

Title:

Travel Wise: Selecting A Virtual Travel Specialist

Word Count:

573

Summary:

Gone are the days of relying on your neighborhood travel agent or spending the first day of your vacation hunting for a local outfitter or guide. Reliable travel specialists are located in virtually every corner of the world and can now be accessed on the web.

Whether you are searching for a tour operator, travel agency or outfitter, the following tips will help you weed through the plethora of travel specialists hawking their wares online.

Websites

The design and co...

Keywords:

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Article Body:

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Websites

The design and content of a company's website speaks volumes about the way they do business.

- A travel specialist's website should provide information that is useful, informative and fun.
- The contact information, including a phone number and an email address, should

be easy to locate.

- The site should also include all relevant information, such as the cost of an excursion, maps and directions. And, for those engaging an adventure specialist, a packing list, either directly in the content or in the form of an FAQ (frequently asked questions).

Visible track record

Great website but how do I know they can deliver? Assessing a travel specialists credentials is not as difficult as it sounds.

- Many industry associations and tourist boards list members and accredited agencies on their websites.
- Check references, read testimonials from previous clients, pose questions on a travel forum.

Knowledge and experience

Nothing can be a substitute for knowledge and experience.

- Determine the agency or outfitter's knowledge of your travel destination as well as the type of adventure you wish to experience.
- Find out how long they have been in the business and whether they are accustomed to organizing tours for singles, families or seniors.

Location of the outfitter

If they are not located in the country you will be traveling to you may also wish to understand:

- Who will sort out any problems, accidents, or emergencies that may arise during your holiday?
- When was the last time they biked down that country road?
- Or how they will obtain a refund for the boat tour that was cancelled due to inclement weather.

Client service

If communicating with the specialist is a challenge there is a good chance your trip will turn out to be a disaster. Select a specialist that is committed to organizing quality trips and returning satisfied clients.

- How quickly does the agency or outfitter respond to your emails and telephone calls?
- Are they eager to assist you with the planning of your vacation?
- Do they go the extra mile to customize your itinerary?
- Does the proposed itinerary reflect your interests?

Cost vs. Value

Get more than one proposal and compare.

- Find out what is and what is not included in the price.
- Determine the location and quality of the accommodation.
- How many meals are included and whether they are buffet or a la carte.
- Is the trip fully guided or will you be touring on your own?
- In addition you will want to know what, if any, sightseeing is included and whether you will have any free time.

Conditions

Make sure to read the fine print before you commit. The terms and conditions should clearly spell out your responsibilities as well as those of the specialist.

- What is the company's policy on reservations, deposits and cancellations?
- Can a tour or excursion be cancelled for a lack of bookings?
- Who is responsible for additional payments in the event of a currency fluctuation?

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