

Ancient Trails: Spirals from the Source
8/9 Grade Rite of the Wheel
Sunday, May 24 - Saturday, June 6

Dear 8th and 9th Grade Families,

Our Upper School end of year trip has always been referred to as: "The Rite of The Wheel" in honor of the Native American idea of the Rite of Passage. We take our young adults away from their families and put them in a new family, their SBMS family. They live with different adult mentors in unfamiliar surroundings. They experience new challenges, new goals, and ultimately a new appreciation of themselves, as their ability to reach farther and deeper within continues to unfold.

Our trip name, *Ancient Trails: Spirals from the Source*, speaks of our journey. It reflects the path going back before one ventures forward. Kachinas, Kokopeli, our own spirit, spirits of those in our families and friends remain with us to guide us on the Trail, literally and figuratively, on this trip and in this life. We will go to the Heartland of the American Southwest and tap into the Native American energy and insight that still has much to teach us. Our route will take us in the four different directions, spiraling away from each other, only to bring us back together with new experiences on which to share and grow. We will cross the Colorado River, the source of life for many, past and present. We will pass by the Hopi Mesas on our journey across the land of the Ancient Ones, where a community in the town of Walpi has existed continuously for 800 years. We will spend a day taking in the vast beauty of the Grand Canyon. To complete our journey we will end with a dip in the cool waters of Oak Creek as we wash off the road dust and celebrate the reward of a trip well traveled. A Spiral reaches out and then returns at a higher level. Your children will return with a different perspective as they take in the air, the sky, the land, and the energy of the Great American Southwest.

We have been to the Four Corners on our End of Year trip fourteen times since 1980. Even though the route has changed in many ways, the magic of this trip is just as powerful. The 8th and 9th grade will begin this trip separately. The 8th grade will leave from SBMS in the school vans and will journey to Navajo National Monument to take a hike to Betatkin, one of the sacred ancient native ruins. The 9th grade will depart on the train and will eventually end up at Canyon de Chelly where they will do a jeep tour of the canyon and have the distinct honor of two evenings of native stories from one of the finest Navajo story-tellers in the area while camping on his family's land inside the Canyon. The 8th and 9th grades will then reconnect at the Grand Canyon where we will have one day to explore before heading out on our cycling adventure. Our first ride will take us along the rim of the Grand Canyon before turning south for a 3-day ride across the Coconino Plateau following the historic route of the late 1800s Grand Canyon Stage Coach Line. After passing the San Francisco Peaks and the town of Flagstaff, AZ we will continue south through the pinyon pines riding dirt roads, single track and pavement to end amongst the amazing red rock formations of Sedona.

This trip is sure to be an enriching and memorable journey. We feel fortunate that we have been able to offer this opportunity to so many over the years. Thank you for your continued support. See you at the slide show in June!

Erin Finnegan and the SBMS staff