

Booking Your Tour

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We are delighted that you are looking to book your forthcoming tour with us. The key elements and specific inclusions for your trip will be listed on your personalised **Tour Proposal** so please don't hesitate to ask if you would like any amendments or additions before you book. In the meantime, please read through the following pages very carefully as they contain important generic information regarding the booking and planning of your tour. Please call us without delay with any questions.

Accommodation

We offer a varied selection of accommodation options including hotels, training centres, hostels and holiday villages, all of which have been visited by our staff or our representatives and checked for their suitability for our groups. As local accommodation classifications vary in different countries, please read the descriptions carefully or ask us for further details before deciding whether a particular option is right for you and your group. Various meal plans are available, depending on the accommodation. These include bed and breakfast (the only meal included will be breakfast), half Board (breakfast and evening meal) or full board (breakfast, evening meal and a packed lunch). Self-catering or room-only options will not have any meals included unless otherwise stated. Meals will be provided at your accommodation unless otherwise advised (but sometimes might be at a local restaurant for example).

Damage Deposits

Some accommodation providers require a damage deposit to be paid directly on arrival, refundable after the stay subject to an inspection of your rooms.

Tourist tax & City tax

Some accommodation providers are required to charge a city tax or tourist tax which may have to be paid directly on arrival. Whenever possible we include these costs within your package (but please check on your Inclusions for details or check with us first if you are unsure).

Travel

Coach

Your travel arrangements are an important part of your tour, and it is our belief that you should travel in comfort and safety. An executive coach is typically provided for door to door travel throughout the tour. Your coach will usually be equipped with seatbelts, reclining seats, DVD, stereo, air circulation system, microphone, toilet and drinks machine. Various coach sizes and capacities are available. Tour drivers are also an important part of the tour, so you should find your drivers to be friendly, experienced and reliable. Where coach travel is provided by suppliers in overseas countries, we contract reputable local companies to handle all the necessary journeys as stipulated, but while they comply with local regulations, please bear in mind that these may be different to those here in the UK.

Ferry

We use the ferry services from Dover to Calais for most of our tour groups. With refurbished and improved vessels, you can eat and drink on board in comfort as you sail across to mainland Europe. We also use the fast and popular Eurotunnel service from Folkestone to Calais, although a supplement is sometimes required for groups wishing to use this service. Subject to availability, other crossings may also be offered including Harwich–Hoek of Holland, Hull–Rotterdam, Newcastle–Amsterdam and the Irish Sea routes.

Flights

For flight-inclusive packages, we will always take into consideration your preferred departure airport and travel times, however we cannot always guarantee these due to route schedules and flight availability. Many airlines now charge extra for luggage and equipment to be checked-in to the hold, in addition to other services. These are not included in your package unless specifically shown as an inclusion on your Proposal, and would need to be booked separately at a supplement. You will be advised of the weight allowances of your airline, and any surcharges that may be appropriate on confirmation of your flight details. Requests for passenger name amendments and changes after a booking has been confirmed are typically subject to fees as imposed by the airlines, and such conditions are outside of our control.

Performances

Depending on the nature of your performing group, we can arrange performances a wide variety of venues as appropriate, including churches, cathedrals, market squares, band stands, concert halls and retirement homes. Rehearsal time, workshops and instruction can also be added to your program on request.

Activities & Excursions

We will work with you to build a programme of activities during your tour. These may include museums and places of educational and cultural interest, excursions to theme parks, swimming pools etc. These can form part of your package and be pre-reserved on your behalf and paid for in advance. Further local activities such as ten pin bowling, karaoke and discos are available in some resorts. Tickets to music or other performances can often be purchased in advance too, subject to schedule.

Representation

We have representatives available at all our featured destinations. Depending on the nature of your tour and your own requirements, this could mean; a local representative to meet with you on arrival to assist with check in; English-speaking assistance at your sports matches; a team of representatives at our own festivals and events. A full time tour representative dedicated to your group is not included in your tour package unless specifically stated but may be added at a supplement on request. You will always be given a contact number for English speaking assistance during your tour as well as the back-up of our 24-hour emergency support here in the UK.

Travel Insurance

It is vital that you ensure that you have adequate travel insurance cover for all the members of your group. We are able to offer you our travel insurance to purchase as a group, which has been designed with our tour groups in mind. It is not compulsory that you take our cover, but **it is a condition of booking that every member of the group travels with appropriate travel insurance cover**. We are an appointed representative of Fogg Travel Insurance Services Limited for the sale of travel insurance. Fogg Travel Insurance Services Limited is fully authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority. Full details of the levels of cover and terms and conditions can be found in the policy documents which can be sent to you via email or are available to download from our websites.

Musical instruments are covered under the policy up to the single article limit of £200. The limit can be increased for a supplement on request. Please also note that **gadgets such as iphones and ipads** are not covered under the standard terms of the policy that we offer or that may be included in your tour package should this have been provided. Should you wish to upgrade your policy to include cover for gadgets or indeed to **reduce the normal excess** from the policy wording down to zero so that no excess is paid on making a valid claim (see policy wording, as conditions will apply) then you may do so on request by paying the additional premiums as quoted to you.

You should **strongly consider paying your travel insurance premium at the booking stage in addition to your initial deposits**, as while you can add the insurance premium at any subsequent point, you will not be insured until this premium is actually paid.

Health & Safety and Travel Advice

The safety and wellbeing of our clients is an absolute priority, and procedures are in place to make sure that we take every precaution to ensure best practice for the preparation, organisation and operation of your trip.

Health & Safety

Tour members should seek medical advice if they are in any doubt about their fitness to travel and participate in the activities on the trip. For those travelling to overseas destinations, it is the responsibility of participants to contact their doctor in advance should they deem relevant. Travellers from the UK touring to Europe should ensure they have an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). Eligible travellers from the UK are entitled to receive free or reduced-cost medical care in many European countries on production of a valid EHIC card. Applications are available online at www.ehic.org.uk.

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. 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>
Teacher pack: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-aware-teachers-pack>
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>

Safety Management & Risk Assessment

Our Safety Management System, developed under the guidance of external consultants ensures that all reasonable measures are taken to assure our clients of a high level of safety and professionalism throughout a tour. These include; coach company checks including licence, insurance and safety documentation; accommodation inspections to assess fire, safety, hygiene and suitability; training, experience and professionalism of our staff and representatives; accident and emergency procedures and 24 hour assistance. We can supply documents in order to help you with the completion of your own risk assessment as may be required by your own governing body or LEA. We also recommend that you make an inspection visit in advance of your tour in order to satisfy these requirements and benefit from local orientation.

Staying Safe & Behaviour

Adults and children alike must take reasonable care for their own safety at all times. Being in a foreign environment on a trip can be very exciting, but any tour brings with it certain risks which you should attempt to minimise. Furthermore, in confirming the tour booking you are also agreeing to our terms and conditions with reference to the conduct of your group, including but not limited to damages and behaviour.

Please read our Before You Go – A Safety Guide, which is available to download from our website and is sent to all Group Leaders at booking and prior to setting off on a trip.

Quality Assured

We are assured members of the **School Travel Forum (STF)** and have been awarded the prestigious **Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC) Quality Badge**. As such 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 travelling with young persons;
- offer fair terms and conditions and the best financial security.

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>

Passports & Documentation

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.

Financial Protection (Bonding)

Why Your Tour Money Is Safe

Tour companies are bound by local and European legislation to ensure that your monies paid to us in respect of your tour are fully protected. While our reputation and experience mean that your monies are in very safe hands, you should also carefully read the following sections which confirm that as a company, we have arranged substantial bonds to ensure the financial security of our clients. Please do not travel with a company that is not fully bonded.

Air Holidays & Flights

All the flights and flight-inclusive holidays organised by us are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate. ATOL protection does not apply to all holiday and travel services we offer. Please ask us to confirm what protection may apply to your booking.

Coach & Land Package Tours

We are fully bonded for the package holidays organised by us which do not contain a flight element. Our membership of the ABTA means that if you are travelling by sea or land or even if you have booked your own flights, your holiday package booked with us will have full financial protection. Note: the flight element is not covered in the event of the failure of the airline with which you have booked your own flights directly. For further details visit www.abta.com.

Booking & Payments

- Carefully read your **Proposal** to check that it meets with your expectations and requirements.
- You should carefully read our **Booking Conditions** before committing to your booking and entering into a contract with us, bearing in mind that the information contained within this document and important information supplied by us and available on our website also forms part of your terms and conditions of booking.
- Complete the **Booking Form** as fully and accurately as possible, and return to us with your initial deposit payment.
- Please note that all **deposit payments are strictly non-refundable**.
- Your deposit may be made by cheque, bank payment or by debit or credit card. If you wish to pay by **business credit card** we will have to impose a charge of 2% to cover the additional fees levied by the card companies.
- If you are booking a flight-inclusive package, we shall also require a **full passenger list** at this stage.
- We shall send you a **Booking Confirmation** once your booking is in place.
- Your **payment schedule** will be shown on your Proposal and also on your Booking Confirmation, detailing the final balance payment date and any interim deposit payment dates if applicable.
- **Provisional Tour Details** will normally be sent to you at the time final payment is received.
- Any tickets, references and your final itinerary will normally be sent out to you with your **Final Tour Information**, typically 7-10 days in advance of your departure on tour, or as soon as all arrangements have been finalised on your behalf and all payments have been received by you.

Getting In Touch

We are always here to help. Please don't hesitate to get in touch at any stage to discuss your tour, goals and expectations.

You can reach us on: **01279 647 566** or by e-mail at tours@absolutetravel.co.uk

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