



Group Leader Information

A guide to booking non-package travel or with overseas companies

Occasionally the STF hears of teachers being encouraged to make arrangements directly with non-UK suppliers; the following information is a guide to the potential pitfalls to watch out for.

Not booking as a package

UK and European law gives significant and wide ranging legal protection to consumers – including school and group travel - that book travel arrangements as a ‘package’.

This is defined as the pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following components:

- transport
- accommodation
- other tourist services not ancillary to transport or accommodation and accounting for a significant proportion of the package

Under the Package Travel Regulations the tour operator, if you've booked a package holiday, is liable for all the services - coach hire, accommodation, flights, etc. - as long as they were part of the package the tour operator arranged for you.

Booking or paying for services separately or directly with suppliers - your accommodation, coach, ferry, flights and excursions - would mean that the trip was not a package and would fall outside the protection offered by the Regulations.

Important elements that would be missing include the financial protection of monies paid and repatriation in the event of failure, significant considerations for a school trip. In addition, where any supplier failed to deliver the promised service any dispute would have to be resolved with them directly, which for overseas suppliers can have substantial difficulties.

Under a package, financial protection and repatriation are legal requirements and redress would be with the tour operator for all services.

Booking a package with an overseas company

The protection of the Package Travel Regulations 1992 only applies to bookings made in the UK; however as the UK Regulations is the enactment of over-riding EU legislation all other member states are required to have similar protection in place.

Notwithstanding the above, even where EU regulations should provide protection - such as booking a package with a French company - ensuring they are in place and if need be enacted upon can be fraught with difficulty. For example, it is likely that the detail of the local interpretation of EU legislation will be hard to identify, any contract with an overseas company will be drafted to meet their local law, not the UK's, and consequently any resolution would need to be made through overseas courts. Not the easiest of dispute resolution.

There are no government protection schemes for booking with non-EU companies.

Booking with a School Travel Forum (STF) Assured Member

All STF members are UK based and any bookings made with them will be packages providing full consumer protection under UK law. In addition, all are visited annually by independent auditors to ensure they are compliant with the STF's robust code of practice.

Since its inception the School Travel Forum has won widespread recognition and support for the way it simplifies and provides essential reassurance for leaders looking to organise study, sports & ski trips. Teachers using an STF Assured Member can be secure knowing that their travel partner:

- Understands and facilitates the needs of educational travel
- Manages safety effectively
- Offers fair terms and conditions, and the best financial security
- Is fully inspected every year by independent experts

From its beginning the STF initiative won the support of the ASCL, ATL, NAHT, NUT and Voice. It was welcomed by the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) and the (then) DCSF, and NASUWT advised members wishing to organise school trips to use companies that had this type of scheme.

Our standards have been adopted as the benchmark for all companies operating Study, Sports and Cultural Tours by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom's Quality Badge award. This provides for the first time a national accreditation combining the essential elements of provision - learning and safety - into one easily recognisable and trusted award.

Further information:

- Trading Standards Guidance: http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/cgi-bin/glos/bus1item.cgi?file=*BADV015-1111.txt
- Which Guide to Package Travel: www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/regulation/package-travel-regulations/
- School Travel Forum: www.schooltravelforum.com/
- Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge: <http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>

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