

Travel Consultant

A travel consultant advises customers about travel arrangements for business or leisure within the UK or abroad and sells them travel packages or separate elements. They usually specialise in either leisure or business travel.

The Work

You could be:

- showing customers travel brochures and discussing the holidays on the phone or face to face
- using a computer to check prices, timetables and hotel accommodation
- putting together a package of travel, accommodation, car hire and insurance to suit the customer's holiday or business needs
- advising about visas, vaccinations and insurance
- using a computer to book travel and accommodation, taking payments and mailing travel documents to the customer
- issuing foreign currency at the current rate of exchange
- telling customers about any changes, such as flight times, and, if necessary making alternative arrangements
- dealing with holiday cancellations, arranging refunds and handling complaints
- managing business clients' accounts and producing invoices.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

As a Modern Apprentice, you would usually start on the National Minimum Wage (NMW). At present the apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £3.70 an hour (April 2018).

Starting pay before commission can be about £14,000 to £19,000 a year. You may also get discounts on life insurance or on holiday packages you buy for yourself and your family.

Conditions

- You would usually work in a travel agency shop which is open to the public.
- You would work regular hours Monday to Friday, and some weekends on a rota basis.
- You would usually wear a uniform, which is provided.
- Alternatively, you could be based in a call centre receiving inbound sales calls from customers. You may work around a 40-hour week based on shifts.
- You do most of your work on computer.

- Part of your income will probably be based on commission which will vary from month to month. This may involve meeting sales targets.
- Part time work is usually available.

Getting In

- There are no formal entry requirements for this career, although a good general education is useful.
- The most common route into this job is through a Modern Apprenticeship in Travel Services.
- You could start by taking a qualification in travel and tourism. Relevant courses include a National Certificate (NC), National Qualification (NQ), Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND). Entry requirements range from 3 subjects at National 4 or 5 for NC and NQ courses to 1-2 Highers for HNC and HND courses.
- Ability in foreign languages is useful.
- IT skills are important. For some jobs employers may ask for experience in using specialist booking software.

Vacancies appear in trade journals such as Travel Weekly, Travel Trade Gazette and on websites which advertise travel jobs such as traveljobsearch.com. Once you have experience you can register with a travel related employment agency such as New Frontiers.

Some firms specialise in holidays, some specialise in business travel and some do both. The ABTA website lists vacancies in the companies which are members of ABTA.

What Does It Take

You need:

- a polite, attentive and helpful manner
- an interest in and enthusiasm for travel
- a smart appearance
- a confident telephone manner
- a methodical approach with good organisational skills
- sales skills
- the ability to work under pressure at busy times
- excellent attention to detail
- the ability to handle money.

Training

- Entrants normally receive on the job training, combined with attending training courses or seminars.
- During the two year Modern Apprenticeship, you would complete Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Travel Services (Leisure and Business) at SCQF Levels 5 and 6.
- ABTA runs training events for ABTA members and their staff, to keep up to date with developments in the industry.

Getting On

- With experience you might get promoted to a branch manager position or team leader position.
- You might move into other travel and tourism related jobs, such as resort representative or tour guide.

Contacts

Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) Ltd

Tel: (0)20 3117 0500

Email: abta@abta.co.uk

Website: abta.com

Institute of Travel and Tourism (ITT)

Tel: 0844 4995 653

Email: admin@itt.co.uk

Website: www.itt.co.uk

People 1st - Careers That Move

Website: www.careerthatmove.co.uk

Website (2): www.people1st.co.uk

Springboard

Tel: 020 7921 0420

Email: info@springboarduk.org.uk

Website: springboard.uk.net

Website (2): www.careerscope.uk.net

Thomas Cook Careers

Website: careers.thomascook.com

TUI Travel PLC

Tel: 0800 169 5692

Email: RecruitmentUK@thomson.co.uk

Website: tuijobsuk.co.uk/work-at-tui-travel