



National
Guidance

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Provider-led Study and Sports Tours

Rationale

Tour operators take groups of young people almost anywhere in the world for a wide range of educational purposes. They offer co-ordinated programmes combining travel, accommodation and learning activities removing much of the organisational work from Visit Leaders. Almost any type of content is possible – including cultural visits, community work, historical and language studies, sports tournaments and ski courses. While brochures and websites will detail the most popular tours, some tour operators will tailor-make an itinerary to meet specific requirements and desired learning outcomes.

An advantage of using a tour operator is that they are responsible for delivering the contracted package or making suitable alternative arrangements in the event of incidents such as travel disruption.

Range of Provision

In choosing a provider that will best meet your desired learning outcomes, you should consider the full range of services required, including accommodation, transport, tutors/guides who can support learning, and the component parts of the package such as concerts, fixtures and activities.

- **General Tour Operators & Travel Agencies**
Tour operators and travel agencies that normally make arrangements for the public may also have the facility to combine some or all of these services for school groups and other youth parties.
- **Specialist School Tour Operators**
These specifically deal with the needs of the educational sector, and the range of provision is wide and varied. Individual companies may concentrate on a particular type of tour, for example: a specific activity (such as snowsport or hockey); a specific topic (such as music or languages); specific destinations (such as battlefields or a particular country); expeditions to remote parts of the world.
- **Coach Operators**
Many coach operators will offer to organise tours for schools, particularly if they already provide transport arrangements for other purposes. Visit Leaders should ensure that the operator has the experience and expertise for the tour that they require.

- **Self-Arranged Packages**

It is possible for a Visit Leader to create a Tour by booking all of the elements individually and combining them into a self-arranged package. However, a tour operator is legally responsible for the package they put together - the responsibility for a self-arranged package lies with the establishment or its employer. For further information, please see document 3.2h "Self Organised Visits and the Package Travel Regulations".

Quality Standards

The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge enables Providers, including tour operators, to have their safety and quality standards verified by independent inspection. The badge provides a quick and easy means for Visit Leaders to ascertain that a provider meets national standards. Where the provider holds a LOtC Quality Badge, no further assurances are normally necessary.

Outside the LOtC Quality Badge scheme, the travel industry is covered by legal requirements offering consumer protection, including the Package Travel Regulations (1992). These apply to anyone who offers for sale (other than occasionally) package holidays. An important safeguard in these regulations is the requirement for financial security, which must be provided by a bond, insurance or trust fund. Bonds are often established through national trade associations, such as the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA). If the package includes air travel, there is an additional requirement that the organiser must hold an Air Tour Operator's Licence (ATOL). Self-arranged tours do not generally benefit from this kind of consumer protection.

Specific Issues

Visit Leaders should ensure that both they and the provider have a clear understanding of who is responsible for particular aspects of the tour. For example, a coach driver is responsible for the vehicle and safe driving, whilst the Visit Leader is responsible for supervision and the safe conduct of the group.

Where a tour includes any adventurous activity (e.g. snowsport, rafting), then specific guidance about such activities should be followed.

There should be absolute clarity about who is responsible for each specific activity during a tour. For example:

- The tour operator delivers the activity as part of its contract, and the tour operator is thus responsible for it.
- The activity is delivered by a provider sub-contracted by the tour operator as part of its contract. The tour operator remains responsible for it.
- The Visit Leader agrees for an activity to be delivered by a separate provider (perhaps recommended by the tour operator), and the tour operator is merely responsible for incidental arrangements such as transport. In this case the Visit Leader is responsible for selecting a suitable provider and agreeing their specific responsibilities.
- The Visit Leadership Team delivers the activity, and is responsible for it.

Provider Support for Learning

By using the support offered by the provider, Visit Leaders can save both time and energy. It can often be free, expert and regularly updated. Visit Leaders should identify the resources that best complement the purpose of the visit.

Consideration should include:

- **Expert-led courses**
These are commonly available where expert skill or knowledge is advantageous. Examples include: snowsport schools, sports academies, language classes, drama workshops and music master classes.
- **Expert guides**
Tours can be led or supplemented by experts in the location or the subject being studied. The degree of expertise can vary - from local tourist guides, to those with specialist subject and UK curriculum knowledge.
- **Workbooks and/or schemes of work**
These can be web-based or hard copies that can be used or adapted. They may have been developed to link subjects to specific destinations and have the benefit of local content.
- **Location-specific resources**
Many locations, particularly those used to receiving large numbers of educational groups, have produced their own resources or may employ an on-site education officer.
- **Study/work facilities**
These can range from a simple room and tables for study, a library or more complicated provision such as workshops, A/V resources, IT facilities or gymnasias.
- **Tour content**
The final choice of content should reflect an understanding of the subject and the curriculum, and how they link into the destination. While the expertise and experience of the provider is an important aspect of the support provided, it will be the effectiveness of the partnership between the Visit Leader and the provider that ensures whether or not the desired learning outcomes are actually achieved.

