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How to book a tour with Visions

Although it seems like a pretty basic question, it's actually a really good one! With everything changing in our world at break-neck speed, we thought we'd take the time to spell everything out and hopefully put your mind at ease. It's really not hard to book your group!

Did you know that most schools start planning a minimum of 18-months before the trip? This give parents time to save so everyone can participate without hardship!

1. **Write or call in and ask us for more information.** If you see a marketing flyer that catches your eye or a destination and programme that you are interested in, simply let us know. In turn we will not only send you more information but also have someone personally contact you to see how we may assist (we call this person a Travel Advisor). We are always available – via email, phone or Skype to answer questions and help guide you to the perfect product that suits your needs. If you don't want to speak to someone, no problem. We can email you everything you need for consideration.

So many times we hear feedback from our teachers that we don't put pricing in our marketing materials so you have no idea whether you may want to consider a potential tour. Yes, this is correct. The reason for this is that every single quote we give is customised for you and your pupils. You tell us what you want, and we will happily give you a specific quote based on your needs and your preferences. We serve schools from many different locations so it's important that we not only know what you want, but also where you want to travel from.

2. **Ask us for general pricing.** So you are interested – great! The next step is to find out how much things will generally cost. No problem – your Travel Advisor is happy to give you an idea of what the package will be based on different numbers of pupils and staff travelling.
3. **Ask us for a personal quote.** Are you ready to move forward? If so, your next step is to ask us for a personal quote. Your personal quote will be just for your school, on the dates you need and to your specifications. To request a quote you will need to supply the following information:
 - a. The specific number of students and paying adults you wish to bring
 - b. The specific number of FREE teachers/staff you wish to bring
 - c. The rooming required for your hotel stay if travelling outside of Europe
 - d. The dates of travel

We know that numbers will change and that's okay. The initial quote is just to give you a really good idea on what costs to expect for planning purposes.

At Visions we offer two different types of tours. First, we offer **events**. Events are on set dates and have specific allocations. We strongly urge you to book early if interested in an event just so you know your places are secure. The second type of tour is any of our **standard tours** that may be found on our website (www.visionsineducation.co.uk). Just choose your destination and the dates your school would like to attend and we will set up a tour that meets your personal needs.

The required rooming is something you will want to consider. Most of our pupils sleep four to a room sharing 2 double/queen beds. This helps keep the costs down because the lodging is an expensive part of your tour. For staff, our general quotes include 2 staff per room with each staff member having their own bed. You will want to take into consideration families or parents that may want to come along as well as other possibilities. Please know that most all tours are dependent upon the specific rooms allocated in your quote so if your rooming should change (i.e. you end up with a different male/female break-out and need an additional room), your tour will need to be re-costed to accommodate your revised rooming needs.

Another thing to consider is how many free staff places you desire. We generally quote with one free staff place for every ten pupils, however, this may be changed to whatever works for your school. You may also elect to have additional paying staff that come along but are not incorporated into the cost of the students. Either way, the choice is yours.

The next thing you should consider is how you will get to your destination. Would you like your quote to include airfare or motorcoach transportation? The choice is yours. Just let us know what your preferences are.

The final thing to consider is your dates. If you plan on flying to your destination, general airfares can change wildly dependent upon the time of year and also on the demand level for the route. We will need a **very specific departure date** in order to be able to give you an air quote. If travelling by motorcoach, this generally isn't an issue but other factors may be. Things such as, is the time period you want to travel a busy one for other travellers? If so, it may mean your programming may not be available or that hotel rates are higher than normal. Plan early and start thinking about an alternative date just in case. 😊

A 'Quote' is valid for 30-days while you consider your options.

4. **Get the approvals needed to run your trip.** Once you have worked with your Travel Advisor to finalise your quote and you know how you will be travelling, the specific dates, what's included and the costs, the next step is to gain approvals from anyone necessary. This may include your Principal, your LEA, your Senior Management Team, or just your Department Head. If you need help, simply tell us what you need and we will always try to supply you with anything necessary to gain approvals. We have years of experience working with schools.

Also, please know that we are an **'Assured Member of the School Travel Forum'** (STF) and in booking with us you can be secure in the knowledge that we meet all requirements and are fully audited each year, and also that we have earned our 'Quality Badge.' The Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) endorses the Quality Badge and requests Local Authorities to recommend the use of badged providers and require the minimum of additional paperwork where Quality Badge accreditation is in place. This means that you can book your trip with confidence, meet your due diligence and reduce the amount of external provider paperwork necessary.

5. **Ask us for a Provisional Booking.** A Provisional Booking, or an Option as sometimes called, is a non-binding agreement that states that you are moving forward with your trip and that we will hold space and quoted rates for you while you gather the initial deposit required to confirm your booking. The paperwork issued will confirm everything agreed and will act as an initial contract between you and Visions. If after going to Option you do not get the student interest you had hoped, the Option may be cancelled at no penalty at any time.

After a Provisional Booking has been issued, this is when you will write to your parents with all details required so they may register their children on the tour. A Provisional Booking is valid for 21-days. During this period, it also allows us to double check with our suppliers to ensure space is still available and that all programming is on track. If for any reason we are not able to accommodate you on the specific dates or with the quoted rates, we will let you know immediately, prior to you sending in deposited amounts. After the 21-day period is over, your tour may be required to be re-costed if deposits have not yet been received.

Deposits and payments may be accepted via check, bank transfer or a variety of other ways. All deposits paid must be made in one lump sum and not from individual parents. Another important thing to understand is that all deposits are non-refundable because as soon as we have received these from you, we in turn pay them out to our various suppliers to hold your places. This is one of the reasons why we mandate Travel Insurance which will cover independent cancellations.

During this time period you will also want to designate which staff members will oversee which elements of your tour. We suggest you put someone who is highly organised in charge of pupil registration and collection of funds. You will want to alert parents that for registration, they will need to bring a photocopy of the pupil's valid passport. We cannot begin to explain how many schools get tripped up by parents who say they are going to renew passports and then never do it. This in turn causes a major disruption with airlines who require certain information by certain dates otherwise they will cancel the booking. Due to this, we cannot stress enough how important it is to have a cut-off date well in advance of when the information is due to us. And equally important, that all details are logged directly into our Passenger Information Booklet during registration so no one has hours of paperwork to follow up on. 😊

This is also the time to confirm your travel insurance. Many schools have their own policy, others need to purchase it from a wholesaler. Travel Insurance is inexpensive and very important! We require a copy of each policy before you are issued your final travel details.

We have had many schools that do not understand the purpose of travel insurance. It's actually very simple. It not only protects parents before the trip – if a child breaks a bone playing sports and is not allowed to travel or if someone comes down with an illness or a family emergency, it covers this so the parents do not lose their funds. If while on tour there is an accident that causes a traffic delay and you miss your flight, it protects you. Then finally, if any child is sick or gets hurt while on tour, it also covers medical aspects. Travel insurance is very important to protect your pupils and your parents; hence it is mandated by every group.

6. **Confirm your booking.** Send in your initial deposits and your Booking Form and drumroll... you are confirmed! Once received we will notify you and send you a confirmation, a payment schedule and all the forms required. You will also be assigned a specific contact in our Operations department to work with so you know that every question can be answered. They will then take over as your chief contact for anything needed up until your tour departs.

7. **Skype with your Ambassador prior to departure.** After you receive your full itinerary and about 2 weeks prior to departure, you will be assigned a Visions Ambassador. They will contact you, usually via email, and ask for you to set up a Skype call with them. Skype is totally free to use, you just need a good internet connection and then to download the programme. You can Skype on your computer, your tablet or your smart phone. Your Ambassador may then review general items, take your suggestions as to anything extra that your group might want to participate in, and even do things like start to set up birthday celebrations which may be happening. They are there to serve your school.

Your Ambassador will meet you in your destination and will be there to ensure you are set up for success. Your Ambassador is not a local guide, but instead is an expert at making sure every single little thing is just right on your tour so you, the party leader, can enjoy the trip along with your students. Your Ambassador is also highly trained from an emergency management standpoint. You just need to let them know what you need and they will ensure it is taken care of.

8. **Ready, set, go!** Let us know how we may serve you!

