

# Reviewing Travel Policies & Pre-trip precautions



Clearly Covid-19 has changed the world, and profoundly impacted how we travel. Prior to any international school travel being approved in this new environment, we strongly encourage all schools check to ensure your School Board has reviewed their Overseas Travel Policy and Insurance cover to align with the updated Ministry of Education (MoE) Guidelines. The guidelines have been updated to reflect the **best practice** standards Schools/Boards should be meeting before any school travel is approved.

The MoE guidelines were updated after the financial losses suffered in 2020, due to multiple schools not travelling with a [TAANZ](#) Financially Bonded Tour Company/Travel Agent and subsequently losing thousands of dollars of students' funds. TAANZ Financial Bonding provides consumer protection and independent auditing of its members. The new guidelines state that should a School/Board choose to travel with a non-TAANZ Financially Bonded agent/company, parents must be advised of the additional risks associated with this decision and the school must receive each parent's signed approval to not follow the MoE Best practice guidelines.

*NB: IATA Accreditation/Bonding alone is not sufficient to protect consumers, as IATA only covers the airlines loss of airfares.*

## Who is an appropriate travel arranger, and what do we need to know/ask?

1. Are they TAANZ Financially Bonded and Licenced? (Consumer Protection)
2. Are they IATA accredited? (Airline protection only)
3. Are they a member of the [School Travel Collective Inc?](#)
4. Do they specialise in school tours and understand Duty of Care and what is required?
5. What are their accreditations, and do they provide appropriate financial protection?
6. What experience do they have? Can they make the questions covered in the checklist easier to answer?
7. What Health & Safety protocols do they have in place to ensure the safety of students & staff?
8. Always compare quotes/packages; what is **really** included, and what extras will you need to provide for?

## Is it safe to travel?

1. What are the requirements in terms of vaccines and covid travel restrictions?
2. Are there travel warnings in place?
3. Is your travel partner WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) Safe Travel accredited?

## WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT?

### Are you working with a TAANZ financially bonded company?

When booking a school trip, you need to ensure that monies paid for the trip are financially protected. For this reason, you should only work with companies that are TAANZ Financially Bonded and licensed. This ensures your funds are protected and not being used for operational costs or another groups tour expenses. Companies that are not TAANZ financially bonded are able to utilise client funds for anything they like e.g wages, rent, advertising, deposits for another group etc.

TAANZ bonded companies are independently audited twice yearly by the TAANZ bonding authority to ensure that all client funds are held in separated and bonded accounts that are not being used for anything other than that client's specific and associated tour costs and expenses.

TAANZ Bonded companies must also pay a minimum bond fee of \$100,000.00 to the Bonding Authority to meet the minimum bonding requirements. During 2020 and COVID-19 border closures, all of the companies that were in the news across NZ & Australia for losing students' money, were companies that chose to not be TAANZ Financially Bonded.

Therefore many schools across NZ/Australia have lost hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars due to this. Put simply, those companies were using clients' funds for operational costs, other group's expenses and even refunding other groups.

When researching which tour company to use, ask the company what they did with schools who were travelling with them in 2020 when COVID-19 closed the world - did they refund in cash and how much, or did they offer credits? Credits are a difficult issue moving forward as some students with credits will have left school already and have no chance to use their credit. There is also the question of where the company gets the funds to honour those credits – often it can be built into your tour cost, so it doesn't end up being a credit at all.

### **Is your Tour Provider a member of School Travel Collective Inc (STC)?**

With a company being a member of STC, over 70% of their business must be working in the School Travel Market. It also means that they must abide by the strict membership requirements of STC

Membership requirements:

- 1: TAANZ Financially Bonded
- 2: IATA accredited company
- 3: Qualmark Accredited Company (Government – Tourism NZ quality standards)
- 4: Work Safe NZ Accredited company
- 5: Must not hold any outstanding credits with clients except for airline credits
- 6: Must adhere to the STC Inc constitution and code of conduct

### **What are their Health and Safety protocols like?**

Any travel partner you choose should have plans in place around managing the health and safety risks (including Covid) associated with travel. Tour Time is delighted to have been accredited with the Safe Travels Stamp by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and Tourism Export Council NZ (TECNZ), after implementing global best practice around Covid-19 safe protocols to ensure we are Covid-19 ready. Tour Time have also received full accreditation as being a Covid-Clean company from Qualmark NZ.

On top of these important accreditations, when working with a specialised school group provider (rather than just a travel agent who books your flights) it means that you will be able to rest assured that your provider can tell you that they:

- Audit all attractions, transport operators and accommodations for appropriate Health and Safety requirements to ensure your group safety.
- Provide transport/coaches that are available specifically for your group, rather than expecting your students to travel in public transport.
- Understand the Duty of Care requirements of working with youth (i.e don't accommodate youth in hostels or backpackers expecting them to share bathrooms with the public).
- Can cater for and adequately account for your members individual health needs, allergies and medical conditions – they know who is travelling with you and ensure that your providers know too.
- Have First Aid trained and Police vetted experienced Tour Managers available 24/7 on every tour.
- Have local guides/translators available where required.
- Can assist you with completing RAMs as required.
- Will ensure that any fixtures arranged are with a suitable competitor, not just an available one.
- Are available 24/7 when you're on tour to help with anything that crops up.

A good tour partner will take away the worry and the "what ifs" for you. You will know that your money is safe, and you and your students are safe. It's worth making sure these two critical factors are ticked off before you even start comparing prices... because these two benefits are priceless!

### **Does the Travel Company specialise in school travel?**

Some mainstream travel companies will arrange school trips, along with cruises and Fiji holidays for families etc. But to get the most out of your trip for students, a *specialist school tour operator* is recommended, as the level of expert advice they can offer is unrivalled. Many companies will claim to be experts, but there are some important markers to look for that will confirm this to you, such as clear Duty of Care requirements. Using a school travel provider is also the difference between taking a selfie in front of Google vs meeting a senior Google team member in their offices. School travel experts have the right contacts, in the right place, as school travel is their core business.

### **What experience does the company have?**

There are many school travel companies out there, with varying degrees of experience. We'd recommend that you look for a school travel company that has been operating for many years. Not only will they have the experience to support you throughout the process of arranging your school trip, but they are also likely to be financially stable. Many companies will talk about their experience... but years in business is what you are looking for...not 3 staff that have worked for 5 years each in the industry and they have 15yrs of experience combined.

Tour Time has been in business for 30yrs, and if we were to combine our staffs' experience, we would have in excess of 150yrs of experience. We had over 56 groups booked to travel in 2020 and are the most successful school travel company in the NZ market and the second largest in the Australian market.

### **You should ask for a COVID guarantee**

We've worked with our suppliers to make some significant changes that we hope will help you to book and travel in confidence. To help us work out exactly what we needed to do as your tour partner, we reached out to you, our clients. You told us that to book with confidence, you needed greater flexibility to cancel or postpone your trip. You also told us that to travel with confidence, you needed to know your group's health and safety would be prioritised. Our Covid guarantee address both of these concerns.

With you in mind we have worked to make our Terms and Conditions more flexible, so it's now easier for you to cancel or postpone your trip should the situation change. All funds paid to Tour Time are held in client/tour specific TAANZ Financially Bonded bank accounts to ensure your financial security.

### **Reduced deposits:**

**Domestic tours:** \$75 per person

**International tours:** \$300 per person

*If airfares are included a higher deposit may be required, dependent on the airline's requirements.*

### **Travel Insurance with COVID-19 cover**

Tour Time's exclusive travel insurance covers all sporting activities on and off the court, all tour activities, covers pre-existing (non-terminal) conditions when following doctors' advice and clearance to travel, and it also has full COVID cover curtailment, isolation, medical and cancellation along with 3rd party collapse insurance of up to \$10,000NZD per person. Our policy even includes cover for a staff member to be replaced should they become ill whilst overseas to maintain your student/staff ratio. Our policy is the most comprehensive and inclusive travel insurance policy in the market, giving your school and parents confidence that students and staff will be well looked after should the need arise.

### **What is SAFE TRAVELS / COVID CLEAN?**

**Safe Travels:** The Safe Travels Stamp was created for travellers by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) to recognise businesses around the world which have adopted the Safe Travels health and hygiene global standardised protocols. Our Safe Travels protocols are updated regularly, and it is a living document that is updated as new information and protocols become available about COVID-19.

**Covid Clean:** is derived from the New Zealand Government's COVID-19 guidelines and is developed exclusively for Qualmark licence holders (Tourism NZ Quality standards) to ensure that companies adhere to protocols and can demonstrate that customers and staff adhere to these guidelines and protocols whilst also following the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Safe Travels stamp.

Tour Time has produced a comprehensive 97 pages Safe Travels COVID-19 Ready Health & Safety Guidelines plan that is available to all schools.

### **Preferred Supplier Agreements**

A number of schools across New Zealand have chosen Tour Time as their preferred travel supplier for both domestic and international travel requirements for sports, music and educational travel. The level of supplier agreement varies from simply supplying domestic wholesale airfares to attend tournament week and choir competitions, through to supplying

coach transport and rental vans, through to providing full service and inclusive tour packages of flights, accommodation, meals & attractions and specific activities for music, sports, classics, science, history, arts, NASA tours etc.

When choosing Tour Time to be your preferred supplier you gain access to our group buying power across airlines, accommodation and attractions. More importantly, this is what we do on a daily basis, so we have the expertise, knowledge and contacts to make it happen in a quarter of the time it will take your staff to arrange. We also hold the relevant licenses, accreditation, qualifications and expertise, meaning you can leave your staff free to educate, rather than arranging travel. There is a huge savings in time and money, and as a school you need to have an expert travel partner who you can turn to in the event of something going wrong.

### What about Fundraising?

Consideration needs to be given around whether you require fundraising to be part of your touring process as a group or will this be left up to each individual. When fundraising you need to consider the time vs reward aspect of fundraising, along with the management of how fundraising will work.

Tour Time are an advocate of fundraising as we believe that it is an important part of our youth's development. However we look to do this the most cost effective way and there are multiple fundraising activities that work and others that do not. Ask us for a list of what other groups have found to be incredibly successful.

### If in doubt, call Tour Time

Tour Time has been working in the school travel space for 30 years and is a founding member of the School Travel Collective Inc. We are more than happy to provide advice, quotes and guidance free of charge and obligation free.

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