

before you go: a planning & safety guide



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1. Our Commitment to You

Established in 1992, Absolute Travel & Tours Ltd. (also Absolute Travel, Absolute School Travel, Absolute Sports Travel and Absolute Skiwise), is a specialist tour operator organising sports tours, educational study trips, ski trips, activity trips, performing arts trips, festivals and tournaments for schools, colleges and clubs to destinations at home and abroad.

The most effective way to ensure a safe and trouble-free tour is to prepare thoroughly. Our pre-tour safety guide provides information we believe will assist group leaders in the planning and preparation of their tours. At Absolute Travel & Tours, we are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our clients. We operate a 'Safety Management System' which is annually audited by a suitably qualified external agency. This ensures that all reasonable measures are taken to assure our clients of a high level of safety and professionalism throughout a tour. We commit to:

- Maintaining and developing the highest safety management standards for the tours, trips, courses, events and activities that we provide.
- Planning and setting standards which meet the needs and expectations of our clients which are both measurable and realistic.
- Providing the best financial protection available.
- Maintaining active communication with industry specialists, to promote and develop best practice.
- Undergoing a comprehensive audit by qualified external consultants.

2. Planning

Set the Objectives

Why are you going on the tour? Assessing the goals of your tour is your first step to making a decision on the type of tour you wish to plan. It is important that you choose the right tour to suit your budget, ambition and goals. A clear understanding of your objectives enables other decisions to be made.

Consider Your Group and Destination

Each group is unique - the combination of individuals that make up the group is likely to change each time you travel. As such, even if you visit the same places, you may need to consider different measures to accommodate the individuals. In some cases you may need to consider a different destination to enable you to achieve your objectives. Remember also to consider your team of group leaders and ensure all the necessary skills and staffing ratios are available.

Guidance

Absolute Travel & Tours Ltd. is a partner of the 'Travel Aware' (formerly "Know Before You Go") campaign. Please visit the website at <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/> during the initial planning stage for up-to-date travel advice and information. For up-to-date advice about the country that you are proposing visiting, visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice for details.

ABTA's Guide to Planning and Booking a Holiday

There is some very useful generic advice on the ABTA website. It's worth checking out their information pages.

Visit **ABTA's** <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/planning-and-booking-a-holiday> for lots of help with your planning.

For **OEAP National Guidance** for Group Leaders and Trip Co-ordinators, please visit: <https://oeapng.info/>

3. Getting the Ball Rolling

School, LEA and Governing Body Policies, Procedures and Permissions

Always ensure you understand and comply with the requirements of your school, academy, college or governing body's policy and procedures for foreign travel and touring. Ensure you have the necessary permissions to proceed and be aware that you may be required to state the educational objectives. Where applicable, approval from your UK sports governing body will also need to be sought and obtained prior to travel (sports teams). Please ask us if you require any assistance.

Supervisory Staff & Experience

All supervisory staff must accept responsibility for the wellbeing of students including matters relating to safety and discipline. The skill and knowledge of the staff can help avoid the occurrence of many incidents on tour. It is recommended that at least one accompanying staff member has had previous experience of travelling abroad with youth groups. Absolute Travel & Tours offers a free place ratio for supervisory staff that is often greater than required by most LEA policies. If non-teaching adults are travelling as supervisory staff, it is vital to check the implications with your governing body or LEA.

Pre-Tour Meetings

It is important to meet regularly with staff accompanying the tour to establish policy, share duties and to communicate this policy to the students participating on the tour. A pre-tour evening meeting for leaders, students and parents will provide an opportunity to reinforce guidelines, answer questions and perhaps run through the tour itinerary. Aspects of safety and behaviour should certainly be raised at such meetings and students should be advised of their individual responsibility for collective safety.

Codes of Conduct

It is good practice to agree a code of conduct with pupils and parents before the tour. Acceptance of the code will provide group leaders with the necessary authority to carry out their responsibilities. The code should include behaviour during free time, which is when many accidents happen.

4. Risk Assessments and Inspection Visits

Risk Assessment

This is the process of identifying risks and applying measures to avoid or counteract them. The aim is to guide your group safely through the series of obstacles you will encounter. Remember to formulate a Plan B where appropriate. Full guidelines on what is expected can be found in 'Demystifying Risk Assessments' available from us on request. It sets out, with examples, what is demanded and is compatible with the latest advice from the Department for Education and Scottish Government. There are many ways to record risk assessments and you should follow your own school, college, Academy, Trust, governing body or LEA guidelines and formats.

Inspection Visits

An inspection visit to your selected destination offers the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the accommodation and surrounding area prior to your tour. It is an ideal opportunity to check the detail of your risk assessments. We provide two kinds of inspection visits:-

- Group Inspection Visits Accompanied by our Staff

We organise group inspection visits to certain destinations that we offer. Visits will include the accommodation and facilities we use, possible sample excursions and an opportunity to discuss any aspects of your tour with our staff and local suppliers or agents.

- Individual Inspection Visits

For tour destinations not covered by group inspection visits, we offer group leaders an opportunity to visit their selected destination. We will pay for 2 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation for the Group Leader or as pre-agreed. Please contact us for further details.

During Your Inspection Visit

- Familiarise yourself with the accommodation and the areas you plan to visit and consider what problems may arise with both individuals and the group as a whole in mind.
- Confirm that your control measures will work and be effective.
- Select appropriate group meeting points for different activities where required.
- Identify potential trouble spots and record any 'out of bounds' areas.
- Note useful telephone numbers such as emergency services etc.
- Visit the nearest tourist office.
- Take a colleague – two heads are better than one.

If You are Unable to Undertake an Inspection Visit

Should you have any particular questions on safety issues, please contact us. Alternatively, you may seek advice from your governing body or LEA. There are almost certainly experienced leaders running similar trips from schools in your area.

5. Fire Safety in Accommodation

Varying Standards

It is important to recognise that standards and regulations on fire and safety differ greatly throughout Europe and the rest of the world. As a minimum, all our properties will conform to local regulations. Where we use properties on a regular basis, additional recommendations may be made. The Inspection Standard for general safety and fire safety in our accommodation has been developed in conjunction with RoSPA and the Fire Protection Association (FPA) and with reference to the EC recommendations (88/666/EEC).

Induction Talk

We request an induction talk (and where practical a fire drill) to be given on arrival at your accommodation. This is an important safety measure, so please ensure you ask for an induction or at least advice upon your arrival. If circumstances prevent this induction talk, group leaders may wish to undertake their own evacuation exercise.

Fire and Safety Precautions

Group leaders must ensure that all group members know what to do in the event of a fire. You must ensure that all group members are aware of;

- what the alarm will sound like
- how to raise the alarm
- the accommodation's procedure in the case of fire including all escape routes and where the assembly point/s is/are

Additionally, there are some other precautions that group leaders can take whilst staying in any hotel:

- Check where the fire alarm call points are or how to sound the fire alarm
- Ask the means of calling the fire brigade
- Check the fire escape routes on a daily basis and during the evening to help ensure that they are free from obstruction. Report any problems to the hotel management
- Ensure group members unplug electrical appliances before leaving a room unattended and before going to bed. Appliances that stay heated (eg. travel irons, hair straighteners) are a particular problem
- It is very strongly recommended that a strict no-smoking policy should be adopted in bedrooms
- Instructions for what to do in an emergency should be posted by the hotel in every room (see Appendix for a typical sign that can be used as an example for demonstration)

6. General Safety in Accommodation

Reception Times and Cover

Check the times of reception and night porter duties. You never know when you may need to contact someone for assistance or important information.

Lifts

Some group leaders stipulate that lifts are out of bounds for students. Either way, close monitoring and sensible use of lifts is recommended. We advise against the use of 3-sided lifts. These still exist in some older hotels and can be dangerous.

Balconies and Banisters

We strongly recommend that group leaders stress to their groups prior to, and on arrival, the importance of being extremely careful on accommodation balconies. All individuals are hereby specifically warned that jumping from, leaning over, climbing on or climbing over balconies are extremely dangerous and strictly forbidden. The FCDO and ABTA have launched a campaign in an attempt to reduce the number of serious balcony incidents that happen every year, especially in Spanish resorts. You can check out the FCDO news section for details on the campaign and also see the Travel Advice page for Spain in the section called 'Balcony Falls.' You must act responsibly on balconies at all times. N.B. The taking of unnecessary risks (self-exposure to peril) can be life threatening and have the most serious of consequences and will not be covered by travel insurance.

Check out the following FCDO link: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/europe/spain>

The FCO states *"There have been a number of deaths recently as a result of falls from balconies. Do not take any unnecessary risks, especially when under the influence of drink or drugs. It is unlikely that your travel insurance will cover you for such incidents"*.

See **ABTA's balcony safe page** at <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday/balcony-safety>

Make sure banisters and rails are sturdy and report any defects to the accommodation management immediately. Insist on a room change if you consider there is any danger to the room occupants. Please also bring this to our attention so that we can ensure remedial measures are put in place.

The throwing of anything from accommodation balconies is also extremely dangerous and strictly forbidden. Please report any such behaviour to the hotel management and reps without delay.

Glass Doors

Be aware of clear glass doors or patio doors that are difficult to see. It is easy to walk into these risking injuries. Running in the hotel should be discouraged. Keeping bedrooms tidy will reduce the risk of falling and tripping and potential injury.

Free Time

One of the most common causes of injuries is horseplay in rooms during free-time. Typical incidents are trapped fingers in doors, falling from bunks, slips and trips. Whilst most injuries tend to be minor, they can result in a hospital visit.

Hotel Swimming Pools

Many hotel pools do not provide lifeguards. We advise you not to allow your tourists to swim without competent supervision. LEAs generally have guidelines for this, which should be followed. Pay particular attention to depth markings, safety signs and notices. Do not dive or jump into swimming pools as the water depth may vary, be unclear and be insufficiently deep to prevent injury. Every year, serious injuries occur in hotel swimming pools and student safety must be the priority.

See **ABTA's swim safe page** at <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday/swim-safe> for guidance.

Electrical Sockets in Bathrooms

Some hotels still have electric sockets in the bathrooms. We would strongly recommend that you advise your students not to use these under any circumstances.

7. Transportation

Coach Transportation

All coach companies that we contract are subject to an audit process prior to first use in accordance with our Safety Management System. We also visit many of the UK coach operators we contract, inspecting them for the highest possible safety measures and assessing the experience of the operator and the recruitment and training of their drivers. We will ensure that the coaches that we contract for ski trips will be properly equipped for winter conditions and that equipment will include appropriate anti-freeze systems and snow chains. We also check with our suppliers that their drivers have been trained in how to fit snow chains and any other equipment and have the appropriate experience to drive in winter conditions.

Seatbelts

All UK-originating coaches are fitted with seatbelts. In addition, it is now compulsory for passengers to use seatbelts on coaches both within the UK and also in a growing number of countries within Europe. It is not compulsory for coaches to be fitted with seatbelts in the USA and laws vary from one state to another. We request the supply of coaches that are fitted with seat belts but this cannot always be guaranteed. You are strongly advised to use seat belts where fitted. In some cases, failure to use them can result in on-the-spot fines and heighten the chance of serious injury.

Induction Talk

We have also arranged for a short induction talk to be given by the driver before departure. Please request a coach safety briefing from the driver if this is not automatically provided.

Safety Points to Remember:

- Staff should be seated strategically near all exits. Check that these are operational if possible
- Check the location of the First Aid Kit
- Check the location and operational instructions of Fire Extinguishers
- Please use seatbelts - it is law in many countries
- Keep all luggage clear of aisles and exits
- Do not disturb the driver whilst he/she is driving
- Ensure a rubbish collection facility is provided and used - a bottle or tin can on the floor could roll under the driver's pedals and impede his/her ability to drive
- Standing in the aisle is not permitted whilst the vehicle is moving
- Take care getting off the vehicle, especially on the Continent. The door may open directly onto the road and the traffic will be approaching from an unfamiliar direction
- Always have two people carry out a head count before leaving every stop

Non-UK Coaches

Regulations applying to travel on non-UK registered vehicles vary from country to country. We aim to ensure that coach companies contracted comply with locally enforced regulations. It should be noted that some countries outside the UK do not yet require coaches to be fitted with seatbelts and it may not therefore be possible for us to provide such a facility. Most coach drivers in non-English speaking countries will have at most very limited knowledge of English. If the group is making extensive use of a vehicle abroad, groups should consider the inclusion of one or more linguists in their staff team. Alternatively, we can usually provide an English-speaking tour escort or guide to accompany the group abroad if required.

Ferry Transport

School group organisers are required to appoint Group Leaders to be responsible for the supervision of their party at all times, who need to report to the Duty Manager at the Information Desk on board immediately on embarkation.

Natural exuberance from children is to be expected but the dangers of unruly and foolish behaviour whilst on board should be explained to your party prior to boarding. All individuals are hereby specifically warned that jumping from, leaning over, climbing on or climbing over railings, balustrades and balconies are extremely dangerous and strictly forbidden.

You should ensure that all members of the group listen to and are familiar with the emergency procedure that will be announced shortly before departure. Clarify any nautical terminology (eg. Muster Station) if necessary. We recommend you establish a specific area on board as a base, although assigned seating is not typically possible. Group members must not return to the coach deck until specifically called to do so.

P&O Ferries produce a document called 'Behaviour of Young Persons' detailing specific risk assessment and safety information for ferry crossings which is available at any stage for Group Leaders on request.

Air Travel

Very strict safety criteria apply to all air travel originating within the UK. These are closely monitored by the Civil Aviation Authority. You should pay attention to the terms and conditions particular to the airline, which we shall send to you with your flight confirmation. You should be careful to ensure that baggage is not left unattended at the airport at any time and to ensure that no-one could interfere with your luggage at any time prior to travel. It is essential that restrictions concerning items that may be carried as part of any carry-on allowance are strictly adhered to.

All passengers must observe the safety instructions and demonstrations that are given prior to take off and stow luggage carefully in the lockers provided. During your flight, dehydration is a potential risk, so drink plenty of bottled water if you can. Simple exercises in your seat or in the aisle when permitted to do so may help prevent problems associated with sitting still for longer than usual as well.

The CAA have in the past produced an information sheet called 'Travelling Safely' with further safety information for flight travel. For up-to-date advice, however, you should visit <http://www.caa.co.uk/passengers/> for guidance and support.

Public Transport

The regulations concerning public transport are determined by the appropriate authorities in each country. If it is envisaged that the group will use public transport, we recommend that at least one member of the group has had prior experience of the relevant system, particularly knowledge of capacities, frequency and the best method of obtaining tickets to avoid delay.

8. Sports Programmes, Skiing, Activities, Culture and Education (including Code of Conduct)

The sport, ski and cultural activities you participate in, or the study and educational elements you undertake will be central to accomplishing your goals and objectives for the trip or tour.

It should be noted that participation in any sporting activity carries an increased element of risk. Absolute Travel & Tours implements measures as outlined in our 'Safety Management System' to minimise and control such risk.

The following advices have been formulated in conjunction with the Association for Physical Education (afPE) 'Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport'. See <http://www.afpe.org.uk/physical-education/safe-practice-in-physical-education-school-sport-physical-activity-2016/> for more details.

School, Academy and College Supervisory Staff

Group leaders are responsible for the overall coordination and management of pupils at all times, and for ensuring that they are aware of, and abide by the specified Code of Conduct. You should be confident that the wellbeing of pupils is never compromised, and that you have the appropriate level of control and discipline in place to manage the group safely:

- be aware of pupils' individual learning needs, behaviour patterns, medical issues and abilities
- ensure that pupils have the skill levels, general fitness and physical maturity necessary for the demands of the activity
- that pupils have received an appropriate preparation for the activity in which they have been asked to participate
- keep a register of participant names and emergency contact details on location at the venue
- pupils, other staff and parent supporters are managed appropriately
- should be satisfied of the competence and suitability of other staff, coaches and instructors
- staffing is sufficient to cope with any circumstances that might reasonably be foreseen including emergencies caused by illness or injury
- pupils are directly supervised at all times, including time spent in changing rooms, which may require the attendance of both male and female staffing at the venue as appropriate
- appropriate insurance is in place and documentation including emergency contact details are to hand
- first aid kit and medical supplies appropriate to the size of group and activities being undertaken

Pupil Code of Conduct

Group leaders should ensure that all pupils should;

- respect all requests and decisions made by, and cooperate fully with, staff, officials and instructors
- be responsible for having personal medication to hand at the venue
- be punctual and participate fully in all activities
- be well-informed about emergency and safety procedures
- have the skill levels, general fitness and physical maturity for the demands of the activity
- abide by the laws, rules and regulations of any activities participated in
- not leave group sessions/activities without permission
- behave at all times in a manner which reflects positively on themselves, the group and the school/college/institution that they represent
- avoid behaviour which may offend or inconvenience others
- exercise a duty of care to each other and be considerate to others at all times

Sports Matches and Coaching

Group leaders are responsible for ensuring that all pupils wear clothing and footwear appropriate to the sport and playing surface. Please ensure that you and the players are aware of any rule variations in sports matches against foreign opposition, as there are sometimes differences in other countries, and it is normal to play and abide by the local rules. Matches organised overseas will often be against club, rather than school teams and age groupings may vary as European categories follow the calendar year rather than the school year typical back at home. Please ask us for full clarification in advance in order that you can take this into account in your planning. It should also be noted that foreign referees and officials may interpret the same laws differently to that which you are used to at home. Tournament regulations, where provided, will be available in advance on request.

Activities, Culture, Music and Education

The spirit of adventure and excitement must at all times be complemented by concern for the wellbeing and safety of pupils/students, which is of paramount importance. Students should be adequately prepared for all activities and made aware of their personal responsibilities for safety. This includes paying attention to the safety briefings and adhering to any Code of Conduct presented by the activity providers. They should share in the assessment and management of the risks associated with activity ventures – this is an important part of the learning process. Clothing and equipment should be suitable for the intended activity and any safety equipment provided must be worn at all times.

Skiing

Skiing is an activity that requires a degree of self-control, discipline and fitness. Trips should be preceded by a programme of regular pre-ski exercises and fitness training sessions, which will help to prepare pupils for the rigours of the activities to be undertaken. Clothing must provide adequate protection against snow, wind and cold. Ski helmets should be worn for added head protection (these are now compulsory in many countries). Sun cream should be applied to prevent sunburn and lip balm to prevent chapped lips. Pupils must have any medication if required and pre-warn instructors of any special needs.

A minimum of four hours daily tuition is typically included in standard Absolute Travel & Tours (Absolute Skiwise) packages. If pupils are allowed on the slopes at other times, they must be supervised by a member of school staff with appropriate qualification and knowledge of the area. It is recommended that staff hold an up-to-date ASCL qualification in order to facilitate this. Pupils should not be allowed to ski alone or outside marked ski areas and trails at any time. Teachers remain in loco parentis at all times which means that lunchtime supervision by reps or instructors is not included in our packages and the responsibility of pupils remains the responsibility of the school.

Group leaders should make pupils aware of particular slip, trip and fall hazards including warnings concerning slippery footpaths, walking in ski boots, traffic risks when disembarking from coaches and ski buses (especially when carrying skis or snowboards), falling icicles and freezing temperatures. Particular risks concerning après-ski activities such as ice-skating, tubing and tobogganing should also be fully assessed in advance.

Pupils should be adequately prepared for all activities to be undertaken and for their personal responsibilities for safety. This includes paying attention to the safety briefings and adhering to any Code of Conduct presented by instructors and officials at all times.

The International Ski Federation (FIS) operates the following **safety conduct code** applicable to all skiers or snowboarders, which is binding by law:

- 1) Respect for Others: Behave in such a way that does not endanger or prejudice other skiers or snowboarders.
- 2) Control of Speed: Adapt your speed to your ability, the prevailing conditions of terrain, and the density of traffic.
- 3) Choice of Route: Choose your route in such a way that you do not endanger other skiers or snowboarders ahead.
- 4) Overtaking: You may overtake to the left or right but leave enough space for others to continue their line.
- 5) Entering and Starting: Check up and down the slopes before starting off so not to endanger yourself or others.
- 6) Stopping on the Piste: Avoid stopping on the piste in narrow places or where visibility is restricted.
- 7) Climbing on Foot: When either climbing or descending on foot, keep to the side of the piste.
- 8) Respect for Signs: A skier or snowboarder must respect all signs and markings.
- 9) Assistance: At accidents, every skier or snowboarder is duty bound to assist.
- 10) Identification: Whether involved or a witness, you must identify yourself to others following an accident.

In respect of accidents, the FIS advice is as follows:

Assisting in case of an accident

- Secure the accident area
- Protect with crossed skis or planted snowboard above the injured person. If necessary, post someone up the slope to give warning.

First Aid

- Airway – check it is clear
- Breathing – check for breathing
- Circulation – cover any wound and apply firm pressure
- Provide warmth – give nothing to eat or drink (especially alcohol)

Alert the Rescue Services

- Contact the resort's emergency services – the telephone number is normally on the piste map
- Place of accident (piste name and nearest piste marker)
- Number of people injured
- Type of injury

Establish the facts of the accident

- Names and addresses of people involved as well as witnesses
- Place, time and circumstances of the accident
- Terrain, snow conditions and visibility
- Markings and signs
- Report to the police as soon as possible

See **ABTA's** helpful page at <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday/winter-sports> for guidance.

9. Excursions and Visits

It is essential that you ensure that any visit or excursion selected is appropriate to the age, abilities and size of all members of your group. Please note that almost any visit carries some inherent risk, particularly where children and young persons are involved. Your risk assessments should have considered appropriate control measures. Where any safety equipment is provided, this must be worn at all times. Group Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the children are fully supervised at all times and that any instructions or safety briefings are followed.

10. Staying Safe on Tour

Being in a new or foreign environment on a trip with your school, college or group can be very exciting, but any travel brings with it certain risks which you should collectively and individually attempt to minimise. Group leaders, staff and travellers alike must all take reasonable care for their own safety (and those of them travelling with you) at all times. Don't take risks that you wouldn't do at home just because you are away. ABTA has some very useful information, guidance and video advice, which we hope will be informative and helpful.

Visit ABTA's "**staying safe on holiday**" resource at <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday> for guidance.

Local Laws and Customs

Find out about local customs and dress and behave accordingly. Obey local laws – there may be serious penalties for breaking a law that might seem trivial at home.

Visit ABTA's <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/planning-and-booking-a-holiday/local-laws-and-customs> for more.

Crime

You're as much at risk (if not more) of being a victim of crime when travelling as you are when you're at home. While this means you should be on your guard, staying safe is more a matter of common sense and simple precautions. You and your group should be especially vigilant in busy areas, markets and cities. You should be aware of the possibility of muggings and guard valuable personal items at all times. Don't openly display valuables such as mobile phones, devices or digital cameras, and take care in crowded areas where pickpockets and bag snatchers may be operating. The majority of reported thefts are a result of items being left unattended or thieves using distraction techniques. Only carry with you what you need for the day. Use the safety deposit boxes in your hotel bedroom (if provided) or the safe at the hotel reception if not, for all personal and group valuables. Do not leave cameras, phones, money, devices and gadgets etc. loose in bedrooms or public areas. Stay in small groups at all time – don't get isolated and left alone. Try to avoid remote backstreets and poorly lit areas.

Photography

You will no doubt wish to take photographs and or video footage of your tour. Be aware when doing so, as in certain situations this may offend or be misunderstood, especially near military institutions or religious buildings.

Food and Drink

Stay hydrated - be sure to drink plenty of water. Check whether it is safe to drink local tap water. If not, stick to bottled water. Be aware when buying and consuming food other than from the accommodation, especially from street vendors.

See ABTA's page: <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday/stop-sickness-scams-and-what-do-when-you-have-genuine-claim>

Protection from the Weather

Always take and wear clothing appropriate to the weather – hot, cold or otherwise. Be safe in the sun – avoid excessive sunbathing and wear a high factor sunscreen, hat and sunglasses.

See **ABTA's** <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/staying-safe-on-holiday/safe-and-healthy-holidays-sun> for guidance.

The Beach, Sea and Lake

Being aware of the dangers at the beach and spotting the hazards will ensure that your visit to the beach is a safe and enjoyable one. When visiting the beach you should consider the following: We recommend you establish an area on the beach as a base; check the beach surface for broken bottles or other hazards; whether there are lifeguards available - we recommend you try to choose a beach that offers a lifeguard service and only swim where the patrol operates, within the area of red/yellow flags; whether the tide is in or out; are there rocks, piers or breakwaters that may affect paddling and bathing; is the beach busy; are there watersports taking place; are these in zoned areas; what are the sea conditions like; does the beach shelve steeply? Children should always go with a staff member, not by themselves. Don't swim alone. Make sure that you know where everyone in your group is. Constant supervision is the only real means of ensuring pupils' safety. We strongly recommend that you do not visit the beach after dark.

11. Travel Insurance and Emergency Medical Assistance

Travel Insurance

The safety and wellbeing of our customers is our primary objective. That's why travel insurance has been included in your package. Full details of the policy are always readily available to view, download and access from our website at <http://www.absolutetravel.co.uk/info-zone/travel-aware>

You should check that it meets with your requirements and is fully fit for purpose. This is included in your package, but you can opt out if you wish and your package will be discounted accordingly.

Many schools have insurance in place with the RPA (or other commercial insurers), but it would be best to check that any such policy covers you for all of the elements of any trip to be undertaken. Either way, it is a condition of booking that you have comparable and adequate cover in place whether purchased through us or organised independently.

12. Health Advice for Travellers

It can be especially disconcerting to suffer illness abroad as medical treatment generally has to be paid for. As well as taking appropriate travel insurance cover, there are some further precautions that you should consider:

Visit your Doctor

We recommend you visit your doctor as soon as possible before you travel. Check what vaccinations you need; check to see if you need extra health precautions; check if your medication is legal in the country you are visiting - pack it in your hand luggage; if you are taking prescribed medication, take a copy of the prescription with you, and find out if you will need to take a doctor's letter with you.

GHIC and EHIC

You should obtain a GHIC (Global Health Card) or only if you have rights under the Withdrawal Agreement, an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) well before leaving the UK. For most people, the GHIC replaces the existing EHIC for new applications although you can typically use an EHIC if you have one prior to expiry date. Both are free and you should beware of unofficial websites that may charge you a fee when you apply.

Neither the GHIC nor EHIC are a substitute for travel insurance as you will not be covered for medical repatriation, on-going medical treatment or treatment of a non-urgent nature. Remember - each person in your group requires a card. You can presently use a GHIC while visiting EU countries, although further countries may yet be added to the list.

Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

Parental Permission for Medical Treatment

You should obtain the written permission of parents/guardians prior to travel for group leaders to carry out the following:

- Administer prescription medication required by students if applicable
- Administer pain relief medication as appropriate (eg. Paracetamol)
- Authorise medical treatment in the event that this is deemed necessary by the medical authorities present.

Group Members' Medication

Record any particular medical details or medication requirements for members of the group. Let other staff know where these details are held. It is essential to bring sufficient supplies of medication to last for the duration of the tour (allowing also for any unforeseen delays) - additional supplies may not be readily available locally.

First Aid Kits

Many LEAs and school/sports governing bodies stipulate that a first aid kit be carried on all tours. This policy may specify the contents of such a kit. Keep in mind that you are providing for a group and not just a few people and take into account the activities which pupils will be participating in. Headache and stomach-ache remedies such as Paracetamol are worthwhile but must not form part of the first aid kit and should be administered and controlled by one member of staff only.

First Aid Qualification

We recommend that at least one member of staff should have completed a first aid course. Your LEA or governing body may insist on this or other similar qualifications. If you are leading a very large group, you may wish to consider taking a qualified first aider specially to handle medical matters.

13. Emergency Contacts

In the event of a serious incident whilst on tour, your first point of contact should be the local emergency services. However, it is essential to communicate speedily with other contact points:

Designated School Contact

Designate a school contact in the UK who will be available whilst you are on tour, especially on travelling days when you are most likely to need to make contact (eg. due to a travel delay). A complete set of tour documents should be left with them. This will facilitate speedy assistance in the event of an emergency. This person must be able to contact all parents, perhaps via a pyramid telephone communication system.

Absolute Travel & Tours 24-hour Emergency Contact

We operate a 24-hour duty officer service for group leaders. Our staff members are trained to operate to established emergency procedures in case of any major incident. These procedures set out channels of communications, duties and responsibilities, enabling quick and efficient assistance to be provided.

Tel: +44 (0)1279 647 566 Outside office hours this is a message with alternative emergency telephone numbers.

Tel: +44 (0)7795 466 016 Duty Officer emergency line for Group Leaders only

N.B. Under no circumstances should the emergency telephone numbers be passed on to parents or pupils as this may result in our management team being diverted from helping you.

14. Other Useful Information, Guidance and Checklists

LEA, School or Sports Governing Bodies

Your LEA or school, college and governing bodies will have guidelines relating to travel, trips and tours. It is essential that you follow their recommendations at every step along the way.

Government Publications

The Department for Education issues guidance and Health and Safety advice for schools. Visit the following link for Departmental advice on health and safety covering activities that take place on or off school premises, including school trips: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>

For further resources, please visit: www.education.gov.uk

For useful advice, please visit the frequently asked questions section on the Health and Safety Executive's website as follows: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/faqs.htm#school-trips>

The Scottish Government has also produced a good practice guide as follows:

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/health-and-safety-on-school-excursions-a-good-practice-guide/>

15. Passports, Visas and Waivers

Passenger Information

You will be required to send us various details and documentation at the time of booking and/or in advance of the trip and your prompt attention to these is vital to ensuring the smooth running of your trip. **A full passenger list** will be required, inclusive of dates of birth and other information depending on your tour. This is required at the point of booking for flight tours. It is essential that the names you supply on your passenger list match the names that appear on the passports. Discrepancies may result in additional charges, and even refusal to travel.

Passports & Visas

For overseas trips you will need to ensure that every member of your group has valid documentation to travel. You should ensure that any applications for required documentation are made in good time so that they are received well before you depart. **A full valid passport will be required**, and depending on the destination, it is sometimes necessary to have an extended period of validity beyond the end of the trip. For some European trips a Collective Passport may be used for qualifying groups. However, they are not accepted by several airlines and a number of countries, so you should double-check in advance if you are considering this option. Some countries require an entry visa for the duration of your stay.

It is important to note that **a visa may be required by a non-UK passport holder** that is not required by a UK passport holder. We recommend you check with the relevant embassy or consulate.

Travelling to the USA - Visa and entry requirements

If you are travelling to the USA, you may require visas. For British citizens an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) is required and needs completing online at a present cost of \$14 per person. All other nationalities must check with the necessary authorities for appropriate passport and visa entry requirements.

Waivers

We will advise groups in advance where the signature of a waiver by a Group Leader or parent may be required in resort or prior to travel. This is sometimes required in ski resorts in the USA for example. Notwithstanding the above, Group Leaders have the reassurance that the primary contract is with Absolute Travel and Tours Limited and is signed under English law. This means that the protection offered under the Package Travel Regulations takes precedence over local disclaimers that may be demanded in resort.

16. FCDO Travel Advice

FCDO Travel Advice – Travel Aware

Preparing for safe and healthy travel abroad

The Travel Aware campaign is a joint venture between the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and the travel industry to help make sure British travellers are better prepared when they go overseas. The purpose of travel advice is to provide objective information and advice to help you make better-informed decisions about foreign travel. No foreign travel can be guaranteed as safe and you take personal responsibility for any trip you make abroad. The FCDO keeps travel advice under constant review, so check the website regularly for updates.

Further details on travelling abroad can be obtained by visiting www.gov.uk/travelaware which provides important information on all the destinations we feature, as well as travel tips, checklists and safety videos. You should visit this in advance and sign up for e-mail alerts for your chosen destination.

The FCO campaign aims to promote the following key messages:

- Get adequate travel insurance
- Check FCO's country and travel advice
- Research your destination – know the local laws and customs
- Visit your GP before travelling
- Check your passport is in good condition and valid and that you have any visas as may be required
- Make copies of important travel documents
- Tell someone where you are going and leave emergency contact details with them
- Take enough money and access to emergency funds

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides invaluable information for those travelling abroad and we would encourage everyone to read their country specific and travel advice.

Some useful links

Direct links to some of the useful sections are detailed below:

Travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

Travel checklist: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-checklist>

Activity trips: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safer-adventure-travel-and-volunteering-overseas>

E-mail sign up: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/email-signup>

Urgent help: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/embassies>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fcdotravel>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK>

Covid-19: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

ABTA advice: <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice>



17. Travel Checklists

Don't forget to visit ABTA's website, which has a huge amount of useful information about the planning and booking of a holiday. Visit: <https://www.abta.com/tips-and-advice/planning-and-booking-a-holiday>

Travel Checklist – Before You Go

- Don't travel without insurance - make sure it covers you for any activities you are likely to undertake
- Travelling within the EU? Then get a free Health Insurance Card (GHIC) for free or reduced emergency care - you still need full travel insurance though!
- Check with your doctor as soon as possible to find out if you need any vaccinations or other precautions before you travel
- Make sure you've got correct visas (if applicable) for the country you are visiting and that your passport is valid
- All first-time adult passport applicants must now attend an interview to verify their identity. It now takes up to six weeks to get a first passport. Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/renew-adult-passport> for more information.
- There are different rules for passports for children. Follow this link <https://www.gov.uk/get-a-child-passport> for details.
- For certain countries your passport must be valid for 6 months after the date you travel - check before you go
- Take photocopies of your passport and other important documents and keep these separate from the originals when you travel and/or store them online using a secure data storage site
- Fill in the emergency contact details in your passport. This will make it much easier for the authorities to contact someone in an emergency if necessary
- Find out where the nearest embassy is - check their website to find out what services they offer and their opening times
- Take enough money for your trip and some back-up funds. Consider a pre-paid currency card or travellers cheques - make a note of the cheque numbers before you go. Advise your bank and/or credit card companies if you intend using your cards while abroad
- Consider taking your mobile phone - check with your service provider to make sure your phone works abroad and be aware that the cost of using it abroad can be substantially higher than at home. Consider storing useful numbers such as the police and the local embassy or consulate
- Invest in a good travel guide to help you plan your trip (and phrase book for whilst you are away)
- Travelling to the USA? British citizens travelling to the USA will require an ESTA (Electronic System for travel Authorisation). The form needs completing online ([web link](#)) at a present cost of \$14 per person. All other nationalities must check with the necessary authorities for passport/visa requirements.

Travel Checklist – When You Are Away

- Think about what you are doing at all times - don't take risks that you wouldn't at home!
- Remain alert and guard valuable personal items at all times. The majority of reported thefts are a result of items being left unattended or thieves using distraction techniques. Don't openly display valuables such as mobile phones or cameras
- Find out about local customs and dress and behave accordingly. Obey local laws - there may be serious penalties for breaking a law that might seem trivial at home
- Be careful when taking photographs, videos or using binoculars. Such activities may be misunderstood, especially near military installations or religious buildings
- Drink plenty of water. Check whether it's safe to drink local tap water - if not, stick to bottled water

18. The School Travel Forum (STF) & the LOTC

We are **longstanding members of ABTA** (the leading travel association), one of the most trusted and recognisable brands in the country. We are also Assured members of the **School Travel Forum (STF)** and have been awarded with the prestigious **Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC) Quality Badge**.

Why is this important? It means that in booking with us, you can be secure in the knowledge that we:

- understand and facilitate the needs of educational travel
- have effective safety management systems in place, specifically focussed on group travel with young persons
- offer fair terms and conditions to our customers and adhere to the ABTA Code of Conduct
- ensure that you have best financial security and protection for the payments you make to us

To ensure our health and safety standards are maintained our systems and procedures are fully audited annually by independent experts. STF membership is the benchmark for good school tour providers. Consequently, it is an Awarding Body for the prestigious **Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (LOTC)**.

The Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) endorses the Quality Badge and requests Local Authorities to recommend the use of Badged Providers and require the minimum of additional paperwork where Quality Badge accreditation is in place. This means that you can book your trip with confidence, meet your due diligence and reduce the amount of External Provider paperwork necessary.

ABTA

Check our ABTA membership at:

<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>



LOTC Quality Badge

Check our LOTC Quality badge holder records at:

<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>



School Travel Forum Assured

Check out our School Travel Forum Assured membership status at:

<http://www.schooltravelforum.com/search>



19. Covid-19

Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is committed to the best possible safety standards for our groups. At the time of publication Covid-19 continues to have a huge impact on all school and college travel. We are here to support you at every step of the way, whether you have booked a trip already, are deferring, rescheduling or looking to firm up a new trip now.

Our Safety Management System (SMS) has been updated to include new Covid-19 checklists as part of the audit process we undertake when working with our suppliers. Furthermore, the suppliers that we work with will individually supply their own unique response relating to procedures and policies that have been in place further to Covid-19 as well as details of local regulations and restrictions which may be in force, in their location. For up-to-date advice, please always visit:

www.absolutetravel.co.uk/covid-19

<http://www.schooltravelforum.com/latest-news/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.abta.com/news/coronavirus-outbreak>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

20. Striving for Excellence

Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is committed to the continued improvement of safety standards. The review and assessment of our own systems is ongoing as we aim for the highest level of safety, professionalism and client satisfaction.

Customer Communication

Please immediately report anything that causes concern to the appropriate party (eg. rep, hotelier, coach driver or other supplier), and record any incidents on an Incident/Accident Report Form. If the situation cannot be satisfactorily resolved, please contact us and we shall endeavour to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

We shall also send you a Customer Feedback Questionnaire in advance of your trip, which we shall ask you to complete and send back to us on your return. These steps help us to address matters with the supplier concerned and be proactive in preventing similar problems happening in the future. We believe that by listening to our clients we can continue to improve our products and services.

