

Questions To Ask On College Campus Tours

This is your best chance to get underneath the veneer of polished presentations – use it wisely.

A college tour is one of the more exhilarating and fun experiences in the college search. It's a time when you can imagine a possible future – but don't let that excitement affect your rationality.

Colleges put a lot of effort into putting their best foot forward – but, if you want to know what day-to-day life will be like in a particular school, you'll have to do a little digging. The following questions are an excellent start.

What are the dorms like?

Are they clustered together, or spread throughout campus? How easy is it to get from one to the other – and is it a safe walk? Single-sex or coed? How often are the bathrooms cleaned? Are you required to live on campus all four years – and, if not, what's off-campus student housing like? What's the food like – and how easy is it to get other cheap meals? How far is the closest grocery store?

What is the classroom like?

Are freshmen courses usually taught in amphitheaters? How often are you taught by a professor vs. a teaching assistant? Is the teaching innovative or experiential, or lecture-driven? What are the strongest majors and departments in the college? How large is the major in which you're most interested? Is there an advisor program, and if so, how involved will your advisor be in your academic career? How is scheduling determined, and how likely are you to get into popular classes?

What is the social life like?

What are the various social groups on campus, and what percentage of students take part in them? How much time do students spend socializing vs. studying? What is there to do in town? What do most students do over the weekend? How easy is it to get around? If there's a shuttle service, how big is the radius? Can you call to get picked up, or do you wait at stops? How late does it run?

What is the food like?

Make sure you eat while on campus. Be sure to also ask where the various places are located on campus and the times they are open to serve you. If you are going to live on campus for four years you need to like the food that will be available on campus and be familiar with the many different times and places you can eat when you get hungry. What is available to you at various times of the day and night? Can I get vegetarian meals? What type of meal plans are available? What are the costs? Are there bonus dollars as part of the meal plans? Does any left over credit from a meal plan cross over to the next semester? Does the local city work with the college and allow me to use my credit for my meal plan dollars if I decide to eat off campus? How do I get additional credits if I use up my meal plan dollars?

What are the surroundings like?

Is the campus (and nearby) considered a safe area? What sort of safety measures are in place – like card readers for dorms, or campus police that patrol throughout the day? Is the town or city

social life driven by the college, or are there thriving communities outside as well? Is the college a bubble, or is it well integrated with its neighborhood?

How well does this school fit me?

What's the (favorite activity) scene like? Do students here seem to be on my wavelength? Do staff and students make you feel welcome, or like an intruder? How do students seem to treat each other?

Of course there are hundreds more questions, but this is a good jumping-off point for everyone. Just remember to ask as many questions as possible that relate to your strongest interests – and ask as many questions as you can about things you see that stand out to you. Bottom line: Be prepared with the right questions on your tours, and you're much more likely to come away with a true impression of the school, as opposed to one constructed for you.