

TOPSAIL HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING PIRATES

London 2028 Family Handbook

London New Year's Day Parade · December 28, 2027 – January 4, 2028



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Keep this handbook. Turn in one page.

Everything you need for the next fifteen months is in here. The only paper you hand back is the Agreement & Signature Page, due Thursday, October 1, 2026 along with the first payment.

Everything is also online: topsailbands.com/london-2028 — the announcement video, this handbook, the signature page, every sign-up link, and the payment schedule. Bookmark it; it stays current as things change.

PART ONE

Family Information

What the trip is, what it costs, and what you need to do.

The Trip

The Topsail Marching Pirates have been invited to march in the 42nd London New Year's Day Parade. More than half a million people watch from the street, and about 350 million more watch on TV. We have been offered 150 marching spots.

Depart	Tuesday, December 28, 2027 — overnight flight from Raleigh–Durham (RDU)
In London	Six nights in a superior first-class hotel in central London
Parade day	Saturday, January 1, 2028 — assembly at Berkeley Square, step off at noon
Return	Tuesday, January 4, 2028 — return flight into RDU
Operator	Performance Travel Ltd. / Youth Music of the World
Price	\$4,800 per traveler, or \$4,750 paid in full

The dates are set by the parade and cannot be changed. Please check them against your family's holiday plans before you commit.

We fly out of Raleigh–Durham (RDU) rather than Wilmington. We asked, but there is not enough available lift out of ILM to move a group of about 200 people at once — RDU is the closest airport that can.

What the Week Looks Like

Here is a proposed day-by-day so you can picture the week.

This itinerary is subject to change

Everything below is proposed, not confirmed. Performance Travel Ltd. and the London Parade authorities set the final schedule during 2027, and the order of tours, timings, and specific activities may change. The departure date, parade day, and return date are fixed — the days in between are not. Please do not book anything around a specific day on this list.

Tue, Dec 28	Depart RDU on an overnight flight to London.
Wed, Dec 29	Arrive London, transfer to the hotel by coach. Check in, dinner at the hotel.
Thu, Dec 30	Half-day guided tour of the West End and the City, plus a visit to the Churchill War Rooms.
Fri, Dec 31	Three-quarter day at Hampton Court Palace, home of Henry VIII. Student New Year’s Eve party at the hotel that night.
Sat, Jan 1	PARADE DAY. Group photo, assembly at Berkeley Square, sack lunch. Step off at noon before half a million people, with street drill at the end of the route.
Sun, Jan 2	Three-quarter day at Windsor Castle. Evening at a West End musical.
Mon, Jan 3	Half-day tour of the Tower of London and the Crown Jewels. Final dinner in London.
Tue, Jan 4	Return flight to RDU.

Breakfast is included every morning. Three dinners are at the hotel and three more are covered by the £85 card. Only parade-day lunch is provided — plan for five lunches on your own.

Who Can Come

This trip is built around the fall 2027 marching season, and marching band is a requirement to participate. That sets who is eligible:

- Current 8th graders — eligible by enrolling in Fall 2027 marching band as freshmen.
- Current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors — eligible by enrolling in Spring 2027 concert band and Fall 2027 marching band. Both semesters, not just one.

Marching band enrollment is mandatory to go on the trip

Concert band alone does not qualify a student. The trip is built around the marching season, and a student who is not enrolled in marching band that fall cannot march in the parade.

The Class of 2027 is not eligible

Current seniors graduate in June 2027 and will not be enrolled in band for the fall 2027 season this trip is built around. We know that is a hard thing to hear from a program some of these students have been part of for years, and we are sorry we cannot make an exception.

New to Topsail Band? If your 8th grader is joining us for the first time, welcome — please also complete the Parent Intake Form so we can get your family into our systems.



Parent Intake Form:

<https://bandtogether.topsailbands.com/intake>

The Price

\$4,800 per traveler. That is the whole price. No processing fee, no shirt fee, no surprise charge later.

Pay in full and save \$50

One payment of \$4,750 by November 1, 2026 covers the whole trip. You do not have to do this. Most families will pay monthly, and nothing is lost by doing it that way.

What the price includes

- Round-trip airfare from RDU to London, including taxes, fuel surcharges, and airline fees
- Six nights in a superior first-class hotel in central London — most students twin or double, adults guaranteed twin or double
- Breakfast every morning and dinner every night in London — three dinners at the hotel, three more using a dinner card described below
- A card loaded with £85 for three more dinners, which also works as an Oyster card on the Tube and buses
- Sack lunch on parade day
- Freight shipping of instruments, guard equipment, and uniforms both directions — nothing extra to pay at the airport
- Guided coach tours of the West End and the City, the Tower of London and the Crown Jewels, Churchill's War Rooms, Windsor Castle, and Hampton Court Palace, each with a professional guide

- A ticket to a West End musical — a show like Wicked or Les Misérables — with coach transfer from the hotel
- A download of three self-guided audio walking tours: the parade route, a Southbank stroll, and rock-and-roll London
- A supervised New Year’s Eve party for students at the hotel
- A commemorative 2027/28 London Parade medal and a digital group photograph
- Travel insurance through the Youth Music Performers Club
- A full-time resident tour assistant with the group for the whole trip
- Your Topsail trip shirt, and all PayPal processing fees on your payments

What the price does not include

Item	Estimated cost
Passport	Roughly \$165 for a first adult passport and \$135 for a child under 16. Renewals cost less.
UK travel authorization (ETA)	About \$26 per person, children included. Required to board the flight.
Getting to and from RDU	Not included. Details on getting to the airport will follow closer to departure.
Most lunches	Only parade-day lunch is provided. Budget for five lunches on your own.
Spending money	Souvenirs, snacks, and anything beyond the meals listed above.
Grandstand tickets	About \$115 per seat for family who want to watch from the stands. Optional.
Single room supplement	Add \$840 for adults who prefer not to share a room. Optional, adults only.
Tour assistant gratuity	Customary at the end of the trip. Collected as a group.

Payment Plan

Thirteen payments, all due on the 1st of the month. December and January are deliberately the two lightest payments of the plan.

Due date	Payment	Paid to date	Balance left
October 1, 2026	\$300	\$300	\$4,500
November 1, 2026	\$300	\$600	\$4,200
December 1, 2026	\$300	\$900	\$3,900
January 1, 2027	\$300	\$1,200	\$3,600
February 1, 2027	\$500	\$1,700	\$3,100
March 1, 2027	\$500	\$2,200	\$2,600

Due date	Payment	Paid to date	Balance left
April 1, 2027	\$400	\$2,600	\$2,200
May 1, 2027	\$400	\$3,000	\$1,800
June 1, 2027	\$400	\$3,400	\$1,400
July 1, 2027	\$400	\$3,800	\$1,000
August 1, 2027	\$400	\$4,200	\$600
September 1, 2027	\$400	\$4,600	\$200
October 1, 2027	\$200	\$4,800	\$0

How to pay



Sign up here (students and chaperones):

<https://bandtogether.topsailbands.com/trip-intake/london-new-year-s-day-parade-2028-ynx99>

- **Before each due date, Band Together emails you a PayPal invoice — click it, pay it, done. You do not log into PayPal separately or send money yourself.**
- Make sure your email address in Band Together is one you actually check. If a monthly invoice has not shown up within a few days of the 1st, look in spam, then contact us.
- Do not hand cash or a check to Mr. Wentzek, the Music Boosters, the school, or the district. We cannot take it.
- You can pay ahead any time. Send extra in any month, or pay off the rest early. These amounts are a minimum, not a limit.
- The last payment in October 2027 settles up whatever is left. If the final bill comes in lower, that payment gets smaller.

If you are going to miss a payment

Call or email before the 1st, not after. The boosters have to send money to the travel company on set dates, so one missed payment affects everybody. If we know ahead of time, we can almost always work something out. If we find out late, there is not much we can do.

Deadlines and Refunds

October 1, 2026	First payment due, with the signed Agreement & Signature Page. \$200 of it holds your spot, and you never get that \$200 back.
March 1, 2027	Last day to add anyone — student, chaperone, or on-the-ground — to the trip. All registration ends here.
April 1, 2027	Refunds stop. Through March 31 you can drop out and get everything back except that \$200. Starting April 1, no money comes back.
August 1, 2027	Trip cancellation insurance starts working. It covers up to \$4,500.

October 31, 2027

Everything must be paid off. This is the travel company's final deadline.

Please read this twice

There are four months — April 1 to August 1, 2027 — when your money is already non-refundable but the trip insurance has not started yet. If you have to drop out in those four months, the money is gone and the insurance will not cover it.

Some families buy their own travel insurance to cover those four months. That is up to you, and we are glad to talk it through. The included policy also covers up to \$4,500, a little less than the \$4,800 trip price.

Passports

Start this in September. Do not wait.

- Every traveler needs a valid passport — students and adults alike.
- Lately it has taken four to six weeks, but that number moves, and summer and holidays are slower. Waiting until 2027 is a gamble. You can apply at many post offices and clerk of court offices, or by mail if you are renewing. Everything you need is at travel.state.gov.
- **Bring two color photocopies to Mr. Wentzek.** Print them and hand them over — never email a picture of a passport. We need them to book plane tickets and to replace a lost passport quickly overseas.

Check this even if your passport “looks fine”

Most airlines will not let you board unless your passport is valid at least six months past your return date — not your departure date. Ours must be good through July 2028, six months past our January 4, 2028 return. Check the expiration date tonight, even if it looks fine at a glance. U.S. passport information is at travel.state.gov.

UK Travel Authorization (ETA)

Do not apply yet. Wait for our reminder in 2027.

Since February 25, 2026, an American cannot get on a plane to the United Kingdom without one. It is not a visa. It is an online approval linked to your passport.

- It costs £20 per person, about \$26. Everyone needs one, including babies and young children. The price has gone up twice already, so it may cost a little more by 2027.
- **It is good for two years, or until your passport expires — whichever comes first.** Apply too early and it runs out before we leave, and you pay again. Get the passport first; a new passport cancels an ETA you already have.
- **Apply only through the official UK ETA app or GOV.UK.** Other websites charge two to three times as much for the exact same thing. They are not faster and they do not improve your odds.

- Most people are approved within minutes, but give it three business days to be safe.

Rooms

- Most students share a twin or double room, two to a room, one bathroom inside the room. At some hotels a number of students will be in a triple room instead — the tour operator assigns this by property, not by request, so we cannot promise which one your student gets.
- Adults are guaranteed a twin or double room, never a triple.
- European hotel rooms are smaller than American ones, so expect small beds and a small bathroom. That is normal there, not a downgrade.
- Students pick their own roommate. Talk this through with your student early — one change sets off a chain of others across the whole group.
- We lock in rooms on a date we will announce in spring 2027. After that, no switching.
- An adult who does not want a roommate can pay \$840 for a room alone.

A Pender County Schools student may only room with another PCS student

No chaperones, no parents, no siblings — no exceptions. This applies whether the adult is a chaperone or an on-the-ground parent. A sibling who is not a PCS student is welcome to come along, but rooms with their own parent and stays under that parent's direct supervision, not with a PCS student.

How Students Travel

Every student flies with the group, both ways. There is no exception to this.

- The tour operator books one group flight out of RDU and one group flight home. Students are on it. A family cannot book a separate flight for their student, in either direction.
- If a family wants to take their student home themselves instead of flying back with the group, **the only way to do that is for a parent or guardian to be physically present and collect the student in person from Mr. Wentzek, at a time and place we set in advance.** This works the same way an elementary school release does — an approved adult signs the student out in person. There is no unaccompanied travel, and we cannot release a student to anyone but a parent or guardian.

This does not apply to adults. If you come on the ground yourself, see "Coming without the group flight" below for what that does and does not let you do.

Adults Traveling With Us

Adults are welcome and needed. Every adult who travels is a chaperone with an assigned small group of students, unless they are joining purely as a spectator rather than a supervisor — talk to us if that is your situation.

- **Every adult traveler completes a two-step background check. There are no exceptions.**

- Mr. Wentzek reviews completed background checks and reaches out to those selected. Completing it is not a guarantee — spots are limited and assigned based on what the program needs.
- Chaperones watch a small group of students during free time and count heads at every meeting point.
- **Background checks close September 19, 2026** — before the October 1 payment deadline, so you know whether you are selected before you owe any money.
- Cost is the same as for students: \$4,800, or \$4,750 paid in full. Add \$840 for a single room.

Background check — required for chaperones and on-the-ground adults alike, in this order:



Step 1 — Chaperone background check form:

<https://forms.gle/BE3yr1SyRRWEpq3R8>



Step 2 — District background check portal:

<https://appgarden2.volunteertracker.bchex.io/voltracknc710.nsf>

Coming without the group flight

Unlike students, an adult — chaperone or not — may skip the group flight and arrange their own travel. This uses the same hotel, tours, meals, and insurance as everyone else.

- **A background check is required, the same as for chaperones.** You will be around a group of other families' kids all week, even though you are not formally chaperoning one.

Estimated: \$3,300, or \$3,250 paid in full

The travel company's confirmed land-only cost is \$3,105 per person. We added our usual markup for the shirt and payment fees to get this estimate — the same way we priced the main trip. Exact price, deposit dates, and airport transfer details will be confirmed once we finalize the contract with the travel company.

You're with us, not in charge

You're welcome to join your child's chaperone group — walk with them, be present, have fun. But you cannot remove your child from that group at any point on the trip. Mr. Wentzek, Mr. Edwards, and Pender County Schools remain responsible for every student, exactly as if you weren't there.

Due date	Payment	Paid to date	Balance left
October 1, 2026	\$200	\$200	\$3,100
November 1, 2026	\$200	\$400	\$2,900

Due date	Payment	Paid to date	Balance left
December 1, 2026	\$200	\$600	\$2,700
January 1, 2027	\$200	\$800	\$2,500
February 1, 2027	\$350	\$1,150	\$2,150
March 1, 2027	\$350	\$1,500	\$1,800
April 1, 2027	\$275	\$1,775	\$1,525
May 1, 2027	\$275	\$2,050	\$1,250
June 1, 2027	\$275	\$2,325	\$975
July 1, 2027	\$275	\$2,600	\$700
August 1, 2027	\$275	\$2,875	\$425
September 1, 2027	\$275	\$3,150	\$150
October 1, 2027	\$150	\$3,300	\$0

This schedule is our own estimate, scaled from the main plan — not yet confirmed against the travel company's actual land-only deposit dates.

This is a separate sign-up from the main trip. Talk to Mr. Wentzek before you register — we want to confirm this is the right fit for your situation first.



On-the-ground sign-up:

<https://bandtogether.topsailbands.com/trip-intake/london-new-year-s-day-parade-2028-on-the-ground-3i80q>

A Few Things Worth Knowing Early

Small stuff, but the kind of thing that is much easier to handle in September 2026 than in November 2027.

Both parents on a passport application

A passport for a student under 18 generally requires both parents or guardians to be involved — either both present at the application appointment, or the absent parent completing a notarized consent form. If your family is separated, divorced, or a parent is unavailable, start this conversation now. It can take time to sort out and we would rather you find that out in September than in the spring.

Medical care while we are there

Pender County Schools' standard trip medical release covers our chaperones in an emergency. If your student takes daily medication, tell us before we travel so we can plan for how it is carried and given. The included travel insurance does not cover the cost of replacing lost or forgotten prescriptions, so pack more than you think you need, in carry-on luggage.

What the insurance does not cover

The included policy does not have a separate trip-delay benefit — if weather or an airline delays us, that is not a claimable loss on its own. It also excludes pre-existing medical conditions and does not pay for treatment inside the United States. None of this is unusual for a policy like this one, but we would rather you know the shape of it than assume it covers everything.

Fundraising

Every dollar raised for this trip is above and beyond our normal budget — never pulled from the boosters' \$160,000 annual program budget.

What the boosters can and cannot do

- The boosters will run group fundraisers and seek sponsorships that benefit the whole traveling program. Any money raised is split evenly across everyone going.
- **The boosters cannot put fundraising money toward one student's bill.** This is not our preference — it is the law for a 501(c)(3). When a nonprofit lets families work off their own bill, the IRS calls that a private benefit instead of charity work, and in 2013 a federal tax court took away a booster club's tax-exempt status for doing exactly that. Our accountant told us not to do this, and we are listening.

Want to help? We are forming a London Planning & Fundraising Committee — parents who help organize fundraisers, sponsorships, and trip logistics. No experience needed, and it is separate from chaperoning; you do not need to travel to serve.



Committee interest form:

<https://forms.gle/eehzEsLeR2Vq34vY8>

What your family can do

Nothing stops your family from raising money on your own. That happens outside the boosters, and it is perfectly fine.

- Ask grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends to give directly to you. Many families receive checks toward the trip as birthday or Christmas gifts.
- Some students pick up a seasonal job between now and next fall.
- Ask your employer if they match donations or help with youth travel.
- If money is what is stopping your student, come talk to us privately. We will do what we can, and it stays between us.

Trip Commitment & Conduct Agreement

What you are promising, and how students are expected to behave.

What You Are Signing Up For

When you sign the Agreement & Signature Page, you are enrolling the student in two specific classes and promising the student is going on this trip.

- Current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors: enroll in Spring 2027 concert band, then enroll in Fall 2027 marching band. Both semesters are required.
- Current 8th graders: enroll in Fall 2027 marching band as an incoming freshman. There is no Spring 2027 requirement for you, since you are not at Topsail yet.

You must be enrolled in marching band to participate in the trip. Concert band alone does not qualify — the trip is built around the marching season, and a student who is not in marching band that fall cannot march in the parade.

If the student does not enroll as described, drops the class, or does not march in the fall 2027 season, they cannot go to London. The money already paid does not come back.

Refunds after April 1, 2027 will only be looked at in an extreme situation. Mr. Wentzek, the Booster Board, the school district, and the travel company would all have to agree.

You Earn Your Spot

Paying for this trip does not buy you a seat on the plane. You earn your spot by how you act. In London you stand for Topsail, for Pender County, and for your country in front of a lot of people. The bar is higher than a normal school day, and it starts the day you sign.

Violations of the Pender County Schools Student Code of Conduct or Topsail High School expectations between October 1, 2026 and December 28, 2027 may put your spot on this trip at risk.

- Mr. Wentzek and school administration will look at it together and decide.
- If the answer is no, you do not go, and the money already paid does not come back.
- Missing rehearsals, failing grades, or not meeting band expectations over and over can also cost you the trip.

If something happens at school, call Mr. Wentzek right away. Telling him early almost always goes better than telling him late.

How You Act on the Trip

The Pender County Schools Student Code of Conduct applies for the entire trip — it does not pause because we have left campus or left the country. Everything below is on top of that, not instead of it.

The rest of this section is written to the student. These rules start the minute we leave campus and end when we get home.

Where you go and who you are with

- Stay with your chaperone group at all times. Once we set the groups, they do not change.
- On free time, move in groups of three or more. You must be able to say where your chaperone is and what time you are due back.
- Never leave the hotel, a tour stop, or your group unless a chaperone says yes first.
- Be on time, every time. When you are late, two hundred people and a bus are waiting on you.

At the hotel and after curfew

- We set curfew each night. After curfew you are in your own room, and you stay there until morning.
- Chaperones will check rooms. When a chaperone knocks, you open the door.
- Never go in the room of a student of a different gender. Not for any reason.
- You share a room with one other person, and you are responsible for that room. If something is broken or missing, the bill goes to your family, not the boosters.

Zero tolerance — no exceptions

- **Alcohol.** In the United Kingdom you can legally buy alcohol at 18, and some of you will be 18 by the time we go. It does not matter. No student on this trip drinks. Not at dinner, not in the hotel, not on free time. None.
- **Cigarettes, vapes, and any drug.** Same rule. It does not matter that a shop in London will sell it to an 18-year-old. The answer is still no.
- No stealing. No damaging anything that is not yours.
- No bullying, no threats, and never put your hands on anyone — a classmate, a chaperone, a guide, a hotel worker, or a stranger.
- No leaving the group without permission. No being outside the hotel after curfew.

In public and on parade day

- On parade day you wear what you are told, the way you are told, for as long as you are told.
- Be polite to guides, drivers, hotel staff, and everyone else. We are guests in someone else's country.
- Phone away during rehearsal, during the parade, on tours, and any time an adult is talking to the group.
- Do not post anything that makes you, the band, or the school look bad.
- Keep your passport where the chaperones tell you to keep it. A lost passport is a real problem and can hold up the whole group getting home.

What Happens If You Break a Rule

We decide what happens. Depending on what you did, we may skip straight to the bottom of this list.

- You lose free time and stay with a chaperone for the rest of the trip.
- You are pulled from the parade. You still fly to London. You just watch.
- **We send you home.** Your family pays for that flight, plus a flight for the adult who has to travel with you. You get none of the trip money back.
- The Pender County Schools Student Code of Conduct still applies. You can be disciplined at school when we get back, too.

A note to families

Part Two is strict on purpose. We are taking teenagers across an ocean for eight days. Being clear now is what makes January 2028 a good memory instead of a bad one. If anything here is confusing, ask before you sign.

Your Checklist Before October 1, 2026

1	Decide as a family	Talk through the dates, the cost, and the payments. Bring us your questions. There is no bad question about money.
2	Sign up in Band Together	Commit your student to the trip through the app. Use the QR code from the meeting or find it in the app. New 8th grade family? Also complete the Parent Intake Form.
3	Choose your payment option	Monthly (\$4,800 over 13 payments) or pay in full (\$4,750 by November 1). Watch for the PayPal invoice Band Together emails you.
4	Check every passport	Confirm the expiration date is after July 2028. If it is not — or if you do not have one — apply this month, and sort out both-parent consent early if that applies to you.
5	Apply to chaperone, if you want to travel	Adults only. Background check required. Applications close September 19, 2026 — before payment is due.
6	Sign and return the signature page	The Agreement & Signature Page is a separate sheet. It covers both parts of this handbook.
7	Make the first payment	Due October 1, 2026. \$300, of which \$200 is non-refundable.

Questions

Ask them. We would rather answer a hard question now than have a family guessing about money, safety, or who is watching their kid.

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You can also message either of us through the Band Together app.

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Prices and inclusions reflect the offer of performance tour issued by Performance Travel Ltd. for the Topsail High School Marching Pirates Band. Itinerary details are proposed and subject to confirmation by the tour operator and the London Parade authorities. Airline, hotel, and final schedule are confirmed to us during 2027.