

Guide to Buying Plane Tickets

Who do we get the tickets from?

You can choose to go through a travel agent, or you can try booking the tickets yourself online. When taking a large group, travel agents often provide a great amount of assistance. However, online companies sometimes have sales which end up being cheaper, even if they are more work. I recommend checking around at several online sites and several travel agents to get quotes.

What type of ticket do we get?

Make sure that you check the details of the tickets before you commit to buying them. Most tickets offered are refundable for a penalty (around \$200). Fully refundable tickets are usually way too expensive to justify the added flexibility. Most tickets allow at least one free change of the return date (in case you need to come home a week earlier or a week later). Again, make sure you check this when buying tickets.

You can get insurance if you like, however, keep in mind that insurance doesn't cover just deciding you don't want to travel. It only covers illness, accidents, death, etc.

Where can we find travel agents or ticketing agents?

Online you can do a search for "air fares" and find a considerable list of websites. Some of these include www.Cheaptickets.com, www.expedia.com, www.travelocity.com, www.priceline.com, www.orbitz.com. There are many more.

Travel agents can be found in your phone book or online. Some of the agents that we have used are:

- Golden Rule Travel 888-950-3273
- Creative Travel 800-242-8188
- Raptim Travel 800-777-9232

When should we purchase the tickets?

If you are using a travel agent, make reservations without officially buying the tickets (also known as ticketing) as soon as you have tentative names and dates. When everything is finalized, then ticket. Nothing is ever guaranteed until ticketed but if you get the contract missionary fares, they seldom change much if any. That way they will at least have the space if you choose to go that route rather than trying to find space too late when there is none at a decent fare. Tickets should generally be bought six weeks in advance, however if you are traveling in the summer or around the holidays, you should try to reserve tickets at least two months before traveling.

How much should we expect to be paying for different services?

- Travel agents generally charge about \$25-50 per ticket.
- Buying tickets online generally has a service charge of \$5 per ticket.
- Insurance can be bought at different rates depending on coverage starting at \$10.

Other hints:

- It is very important that from the first booking you are using passport names as many airlines do not allow name changes. Holding space with the wrong name can sometimes mean you can't get the space in the correct name later.
- Double check passport expiration dates. Some countries say a passport must be valid for six months beyond the return date.