

SeaBase Plans
from Troop 72, Westfield NJ

First thing, get a copy of the Leaders Guide for your trip from the SeaBase website. It contains ideas for transportation within Florida, lodging, and sightseeing.

We arranged for group fares from Continental Airlines from Newark to Miami. Group fares aren't that much better than retail, but you don't have to lock in the names and you can change the number a bit. Continental's requirement for group tickets is a minimum of 10 in a group. It might vary for other airlines.

We stayed in a Comfort Inn in Florida City for two nights. Just researched cheap motels on the internet. This one was close to Everglades National Park, had air conditioning and a pool.

For transportation in Florida, we rented minivans at the Miami airport and kept them for the two days prior to checking in to SeaBase. That allowed us to move the group to Florida City, get around within Everglades Park, drive to dinner, and visit Everglades Alligator Farm the last morning on our way to Islamorada. SeaBase staff assisted us in dropping off the cars at the Marathon airport, when we arrived at SeaBase.

At the end of the trip, we hired "Captain Jack Limos" to bus us from the Base back to Miami airport. They were right on time, waiting for us at the Base when we finished breakfast.

We examined a number of rental, bus, and tour options, and this combination seemed to be the best for us.

We spent the first afternoon at the beach in South Beach, Miami. We drove there directly from the airport. It was fine, but it was hard to coordinate multiple minivans and find parking. Our group got somewhat separated. If you go this route, warn everyone to carry their cell phones, exchange numbers, and remind them to turn ON their phones.

We hired a guide from the Everglades Hostel to give us an all-day tour of Everglades National Park, that included some canoeing and a bunch of short nature walks/hikes. The hostel was listed in the SeaBase documentation, but I don't recommend staying there. However, they were willing to provide a guide for our touring. Everglades NP is probably best in the Spring or Winter; there are lots of mosquitos in summer, but it was a fine thing to do with scouts. And having a guide probably helped stop the scouts from complaining and asking to go back to the motel.

We called ahead and obtained group rates at Everglades Alligator Farm. The

Alligator Farm includes an airboat ride in the everglades. Also a snake and alligator show. The scouts can hold snakes and gators at the end of each show. Actually, the schedule for shows didn't really fit in the time we had, but one of our leaders asked the staff to give us a private show, so we could see it before we had to leave.

Before the trip, we held a series of monthly meeting with the group to inform them of all the medical requirements, discuss our pre-Base tour, and make them familiar with what will happen at the Base and what to pack. We also invited a guy from the local dive shop to show them various snorkels, masks, and fins. Some months, we rented time in a local pool so the group could take swim tests, practice floating, and practice with the snorkel equipment that some of them had purchased ahead of time.

Hope this information helps. The planning paid off for us. The trip went extremely smoothly and we all -- including the trip leaders -- had a GREAT time.