

Coronavirus Holiday Cancellations & Refunds

This sheet seeks to address some Frequently Asked Questions:

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How can I get my money back?

Package Holidays

If the company has cancelled your holiday, Package Travel Regulations require companies to refund the cost of the package holiday or holiday flight within 14 days. You are legally entitled to a cash refund and do not have to accept vouchers or a credit note.

What happens if I decide to accept a voucher? Before you accept an alternative to a cash refund, ensure it is a "refund credit note" and that it is ATOL protected. This is a safer alternative that some companies are offering in response to the demand for refunds

Flights

Again, Package Travel Regulations require companies to refund the cost of a holiday flight within 14 days. You are legally entitled to a cash refund and do not have to accept vouchers or a credit note.

Ferries

All companies: If you were due to travel between the dates travel restrictions were imposed and lifted and your ferry journey was cancelled, you should have either a credit

voucher or you can request a refund. For journeys in May and beyond, hold off cancelling or amending your booking for now, as the official advice may change closer to the time of your booking.

Calmac have announced that until 15th July 2020, you can cancel any planned bookings without having to pay a fee. You can apply for a refund on the Calmac website.

Accommodation: Hotels, self catering, caravan parks

If your accommodation is closed you are due a full refund. Some accommodation is offering to waive their cancellation fee. Airbnb is offering a full refund for bookings before 31 May. If your accommodation provider fails to give you a refund, it is worth asking in writing. You can also seek redress from your credit company, threaten court action and, finally, take the provider to court.

If you own or lease a property at a holiday park, you will need to continue to pay the site fees despite being unable to visit your property. The fees will continue to cover security and you can check your agreement to establish the conditions of the contract between you.

If a company is refusing to refund then what are the next steps?

- Insist on a refund in writing. Check your contract and quote it if it supports your argument. You may also want to refer to the CMA (Competition and Markets Authority, the consumers' watchdog) investigation. The CMA are investigating firms which have failed to provide a refund to customers who can't get the service or holiday they paid for.
- If you paid by credit card, ask them for a refund. Under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act, if you pay for something costing between £100 and £30,000 on a credit card, the card firm's equally liable if something goes wrong, so you may be able to claim your money back from it.

Under chargeback, which isn't a legal requirement, just a customer service promise, your bank will try to get money back from the bank of the firm you bought from, and you can try it on debit card purchases and those which are less than £100. Martin Lewis' website Money Savings Expert has more detailed information about this.

- You can threaten court action to get your money back
- You can take court action against the company. There is a cost involved in this. It can be done online.

I've already paid a deposit, should I pay the remainder of the holiday cost if the company asks? Will I lose the deposit if I do not pay?

If you do not pay the deposit the company can deem that you are cancelling the holiday and you are likely to lose your deposit. If you pay for the holiday and are unable to travel you

should be entitled to a full refund as above. If there is Government advice not to travel at the time of your holiday you should be able to claim on your travel insurance.

What are my rights if I accept the company's offer of a voucher in lieu of the holiday and then change my mind?

If you change your mind you are likely to lose your money. The travel industry call this "disinclination to travel" and it is not covered. If you are unable to travel because of illness it is worth contacting the firm to try and negotiate a refund.

What happens if the company goes into administration?

There are two organisations that support holiday makers whose provider goes into administration:

ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) who offer a financial protection scheme for land and sea based holidays bought in Britain.

ATOL (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) offer similar protection for flights.

These organisations will, provided the company you booked with is covered, arrange a refund, repatriate you or enable you to complete your holiday, as appropriate.

If I book travel and accommodation separately what happens if only one of them is unavailable due to Covid19, e.g. the accommodation is there but the flight to get to the accommodation is not?

If you book with one company, contact them. If you cannot access your accommodation, your insurance policy may offer you recompense. This depends on the terms and conditions of your policy

Insurance

If you have an annual travel insurance it is probably worth renewing. The insurance industry has not got a unified response to the coronavirus. The website Money Saving Expert has detailed advice, which they update.

The official "watchdog", CMA (Competitions and Markets Authority) have received 26,000 complaints about holiday companies. They have set up a task force to deal with this and may take some companies to court.

It may help you to keep a diary of all dates (bookings, cancellations, contacts, complaints, etc), contact details of all companies involved, including phone numbers, email, web and postal addresses and the names of any people you manage to speak to so that if you cannot get a satisfactory response immediately, there may be a resolution at a later date.

If you urgently need the money spent on a holiday, you may need to consider other solutions meanwhile. The Scottish Welfare Fund offers crisis grants and other guidance is available from CAB.

References

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus#our-travel-advice-and-consular-support>

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/02/coronavirus-travel-help-and-your-rights/>

Money Saving Expert has collated responses from a number of holiday companies.

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/coronavirus-outbreak-advice-for-travellers/>

A large number of companies are seeking to keep their customers informed. Some have information about other organisations e.g.

<https://www.onthebeach.co.uk/faqs/coronavirus>