

TRAVEL ADVICE WORTH PACKING

Planning a holiday is exciting. At the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) we understand that a travel-related booking can often be a large purchase and so we encourage travellers to take simple steps to protect themselves in the same way they would for any purchase.

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BOOKING YOUR NEXT TRIP

1. LOOK FOR THE ATAS SYMBOL

In Australia, the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) administers the only accreditation scheme for travel businesses called ATAS (AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme). The ATAS symbol represents that the business has met strict criteria in order to become nationally accredited and that the business is credible, experienced and professional.

ATAS PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING PROTECTIONS

IT'S AN AUSTRALIAN REGISTERED BUSINESS

By booking through an Australian business, you can be certain that your rights under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) will be enforceable. Whilst the ACL also applies to overseas online sellers, it is difficult to obtain a remedy under Australian laws or any other consumer protection laws in that country due to the distance.

Pay particular attention when booking online that the company is an Australian registered business or look for the ATAS symbol.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

You can be certain that by booking with an ATAS accredited travel agency any complaint that may arise will be managed professionally.

ATAS accreditation means that the business has a robust 3-stage complaint process available to consumers: internal dispute resolution by the agent, escalation to AFTA for review and thirdly, an independent review committee should the matter remain unresolved.

ATAS CODE OF CONDUCT

Only ATAS accredited businesses agree to conduct their business pursuant to the ATAS Code of Conduct which sets out the service obligations of the business to you, the consumer.

2. PAY FOR TRAVEL BOOKINGS WITH A CREDIT CARD

Travel is a global economy, so there will from time to time, be business failures both domestically and overseas. The best way to protect your travel booking against fraud or a supplier going insolvent, is to pay by credit card. The rules governing credit card purchases generally provide that where a service or good is not provided, the payment may be reversed (this is called a chargeback). Check with your credit card provider as to the rules for your card.

Whilst credit card payments attract a surcharge fee, this fee provides a valuable insurance in the event you don't get what you paid for.

3. ALWAYS READ THE BOOKING TERMS AND CONDITIONS

You are entering a contract when you purchase your holiday. Pay particular attention to the following:

- Cancellations fees.
- Non-refundable deposits/components.
- Change fees.
- Visa and passport responsibilities.
- Check your itinerary and flight time. e.g. 01:00 equates to 1am in the morning.
- Before signing or paying monies, ensure you understand the terms and conditions fully.

If you are unsure of something, ask your travel agent.