

Neil Shepherd, MD of Newlyn Male Choir and “Laudate!”, also a qualified travel agent and tour operator writes.....

Readers of this site will no doubt have heard the extremely sad news of the cancellation of the Mousehole MVC Centenary tour to Ireland due to the failure of the tour company. Members, families and friends had paid £51,000 up front to a tour company, including money raised from fund raising efforts, and payments made by members. Click on the link below for further info.

<http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/homepagenews/Village-choir-s-centenary-celebrations-left-tatters-travel-firm-booking-tour-goes-bust/article-1024935-detail/article.html>

This sad tale draws attention to a few “do’s and don’ts” as far as choir tours are concerned.

1. If you are organising a choir tour, ALWAYS ensure from the outset that your travel arrangements are covered by insurances which will cover you if the tour company or travel agent “goes under”.
2. Check that the travel agent or tour operator concerned is covered by bonding (eg ABTA, ATOL, etc). If an agent claims to be covered by an ATOL licence – check by logging on to the ATOL website <http://www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=27> To confirm membership of ABTA, log on to <http://www.abta.com/home>
3. Mousehole choir were travelling by Coach and Ferry. Be aware that an A.T.O.L. licence **ONLY** covers air travel. It **does not** cover buses, ferries, coaches, taxi’s, transfer companies, hotel accommodation, excursions and meals whilst you are at your tour destinations etc. If a “D.I.Y” package is booked, you need to ensure that all components of your tour are covered.
4. If you are able to, pay some, if not all of your tour costs by credit card. This has benefits including getting refunds (to a certain extent) if things go round.
5. Information about legal requirements concerning tours/operators can be found below: (Info from “Travel Watchdog”)

The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992, represents a little known piece of legislation. The bones of this act are published here, but if you wish to look at the DTI on-line publication, and have access to some useful FAQ's, go to: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/facts/package.htm>

Relevant or Related Legislation Consumer protection is offered under The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992.

Key Facts

What makes a package holiday? The definition of a package holiday is complex, but a package holiday must:

- be sold or offered for sale
- be sold at an inclusive price
- be pre-arranged
- include a minimum of two of the three elements of:
 - ° Transport
 - ° Accommodation
 - ° Other tourist services (not ancillary to transport or accommodation) accounting for a significant proportion of the package, such as a tour guide.

In the UK, anyone who offers for sale (other than occasionally) package holidays must comply with the Package Travel Regulations 1992. These set out travel organisers' responsibilities to their customers and remedies available to them should there occur a breach of the regulations.

The regulations provide consumers with statutory legal rights against tour operators by making clear to operators that they have legal responsibilities to their customers. The Regulations also enable dissatisfied holidaymakers to pursue their case with a single supplier, the travel organiser, instead of with individual suppliers such as airlines or hoteliers.

Where a tour operator has failed to honour its contractual obligations to a customer, it may be liable to pay compensation.

For help with contacting the relevant authorities/regulating bodies, [follow this link](#)

To view the relevant statute : http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si1992/Uksi_19923288_en_1.htm

In conclusion – **if in doubt, ASK**. I am willing to offer a little free advice to Cornish MVC's considering organising tours if I can be of use.

On a professional basis, I am able to plan tours, itineraries, venues, publicity for very realistic fees etc. I work with a number of reasonably priced *reputable* travel agents and tour operators on a commission basis and I am able to offer help with all aspects of a choir tour. Contact me on 01736 759944 or e-mail neilshepherd@yahoo.co.uk.

My website can be found at www.neilshepherd.org.uk

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