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Pilgrims and Sports Fans Beware

Commission for Aviation Regulation advises travellers to ensure their travel agent or tour operator is properly licensed.

Recent controversy surrounding start-up airlines has highlighted the importance of compliance with the relevant legislation in order to safeguard consumers. This has prompted the Commission for Aviation Regulation to issue a general caution to anyone purchasing travel abroad.

The Commission for Aviation Regulation has advised people to check that the travel agent or tour operator they deal with holds a current licence. The Commission has warned that the trip of a lifetime could turn into a costly fiasco if care is not taken when making travel arrangements.

A travel agent's licence, issued by the Commission for Aviation Regulation, is a legal requirement for anyone selling travel out of the Republic of Ireland. Its primary function is to protect the consumer through the travel agency bonding scheme. This scheme enables the Commission to step in with funding for alternative travel arrangements to enable travellers return home or receive a full refund, if they are left stranded or if the agent or operator goes out of business.

Travellers are advised to check with their travel agent or tour operator that they have a licence. Licence holders are required to display a copy in their office. Alternatively they can contact the Commission for Aviation Regulation on 01 6611700 or check its web-site at www.aviationreg.ie for a list of licence holders. Similarly anyone interested in acquiring a travel agency licence should also contact the Commission for Aviation Regulation for details.

The Commission said its warning is particularly relevant to people travelling abroad to attend sports or music events and on religious pilgrimages as it is in these sectors that unlicensed operators are most commonly active.

Ends

Notes to the Editor

The Travel Agent's Licence and Bond

The Commission for Aviation Regulation has responsibility for issuing licences to tour operators and travel agents. Tour operators and travel agents are obliged to enter into a bond, which amounts to 10% of a tour operator's turnover and 4% in the case of travel agents before the Commission grants them a licence. In the event of a failure of a tour operator or travel agent, the Commission is then responsible for administering the bond. This work usually consists of assessing the eligibility of individual claims from customers of the failed tour operator or travel agent, making the appropriate refunds, and where necessary, making arrangements for the repatriation of customers.

The Commission for Aviation Regulation

The Commission for Aviation Regulation was established in 2001 to provide independent regulation of certain aspects of the aviation and travel trade sectors in Ireland. The activities of the Commission are primarily aimed at protecting the interests of the users.

An Example

In August 2001 Longford Town soccer club attempted to organise a trip to Bulgaria for 250 people, which ended in near disaster when the chartered plane failed to arrive. It was discovered the company organising the trip was not licensed which proved extremely embarrassing for the soccer club.

***Issued on behalf of the Commission for Aviation Regulation by
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