

An Easy Guide to Make a Coach Hire Booking

Introduction.

Who would take responsibility of planning a coach hire trip in today's 'compensation culture' society? Leaving home or work with groups of people is an increasingly awesome prospect given the alarm caused by highly publicised disasters and the explosion of paperwork that accompanies such ventures.

Despite this, every year, one million - four hundred thousand passengers, take excursions with Belle Vue and return all fit and well and with a new enthusiasm for one another. "There is no doubt," said one teacher, "that trips are entirely worthwhile - they can have the effect of transforming one's relationship with children. You have a chance to experience each other with the defense's down and make contact on a human level that school often precludes."

The same can be said for corporate office trips and family excursions. It pays to get away sometimes, out of the 'everyday' environment and experience each other with no boundaries.

Transport – Transfer or Excursion?

When travelling out, there are two types of coach hire excursion. One going around the corner or across the City to another venue or, a fully-fledged day trip excursion that incorporates a visit to another place of interest like a zoo or a theme park. The first one is known as a transfer and the second one is known as an excursion. Whilst both means of transport have to have the security on health and safety matters, the latter needs a lot more preparation on your part.

Choose Your Mode of Transport

Book a vehicle that suits your budget. Standards vary. Most operators have standard, executive, and luxury/corporate vehicles. Standard coaches have the basic seats and generally no frills. They can be more aged vehicles, that have fallen down the fleet line. Then there are executive vehicles which are more modern and fitted with air conditioning, reclining seats, reading lights, toilet and washroom, PA and entertainment systems, such as radio, CD and DVD.

Then you have luxury/corporate vehicles that are new or fitted with seats in a conference style seating capacity. For business, passengers can face each other and communicate far more easily during transit. There are additional facilities on-board such as toilet and washroom and a kitchen for the serving of food or drinks. These vehicles are popular with football teams travelling to away fixtures and they are also used on business class and weddings.

Plan Ahead When Making Your Booking

Consider booking the service in advance to save yourself time and money. When you are planning to go to places with your group, you might want to consider your options in advance, especially for larger groups.

Not only will this mean that groups are more likely to get their first choice of transport mode because of vehicle availability, but you can get a better price and it also gives passengers a fair amount of time to save for the upcoming trip.

How many passengers are you taking?

Coach sizes vary, so it is worth knowing exactly how many passengers you are carrying to get the best value, as prices also vary depending on the size of coach.

For example, minibuses cater up to around 19 people. Then midi-coaches (smaller coaches) carry up to 30-35 passengers. Standard and executive coaches usually carry around 49 passengers, with some coaches going into the mid-fifties. Some single decker coaches fitted with smaller seats (for school children) can carry up to 70 passengers. Double decker coaches can carry around 70-85 passengers.

Information Required to Obtain a Coach Hire Quotation

When obtaining a coach hire quotation there is some basic information required from you:

1. Your name.

2. Your telephone number.

3. Your email address.

4. Date of travel.

5. Time of collection / pick up time.

(Times can be referred to in a 24 hour clock. So 6pm is 18.00.)

6. Collection / Pick Up point.

Where do you want you and your group collected from? We need an address, with a post code, and preferably a land mark. Is there good access for a coach?

7. Are there any more collection points / pick ups?

(Some coach hire bookings may have more than one collection / pick up point).

8. How many passengers are there?

9. Do any of the passengers have special needs?

(Walk on or wheelchair access required?)

10. What type of coach would you like to travel on?

Standard? Executive? Luxury/Corporate? Double Decker? Mini-bus? Mid-Coach? Bus? Accessible? Vintage coach/bus? Or Chauffeur Driven car?

11. Where is the destination?

We need an address, with a post code, and preferably a landmark. Is there good access for a coach? If there are multi pick up points please advise us of the correct one. E.g. an airport terminal number if travelling to the airport.

12. Return date.

Is the coach returning same day, if not which date?

13. Return time.

Time of the return time to leave (not arrive back) from the destination point.

14. Reason for travelling.

If we know the reason for travelling, our team can ensure you receive maximum impact on the service we offer. E.g. A tourism event, a birthday, or a business function.

It is worth giving all the correct information from the start, rather than issuing basic information only to realise later on that there is more to the trip than you have informed us about and then it may have to affect the price.

Making The Booking and reserving the coach(s).

Once you have received your quotation and you wish to secure a booking, contact our team and they will turn the quotation into a confirmation booking. A confirmation booking will be emailed to you to secure the booking. You may now consider the coach travel requirement 'booked.'

Some other important info' you may want to consider...

Safety - Choose A Reliable Professional Transport Provider

When making a coach hire booking, check that your transport provider is an operator that is 'compliant' with the Driving and Vehicles Standard Agency. You can ask them for a copy of their 'OCRS rating,' which is a scoring system for their vehicle maintenance. The DVSA have records on file of all transport operators' maintenance records. This includes MOT pass rate on their vehicle fleet, road side inspections and a general scoring system that gives quality information on the road worthiness of the coach/bus operator in question. The score rates from Red, Amber and Green and from 1 to 10. Green 1 is low and Red 10 is high. The lower the better. Quality operators are in the green with a score as low as possible. E.g. Green 00. This is the best way to check on the road worthiness of your chosen operator and is a true reflection of a transport supplier's maintenance management. Ask your transport provider to give you an up to date report for your own assessment and check that the date is current rather than two years ago.

You can also ensure their drivers are 'CPC' trained and screened by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Check out any testimonials or reviews of recent clients and monitor what regular clients the operator has.

The CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) is an organisation who represent coach and bus operators at government level. The CPT promotes compliance amongst operators and they have operational and technical departments to assist operators in meeting up to date regulations and standards also benefiting from newest innovations. The CPT also ensure emergency back-up procedures in the event of a road traffic accident for all their members including road side emergencies including assistance in press and public relations handling. Ensure your chosen transport supplier are members.

Safety Onboard.

Most quality drivers will have a 'Health & Safety Introduction Briefing' at the start of each and every journey highlighting, boarding and disembarking procedures, emergency exits, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, toilet location, emergency window exits with break glass hammers and selected teacher/supervisor seating positions to ensure maximum supervision of the party during transit, should the passengers be students. (Please listen carefully to this briefing as it has been proven to save lives in the eventuality of a road side incident.)

Check Operators Terms And Conditions And Ensure Your Group Are Aware of Them

Obtaining and reading operators terms and conditions ensures you can abide by their values and respect the rules of the coach. This will earn you the respect of the driver who will go the extra mile of meeting your expectations. You must express the important terms to your passengers. Such things as, wearing seat belts, not blocking emergency exits, rules of the toilet room, rules on smoking, drugs and alcohol. Abiding by the rules ensures a great safe day out. Failure to establish and abide by the rules can in some cases result in cancellation of the journey, resulting in disappointment for all concerned.

Ask About Quality Control

Some operators have no control over the standard and upkeep of their fleet of vehicles. Good maintenance starts with good cleanliness. Quality operators will have a vigorous system in place that is double or treble checked on a daily basis with a paperwork management system in place. At the higher end of the market they will be a member of the 'Coach Marque Scheme' which is the Industries Quality Scheme for a quality auditing system. At the higher end of the spectrum operators will be certified to ISO9001, which is recognized across Europe.

Ask To See Customer Testimonials

Ask to see previous customer testimonials. There's nothing like seeing testimonials of a good service received from recent customers to put your mind at rest and give you confidence that your business has been placed in the right hands. If customers receive exceptional service they will record it with the supplier such was their gratitude. Quality operators receive testimonials by the bucket load.

Check Out Back Up Systems

Although vehicles are well maintained, even a brand new one can break down. In the event of an unfortunate break down or vehicle failure beyond the operators control, enquire about back up procedures or systems. When you are stranded at the side of the motorway, what's the plan? Quality operators have spare vehicles laid aside for such an event, or can scramble another vehicle from their large fleet, that happens to be the nearest in the area or, they have an army of quality approved suppliers that they can call upon. If it is a minor technical situation operators have their own 'rapid response' maintenance team and/or established relations with a 'breakdown call out team' that they can call upon for rapid assistance. This simple point can result in you being back on the road in minutes rather than hours.

Value For Money

You get what you pay for. If a trip is cheap then it will probably lack frills and could have poor vehicle maintenance standards and low driver customer service levels. It could result in landing you in trouble with a breakdown and worst of all, stranded passengers.

Cheapest price is not always best value. When it comes to transport, you do get what you pay for. There is a difference between getting ripped off and paying a little extra for added value so it's worth doing your homework and ensuring you know what you are getting for your money.

Get Added Value From Your Supplier

Coaching/Bussing is a seasonal business. Between April and July supply is short and prices go high, sometimes over stretching budgets. The winter is quieter. Forming a relationship with a quality operator is better in getting consistent prices based over a year rather in the demand as operators will give discounts for regular quantified business. You can have assurance having completed all your checks which must be better than checking every operator you might use every other week, based on who is the cheapest.

Get Your Risk Assessments Organized Easily.

Do not be put off by Risk Assessments. Although they are a notable part of the organization for group organizers such as teachers, risk assessments can be off-putting. Your organization will have a standard procedure and policy in place which is easy to follow. Transport operators should be able to cut down much of the work by helping with these. Quality operators will be audited on an annual basis, usually as part of an insurance policy, and they will be able to supply risk assessments for their transport operations to you with ease. If you are visiting a Visitor Attraction then obtain the attractions Risk Assessments and you will soon have the job done with ease.

The Drivers Safety Introduction and travelling on the coach.

Listen for the drivers safety introduction before departure, all drivers should complete one. This is a chance for the driver to make their personal introduction ensuring you will have a safe and fun experience. This introduction will highlight the position of the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, emergency exits, break glass hammers and also run through the facilities of the vehicle you are travelling on to ensure you travel safe and comfortable at all times throughout the journey. Ensure your group listens to this with good order. During the journey, your group must obey the driver, stay in their seat and face forward and never stand up on a moving coach. Keep noise levels reasonable and do not distract the driver unless absolutely necessary.

Keep Hydrated

Never forget to bring bottled water during long bus trips. Keeping yourself hydrated normalizes your body's functions, something that will be beneficial to people who occasionally experience motion sickness.

Encourage Comfortable Clothing

On longer journeys and holiday trips wear comfortable attire and conserve your body heat by wearing something warm like a jacket or a sweatshirt, especially during the cold seasons. In addition, avoid tight tops, tight trousers, or any attire that can constrict your system's blood flow. Stretch once in a while. Sitting continuously for hours can numb the muscles of your body that are not used. Thus, grab every opportunity to stretch and move around in your seat.

Avoid Boredom

Recruit an entertaining driver from your operator. Most quality operators recruit based on personality and polish their staffs driving skills up. So quality drivers like to entertain and go the extra mile, especially on day trips and holiday tours. Most drivers give a tour description when passing places of interest. In the quieter times of the journey, you can play something of interest on the vehicles CD or DVD system. Because of the advent of the world wide web, it is now easier for everyone to do all kinds of things. For constant travellers, this is great news since they can get all sorts of online information while on a tour, through their mobile phones or laptops. Also, they can make informed decisions about their travel plans when they arrive at their destination.

Research Your Destinations Attractions

There are websites that provide online reviews about museums, galleries, theme parks, sea side resorts, farm visits, mills, restaurants and other places of interest, giving you a good idea of the places that are worth visiting. You can also get feedback from your transport provider as it is most likely they have been there before with other organisations and they can advise you accordingly.

Collecting Payment If Passengers Are Contributing

Do not take money from passengers encountering you at inconvenient times. It is always the cheque thrown at you, not in an envelope and with none of the paperwork attached that goes missing - costing you hours of heartache and fruitless searching. If you have specific set times to accept cash or cheques then you administer things better and ensure the procedures are fair. Number deposit envelopes according to when they are received so that there can be no question of favoritism when it comes to allocating places.

Not Having a 'Plan B'

Though we've talked about the importance of sticking to the itinerary, let's face it—stuff goes wrong. The planetarium is closed, or the super-cool dinosaur the kids were excited to see at the museum has been taken down for cleaning—or maybe the fair's hot dogs have given everyone food poisoning. Having a back-up plan can be helpful, but so can 'a good attitude' and a 'commitment to having fun no matter what' on the trip.

Emergency Situations.

In the event of an emergency situation or road traffic accident the drivers training should kick in. They will want to ensure that the vehicles position is not in further danger, way up any casualties fast, activate the emergency services and administer first aid if required. Your assistance will be required in calming the remaining passengers, moving them to a safer position and keeping good order. Ensure your team are prepared in the unlikely event this could happen.

Driver Training.

All quality operators carry out driver training. It is now European law to ensure 'periodic training' is carried out every five years based on 35 hours training to CPC standard (Certificate of Professional Competence – the highest standard form of training in the industry). However, the quality of the training and more to the point, the driver's acceptance and application of the knowledge varies. There is a big difference between 'having to' and 'wanting to' when it comes to training driver teams. Look for operators that train 'in-house' and have a 'high customer service based training program.' Ask for a video if there is one available.

Queries?

If you have any queries what-so-ever please do not hesitate to ask our team. We strive to go the extra mile on each and every journey so if we know your desired outcome, we can help you achieve it. Don't hesitate to mention any material facts that will enable us to service you better and enhance your travel experience.

Have fun.

Travelling away with a bunch of friends, family or colleagues should be fun. Make it that way by getting all the basics right, so that people can enjoy the experience. We would love to be part of your next travel adventure.

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