

Travelling with a Group –Benefits & Limitations

All members of a group, travelling on a cruise or on a tour, must be aware of group dynamics and their effect on the way the group functions. The benefits of travelling with a group are many – carefully planned itineraries, tremendous value, ease of travel, fellowship, enhanced travel experience and more. At the same time, group members must appreciate that they must give up some freedoms when travelling with a group. Only by balancing these factors and by willingly living within these rules, will all members enjoy the full benefits of group travel.

Group Leaders – Members of our groups benefit from the addition of an experienced group leader who travels with the group, providing assistance in the general operation of your journey and providing personal assistance for group members. They work closely with our local suppliers i.e., airlines, hotels, professional guides, etc, to ensure the smooth operation of your travel arrangements and they provide the communication link between Craig Travel and our suppliers. They are not professional guides and should not be perceived as such. If you need any assistance or have any concerns or complaints at any time throughout your tour / cruise, please talk to your group leader immediately. Please don't wait until the end of your trip to mention concerns as by then it is too late to remedy the situation if at all possible.

Hotel Rooms – In most cases, hotel rooms are blocked on a "run-of-the-house" basis, using the best available rooms at the time that rooms are actually assigned i.e. on the day of arrival. In most cases rooms are assigned by the hotel, even though we do make requests for special bedding configurations (eg., twin beds, king size etc). We always request that the group be assigned to non-smoking rooms and that rooms have twin beds, unless otherwise specified. However, not all rooms are created equal (this is especially the case outside of North America, where some buildings have been converted for hotel use) and we are seldom aware of the room styles prior to your arrival at the hotel. For example, in some cases rooms with one large bed may be assigned to people who want twin beds without our knowledge. Some people may be assigned to superior rooms while others will receive standard rooms. If you feel that you have not been treated fairly or have a room that is not as requested, please discuss it with your group leader. Your group leader will do his / her best to improve the situation or, if not possible at this hotel, they will do their best to give you preference at the next hotel. We request that you do not approach the front desk on your own but allow your group leader to handle all requests for room changes.

Meals – On tours, most meals are taken in a group environment with group members eating together and at the same time. This often means that meals are served buffet style, allowing us to enjoy the greatest possible choice while ensuring that we are not held up by slow service (it can take well over two hours to provide table service for a group of 30-40 persons arriving at the same time – a buffet meal, if properly handled, will allow everyone to eat at their own pace and still be finished in less than 90 minutes). Buffet service also allows a restaurant to serve a variety of dishes, satisfying the wishes of a far greater variety of diets. However, in most cases, people with special diets will need to be aware of what they can eat and choose their food accordingly. We will attempt to ensure airlines and hotels are aware of special diet needs, we cannot guarantee that they will be provided. Please be aware that restaurants frown on the practice of taking food away from a buffet to be saved and eaten later.

Physical Fitness – All of our tours are planned for members who are physically mobile and able to care for themselves. While we do provide portage whenever possible, group members must be able to handle their suitcases when required (e.g. at airports, through Customs and in hotel rooms). Members are also assumed to be able to walk a reasonable distance without assistance (about 1 kilometre) and to maintain a reasonable group pace when walking with fellow tour members. If you have any doubts about your ability to keep up with the group, please talk to our staff as soon as possible. Due to distances and time

constraints at many of the world's airports, we do encourage members with some physical limitations to make use of the extra assistance offered by most of the world's airlines.

Coach Travel & Seat Rotation - On most tours, there will be limited seating on the coach. In fairness to all, our policy is one seat per person whether you are travelling as a single or sharing a room. The single supplement does NOT apply to the touring coach. Similarly, we will use a seat rotation system on all tours whenever this is possible. The system being used will vary by coach size, destination and itinerary and details will be advised by your group leader or tour director. In fairness to all members, we must insist that all group members follow the prescribed seat rotation system. The only exceptions to this rule will be as follows:

1. When space allows and with agreement by group members, a number of seats at the back of the coach can be set aside for group members who do not wish to participate in the rotation system. Once a group member opts out of the seat rotation, they may not rejoin the system.
2. Members with certain physical problems substantiated by a medical certificate (e.g. those with severe motion sickness) may be allowed to occupy one specific seat. This would normally be in the third or fourth row of the coach, where the motion is lowest.
3. On certain short tours or a tour on which we are changing coaches and coach size frequently, it may not be possible to follow a set seat rotation. In those cases members may be asked to change seats on an honour system – asking people to switch seats on a voluntary basis each day.

Group Seating On Flights – Most airlines will not allow special seating requests for group members, despite our best efforts to confirm any individual requests. Groups are either given a block of seats without regard to special location requests (e.g. aisle or window) or (in many cases) seats are assigned randomly throughout the aircraft. Indeed we often see that requests from friends and relatives to be seated together are ignored. We do our best to have our airline partners assign seats based on your requests but please appreciate that this is seldom within our control. Special dietary, frequent flyer numbers and wheelchair requests are always given to airlines in advance but you should reconfirm these at the time of check-in. On an ever-growing number of trips with E-tickets, there is the ability to check-in online within 24 hours of the flight departure time, and arrange your own seating. The purchase of seats ahead of time is not available on Economy group contract. Premium Economy & Business Class upgrade can be requested (if applicable), and purchased at additional cost.

Group vs. Individual Needs – Perhaps the most important aspect of group travel is appreciating that the needs of the individual must at times become subservient to the needs of the group. In all things related to the group, we are attempting to provide the best quality and service equally to all members of the group. In doing so, we try our best to cater all individual needs as well. However, there often comes a time when individual desires and wants run contrary to the needs of the group and it is up to the individual to appreciate this. Your group leader will always act for the benefit of the majority of the group and we must ask that individual group members respect this at all times.

We are doing our best to ensure that you receive the best value for your travel dollars. If you have any questions or concerns about your upcoming trip, please feel free to contact our office.