

The only way to really find the right tour operator is to meet them outside of their professional life. You see, there are just too many things that can go wrong if you are taking a tour vacation with someone you do not know. I have heard bad stories from friends who have taken trips to foreign lands, trusting in their tour guides to show them the sites. One of my best friend hooked up with some tour operators in Nepal and was robbed blind. After that, they disappeared into the woodwork, leaving him broke and stranded thousands of miles from home.

Fortunately, I have met plenty of tour operators through my foreign language classes. If you study a foreign language for long enough, you will eventually have a teacher who leads a tour to the country where it is natively spoken. My first tour vacation package was actually in Paris. I had always wanted to go, and my teacher was able to hook us up with a really cheap trip. She had been working with tour operators over there for years, and had finally started to lead vacations herself. She knew all of the best places to stay, eat, and see the sights. It was a wonderful trip.

World traveler types tend to network. The Internet has made it very easy to stay in touch all over the world. As a result, tour operators tend to be in touch with each other. As a result, my French teacher put me in touch with tour leaders taking vacation groups to Spain, Portugal, and even Southeast Asia. It wasn't long before I was taking escorted tours all over the world. I saved up several thousand dollars, set up a home security monitor so that I could check up on my house from anywhere, and set off to see the world.

Unfortunately, not all of the tour operators I went with were really up to the standards of my French teacher. They were nice folks, but not all of them really knew that much about what they were doing. On the trip to Portugal, for example, we were left to our own devices most of the time. It was a fun trip, but I had the feeling that I could have saved a lot of money by going myself. I was not really getting much out of the tour, and I was spending most of my time exploring on my own anyway.