Tennessee is an absolute treasure of opportunities for student/youth groups. From its influential history and music contributions, to its wonderful culture and scenic beauty, Tennessee is ready for your groups.

The eastern portion of Tennessee with the majestic Smoky Mountains as a backdrop is one of the state’s most popular destinations. Pigeon Forge, with more than a dozen theater and entertainment venues and a host of educational opportunities, is a magnet for student/youth groups. Fun and scholarship just seem to go together in Pigeon Forge.

Visiting Mother Nature is a natural way for student groups to enjoy Pigeon Forge because America’s most visited national park is Pigeon Forge’s next-door neighbor. The 500,000-acre Great Smoky Mountains National Park is easily accessible and perfect for any U.S. history curriculum. Groups learn about the formation of the national park system and the famous dedication visit to the park by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. For years, local receptive operator Steve Ellis Tours has been using retired National Park Service rangers as step-on guides and program coordinators.

Science takes center stage at a number of Pigeon Forge venues. Wonder-
on location: south ❖

Works, the upside-down building, specializes in curriculum-based science programs. Gravity, force and motion, probability, sound and energy can all be explored. Titanic Pigeon Forge shares the story of the ship's tragic ending, with activities to enhance English, history and literature curricula available online. Dollywood's "Science in the Park" workbook provides a look at the rides from a totally different perspective.

With music such an integral part of Pigeon Forge’s appeal, it’s understandable that performance groups are welcomed. Venues providing opportunities include Dollywood, Dolly Parton’s Dixie Stampede, Smith Family Dinner Theatre, Tennessee Shindig, Grand Majestic Theater and WonderWorks. Career options in the entertainment field are offered at Country Tonite with topics covering theater production and management careers.

The city-sponsored Dolly Parton Homecoming Parade attracts a variety of regional bands. Dolly is a crowd favorite and the annual May event honoring her attracts tens of thousands of spectators.

Look no further than the Music City’s commitment to the student/youth market to understand why the Student Youth Travel Association (SYTA) chose Nashville as host of its 2012 annual conference. The city combines a rich history and diverse culture with its fabulous music offerings.

The Museum of African American Music, Art & Culture, opening is 2013, will be ready to welcome students with a unique Nashville learning experience. Belle Meade Plantation offers tours conducted by costumed guides who share the estate’s storied history. Performance groups are invited to the 1890s Carriage House, just seven miles from downtown Nashville.

The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson provides a look into how our young nation was shaped. Hands-on history classes can be tailored to any age group. The Visitor Center Breezeway allows for student performance groups following the tour.

There’s a good reason they call it Music City. Nashville features plenty of opportunities for performance groups to display their talents. What better place to perform than the Country Music Hall of Fame? Small ensembles to marching bands of up to 100 members have been featured. A chance to perform at the General Jackson Showboat boarding area is sure to excite; dates are available from March–October. The world-famous Grand Ole Opry welcomes student groups to perform prior to seeing a show in February and March. Ryman Auditorium, with its outstanding acoustics, welcomes up to 80-member performance groups to its stage.

When the weather’s right, Nashville Shores Outdoor Water Park provides two performance venues. Throughout 2012 Gaylord Opryland will host a variety of festivals and events. Festivals of Music and the Heritage Festivals are featured on extended weekends throughout April. Other dates will become available soon.

Memphis, located on the Mississippi River, has become a favorite destination for student/youth groups. Its cotton industry heritage and involvement in the civil rights movement tell a compelling story. And music has always been an important part of Memphis and its contribution to American culture.

Before exploring the obvious, there are a few itinerary options you may not want to overlook. Lichterman Nature Center is a certified arboretum featuring extensive natural areas and gardens, Mecca for those interested in botany and biology. The center is part of the Pink Palace Family of Museums, which includes Pink Palace, Sharpe Planetarium, CTI IMAX® Theatre, and Coon Creek Science Center.

How does breakfast with Elvis Presley sound? One of his favorites, the Arcade Restaurant, opened in...
Titanic Pigeon Forge offers many lessons for student travel groups.

1919 and has been featured in *Great Balls of Fire* and *The Client*. It’s a great way to start a music-filled day. The *Memphis Rock ‘n’ Soul Museum* is the first stop for any group exploring the musical pioneers who broke down barriers to create music that impacted the world. Next stop is *Graceland*. After a Platinum Tour, musical groups are invited to perform at the pavilion across the street from the mansion.

Performance groups are also welcomed at *Opera Memphis, Cannon Center for Performing Arts, Germantown Performing Arts Center* and *Bartlett Performing Arts Center*. *Stax Museum of American Soul Museum* is popular with all groups. Coming in 2012, *Beale Street Landing*, with retail shops, restaurants, meeting space and home of the American Queen steamboat, will host performing groups.

*Mud Island River Park* pays tribute to the mighty Mississippi River. Its “Explorer Package” includes a visit to the River Museum and a self-guided tour of the River Walk, a half-mile-long concrete scale model of the Lower Mississippi. Other tours include “Transportation on the Mighty Mississippi” and “Civil War River Walk Tour.” “The Mud Hunt,” a scavenger hunt for information found on the River Walk, is popular with student groups.

As a major stop on the Underground Railroad, Memphis has made significant contributions to African American history. A key sight is the *National Civil Rights Museum*, which focuses on the struggle for freedom. A visit to Memphis is not complete without an inspirational tour of the museum, housed in the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

From across the state and region, teachers are opening the Tennessee treasure chest and discovering a rare and exciting field trip option. *LGT*