

Sky High Sports – Guide to Flight Bookings

Booking Flights for your tour is often the make or break of choosing that destination as the location for your tour. As such, we have created a 'How-To' guide to help you get the very best flights available, or choose a location which is both suitable and affordable to get to.

Firstly, there are a few truths about booking flights that we need to share with you.

When will prices be available?

Flight prices are released a maximum of 11 months in advance of departure. Anyone stating otherwise is taking a gamble on the prices. The airlines selling tickets 11 months in advance will often be the Major Carriers such as British Airways, Air France, KLM & Virgin. The budget airlines, like Easyjet, Jet2 and Ryanair are slightly slower in releasing their prices, sometimes waiting until 7-8 months ahead of departure – this is often the case with people looking to book a Spring Tour during the late Summer.

How do we book?

The way you can book a group ticket varies. Major Carriers are very easy to work with. Pick your dates, choose how many seats you want and pay a nominal deposit of around £25 per person. The balance and names are then due 4-6 weeks before departure – a fantastic method when you're juggling new players, players leaving, injuries and so on. They're often more expensive & subject to slight tax changes, but the ease of use is a great counter weight.

Budget airlines are all different.

It is no surprise that Ryanair are the most-tricky company to deal with. You can submit a group request through their website. Their team will then send you an offer which you have 48 hours to accept. You will need to pay in full and declare all names there and then. You will then be charged for name changes & not receive a refund if someone drops out. The benefit is often a low cost, but the negative is headaches and surcharges.

With Easyjet, you can book up to 40 people at once without having to go through their Group Team. This is so useful as you can keep an eye on the flight prices for your group. When you book, you will need all names & payment in full at the time of booking. You can add items like baggage and insurance later, but it is still a big up front cost. Should your group rise above 50 people, you do not need to declare your tourist names until a later date – however, payment is still required in full up front.

Airlines like Jet2.com, Aer Lingus, Monarch are almost a hybrid of the three. All offer the option to pay a deposit, with names and payment all up front.

For domestic flights within Europe, we'd always recommend Easyjet. Their prices are often outstanding & the ability to monitor group prices (up to 40 passengers) ahead of booking is a facility not available elsewhere.

For Long-Haul flights, we partner with Aviate Management Groups who are able to provide exceptional rates & options on flights into Europe. They are secured with a deposit of between 10%-25% of the total airfare. The Names & the balance payments are due way down the line as well which gives you great flexibility. Also, up until a certain date before departure, 10% of the seats can be cancelled free of charge should your group fall in numbers.

What is the Price?

The price of a group ticket is often vastly different to that of a single ticket. So often, we have tricky conversations with clients who have checked Easyjet for the price of 1 person & when they receive a higher-priced group quote from us, it doesn't sit well without explanation.

Let's say there are 10 rows in a Plane. Row 1 is priced at £1 and Row 10 at £10. When selling their seats, the airlines theoretically fill up from the front. This is one reason which is why tickets are cheaper when bought in advance. In this instance, your group takes up the first four rows, meaning there are only six rows left. It is therefore likely that your group will be charged somewhere between the £1 and £4. The exact price will depend on the demand of the remaining six rows.

Economies of scale work everywhere else in Travel, but not flights.

How to we attack?

Without sounding like a Scout-Leader, the best way to approach any flight tour is to Be Prepared. If your teams ambition is to fly to Italy, the South of France or Spain, then this decision really should be made at the end of the season previous to the tour.

Then, during the Summer, you can kick your fundraising into gear & be in a position to book and pay for the flights as soon as they are available, or once your season is back in full swing.

Until that point, we'd then say keep your options open. We have excellent Rugby Tour options across Europe, so it may be that flights to your #1 location blows your budget, but a location a little further north or along the coast is bang-on, we can look at that.

This is the same for a date. While it is important to choose a tour-date early on, it often benefits to have a back-up weekend for flexibility.

How do Sky High Sports work with Flights?

Throughout the process, we can do all the work and research for you. We can source the best times, prices and destinations to enhance your tour. We will always be there to offer advice and guidance to ensure you are correctly booked & financially safe.

If you are booking your flights with a budget airline such as Ryanair or Easyjet, we would always recommend that you do this directly with the airline. This is the cheapest way to do it – we cannot get cheaper flights with these guys, so why should we put another cost barrier in your way?

If your tour requires a flight with one of the big-boys like British Airways or Virgin, then we'll task our partners at AVIATE Management with sourcing the best options for you. When you book with Aviate, this can be done in addition to your tour package with Sky High Sports, or directly with Aviate themselves. When booking with Aviate, you will be issued an ATOL Certificate protecting your Flight Booking and keeping you safe.

Lastly, for all tours involving a flight, we insist that you take out a third-party insurance policy to cover your trip. Our partners at Endsleigh Insurance, see our website, can offer superb Group Insurance Policies that cover your travel & injury on the field as well.