



Simply stated, the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) is a professional association representing the tour operator industry. We are composed of companies whose tours and packages encompass the entire globe and who conduct business in the U.S.

USTOA was founded in 1972 by a small group of California tour operators concerned about tour operator bankruptcies. These founding members recognized the need for a unified voice to protect the traveling public, as well as to represent the interests of tour operators. In 1975, USTOA became a national organization with headquarters in New York.

USTOA members number among the top names in travel and represent the entire spectrum of vacation packages and tours available today. In fact, our member companies are responsible for the majority of tours and vacation packages sold by travel agents in the U.S.

According to a recent survey, USTOA companies move more than 11 million passengers annually and account for an annual sales volume of more than \$9 billion. This sales success story reflects the organization's pledge to encourage and maintain the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and service.

Membership Requirements

To become an Active Member of USTOA, a tour operator is required to have a total of 18 references from a variety of industry sources and financial institutions and must meet spe-

cific minimums in terms of tour passengers and/or dollar volume. The company must also be in business at least three years under the same management in the U.S. and must carry a minimum of \$1,000,000 professional liability insurance.

Another important membership requirement is adherence to USTOA's strict code of ethics, which is framed by a pledge to encourage and maintain the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and service.

In addition to these requirements, all USTOA Active Members must participate in USTOA's \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program.

Our Mission and Goals

USTOA's motto is "Integrity in Tourism." Accordingly, the association has established some of the highest standards in the industry. Among these is the principle of ethical conduct, which requires members to conduct business according to a set of professional standards. Additionally, members must represent all facts, conditions and requirements relating to tours and vacation packages truthfully and accurately.

Truth in Advertising requires that members advertise and quote prices which are totally deliverable; accurately identify facilities, accommodations and services; and communicate any substitutions promptly to the travel agent and/or their client.

Members must also demonstrate ethical and financial responsibility in their business conduct, and instill confidence

in their financial stability, reliability and integrity.

Among USTOA's goals are to:

- Educate the travel industry, government agencies, and the public about tours, vacation packages, and tour operators
- Protect consumers and travel agents from financial loss in the event of a member's bankruptcy or insolvency
- Foster a high level of professionalism within the tour operator industry
- Facilitate and develop travel on a worldwide basis

Our Activities

The association made history in 1976 when it became the first travel organization to establish a consumer protection fund, followed by a \$100,000 per member bonding requirement to protect consumers' tour deposits and payments in case of bankruptcy or default.

Over the years, the plan has been strengthened in response to changing economic times. Today, our \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program—which requires each member company to set aside \$1 million of its own funds specifically to protect consumers' deposits and payments—is recognized as the strongest of its kind in the industry.

But, USTOA does far more. Through an ongoing public relations campaign and consumer pamphlets, we educate the traveling public about the benefits of packaged vacations. We help destinations and travel entities build tourism through organizing workshops, site

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inspections, and meetings.

Last but not least, USTOA's highly active government affairs committee has tirelessly championed a policy of open borders. The committee has worked successfully with the U.S. State Department and other government entities to facilitate tourism worldwide.

Why Sell USTOA Members' Products?

In addition to adhering to USTOA's goals and principles, each USTOA company must meet the industry's strictest requirements. To join, a company is required to supply 18 references from a variety of reputable travel industry organizations, as well as to meet specific minimums in passengers and/or dollar tour volume. Additionally, the company must be in business at least three years under the same ownership and/or management, and carry a minimum \$1,000,000 professional Travel Agent/Tour Operator liability insurance, with worldwide coverage, plus a rider to protect you, the travel agent who sells our members' products.

Each of our member companies must not only prove its financial reliability; it must demonstrate its commitment to consumer protection by participating in USTOA's \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program.

And, most important of all, each and every member supports the travel agency distribution system.

USTOA's \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program

When you see the USTOA logo with the emblem identifying the \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program, you can be confident that it represents a company that upholds the travel industry's highest standards...

USTOA's \$1 Million Travelers Assistance Program requires each USTOA Active Member company to post \$1 million in security in the form of a bond or letter of credit. The security, to be held by USTOA Tour Depositors Trust, is solely for use in reimbursing consumers for tour payments or deposits lost in the event of:

- A USTOA Active Member bankruptcy
- A USTOA Active Member insolvency
- A USTOA Active Member cessation of business
- Failure of a USTOA Active member to refund consumer deposits or payments within 120 days following its cancellation of a tour(s) or vacation package(s) or its material failure to complete performance of a tour(s) or vacation package(s).

In some cases—such as one of the larger tour operators becoming insolvent—the \$1 million may not cover all losses. Also, some tour operator brands share coverage under their corporate owner's \$1 million bond.



In addition to financial protection, USTOA also offers travelers invaluable assistance in the event of a member insolvency:

- USTOA will ask all its member companies to provide assistance to affected travelers

in whatever way they can, on a voluntary basis.

- USTOA will inform consumers on their rights of recovery and provide a consumer information center through its website (www.ustoa.com), keeping travelers apprised of latest developments.

- USTOA will serve as a clearinghouse of information, apprising travelers and the press of options available.

How to Find a USTOA Member Company

To identify a member company, look for the USTOA logo on the company's tour literature and in their ads. For a current list of USTOA members and the destinations they serve, as well as literature to distribute to your clients, visit the Travel Agent's Room at www.ustoa.com.