

🏒 10 Hidden Secrets About European Youth Hockey Tournaments (And What Other Companies Aren't Telling You)

How These Secrets Can Save You Thousands on Your Trip Overseas!

#7 will shock you!



MCN Sports
Management

Look, we're going to be straight with you.

Most youth hockey travel companies won't tell you the stuff we're about to share — because, frankly, it might scare some parents off. But at **MCN Sports Management**, we believe in *radical honesty*.

We'd rather you be 100% informed, confident, and prepared than find yourself stressed out in a foreign airport with a missing hockey bag and a cranky teenager.

After working with *thousands* of families and players at European hockey tournaments and tours, we've seen it all — the good, the bad, and the “why didn't anyone warn me?” moments.

This guide was created to share insider strategies that every hockey family wishes they knew *before* traveling abroad — from passport tips and packing hacks to understanding European hockey culture and maximizing player exposure. Whether you're preparing for your first international tournament or planning your next one, this guide will help you travel smarter, play harder, and create memories that last a lifetime.

So grab a coffee, settle in, and let's pull back the curtain on **11 hidden secrets** that can save you thousands of dollars, hours of frustration, and a ton of unnecessary stress.



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Secret #1: Rink Pro Shops Are Basically Hockey Myths

We all do it. How many times have you entered into a rink (or your kid), gone straight to the pro shop, Strat fleeting sticks and seeing what type of merchandise they have?

Those massive, gear-stacked pro shops you're used to at North American rinks, well, they don't really exist overseas. European rinks are for the most part city owned. With that, adding a pro shop is something they just do not want anything to do with.

In fact, in all the rinks in all the countries we have been visited, we can think of only 2 pro shops inside a rink that we have been to.



There are not many Hockey specific stores either. If you find one there is a solid chance that you will have to take a cab (or Uber) to get there. Getting skates sharpened, need new laces or tape can turn into its own European adventure!

If you are traveling with an inexperienced group, then finding a hockey store is basically impossible. **MCN Sports Management** makes sure we know where the nearest store is to each rink and hotel.

MCN Tip: *Pack like a pro traveler. Bring extra sticks, laces, tape, blades, and hardware. Make sure your blades are sharpened before you leave. It is better to bring extra and not need it then be stuck without it. Bringing extras will save you a lot of time and money! We even provide **equipment packing lists** and spare part kits for every family before takeoff. You'll thank us later.*

🔒 **Secret #2: Your Hockey Bag Can Cost You Hundreds in Fees**

Airlines treat hockey bags like rare art — oversized, overweight, and overcharged. We've seen parents pay over \$400 in extra baggage fees because they didn't know the rules. The best way to make sure that this does not happen to you is to make sure your hockey bag is Under 50 lbs. If you are sitting in business class then you are allowed up to 70 lbs per checked bag.

Note, check with your airline about their policy on hockey bags and sticks. The majority of airlines count the stick bag as a part of the equipment bag, but not all of them. Most airlines have their sporting equipment policy on their websites. Be sure to read up on your airline before you head the airport!

MCN Tip 1: *If are an over packer you may be able to fit some luggage in your hockey bag as well. This will save you from the 50 lb limit. If you are a real light packer you may be able to fit clothing and equipment in one hockey bag....however then you have to deal with the 'hockey smell'*

MCN Tip 2: *Always use a stick bag. Do not just tape your sticks together. There is a higher chance of a stick breaking when they are taped together vs traveling in a stick bag.*



SECRET #3: YOUR GEAR MIGHT TAKE A SOLO EUROPEAN VACATION

Here's a painful truth: your gear doesn't always arrive when or where you do. Most hockey bags often go through *special handling areas* or separate customs channels. Most times they do not come out onto the same luggage carousel, but rather the 'oversized luggage' area. If your bag does not come out, **DO NOT PANIC**. Check the oversized area first.

Sometimes, and this can happen, your bag does not arrive at all. They miss connections, are forgotten or overlooked at your home airport..we have seen it all. One way to lessen the likelihood of 'lost luggage' is making sure you pick the right layover flight or a direct flight.

Direct flights are the best option to help avoid lost luggage. However, there are some destinations that a layover is unavoidable. If you do have a flight with a layover, the longer the better. This will allow time to get your bags from one plane to another without the threat of a short turnaround window.



MCN Tip: *A luggage GPS (ex: Apple Airtag) is a MUST have. This will give you the peace of mind to know exactly where your bags are and if they made it on the plane or have come out at arrivals. A gps cannot prevent a bag from being left behind, but it will at least allow you to see where it is and know when it does finally arrive to your destination.*

Secret #4: The 90-Day Rule Is Your Golden Ticket

Most families stress over visas — you don't have to. North American travelers get 90 visa-free days in most of Europe's Schengen region.

However...Before you pack your bags for an international trip, make sure your passport meets the **90-day rule** — one of the most common reasons travelers are denied entry abroad. This rule requires that your passport be valid for **at least 90 days beyond your planned departure date** from the country you're visiting.

For example, if your trip ends on June 1, your passport should not expire before September 1. Many destinations within Europe's **Schengen Area** and other countries strictly enforce this regulation, regardless of your ticketed return date.

Always check your passport's expiration date well in advance to avoid last-minute issues at the airport or border control.

Other, less experienced, groups typically do not know this rule. We have seen families arrive at the airport only to be denied.

MCN Tip: *Check your family passports right away once you decide to join an overseas trip. This can be the difference between the trip of a lifetime and a stressful, expensive venture. If needed make an appointment at your local passport office right away. Getting new or renewed passports can take 4-6 weeks, with expedited 2-3 weeks.*





SECRET #5: WHERE YOU STAY MATTERS MORE THAN YOU

Hotels Can Make or Break Your Trip

You'll spend more time off the ice than you think — meals, rest, team meetings, and downtime. Choosing the right hotel can shape the whole experience.

We've seen teams stuck miles from the rink, wasting hours in traffic or scrambling to find last-minute meal options. Going with an inexperienced group can quickly turn costly — from transportation mix-ups and booking errors to extra travel expenses and missed game times.

That's why **MCN partners only with trusted European hotels** that understand the needs of youth hockey teams — safe neighborhoods, athlete-friendly buffet meals, and easy access to both rinks and local attractions. When every detail is handled right, your team can focus on what matters most: performing on the ice and enjoying the trip of a lifetime.

MCN Tip: *Upgrades are available at most hotels and the service is almost always top notch. Do not be afraid to ask for a larger room if needed.*





SECRET #6: EUROPEAN HOTELS ARE NOT NORTH AMERICAN HOTELS

We're Not in Kansas anymore, Toto!

One of the biggest mistakes we see inexperienced travel groups make is not knowing the difference between North American hotels and European hotels. While families might expect the same spacious rooms, oversized beds, and around-the-clock service they're used to in the U.S. or Canada, the European hospitality experience is quite different — and that's part of what makes it so special. Rooms are often smaller and cozier, elevators can be limited or compact, and amenities like air conditioning or daily towel service may not be standard everywhere.

However, what European hotels lack in size, they make up for in character, location, and charm. Many properties are housed in beautifully restored historic buildings, tucked along cobblestone streets or within walking distance of famous landmarks, arenas, and cafés. Families quickly realize that in Europe, hotels are designed for exploration, not isolation — a comfortable place to rest after a day of hockey, sightseeing, and unforgettable adventure.

The key is understanding what to expect and planning ahead. Choosing the right hotel isn't just about comfort; it's about enhancing your overall experience. At MCN Sports Management, we've partnered with trusted European hotels that understand the unique needs of North American hockey families — offering convenient team accommodations, secure equipment storage, and proximity to tournament venues.

MCN Tip #1: *Air conditioning is not used until at least June at most hotels. If your room is hot then open a window. The hotel front desk will not turn on the A/C for you.*

MCN Tip #2: *Your room will not have window screens or wash cloths. Do not be surprised when you do not find either.*



SECRET #7: MOST COACHES FAIL AT RECRUITING FOR EUROPE

“My Son’s Coach Is Putting a Team Together to Go to Europe!”

We hear it every year.

And every year, a few weeks later, we get the same follow-up email:

“The team fell apart — now we don’t have one.” It happens *every single year*. Why? Because getting 17–20 players and their families to commit to flying halfway around the world is hard. Everyone **wants** to do it, but when it’s time to book flights and make payments, about 80% back out. So whenever we hear, “My son’s coach is putting a team together,” we can’t help but smile and say, “Okay... good luck!”

The Truth Most Coaches Don’t Want to Admit

Unless you’re traveling with a company that has a proven track record of running successful European hockey trips, you’re most likely setting yourself up for stress, disappointment, and lost money.

Organizing these tours takes months of detailed planning — booking hotels, buses, sightseeing, meals, uniforms, and of course, quality hockey competition. Most coaches simply don’t have the time, connections, or experience to manage all that.



And let’s be honest — getting a full team to commit is nearly impossible without a major sponsor. Every family’s situation is different, and not everyone can take on such a big financial and logistical commitment.

So when a coach says, “I know a lot of kids, I can get a team,” the odds are stacked against them.

MCN Tip: *Putting your trust in an experienced organization like **MCN Sports Management** means peace of mind.*

We’ve spent years building partnerships, handling logistics, and creating unforgettable experiences for families — so you don’t have to worry about whether the trip will actually happen.

With MCN, you’re not just going to Europe — you’re joining a professionally organized, world-class hockey experience that’s built to deliver.

🌐 SECRET #8: STRUCTURED TOURS BEAT GOING IT ALONE

Sure, you can absolutely try to organize your own European hockey adventure — but be prepared for the reality behind the dream. Between coordinating hotel bookings in multiple languages, figuring out which airport transfers actually align with your flight times, managing meal plans for picky eaters or athletes, and trying to keep track of game schedules spread across several cities, it quickly becomes overwhelming. What starts as an exciting family project can easily turn into a logistical nightmare — especially when dealing with unfamiliar transportation systems, group reservations, and international payment issues.

That's why MCN Sports Management exists — to take that stress completely off your plate. Our team has years of experience organizing seamless European hockey tours, ensuring every detail is handled with precision. We partner with trusted four-star hotels located close to arenas and key attractions, plan meals suited for high-performance athletes, and arrange private team buses so families travel comfortably and on schedule. From your arrival to the final whistle, you'll never have to worry about where to go or what to do next — everything runs like clockwork.

MCN Tip: *Traveling with MCN isn't just about convenience — it's about value. Our long-term relationships with hotels, bus companies, and local partners mean families who book through us typically save **25–40%** compared to DIY trips. More importantly, they avoid the headaches that come with last-minute changes, hidden fees, and logistical chaos. You focus on your child's hockey experience and making lifelong memories — we handle the rest.*



📌 **SECRET #9: NOT ALL PLAYERS CAN PLAY IN EUROPE**

This is a hard one for a lot of families to hear, but these tournaments are good! They are fast, skilled and can be physical. European hockey is also different style, so it takes a certain type of player to compete in one of these tournaments.

Not every hockey player automatically gets to travel and compete in a European tournament. Unlike programs that allow anyone to click “register here” and join a team, MCN Sports Management requires all players to submit an application. This ensures that every athlete is evaluated, and only those who meet the skill, commitment, and character standards are selected to represent our teams abroad. The result is a stronger, more competitive team — and a better overall tournament experience for everyone.

Choosing a program without a selection process might seem easier, but it often comes at a cost. Teams formed this way may have wide gaps in skill and experience, which can lead to unbalanced games, frustration on the ice, and missed opportunities for true development. By contrast, MCN evaluates each application carefully, ensuring that every roster is composed of players who will thrive in international competition and contribute to the team’s success.



When you travel with MCN, you’re not just signing up for a tournament — you’re joining a program that prioritizes quality and competition. Our selection process guarantees that your player is surrounded by motivated teammates, challenged by top-level opponents, and positioned for an unforgettable European hockey experience. The difference between a “register here” team and a carefully curated MCN team can be the difference between just playing and truly excelling abroad.

MCN Tip: *Always check if a program selects players or simply lets anyone register. Applying to a curated team ensures your player will compete with the best, grow their skills, and enjoy a true European tournament experience.*

😊 **SECRET #10 THIS IS MORE THAN A HOCKEY TRIP... IT'S THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME**

For most families, a European hockey tournament isn't just another trip — it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience. This is likely the only time your child will have the chance to compete against international teams, experience new cultures, and create memories that go far beyond the ice. At MCN, we understand the significance of this opportunity, which is why we go above and beyond to make every detail seamless. From travel logistics and accommodations to curated meals and tournament scheduling, our goal is to ensure families can focus on the experience rather than the stress.

Here's a hard truth: if your mindset is simply, "We don't care about sightseeing, we just want to play hockey," then **STAY HOME**. This trip is not for you. You can find hockey tournaments anywhere, and playing in the same domestic events year after year will get the job done without the added cost or travel. Europe offers much more than just ice time — it's about the full cultural immersion, the excitement of exploring new cities, and the friendships formed both on and off the ice. Skipping these elements means missing out on what truly makes an international trip extraordinary.

At **MCN**, we design our trips for families who want the complete experience. Yes, the hockey is world-class, but the memories extend far beyond the rink. From walking historic streets to enjoying local cuisine and exploring iconic landmarks, we make sure every moment counts. Families who come with the right mindset leave with more than just game results — they leave with stories, experiences, and connections that last a lifetime. This isn't just a tournament; it's a journey your family will remember forever.

MCN Tip: *Come with an open mind. You are about to spend 7-10 days with new people, seeing new cities and trying new foods! Treat a European hockey trip as a full experience, not just a tournament. The memories off the ice — sightseeing, local culture, and team bonding — are just as valuable as the games themselves. Plan to soak it all in, because these moments truly last forever.*



✨ **BONUS SECRET: YES, THE COACHES GET A FREE TRIP**

We have heard people say, or read comments, “It’s just a Free trip for the coach... blah blah blah”

Now here’s something everyone needs to understand: coaches always go for free—and they get paid for their time and service!

Hate to break the news to you, but that spring tournament in Nashville? Well, your coach is going for free. The summer tournament in Boston? Their hotels, travel, and meals are covered. And those organizations that bring multiple teams to tournaments across the U.S. —or even several teams to one big event? They’re not just doing it for the love of the game.

Whether it’s a weekend tournament or a 10-day trip across Europe, these events take a tremendous amount of time, planning, and energy. People are working behind the scenes for months—sometimes nearly a year—to make sure you, your family, and your athlete have a memorable and worthwhile experience. If you’ve never organized a team before, you probably have no idea what goes into it: the ups and downs, hotel logistics, uniforms, player recruitment, and more.



Remember that time you committed to a team, then backed out three days before the tournament and asked for a refund? It might not have felt like a big deal to you, but to a coach or organizer, it’s huge. Not only does it hurt the team on the ice, but it also forces the coach to scramble to fill spots and keep the roster competitive.

When it comes to European trips, we take care of our coaches—because they’ve earned it. They put in months of work behind the scenes to make sure everything

runs as smoothly as possible. No one would expect you to work for months without pay, so why should they?

MCN TIP: *Behind every successful tournament trip is a coach and organizer working tirelessly to make it all happen. From player selection to travel logistics, nothing happens by chance. Respect their time and commitment—communicate early, stay committed, and follow through on your word. The smoother your side runs, the better the experience will be for your player, the team, and everyone involved.*

JOIN THE EXPERIENCE

Ready for the Trip of a Lifetime?

Now that you know some of the secrets, it's time to make them work for you. If we were to put in all of the secrets we would be here for days! The best way to learn ALL of the Secrets is to experience them for yourself.

Join the **MCN Senators Hockey Club** and experience international tournaments in **France, Italy, Czech Republic, Sweden, and Finland.**

We handle the planning — so you can focus on the memories.

- All-inclusive pricing
- Expert coaching
- Family-friendly itineraries
- Once-in-a-lifetime cultural experiences

✉ **Get Your Free Tournament Info Packet and Pricing. Apply TODAY**
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