

Hints and tips for booking your coach or minibus	national express
Always go to a reputable coach operator that can meet all of your safety, reliability and customer service requirements.	
<p><b>Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that the operator has a suitable Operator's licence (known as the 'O' Licence) and is not operating under a not for profit (section 19 / 22) permit. The public service vehicle operator's licence ensures that coach operators have registered their business and that their vehicles comply with the law. You can check this easily on <a href="http://www.tan.gov.uk">www.tan.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• Good coach operators will ensure that their vehicles are clean and well maintained. Much like your own car, coaches and minibuses must be serviced regularly to reduce the likelihood of breakdown.</li> <li>• Seat belts should be fitted on all coaches and minibuses registered after 2001, however additional requirements apply when the trip is organised for the carriage of children. It is the law to wear seat belts but you'd be surprised how many coach operators still have coaches without any fitted</li> <li>• By law, drivers are only allowed to drive for <b>4.5 hours</b> before they must have a scheduled break of 45 minutes. Generally under European law, drivers can only drive for <b>9 hours</b> in any <b>15 hour period</b> and cannot continue to drive without adequate rest periods, both overnight and rest days. Always bear this in mind when booking coaches for longer distances, particularly anything into Europe</li> <li>• Good coach operators will conduct a risk assessment for your journey taking into account distance, low bridges, tight turns and accessibility at your destination</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Reliability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches travel long distances and modern, well maintained vehicles are less likely to fail or develop issues.</li> <li>• In the unfortunate situation that your coach does break down – what is your contingency? Larger and reputable operators will have less breakdowns and will often have good contingency plans, sometimes with replacement vehicles in different locations. You should ask this question when booking.</li> <li>• All coach drivers must be trained and hold a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) licence and Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC) which requires a set amount of training hours each year. Good coach drivers will have excellent driving skills, knowledge of traffic regulations, good communication skills, patience and a responsible attitude. Always remember that a driver is responsible for your safety and those you are travelling with.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Customer Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good coach operators will have a great attitude to customer service and will listen to all your travel needs. They will make you feel valued and appreciated as a customer</li> <li>• Reputable coach operators will be easy to get hold of, have modern ways of doing business and will often have plenty of testimonials from previous satisfied customers</li> <li>• Should you need to make a complaint about any part of the service you receive, good coach operators will have a clear process that they follow and a dedicated contact point for getting in touch</li> <li>• Good customer service can be a very important part of your trip – setting the tone for your journey and adding to the spirit of getting away and on the open road! Don't underestimate this important element – a good operator and driver can make that trip even more memorable!</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By law, coaches do not have to be wheelchair accessible until 2020 – and even then only for scheduled (timetabled) services.</li> <li>• Some modern coaches now come with wheelchair or step-free access but do not take this as a given, it is always best to ask what type of disabled access the coach has</li> <li>• Many coach operators still don't have accessible coaches in their fleet so always ask if there any accessible options for you to consider</li> <li>• A crucial element in providing a great service is having the right attitude to equality and diversity</li> <li>• If you are booking a wheelchair accessible vehicle, always check that your destination is equally accessible and open to all</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Comfort</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always consider whether your journey will be broken with any 'comfort breaks' or if there is a toilet on board.</li> <li>• Coaches with larger capacities (over 60 seats) tend to have very upright narrow seats. If this is the case, it's always worth having a look at the coach you are booking, especially if there are a significant number of adults travelling.</li> <li>• Some children may get travel sickness en-route. Be prepared - any messy incidents can be uncomfortable for all!</li> </ul>	