

Advice for organisers booking a group coach holiday



Choosing which coach operator to use can be a daunting prospect but is crucial for those involved in group organising.

Why do you need to use a BCH coach operator?

Many organisers have always used the services of a specialist tour operator, but **The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements 2018**, created to ensure greater consumer protection, have made it more onerous. The Package Travel Regulations, enshrined in UK law, protect consumers if a travel firm goes bust, and impose obligations on group travel organisers arranging 'packages' - trips involving travel, accommodation and other activities – they require the organiser to have consumer financial protection, repatriation insurance and liability insurance in place.

Therefore, if you are considering organising a holiday in the UK or abroad involving overnight stays, you should make sure you understand these Regulations fully before you undertake this task yourself – or put it in the hands of a BCH Member, who has all the insurances in place.

When using a BCH Member, your group customers will probably still see the group travel organiser (GTO) as their main point of contact, and they can in practice work as much or as little as they want in helping to plan the holiday, but with the support of their supplier company to fall back on if anything goes wrong.

Buying a package

If you are looking to buy a package from a coach operator (which, for instance, would include overnight accommodation and transport) then you must make sure that the operator meets the requirements of the Package Travel Regulations.

Members of the BCH Bonded Coach Holidays group fulfil their bonding requirements under the Package Travel Regulations, ensuring that, in the event of financial failure, your money is protected. They will also be members of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK and have Tour Operator Liability Insurance as a condition of BCH Membership.

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Bonding

Probably the best known method of providing consumer financial protection, with a high degree of customer recognition and credibility. The operator raises an irrevocable guarantee for a specific sum of money, enough to cover any potential claims which is lodged with a Government approved bonding authority that administers any failure and distributes the funds fairly.

The bond might be provided by a specialist bond insurer or a bank. The drawback for GTOs is that you would need to be a member of one of the Government approved bonding authorities. It is therefore recommended that you use your local BCH Member who is fully compliant with the requirements

Once booked

Once you have booked with a BCH Member, it is important to ensure that the operator is clear on who the group organiser is as this person will be required to manage the group, including ensuring the adherence of instructions on times of departure and the like. It is also important to confirm and agree on information such as the itinerary that will be operated with a mutual understanding on when the driver will need to take legal rest breaks, an agreement on additional charges that may accrue as a result of changes in the itinerary, details of payment terms and cancellation terms.

Liability for compliance of 'contractually agreed transport time schedules' (itineraries) now also rests with tour operators, principal contractors and subcontractors to ensure they respect the regulations. To put this quite simply, the law now places some of the responsibility for compliance with group organisers when planning their itineraries.

Using a BCH Member tour operator on an agency basis

You can simply work with an existing Member of BCH who can 'wholesale' the product to you, which you sell on to your members on an agency basis. Although you may find an existing 'off-the-shelf' package that will suit your group, most operators allow you to specify the itinerary and include (or exclude) any element you like, and of course, negotiate a group price. However, to be legal, the transaction and contract must be directly between your group members and the tour operator.

Which Operator?

There are hundreds of coach operators throughout the UK, but a good place to start is by searching through Members of the **Bonded Coach Holiday group**.

Membership of other groups such as the **Coach Tourism Council**, CPT's **CoachMarque** and the **Guild of British Coach Operators** will also show that an operator is committed to certain standards of service.

To find out more about using a BCH member contact Bernice.Molloy@bch-abtot.com or call **0207 065 5316**

A full list of BCH Members can be found at www.bch-uk.org