



## WHY USE A TRAVEL AGENT?

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When you are planning a trip with your team, there are many factors to take into consideration. Traveling with your team can be either the highlight of your season or the low light of your career if the details are not planned and carried out efficiently. Here are some of the first questions you may have about your trip:

1. How far will your school district allow you to travel?
2. What information is required from you to seek district approval for your trip?
3. Should you fly or go by charter bus?
4. How much school time will be missed?
5. What type of hotel? Does it have a pool? Is the location accessible to your activities? Is it in a safe part of town? Is it within walking distance of fast food restaurants?
6. What type of fun activities do you want for your team in addition to your focal performance?
7. What kind of budget do you have for meals? Will it require bus transportation? Can the restaurant accommodate groups?
8. How can we get the most for our money on our trip?

All of these questions could take you an immense amount of time and multiple phone calls. Or, it can be answered by your qualified travel agent who is accustomed to planning *student group* travel. Many people are under the false impression that it costs more to book with a travel agent when the opposite is actually true. Travel agents are paid commissions by the hotels, airlines and bus companies and are not added to your fees. A good travel agent can research the best prices for a quality trip and is knowledgeable in assisting you with your plans for an effective itinerary for your group. An agent that is experienced in booking student group tours can usually save you money by making large room blocks at hotels as well as seating blocks with the airlines. With their *high volume* guarantees, the agent can barter for the best rates for the consumer.

There are some things you should know about the industry that will help you to be more knowledgeable about travel. You will sometimes see or hear of airlines selling seats at a drastically low rate. Keep in mind that there are only a few seats on the plane that can sell at that price. The airlines will usually quote a group rate that will be somewhere between the lowest advertised rate and the regular coach rate. The airline will have to average the cost for the seats on the plane in order to make it cost effective for them.

When contacting hotels, they will quote you a *rack rate*, or the same rate for all individual inquiries. Travel agents are able to negotiate a special group rate by making large room blocks and deposits up front. One variable that you must remember when booking your group, in order for you to ensure these discount prices, you will have to make deposits and guarantees. When you have an individual that must cancel, they will probably forfeit their initial deposit.

When you are spending money on a special trip, you will want to set aside some time for your team to have fun. This is where the experienced travel agent can offer you a variety of activities to choose from that will fit into your itinerary and budget.

It is important to remember when you are sending out a bid to ensure the consistency of the trip content and price comparisons. You should outline for the agencies the criteria which they should base their prices.