



NJDOE News

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School Community Tips For Purchasing Student Educational Trips

Summer vacation means more than summer jobs, summer reading, and, perhaps, summer on the Jersey Shore. It also means many school-sponsored trips.

For that reason, it is important for parents, students and teachers alike to remain mindful of whom they booked such trips with — this is especially important in light of recent news out of Tuckerton, when a travel company used by the Pinelands Junior and Senior High School went bankrupt.

The DOE, with help from the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA), recently released tips for student educational trips to superintendents statewide, and is making the same information available today to parents, teachers and the educational community on the whole.

The tips should help both parents and teachers become better informed and avoid unpleasant and costly surprises. The DOE hopes to best inform the schools and parents as summer arrives and various school clubs, organizations and others embark on their summer trips.

The information is especially relevant given a recent press release from DCA, which addresses an unfortunate situation between the Pinelands Regional Junior and Senior High Schools in Tuckerton and the Global Vistas company, based in Massachusetts: <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/press/mass.htm>.

The trip suggestions are as follows:

- Contact the State Attorney General's Office in the state where the educational travel company is based, and ask if consumers have filed complaints about the company;
- Ask if the educational travel company is a member of the Student Youth Travel Association, National Tour Association or the United States Tour Operators Association, and check the company's past history with those associations;
- Consult the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and ask whether the company is included on CSIET's Advisory List. CSIET is a private, not-for-profit organization which establishes standards for international youth education and exchange programs;
 - The Advisory List contains information about programs which have been evaluated and deemed to meet CSIET's national standards.
 - See <http://www.csiet.org> for more information.
- Get all details of the trip in writing, especially restrictions, cancellation penalties, refund policies and additional charges such as taxes or service fees. Broad terms such as "all major hotels" and "all major airlines" are warning flags. Request specific hotel and airline names, addresses, and phone numbers and call them independently to verify your reservations and arrangements;
- Find out if the educational travel company has insurance coverage, and obtain a copy of the company's cancellation and refund policies. Ask whether you should buy cancellation insurance on your own;
- Use credit cards, not checks, to make your purchase. If you don't get what you paid for, you may be able to dispute the charges with your credit card company. Beware of educational travel companies sending a courier for a check or requesting a direct bank deposit or certified check;
- Investigate charter flights. If the trip involves a charter flight, get the charter operator's name and address and check the operator's registration by writing to: U.S. Department of Transportation ("DOT"), Office of International Aviation Affairs, 400 Seventh St. S.W., X-46, Washington, D.C. 20590;
 - You can also call DOT's Public Charter Office at 202-366-1037 to see if the operator has filed to operate

a charter flight from the planned departure city to the planned location.

- Charter packages cannot be sold until DOT approves the filing.
- Stay away from travel offers which use high-pressure sales tactics with a limited time to evaluate the offer, and those which have deals that sound "too good to be true," because they probably are.

All information was prepared specifically for the New Jersey Department of Education by the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs. For more information, please contact the DOE Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126 or the DCA at (973) 504-6327.