



National
Guidance

<http://oeapng.info>

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 packages building travel arrangements, accommodation and learning content into a co-ordinated programme that removes much of the organisational work from party leaders. Almost any type of content is possible – including cultural visits, community work, historical and language studies, sports tournaments and ski courses.

Tours are a particularly strong way to consolidate learning, as the young person's experiences can be directly related to the real world. It is a way to ensure that geographical studies come to life (with the actual physical feature close at hand) and a foreign language may be easier to assimilate and use in its native environment. Many tours will also lend themselves to cross-curricular study. In addition to specific, targeted outcomes, the richness and diversity of experiences is such that participants will inevitably benefit from other learning opportunities at the same time.

While brochures and web sites will detail tour operators' most popular tours, some operators will tailor-make a specific itinerary to meet the Visit Leader's specific requirements in terms of aims, objectives and learning outcomes. However, Visit Leaders should not fall prey to a hard sell and must remember to seek robust assurances that the provider does provide to the standard that they claim. The LOTC Quality Badge scheme makes this task much easier, and there is no need to seek further assurance where the provider holds the Badge.

Range of provision

It is essential to find a provider that will best meet the learning objectives. Ensure that there is consideration of the full range of services required, including accommodation, transport, learning support and the component parts making up the whole package, such as concerts, fixtures and specified activity sessions.

- **General Tour Operators & Travel Agencies**
Tour operators and travel agencies which normally make arrangements for the public through third parties 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 are organisations that specifically deal with the needs of the

educational sector, and the range of provision is wide and varied. Individual companies may concentrate on a specific topic, such as battlefield tours or hockey tournaments; on specific destinations such as the Isle of Wight or Eastern Europe; or a comprehensive programme of tours covering a range of options.

- **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 the tour operator has the experience and expertise for the tour they require.
- **Self-Arranged Packages**
It is possible for a Visit Leader to create a tour by booking all 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 their employer. For further guidance, please see the document *Self Organised Visits and The Package Travel Regulations* in section three of this guidance.

Quality Standards

The LOTC Quality Badge encourages providers to have their safety and quality standards verified by independent, inspection regimes. The badge provides a quick and easy means for party leaders to ascertain that a provider has been inspected and accredited to a level that meets all the usual assurance requirements of a well-informed and competent party leader. Where the provider holds a LOTC Quality Badge, no further assurances are necessary.

Outside the LOTC Quality Badge scheme, the travel industry is covered by a number of 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 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 full understanding of who is responsible for particular aspects of the tour. In particular, a coach driver is responsible for the vehicle and safe driving, whilst the Visit Leader is responsible for supervision and group safety.

Where a Tour includes any adventurous activity (e.g. skiing, rafting), then specific guidance about such activities should be followed. Clarification should also be sought about whether these are an integral part of the tour package, so under the control of the tour operator, or a bolt-on extra where the tour operator simply takes you to an activity provider (so the responsibility of the party leader).

Provision of Learning Support

Visit Leaders should take advantage of any learning support that can be supplied - it can save both time and energy. It can often be free, expert and regularly updated. Whether the Visit Leader chooses to provide learning support in-house, or to use learning support from the tour operator, they should identify the resources that best consolidate and complement their aims within the chosen learning environment.

Consideration should include:

- **Expert-led courses**
These are commonly available where expert skill or knowledge is advantageous. Good examples include: ski-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 physical resources 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 learning support, it will be the effectiveness of the partnership between the Visit Leader and the tour company that ensures whether or not the targeted learning outcomes are actually achieved.

