

what i learned while campus touring

by Kara Wahlgren



Every college looks cool in the brochure. But college visits do what a glossy pamphlet can't – they let you feel out a school to see if it's right for you. Five students share their "aha" touring moments.



TORI, 18
Freshman, Montclair University
(Montclair, NJ)

The wrong fit: One school I visited had an awesome broadcasting program, but once I visited the campus, I knew I didn't want to apply. The campus itself was nice, but it wasn't in a good part of the city, and I wouldn't have felt comfortable leaving school grounds.

My dream school: What made me positive I wanted to go to Montclair was its broadcasting program. I have high hopes of becoming a producer, and when I toured the studio, I realized they would teach me specifically how to do that. I also learned that they only accepted a handful of dedicated students into the program, so I'd be with people who were serious about it.

My smartest move: I met with alumni from the broadcasting programs. I talked to them about their experience in the field and asked how the school helped their careers.



ELISE, 18
Freshman, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY)

The wrong fit: When I visited an urban school, I realized it was too integrated into the city for me. There was no actual campus – it was like, one building was a store, and then the next building had a school flag, and then the next was a barber shop.

My dream school: When I first pulled up at Cornell, I didn't think I was going to like it because it was in the middle of nowhere. I also worried it was going to be snobby, but the tour guide was really down to earth. He seemed like the type of person I'd want to go to school with, and the students on campus looked approachable.

My smartest move: When you get accepted at Cornell, there's a week where you can stay overnight with current freshmen and go to classes with them. It really helped me get adjusted. A lot of schools offer that, and I'm glad I did it.



ANDREW, 19
Freshman, Monmouth University
(West Long Branch, NJ)

The wrong fit: The first campus I visited was a religious school, and there were really strict rules – they even give students Breathalyzer tests when they come back to their dorms at night! I realized I wanted to be at a school with more freedom, one where I could have fun.

My dream school: Monmouth's campus was only two minutes from the beach. My family has a shore house in Ocean City, NJ, so I like the beach environment.

My smartest move: I visited a dorm room. I knew someone at the school, so I went on a weekend and got to see everything. The dorms were small, but they seemed like somewhere I could live.



AMY, 18
Incoming freshman, Towson University
(Towson, MD)

The wrong fit: I wanted to go to a huge state school, but when I got there, it was bigger than I'd imagined. I realized I'd have to take a bus everywhere.

My dream school: Everything at Towson clicked – the dorm rooms are big, the campus is small, and the town is near Baltimore's Inner Harbor. You can walk everywhere.

My smartest move: I talked to professors at each school I visited. I'm going to be spending a lot of time in class, so I wanted to make sure I liked the people who'd be teaching me.



TOMMY, 20
Incoming transfer student,
Kean University (Union, NJ)

The wrong fit: I'm transferring from a local community college, and the first school I visited was too small. It seemed like there wasn't enough life outside of academics. And the surrounding area was farmland, so there was nothing to do off-campus, either.

My dream school: Kean is in a busy area – there are stores, movie theaters, and clubs right near campus. Plus, there are a lot of other colleges to visit nearby.

My smartest move: I asked people I knew from the schools to give me a tour. Friends will tell the truth about what there is to do, how hard the classes are, and things like that. ☺