

ATOL Reform Factsheet



The Consumer Council

Introduction to ATOL

ATOL (the Air Travel Organiser's Licence) is a financial protection scheme for air passengers. ATOL is managed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). If a tour operator goes out of business before a passenger is due to travel on an ATOL protected holiday the passenger can claim a full refund. If the tour operator goes out of business while a passenger is abroad the passenger will be able to continue their holiday and arrangements will be made for them to fly home once the holiday is over.

Changes in the way holidays are booked

Since ATOL was introduced nearly 40 years ago, the way many consumers buy holidays has changed. For many consumers, especially those who book online using intermediary firms that arrange the various parts of the holiday, it is often unclear that the flights, accommodation or car hire are provided by different suppliers. Consumers may therefore be unaware their purchase is not ATOL protected despite appearing to be a package.

What's new?

From 30 April 2012 flights sold in conjunction with overseas accommodation and/or car hire will be protected by ATOL. These types of bookings are called Flight-Plus. Flight-Plus will be protected when sold through any channel, for example via the internet, on the high street or by phone.

To qualify as a Flight-Plus the flight and accommodation or car hire have to be requested on the same day or within one day either side but it does not matter which is requested first. Also, the trip must depart from the UK.

What will Flight-Plus mean for me?

- **Before you travel** - If your airline, accommodation provider or car hire provider goes out of business the firm that arranged your Flight-Plus must make suitable alternative arrangements for you, at no extra cost. If alternative arrangements cannot be made or if you are not happy with the arrangements offered the firm must provide a refund for your whole booking.

- **When abroad** - If your airline, accommodation provider or car hire provider goes out of business, the firm which arranged your booking must provide you with an alternative flight home, alternative accommodation and or alternative car hire as necessary. If alternative arrangements cannot be made or if you are not happy with the arrangements offered the firm which arranged your booking must provide a refund for the unused aspects of your booking.

What else do I need to know?

- If you arrange your own bookings for flights and accommodation or car hire as separate purchases from different companies you will not be protected by Flight-Plus.
- Flight-Plus protection does not apply to flights booked along with accommodation or car hire directly from an airline website. However the protection does apply to bookings purchased from an airline's holiday company website. If you are in doubt regarding whether your holiday is ATOL protected, check with the seller before you book.
- From 1 October 2012 travel agents and tour operators will be required to supply an ATOL Certificate when selling an ATOL protected holiday. The Certificate will be a standardised document issued by all ATOL holders or their agents. In the meantime tour operators and travel agents must provide clear information to their customers that their holiday is protected.
- When booking a Flight-Plus, other elements requested with the holiday, for example, theme park tickets, must also be protected. However, a consumer's request for these elements solely with a flight does not create a Flight-Plus without accommodation or car hire also being booked.
- Domestic flights do not form part of a Flight-Plus. Flight-Plus does not cover bookings made in the UK where the flight departs from ROI. If it is a package holiday it will be covered by either the ROI Commission for Aviation Regulation bonding scheme or by ATOL.

For more information and advice, contact our Consumer Support team on 0800 121 6022 or e-mail: complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk