

## **HOLIDAYS!**

Most of us look forward to the annual holiday with anticipation that it will provide us with rest, relaxation and enough good memories to see us through the winter. Unfortunately, for a few individuals every year these memories are more likely to bring a shudder rather than a smile.

### **HOW TO AVOID THOSE NIGHTMARE HOLIDAYS**

#### **BROCHURE**

If you get a holiday brochure, you will find that it contains a lot of information. This information is required by law. You should find:

- the price of the holiday
- details about the destination
- details about the accommodation
- transport information
- details about meals
- the itinerary (if appropriate)
- passport/visa requirements
- payment particulars (including time scale)
- cancellation information.

This information is very important, not only when you book your holiday but also whilst on holiday. Please be sure that you know exactly what you are booking.

The information in the brochure must be accurate, and if it is not the travel agent and the tour operator may be prosecuted.

You might also be able to claim compensation, if you are given information which is inaccurate.

#### **BOOKING YOUR HOLIDAY AND WHAT YOU MUST BE TOLD**

There is some information you must be given either by the travel agent or the tour operator before you enter the contract. You must be told about any passport or visa requirements and about any special health formalities, e.g. whether you need jabs for yellow fever or cholera. You must also be given information about how your money is protected against the possibility of the company going out of business including arrangements for getting you home from abroad.

Before you go on holiday you must be supplied with more specific information regarding transport connections and stops; a local contact abroad or

telephone number; and information about holiday insurance whether compulsory or not.

You should read your holiday contract carefully. It must contain all the information you need to have a successful holiday and it may be used by you if you have any dispute over what you are (or were) entitled to. Items which must appear include destination; period of stay; transport details; accommodation details, including location and class; meals; the route taken; excursions; price (and how this may be changed); payment arrangements; any special conditions agreed and how to make a complaint.

### **WHEN YOU GET HOME**

It is important that you make your complaint, in writing, to the tour operator or travel agent as soon as you get home. Many holiday contracts stipulate that you should do so within a set time - so check your contract. Delay may make it seem that you are not serious about your complaint.

Try to make the complaint as complete as possible, mentioning everything that you want to complain about. Give them a fixed time to reply - two to three weeks is not unreasonable.

There are some things which the travel agent or tour operator cannot escape liability for. If a sub-contractor in the resort fails to deliver a service, they should compensate you except where unforeseen circumstances beyond their control have caused the problems.

Remember - if you have a problem with services in the resort you must report it to the relevant person there and then, e.g. hotel manager, tour guide, tour representative and also let the tour operator know. If you do not, this may affect the amount of compensation you can claim, but it does not prevent you from making a claim.

### **IMPORTANT**

After you have concluded a contract no price revision may be made except for transport, taxes, or exchange rates and only if the contract says so.

### **WHAT TO DO IF IT ALL GOES WRONG**

Often you won't be aware of problems until you get to your resort. If your "peaceful, sleepy village" has discos till six o'clock every morning, or your "balcony with sea view" overlooks a ten-foot wall there are steps you can take.

1. Complain immediately at the resort. Be clear about what is making you unhappy. If you are unhappy about a service also complain to the manager;  
Complain to the Tour Representative, and ask her what she is prepared to do. Stay calm;

2. Keep a diary of events, include dates, times, etc.;
3. Take photographs and/or video of the problem. Use a new film or tape for this and try not to mix happy holiday photos with the complaint photos. It might reduce the value of your claim if the company can show that you got some enjoyment from your holiday.
4. Try to get the names and addresses of other holidaymakers who have witnessed your complaint. If they have experienced the same problems this may help to prove your claim.
5. If you have to spend money as a result of your complaint, keep your receipts, e.g. if meals are not supplied or there is a food poisoning epidemic.
6. Be reasonable - the Court might not believe that champagne and caviar would be your normal everyday meal.
7. Sometimes you or those travelling with you will be asked to complete a Customer Satisfaction Form. Be honest - do not feel obliged to say 'something nice' just because the Tour Representative gives you a sob story.
8. Complain to the Travel Agent and the Tour Operator immediately on your return.