



Study and Sports Tours

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Definition

Tour operators can take your group anywhere in the world for any educational purpose. They can build travel arrangements, accommodation and learning content into a coordinated programme that removes much of the organisational work from party leaders. They can give young people an unparalleled window on the world. Every type of content is possible — cultural visits, historical and language studies, a series of concerts performed by the school choir, a visit to a partner school abroad, sports tournaments, activity holidays and ski courses, to name but a few.

All young people require the knowledge, skills and understanding to live in, and contribute to, a global society and this begins with an understanding of the world in which we live, including the languages, values and cultures of different societies. The first-hand experience gained in the context of a study or sports tour is one way of enabling young people to acquire this mix of knowledge, skills and understanding.

All of these activities, in their different ways, help to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and independence. They also give young people the opportunity to experience other cultures, meet and develop new friendships and thus broaden their horizons and knowledge.

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Learning opportunities

Tours are a particularly strong way to consolidate learning, as young people's experiences can be directly related to the real world. For example, geographical studies can come to life with the actual physical feature in front of you; and a foreign language is easier to assimilate and use in its native environment.

Tour operators usually publish brochures that detail their most popular tours, but many will tailor-make a specific itinerary to meet your exact requirements and education objectives. Help with tours in the UK can be just as beneficial as those abroad.



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Most tours also lend themselves very well to cross-curricular study. In addition to specific, targeted objectives, the richness of experiences is such that participants will inevitably benefit from other learning opportunities at the same time.

Tours share with other residential experiences the personal and social development potential of being away from home and school. The teachers in charge can also enhance their understanding of their young people, as well as their personal credibility, in this different environment.

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Range of provision

Finding a provider that will best help you meet your objectives is key, and because of the wide range of possibilities within this sector, it is useful to be aware of the services that need to be provided:

Accommodation	Transport	Visits, concerts, fixtures, activities etc.	Learning support
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Thus you can decide which combination of provision is appropriate for your own needs:

- **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 destinations like the Isle of Wight or Eastern Europe; or offer a comprehensive programme of tours covering a multitude of options.
- **General Tour Operators and Travel Agencies:** tour operators and travel agencies which normally make arrangements for the public through third parties also have the facility to combine some or all of these services for school groups and other youth parties, because of their general expertise in travel.
- **Coach Operators:** many coach operators will offer to organise tours for schools, particularly if they already provide transport arrangements for other purposes. You should ensure they also have the experience and expertise for the tour you require.
- **Self-Arranged Packages:** it is possible for a group leader to create a tour by booking all the elements individually and combining them into a self-arranged package. A tour operator is legally responsible for the package they put together and, therefore, the responsibility for a self-arranged package lies with the group leader or their employers.
- **Language exchanges:** often involve young people staying with host families and attending school with their language partners. There are some specialist providers, and staff may be able to make use of school or town twinning schemes and language subject associations for support in identifying partners.



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Learning support

Learning support in this sector can take many forms, although in some cases it may not be required. However, taking advantage of what can be supplied can usefully save time and energy. It can be free, expert and regularly updated.

You should look for the resources that best consolidate and complement your learning environment and educational needs from the range available:

- **Expert-led courses:** these are commonly available where expert skill or knowledge is advantageous. Good examples are: ski schools, sports academies, language classes, drama workshops and music masterclasses.
- **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 individual 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 facilities:** these can range from a simple room and tables for study, a library or more complicated needs such as workshops, AV resources, IT facilities or gymnasias.
- **Tour content:** finally, and importantly, the quality and make-up of the final itinerary: this should reflect an understanding of the subject, the curriculum and how they link into the destination. The expertise and experience of the provider is an important form of learning support, as is the partnership with the party leader to ensure that the school's educational objectives are met.

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Quality Standards

Outside the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, the travel industry is covered by a number of legal requirements, which offer consumer protection. These include the Package Travel Regulations 1992, whereby anyone who offers package holidays for sale (other than occasionally) must comply.

Full details of the requirements can be found on: www.opsi.gov.uk



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An important safeguard in the 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. In the UK, there is an additional requirement to have an Air Tour Operator's Licence (ATOL), if organising packages that include air travel.

Self-arranged tours do not generally benefit from the above consumer protection.

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Web resource for Study and Sports Tours

www.schooltravelforum.com

This is a group of school tour operators. The forum arranges external verification of its members for safety management standards. The site shows membership currency. It includes guidance on risk assessment and on running safe and effective visits with tour operators.

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