

GROUP LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Linda McAlister, 6-time-traveler and 3-time Group Leader from Huntsville, AL

Our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, AL has enjoyed three marvelously successful trips with Grand Circle Travel. We took 33 members to England, Wales, and Scotland; 32 to Spain; and recently took 28 to the U.S. national parks in July.

When I saw the new listing of Grand Circle's U.S. national parks trip, *The Great National Parks: Yellowstone, Grand Teton & Mount Rushmore*, I was eager to plan and lead it primarily because it was on our bucket list of places to tour, and I was confident that it would be an easy trip to sell to OLLI members. Beginning in Salt Lake City, we heard the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, then enjoyed the natural beauty and history of numerous national parks and monuments including the Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, Devil's Tower, rafting on Snake River, Crazy Horse, and Mount Rushmore. Our guide, Eli, was the most fun ever!

Every group tour has numerous memorable sights or events, but a recent visit to the Heart Mountain

The OLLI group from the University of Alabama in Huntsville rafting on Snake River. Learn more about The Great National Parks at www.gct.com/npt



Relocation Site near Cody, WY left an impression on me. The Interpretive Center lecture and museum, as well as the original guard tower, were poignant reminders of some of our country's ugly history in incarcerating 14,000 Japanese Americans in this remote area during the scare after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

I enjoy group travel for two reasons:

1) It is fun traveling and learning with friends (new and old), and 2) Every detail of the trip—educational, transportation, accommodations, dining, museum tickets, etc.—is planned and organized by the tour company, making it stress free and easy for me!

We promoted the trips to our membership for approximately 6–10 months prior to the trip through newsletters, email blasts, classes, and direct correspondence. Word of mouth and personal invitations to friends worked effectively for building our travel group. Several informal gatherings helped to inform folks about the trip and travel arrangements while also giving them opportunities to become acquainted with fellow travelers. We also offered courses to help prepare for each trip—history, art, movies, language, etc.

Once Grand Circle posts dates and locations for upcoming trips, we choose a date that does not conflict with our OLLI course calendar and an itinerary that has been discussed in our Events/Travel Committee or with our Board of Directors. We have enjoyed each of our trips immensely and also found that the support staff in the Grand Circle office works efficiently with us to prepare for the trip. Each trip was very educational and well-executed with attention to every detail. The tour guides and local guides were superb. The value was excellent with good meals, accommodations, and local transportation.



Left to right: Shelley Morse (OLLI UNCW), JoAnne Lynch (Boston office), Amanda Turrell (Florida office), Susan Williams (OLLI UNCW)



Left to right: Chris McCarthy (Florida office), Linda McAllister (OLLI UAH), JoAnne Lynch (Boston office)

NEWS FROM THE TEAM:

LLI Conference

Staff and volunteers from Lifelong Learning Institutes (LLI) gather each summer to network and share best practices. Over the course of the 3-day conference, attendees participate in breakout sessions that run a gamut of topics relating to learning in retirement—travel, volunteerism, curriculum, marketing, etc.

2019 is the third year Grand Circle Corporation has been a platinum sponsor. O.A.T. and Grand Circle's strong focus on learning and discovery is a perfect match for the mission of LLI's: We love learning for the joy of learning!

Travel is a great opportunity for LLI's to enhance their curriculum, build camaraderie amongst members, grow their membership, and boost their revenue stream at the same time. Our goal for the conference is to educate the representatives on the benefits of a successful travel program for their LLI. We also share great tips on selecting the right trip for each group and maximizing the potential of their travel program.

We enjoy meeting Group Leaders we currently work with and making brand new connections as well. It is also a great opportunity for us to learn more about how these groups operate and what their goals are. The more information we get about a specific group, the better we can help them make their travel program successful.

Do you have a great group travel story, hints for putting a trip together, or thoughts on the joys of leading a group?

Please share your Group Leader Stories, photos, and tips with us by emailing TravelTalk@gct.com.

"We do a rather extensive analysis and frankly what we've found is that if Grand Circle goes to the place we're interested in seeing, it's always been the best deal for us. And the quality is just remarkable."

Bob Huley, LLI Group Leader of Northern Virginia

Refer & Earn \$1000

If you know someone who would make a great Group Leader, simply call your Group Sales Account Representative and provide us with their contact information. If the person you refer becomes a Group Leader on any of our trips—starting at groups of 10 or more travelers—you'll receive \$1000 CASH.