

Government Advice on School Trips: (last update 22 December 2021)

Educational visits

Since September 2021 the Government has stated that schools can go on international visits that have previously been deferred or postponed and organise new international visits for the future. This advice remains current (as of 20th December) You should refer to the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice](#) and the [guidance on international travel](#) before booking and travelling.

Given the likely gap in COVID-19 related cancellation insurance, if you are considering booking a new visit, whether domestic or international, you are advised to ensure that any new bookings have adequate financial protection in place.

You should speak to either your visit provider, commercial insurance company, or the risk protection arrangement (RPA) to assess the protection available. Independent advice on insurance cover and options can be sought from the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) or Association of British Insurers (ABI). Any school holding ATOL or ABTA refund credit notes may use these credit notes to rebook educational or international visits.

You should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits and ensure that any public health advice, such as hygiene and ventilation requirements, is included as part of that risk assessment. [General guidance](#) about educational visits is available and is supported by specialist advice from the [Outdoor Education Advisory Panel \(OEAP\)](#).

Trips abroad can have extra risks and need a higher level of risk assessment.

Schools should make sure any organisation that is providing activities holds the LotC Quality Badge or similar accreditation.

The HSE does not cover incidents overseas. However, it can investigate work done in Britain to support the trip, like risk assessments. School staff could also be liable under civil law for any injuries to the children due to negligence.

If the trip includes significant risks, such as challenging terrain, going to remote places or extreme climates, follow the guide to the [British Standard for adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom](#) (BS8848) as the basis for the planning and risk assessment. Organisations employed by the school should follow this too.

Schools should consider the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's detailed guidance on [safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas](#) when organising adventure visits abroad. A [teachers' pack](#) is also available.

Adventure Travel

Adventurous travel is becoming increasingly popular. Whether you or an organisation make the arrangements direct or through a company, safety must be an integral part of planning and managing any successful trip.

Balancing adventure and challenge with safety

No one can guarantee safety, especially in unfamiliar and unpredictable environments, but choosing travel organisations that take good preparation and planning seriously is a good start. The FCDO and [British Standards Institution \(BSI\)](#) have created a useful [checklist](#) to help guide you in this task.

Checking out safety standards

- if you choose an organisation that prepares properly you are more likely to stay safe on your trip
- don't just assume that safety is well managed: check with whoever makes the arrangements and find out what safety standard(s) the organisers adhere to - e.g. do they use BS 8848?
- ask for evidence of how they comply with the standard(s), including the provider's responsibility for making checks on sub-contractors providing accommodation, transport and activities
- read the contract being offered and be clear about who is responsible for all parts of the venture, including any outsourced elements, how these are checked; and ask about roles (who precisely is responsible for what)

What is BS 8848?

[BS 8848](#) provides a rigorous framework for adventure providers to properly manage risks on adventure trips abroad. As with all British Standards, BS 8848 is voluntary. However, for a company to claim they comply with it, and for it to be effective in minimising risks, adventure providers must fully implement all the measures in the Standard.

The information provided by BS 8848 is not only for adventure providers. It is also for organisers of educational activities abroad including university and academic fieldwork, gap year experience, charity challenges and research expeditions. Individuals can also refer to it to help satisfy themselves that their potential provider has planned effectively, has good procedures in place, and is able to manage safety overseas. See [BSI's guide to Safer Adventures](#) to help with this.

Before committing to a particular adventure trip, any organisation identifiable as "the provider" should find out:

- what exactly is involved in the venture and are there any risky activities planned?
- where/what is the sleeping accommodation?
- who is responsible for individual parts or aspects of the trip?
- who is the person or organisation (the venture provider) with overall responsibility for all parts of the venture, including those run by third parties?
- has the venture leader - and the team members - got sufficient training and experience of similar ventures, activities and environments?
- are there contact details to let you ask previous participants about their experiences?
- what level of physical fitness, experience and skill level is needed to take part?
- is any pre-trip training required and what equipment is needed?
- are particular vaccinations or anti malaria precautions recommended?
- is there any guidance on coping with environment-related illnesses, for example heatstroke, or altitude sickness?
- what evidence do they have of using the safety standard properly?

What happens in an emergency?

Despite careful planning, emergencies can and do arise, so make sure are fully aware of how emergencies will be dealt with. Make sure you have answers to the following questions:

- will the provider pay for any costs directly, or will you be expected to pay and be refunded later?
- what aspects of your trip are not covered by the provider's insurance, and what additional insurance as a participant do you need to obtain?

- what are the evacuation procedures and arrangements for emergency travel back to the UK?
- who should I contact in the event of illness, accident or emergency, both abroad and in the UK?

Remember, if there is no external trip organiser, it is even more important to check off all these points and make arrangements for yourself to cover all these eventualities.

Schools using an outside organisation to provide an activity must check they have appropriate safety standards and liability insurance.

The school or organisation in whose name the venture is operating must check that any selected outside organisation is appropriate to use. This could include checking:

- their insurance
- that they meet legal requirements
- their health and safety and emergency policies
- their risk assessments
- control measures
- their use of vehicles
- staff competence
- safeguarding
- accommodation
- any sub-contracting arrangements they have
- that they have a licence where needed

The school should have a clear agreement with any such organisation that makes it clear what everyone is responsible for, and when those responsibilities start and end. This information should be communicated to parents in advance of the venture. This is especially important if the outside organisation is going to take over supervision of the young people at any stage of the venture.