

Frequently Asked Questions for Consumers

1. Who is AFTA?

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) is the peak industry body which represents the business interests of travel agents. Founded in 1957, AFTA seeks to enhance the professionalism of Travel Agents through:

- the effective representation in industry and government affairs
- facilitating changes to education and training curriculum,
- providing business support through professional advice and services, and
- administration of the national travel accreditation scheme, ATAS

AFTA's role within the travel and tourism industry involves addressing major issues relating to the operation of all travel agencies in Australia, at both a State and Federal level. AFTA prides itself on being the industry watchdog where it ensures that the viewpoint of the agent is transmitted through media outlets and advocated through lobbying activities.

AFTA is the governing body responsible for the administration and ongoing marketing of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS).

2. What is ATAS?

The AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) is a brand new, voluntary accreditation scheme for the travel industry which delivers criteria-based identification of reputable travel professionals and the necessary flexibility to accommodate the travel industry's diversity and the ever changing ways of purchasing travel.

ATAS is a result of 5 years of extensive consultation between the travel industry and State and Federal Consumer Affairs Ministries. ATAS will help consumers identify reputable, professional and reliable travel agents through whom they can book travel solutions with confidence. All accredited agents must abide by a strict Code of Conduct and have a complaint resolution facility.

3. How does ATAS accreditation benefit me?

ATAS helps you find travel agents who meet certain standards, are reliable, well trained and professional businesses. They are the best in the industry and can provide you with peace of mind when purchasing travel via an accredited travel provider.

4. How does ATAS protect me?

ATAS protects you by acting as a clear indicator of quality and reliability. Agents with ATAS accreditation meet high quality standards of business practices, training and professionalism. This means you can book your travel through a trusted and reputable travel agent with confidence and peace of mind.

5. What can I expect from ATAS accredited travel professionals?

ATAS participants will meet high standards of business discipline, training, compliance with Australian Consumer Law, and compliance with a code of conduct – ensuring your peace of mind when booking travel.

The overarching benefits of booking with ATAS participants include;

- a. High customer service standards
- b. Destination and product expertise and knowledge
- c. Complaints resolution facility
- d. Choice and flexibility
- e. Convenience, hassle free and time saving
- f. Cost savings and value for money
- g. Trusted, professional adviser

6. How will ATAS accredited travel participants improve my booking experience?

ATAS participants are experienced industry leaders who will offer you access to a large variety of products and destinations across Australia and the world, the best suppliers and first-to-market offers. They will provide you with friendly service and create a hassle free and convenient travel experience, from beginning to end.

7. Why has ATAS been introduced?

The current regulatory framework for travel agents was introduced in 1986. Since then, the rapid rise of new and online business models, coupled with technological advancements and a growth in direct bookings, has gradually reduced the relevance and effectiveness of the previous system. The changing market place has also disadvantaged local travel businesses, which must compete with offshore providers operating outside the Australian regulatory framework.

On 7 December 2012, a majority of state and territory Ministers for Consumer Affairs approved a Travel Industry Transition Plan 2012 setting out reforms to travel agents' regulation and the Travel Compensation Fund (TCF). The TITP recommends an approach which complements industry efforts to promote confidence and quality, maintains appropriate levels of consumer protection and provides a level playing field to Australian travel providers.

ATAS is the result of 5 years of extensive consultation between the travel industry, and Government agencies including Consumer Affairs Ministries and consumer lobby groups. The result – an accreditation scheme which delivers criteria-based identification of reputable travel professionals, plus the necessary flexibility to accommodate the diversity of our industry and the way consumers now purchase travel. This is a robust, nimble structure which reflects the changing face of the travel distribution chain and the ever changing methods and channels of doing business with consumers.

8. *How can I find ATAS accredited travel providers?*

When considering booking travel always look for the 'ATAS – travel accredited' symbol.