



6 Tips on Making Sure You're Booking with A Reputable Tour Operator

If you're wondering if the bookings you're making are safe for your client, here are six tips on how you can make sure you're booking with a reputable tour operator.

Recently, tour operator **Exploring Vacations**, a tour operator in Ireland and the United Kingdom, closed. According to the company's website, "**RTS Travel Limited** trading as Exploring Vacations has ceased to trade as of Sept. 13, 2018." A closure such as this one might have you wondering how you could make sure your clients' vacations are safely booked when you work with a tour operator.

We reached out to **Tenon Tours**, a U.S.-based tour operator that specializes in European destinations to find out what you can do to keep your clients' travels safely booked. We spoke to Bryan Lewis, president of Tenon Tours, for tips on how agents and travelers can be sure they've booked with a reputable tour operator.



Here are Lewis' recommendations:

1. Do Your Due Diligence

Most travel agents are well-versed in doing extensive background research on destinations and tourism companies, but even a quick Google search can help agents or travelers decide if a tour operator is legitimate. Check recent news about the company for any red flags, or look for recent awards or honors that show growth and financial health.

2. Go Back to the Board

If travel agents or travelers have concerns, they should always check that a tour operator is part of globally recognized associations, such as the **International Air Transport Association**, the **American Society of Travel Advisors**, or the **United States Tour Operators Association**. Beyond that, it's great to inquire with the tourism board in the chosen destination to ensure the company you're considering is a reputable one.

3. Read the Reviews—but Be Careful

If the company an agent or traveler is considering is based in the U.S., check the Better Business Bureau. This is still a powerful tool, and reviews here can only be made by actual customers. It doesn't hurt to check out other review sites as well, like Facebook, Yelp and TripAdvisor, but take these reviews with a grain of salt, since ratings can be made by anyone, even if they aren't verified.

4. Check Where They're Based

Look into where the company is based, and ensure they have a real office and established presence. At Tenon, we feel a U.S.-based company is best for U.S. travelers because we operate under U.S. law and our tours are priced in U.S. currency, meaning the price you see is the price you pay at the end, regardless of the fluctuation of any local currency.

5. If the Worst Happens, Go to the Bank

No one likes to think about the worst case scenario, but if the tour operator you or a client is working with doesn't deliver for whatever reason, the customer can dispute the charges with their credit card company. Many people don't realize they're protected by the issuing bank when services aren't delivered. If the customer bought travel insurance, it also doesn't hurt to check if it covers insolvency or bankruptcy. It's not common, but it's worth asking.

6. If it Seems Too Good to be True, Skip It

It's a saying for a reason. If prices seem too good to be true, they probably are. At Tenon Tours, we're always honest with people. We aren't the cheapest—but there's good reason for that. We deliver a quality experience you can trust.

In addition, if your clients were booked with Exploring Vacations, Tenon Tours can help you. Since Tenon Tours books travelers to the regions that Exploring Vacations did—Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, The British Isles, Italy, and Iceland—the company is offering to match any deposits or payments already paid to Exploring Vacations, up to 25 percent of the trip's value for a maximum value of \$250 pp, with proof of booking."