



Awareness for Gibraltar Consumers:

➤ Travel Guidance & Awareness

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Introduction:

The Office of Fair Trading (**OFT**) has compiled a comprehensive set of guidelines and tips for travellers based on common complaints received by the OFT Consumer Protection Team. The aim of this guidance is to provide practical advice to consumers on key issues that can impact individuals when travelling abroad.

Before Making Your Travel Plans:

Having the right knowledge is crucial for a rewarding travel experience. Consider the following tips to minimize any potential disappointments:

1. Research:

- a. Avoid booking the first option you come across. Take the time to compare different offers to find the best deal. Conduct independent research on your destination to determine your desired sights and experiences, ensuring that the travel offers align with your expectations.
- b. Seek recommendations from trusted family and friends regarding reliable travel agencies, vacation rentals, hotels, and travel package providers.
- c. Be cautious when relying solely on online reviews, as some can be manipulated or fake.
- d. Use the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office website to access important information about your destination, including entry requirements, travel restrictions, safety and security concerns, as well as available travel advice and support.

2. Additional Costs: Be mindful of any hidden costs that may not be immediately apparent. Resort fees, also known as destination, facility, or amenity fees, can significantly increase your daily expenses.

3. Taxes: Some offers may claim to be tax-free, but it's important to inquire about any taxes that may be applicable at your destination. These taxes can sometimes be substantial.

4. Scams: Exercise caution to avoid common holiday scams:

- a. If a deal appears too good to be true, research the travel service provider by searching for keywords like "scam," "review," or "complaint" online.
- b. When booking through third-party websites like Booking.com or Airbnb, always make payments through these platforms and never directly to the host.

5. Travel Documents: Familiarize yourself with the entry requirements of the country you plan to visit.

- a. Check the official immigration or government website of the destination to verify whether your passport alone is sufficient or if additional actions are required prior to traveling.
- b. If you're booking through a travel agent, they should be able to assist you with this information.
- c. If you're booking a package holiday, the package organizer must provide you with the necessary information.

- d. Keep in mind that many countries require your passport to have at least six months' validity remaining upon arrival.
6. Visas: If a visa is required for entry into a specific country, rely on the country's official visa portal for accurate information.
 - a. Beware of private entities that charge exorbitant fees to assist with visa applications.
 - b. Allow ample time for the visa application process, as it can vary from a few days to several months depending on the destination.
 - c. The processing time for visa applications can vary depending on the country you are visiting, ranging from a few days to several months.
 - d. If you're booking through a travel agent or a package holiday organizer, they should provide you with information and assistance regarding visa requirements.
 7. Cancellations: Before making any payments, inquire about the cancellation and refund policies. If possible, obtain a copy of these policies. For further information on cancellations, refer to section 16.

General Travel Tips:

Once you've chosen your destination, consider the following guidelines:

8. Method of Payment: Using a credit card for bookings and travel expenses may offer additional protection compared to cash or debit cards. Review the terms and conditions provided by your credit card provider for more details.
9. Travel Insurance: Purchase travel insurance as soon as you book your holiday. Familiarize yourself with the policy's terms and conditions, understanding what is covered and the emergency procedures to follow.
10. Scams: While enjoying your vacation, be wary of individuals who attempt to pressure you into making quick decisions without allowing time for consideration or seeking advice from others. Always negotiate and agree upon a price for services in advance to avoid any unexpected surprises.
11. Border control in EU Airports: Following Brexit, crossing the border at EU airports may now involve longer processing times. The previously available dedicated EU fast-track lanes, which facilitated expedited passport and customs clearance, are no longer accessible. It is advisable to allocate ample time to prevent delays and minimize any disruption to your holiday plans.
12. Importation restrictions: When it comes to taking food products and medication abroad, it is important to always check the official website of the country's Customs & Border Control for importation restrictions. You can also refer to the [UK Foreign Travel Advice website](#).
13. Mobile roaming charges: Prior to your trip, ensure to consult your mobile network provider regarding any potential data roaming charges. By doing so, you can avoid exorbitant fees. Additionally, it may be worthwhile to consider acquiring a local SIM card at your destination.
14. Travelling with Pets: Before embarking on your journey, ascertain the vaccination requirements, necessary certificates, and/or passports for the country you intend to visit.

For specific information, feel free to reach out to the Animal Welfare Centre at +350 20043352.

15. Driving abroad: Verify that you possess all the essential documents required for driving in your destination country. It is advisable to check whether an International Driving License is necessary. If you have any inquiries, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department can provide assistance. You can contact them through the following website: <https://dvld.egov.gi/idp/>

16. Booking confirmations: Make sure you check what you booked upon your arrival. You may want to check the rate and amenities you booked, particularly if these were booked through a third party website. This is also essential if the host says your reservation is 'lost' or 'cancelled'.

Cancellations:

Generally, consumers have a legal entitlement to receive a refund for travel arrangements that are cancelled by Tour Operators or Travel Agents.

17. Package Holidays: A trip or vacation is classified as a "package" when it involves the combination of two or more travel services, such as flights, accommodations, car rentals, or guided tours, and meets any of the following criteria

- a. the services are provided by a single trader;
- b. they are purchased from a single point of sale; or
- c. they are offered, sold, or charged at an inclusive price.

18. Pursuing a refund: In the event that your package holiday is cancelled, you are entitled to receive a full refund within 14 days of the cancellation. You should not be compelled to accept any alternative form of compensation.

19. Flights: If your flight is cancelled or delayed, you may be eligible for compensation depending on several factors. These factors include whether the flight originated from the UK or an EU country (including Iceland, Norway, or Switzerland), or if it was operated by a UK or EU airline for flights arriving in the UK or EU. Airlines have an obligation to provide passengers with options such as a refund, re-routing at the earliest convenience, or re-routing on a later date as per the passenger's preference. For detailed information on potential compensation amounts, you can refer to the following websites:

- a. [Air Travel | UKICC - The UK International Consumer Centre \(ukecc.net\)](https://www.ukiccc.org/); and
- b. [Claim compensation if your flight's delayed or cancelled - Citizens Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/travel/flights/claim-compensation-if-your-flight-is-delayed-or-cancelled/).

20. Cancellations by consumers: If you decide to cancel your travel arrangements, it is important to note that obtaining a refund or seeking redress will be contingent upon the terms and conditions specified in your contract with the travel operator, as well as relevant legislation. However, exceptions may apply if you are unable to travel due to government-imposed public health measures or similar restrictions.

21. What to do if things go wrong - In the initial stage, make an effort to resolve any problems directly with the Travel Operator or Service Provider. If their response is unsatisfactory, you have several options available:

- a. If you are dealing with an airline, you can refer the matter to an [Alternative Dispute Resolution](#) (ADR) provider.
- b. If the airline provider operates from Gibraltar, report the issue to the Director of Civil Aviation at dca@gibraltar.gov.gi
- c. [Submit a complaint to the OFT](#) (Office of Fair Trading) for investigation.
- d. Get in touch with your travel insurance provider for assistance.
- e. If applicable, consider a bank chargeback or file a claim with the issuer of the card you used to make payment.
- f. Initiate civil proceedings against the responsible party if necessary.

Useful links:

For foreign travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

Information on holiday cancellations and compensation for delayed or cancelled flights: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/holiday-cancellations-and-compensation/if-your-flights-delayed-or-cancelled/>

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department website: <https://dvld.egov.gi/idp/>

Contact us:

We hope the above information proves helpful. If you have any questions, encounter any problems, or believe that we have omitted important details from this guidance, please reach out to the OFT's Consumer Protection Team.

- ✓ Email: consumer.protection@gibraltar.gov.gi
- ✓ Tel: +350 20071700
- ✓ WhatsApp: +350 56002998

For the latest consumer guidance:

- visit our website www.oft.gov.gi;
- or follow our social media accounts:



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