

FAQ & Travel Tips

At Northwest Navigator, we want to make sure your trip is as smooth as possible, so we've put together some tips for both purchasing and making sure your trip is an enjoyable one.

- [10 Tips for Purchasing Professional Motorcoach Services](#)
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10 Tips for Purchasing Professional Motorcoach Services

Transportation by motorcoach is America's safest, most convenient and hassle-free mode of ground transportation.

Obtaining Motorcoach transportation can be as easy as a phone call or email for the experienced charter customer, yet many consumers may feel somewhat overwhelmed when they first step into the process. This quick checklist is designed to help you find the right transportation company and ask the right questions to ensure your group is safe, comfortable, and satisfied.

1. **The cardinal rule: Don't buy on price alone.** When you are deciding which company to use, remember that safety can be affected by many mechanical components, which you can't see. Additionally, delivering a high level of service likely costs more to deliver.
2. **Consider: Does your group have any special needs that must be met?** Things like video equipment, a DVD player, a lavatory-equipped coach, or other equipment—such as ADA compliant wheelchair accessible vehicles—may be needed to make your trip successful.
3. **Request that the company supply its USDOT number.** Such numbers are assigned by the U.S. Government and are required to operate legally.
4. **What is the company's FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) or DOD (Department of Defense) safety rating?** Satisfactory, or is #1 a standard. Never charter from a company with an unsatisfactory or conditional rating from the DOT, or greater rating than a two (2) from the Department of Defense. You may see the safety record of a company by visiting: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/PCS/Consumers.aspx>
5. **Request a certificate of insurance.** Your carriers should supply a certificate of insurance. Acceptable levels of insurance call for \$5,000,000 for combined single-limit liability. This is required by Federal regulations if your trip crosses state lines.
6. **Is the company available for inspections?** Reputable motorcoach companies will welcome the opportunity for you to visit their facilities. You can tell a lot about a company just by looking.
7. **Know the emergency and breakdown procedures.** A reputable carrier will have membership in a nationwide network, such as The International Motorcoach Group (IMG), or access to other networks providing reciprocal maintenance agreements. Additionally, ask about professional affiliations, both state and national, which might be expected to assist in the case of a mechanical difficulty or other complication during your trip.
8. **Clearly spell out your itinerary and what is involved in detail.** Be sure the company knows what hours the driver must be available to the group, and if the driver(s) will require a hotel room. On overnight stays it is customary for the chartering party to pay for and book the driver's room.
9. **Ask how long the company has been in business.** Find out when the company was established, and how long it has been offering motorcoach services. A good track record is always desirable.
10. **Does the company have a background check and drug screening policy in place for its drivers?** Drug screening is a federal requirement. Never charter from a carrier that does not strongly enforce a drug-free workplace. Inquire into the extent of background checks prior to hiring of a driver.



10 Tips for Making Your Trip More Enjoyable

1. **Enjoy a DVD or CD.** In most cases, you can now enjoy a full-length feature film or video of your group's own activities while you travel. While coach companies supply the equipment, DVD Players, CD players, etc., it is customarily the group's responsibility to supply the entertainment.
2. **Passenger safety is the number one priority.** There are no prohibitions against the movement of passengers from seat to seat, to the lavatory, or through the aisles, other than the federally mandated need to remain behind the white or yellow line marked in the floor of the coach behind the driver in the aisle. Passengers should however, be cautioned that they should remain in their seats whenever possible. If there is a need to walk through the aisles, passengers should ensure that they have a good, secure grip on seat backs and designated hand grips at all times to prevent loss of balance or to prevent injury in the event of a sudden stop. Walking or standing in the aisles should not take place in stop and go traffic circumstances or while the coach is traveling roads with many twists and turns.
3. **Have your Final Itinerary to us no later than 15 days in advance.** Passenger safety is our number one priority. To assist us in providing the safest, worry-free excursion, please make sure to send us your final and complete itinerary at least 15 days in advance of departure, (the earlier the better). This allows our safety team to develop efficient and safe routing for the drivers and allows the drivers to completely research the trip and destinations before the trip.
4. **Consider the environment.** Seeing America responsibly also means leaving the beauty intact for the next visitors. Today's motorcoach is both fuel efficient, and environmentally sound. On a per-passenger basis, a modern motorcoach is among the environmentally cleanest modes of transportation in the world. That is especially important when your group travels through America's majestic National park system. Northwest Navigator cares deeply for our environment and as the first motorcoach operator on the West Coast to gain Green Certification, it is reflected in all we do.
5. **Relax.** Recline the seat, adjust the overhead ventilation and lighting controls, adjust the sunshade...sleep if you like, read a book, make conversation, just relax, or see the sights, and let a Northwest Navigator professional handle the driving.
6. **Luggage considerations.** Today's modern motorcoaches have large under-floor baggage carrying capacities. Interior overhead parcel racks are also provided for carry on bags. The same rule of thumb applies to motorcoaches, as does air travel when it comes to luggage size and weight. For your space and comfort inside the passenger compartment, please keep carry on items to the size of a small bag or brief case. For under-floor baggage, please limit yourself to a maximum two (2) items per person, at a maximum weight limit of about 50 pounds each. Generally speaking, "the less the better" in terms of time to load and off load baggage at your departure and destination.

7. **Climate controlled for your comfort.** As already mentioned, individual airline-style overhead ventilation and lighting controls are provided for your maximum comfort and enjoyment. It is a good idea to travel with a light jacket, especially if you will be traveling in inclement weather. Your professional motorcoach driver will be more than happy to accommodate the group's requests for heat and/or air conditioning adjustments.
8. **Boarding and alighting the coach.** The driver will be at the bottom of the entrance steps to assist in boarding and disembarking the coach. Please watch your step as you ascend into the spaciousness of the coach and enjoy the view from the panoramic windows. Equally as important is watching your step in exiting the coach. While the driver will take great care to select safe, well-lighted areas to stop, please watch your step as you exit for any small stones, or loose items that may cause you to lose your balance. If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to ask the driver.
9. **Coach lavatories.** While most full-size motorcoaches are lavatory equipped, please be sure to advise your charter consultant if this is a special request of your group. Coach lavatories are equipped and designed for the comfort of the group, and to handle passenger "emergencies". They are not however, designed for regular, "non-essential" use. Keeping in mind that your itinerary will more than likely have scheduled rest stops about every two (2) hours, it is best to keep the coach lavatory for emergency use only.
10. **Trash receptacles.** Most coaches will have at least one (1) trash receptacle located in the coach, either at the front or the rear. These are provided for you as a means to keep your personal space free of debris, which is not only more comfortable, but also more desirable from a passenger safety standpoint. Your driver may have already, or by request, provide additional trash bags for your convenience. Coaches are also equipped with Recycling containers (blue) to place recyclable bottles and cans.
11. **Public address systems.** Are provided for use by group leaders, tour escorts, or step on guides. Many coaches are now equipped with cordless microphones for the convenience of speaking from any position in the coach. If you are speaking on a microphone with a cord, please remember the cord is not endless, and designed to be used from the position of the tour guide seat, located at the very front next to the driver if the coach is so equipped, or from the seat directly behind the driver.

A Final Note

If your last trip by motorcoach was more than five years ago, you have a treat in store. This isn't the bus you rode to grammar school on, home from college, or to visit a long lost relative on. Today's European-style motorcoach is a delight, and as one of America's premier, professional motorcoach operators, we'll delight in surprising you with it.

We are pleased to help you better understand the professional motorcoach industry and we invite your inquiries through the contact us, or quotes and reservations portion of our website.

Safe motorcoach travel is the product of good planning, knowledgeable investigations, wise choices, and common sense. We hope we have been able to provide you with better tools in making your decision, and, of course, we hope you will choose NorthWest Navigator Luxury Coaches for your motorcoach needs.