



# UKINBOUND

THE VOICE OF INBOUND TOURISM

## Guidance for Handling Tour Groups

Currently guidance (and changes to guidance) on Covid-19 is being produced almost on a daily basis by the UK Government (and Governments worldwide). However, whilst there is a substantial amount of information available that includes how to social distance effectively inside and outside buildings and on passenger transport – there is currently no central place where those who specialise in the travel of small and large groups can view current guidance to ensure the health and wellbeing of their clients.

UKinbound has therefore pulled together links to existing guidance (and liaised with key Government Departments to obtain further information) which aims to provide some answers to the most common questions raised by members. To be aware however that whilst UKinbound will endeavour to keep this document updated with details of the latest guidance, operators should always double check the latest information on gov.uk - the Association cannot be held liable for group travel arrangements within the UK.

### General

ETOA (The European Tour Operator Association) has produced some short, general guidelines for tour operators that are available to view [here](#).

### Travelling to and within the UK

The Department for Transport (DfT) has confirmed that coaches travelling into the UK should follow the Safer Travel guidance for [passengers](#) and [operators](#). For England (please check the links for guidance for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), this sets out that operators should maintain 2 metres distance where possible, and where this is not possible, the risk should be reduced by maintaining a 1 metre distance and taking suitable mitigations including face coverings and increased hand washing/hand sanitiser.

DfT have also confirmed that in terms of entering and leaving the UK, there is no limit on the number of passengers in a vehicle, although adhering to the guidelines will of course limit capacity. Whilst DfT are keen to encourage all coach operators to follow the Government's social distancing guidance, they will not be refusing coaches entry at the border due to lack of compliance with the guidance.

To be aware that if a group plans to travel to the UK by ferry, please check with the ferry company you intend to use before travelling as some companies have imposed limits of 25 people on coaches and some have refused coaches altogether.

### **What is the maximum size for a tour group?**

The latest advice on group sizes can be found [here](#). As of 17 July – in England, this guidance states that it is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). However, businesses and venues following Covid-19 secure guidelines can host larger groups. This is also the case for events in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, charitable or political organisations, and public bodies, provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission, in line with Covid-19 secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment.

To be aware that all those responsible for looking after and managing groups will need to take into account the different policies and capacity levels at hotels, attractions, bars, restaurants and events etc. We have been made aware that some hotels are not taking groups at the moment, partly for logistical reasons but also due to the potential risk of having to deal with a group having to self-isolate at the hotel due to a suspected Covid-19 case. We also understand that some tour guides are putting strict limits on the number of guests they can guide and that some attractions have opened for individuals but are not as yet accepting group bookings.

### **What if someone in the group falls ill with Covid-19? What is the process?**

The Government are yet to confirm official advice on how to best handle Covid-19 infection/symptoms when a group is travelling by coach however tentative advice at this stage is that it is likely that the whole group would be asked to self-isolate in case of an infection. This advice could change if and when tests with immediate results become available.

To mitigate against this possibility, those responsible for organising group travel should make sure that all passengers are healthy before travelling, and not to take any risks whilst travelling.

If a group has to self isolate – then they should follow the current advice that is available for [accommodation providers](#) (please also check the latest guidance for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#)). This states that if a person does show symptoms of Covid-19 and the person can travel home safely, without the use of public transport, they should do so. If they are unable to do this, and their accommodation is the safest place - then they should isolate there. The visitor would be liable for costs of an extended stay.

If it's not possible to remain in the accommodation for the duration of the isolation period e.g. because the accommodation is booked for future guests, and they can't find other accommodation themselves with support from friends or family, the person should discuss this with the NHS Test and Protect team.

There's assistance available for those who may need help to isolate via the National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000. This helpline routes the person through to the local authority support team who, in discussion with the individual and the local health protection team, will help identify alternative isolation accommodation.

We recognise that the current advice is not particularly group friendly and is high risk for tour operators. If group travel is to take place, then please ensure that there is adequate insurance in place and guests fully understand any liability issues.

**Should tour guides ask for group contact details for the Track and Trace Scheme?**

The British Guild of Tourist Guides have informed us that if taking a group on a tour, guides will take contact details from the tour leader only but will take contact details from each person if they are taking individuals on a tour.

Current guidance notes can be found [here](#).

**Other requirements for international visitors**

All travellers to the UK have to complete a Public Health Passenger Locator Registration Form 48 hours before travelling. If you think that this may present difficulties, please let us know.