

before you go: a safety guide



Contents

1. Our Commitment to You
2. Planning
3. Getting the Ball Rolling
4. Risk Assessments and Inspection Visits
5. Fire Safety in Accommodation
6. General Safety in Accommodation
7. Transportation
8. Sports Programmes, Skiing, Activities, Culture and Education
9. Excursions and Visits
10. General Safety on Tour
11. Travel Insurance and Emergency Medical Assistance
12. Health Advice for Travellers
13. Emergency Contacts
14. Other Useful Information, Guidance and Checklists
15. The School Travel Forum (STF)
16. Covid-19
17. Striving for Excellence

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 you are proposing visiting, visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice for details.

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".

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.

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

We visit all the major UK coach operators we contract on a regular basis, inspecting 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 endeavour 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

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 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

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. General Safety on Tour

Think about what you are doing at all times – don't take risks that you wouldn't at home!

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.

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.

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.

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

It is vital that all members of your group have comprehensive travel insurance in place and it is a condition of booking that you have adequate cover for the duration of your trip. Most standard policies do not provide either Group Leader or participant with the level of cover required. Some of the elements required may not be covered by certain policies, including the provision for medical cover for accidents and injuries sustained whilst taking part in team sports on tour or for winter sports participation. Our policy also includes additional elements including Group Leader liability, group money and team kit which would not otherwise be covered.

Travel insurance is not included in your tour package unless specifically shown as an inclusion on your proposal. If you choose to make alternative travel insurance arrangements, you should ensure that the policy meets the requirements of every member of your group to adequately cover for all elements of the tour. Either way, you are strongly advised to forward a copy of the Key Facts and Schedule of Cover to all participants or their parents for approval in advance.

Absolute Travel & Tours Ltd. is an appointed representative of Fogg Travel Insurance Services Limited for the sale of travel insurance. Fogg Travel Services Insurance Ltd. is fully authorised by the Financial Services Authority. We are able to offer you our travel insurance to purchase as a group, which has been designed with our tour groups in mind. This travel insurance policy will suit the Demands and Needs of an individual or group (where applicable) who have no pre-existing medical conditions, are travelling to countries included within the policy terms and who wish to insure themselves against the financial impact of specified unforeseen circumstances/events relating to or occurring during their trip. Full details of these circumstances/events, levels of cover and terms and conditions can be found in the policy information/booklet. A copy of the policy is available on request.

24-hour Emergency Medical Assistance

In the event of serious illness or injury, or you need to curtail your trip, you may need the help of the emergency medical service provided by **ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**. This service is included in your insurance cover but only applicable to insurance purchased through us. If you arrange alternative insurance, there should be an equivalent service. Please check with your provider.

If you require 24-hour emergency medical assistance abroad or need to curtail your trip, and have purchased insurance with us, you will need to contact **ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**.

Tel: **+44 (0)1444 476 000** (for all trips in Europe)....or use this one.... **00 41 44 657 1667** as an alternative if required

Tel: **+ 1 844 780 0494** (for all trips in the USA and Canada)

You should advise ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE that you are insured under the Absolute Travel & Tours Ltd. scheme through ETI (international Travel Protection) and have the following information ready to advise:

- Name of the school/group
- Name and contact telephone number of group leader
- Name and age of patient
- Location of hospital and doctor's telephone number
- The medical problem
- Your tour Booking reference

Following your call, ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE will undertake the following, as applicable:

- Contact the treating doctor/hospital for details of the illness/injury
- Guarantee hospital/medical costs should these be approved
- Establish the necessity for repatriation. This will be on the recommendation of the doctor, not the patient or their family
- Arrange repatriation as specified by the doctor, including ambulances, flights, nurses etc. as necessary
- Where repatriation is organised, the group leader will be contacted to pass on the relevant details to the rest of the group
- In the event of a death, details will be required of location of the deceased, cause of death, next of kin, and contact number for relatives
- A relative will be permitted to travel out to an ill or injured person if this is deemed to be medically necessary. Agreement must be obtained from the ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE Emergency Medical Assistance team prior to travel
- In the event of a death of, or serious illness/injury to a close relative at home, ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE will facilitate you to curtail your trip and travel home

N.B. Remember you must call ERV EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE as soon as practicable and prior to any treatment or financial commitment for their pre-authorisation. Any potential claim will be in jeopardy should you not follow the procedure above. Please remember to take a copy of your passport (and Travel Insurance Medicard if you have one) with you to facilitate the identification process along with a copy of your EHIC (if valid in your destination country at the time of travel).

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.

*European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

You should obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC is not a substitute for medical and travel insurance but entitles the holder rights to healthcare that may become necessary during a temporary visit to EEA (European Economic Area) countries or Switzerland. 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. Apply online at www.ehic.org or forms are available from UK Post Offices. If you already have an EHIC please check that it will still be in date for the duration of your travel, as the card has to be renewed every 5 years. *At the time of publication of this Guide it is unclear whether the EHIC will still be valid in 2021 as Brexit negotiations and the terms of the United Kingdom's departure from the EU have not yet been finalised.

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/>

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



travel
aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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.

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/fcotravel>

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

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

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

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 European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) 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

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

A major initiative to help teachers and schools

Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is an Assured Member of the School Travel Forum (STF) and 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 focused on travelling with young students
- Offer fair terms and conditions and the best financial security

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.

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

<https://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>

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

16. 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.

We are presently working with the School Travel Forum (STF) to develop a comprehensive post-Covid-19 Recovery document entitled "In Safe Hands" involving key stakeholders in the Government, CLOTC and within schools, to plot the protocols and procedures we all hope to follow in order to instil confidence for pupils, teachers and parents for when the time is right for school travel to safely recommence.

The STF has provided new guidance for accommodation providers. 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 suppliers. Furthermore, the accommodations 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.

<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>

16. 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.

