

FREE REPORT: PLANNING THE PERFECT THEATRE VISIT

Whether visiting your local theatre or London's West End, our free guide will help you plan the perfect visit!



If you are planning a school trip, organising everything yourself will usually be a cheaper option, but it takes time, energy and resources to research, plan, co-ordinate and manage, that's before you start to liaise with parents and colleagues to arrange payment!

Working with a tour operator, a specialist who organises trips professionally will have all the contacts, knowledge and resources to do all of this for you, but there is always going to be a fee for the service.

Theatre Workout, through its dedicated travel service, [Creative DMC](#), specialises in creative and cultural group travel for schools. Not only do we sell direct to schools, but to the group travel industry, organising trips for schools from around the world.

If you want assistance organising your next trip, without the added stress of co-ordinating multiple suppliers, speak to us today about creating your bespoke itinerary for you. However, if you want to do it yourself, take note of this free resource to make sure you are prepared and cover all your bases.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

We've experienced some disasters in our time, all the result of unorganised clients who don't communicate clearly, if at all. These experiences have informed this guide, but I thought it would be worth sharing some stories with you to help you avoid making the same mistakes.

DISABLED ACCESS

A teacher booked a group into the balcony of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane to get the cheapest seats available. They paid on time and two months later called to discuss arrangement for the several wheelchair-bound students in the group.

There is no lift or disabled access to that part of the theatre. There had been no mention of wheelchairs when booking. There were, fortunately, still suitable seats in the stalls, and the whole group had to be rebooked at considerable extra expense.

TEACHER TICKETS

Not all shows give free teacher tickets. Even if they do, they still need to be booked. Several clients have ordered tickets for their students, totally forgetting to book staff, or assumed they were free and therefore didn't need booking. If you have 30 students and need 3 staff tickets, book them!

GO TO THE RIGHT PERFORMANCE

One I will never forget is a teacher who arrived to see Les Miserables at the Queens Theatre the day before their booking. The show was sold out so couldn't see it. They had to return to school and book another coach to come see the show on the correct date.

Equally, make sure you go to the right performance. Several groups have turned up for an evening performance when they've booked the matinee and vice versa.

KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING

The Cambridge Theatre is not in Cambridge. The Palace and Victoria Palace theatres are two different venues, so too are the Apollo and Apollo Victoria theatres, and the Lyric and Lyric Hammersmith theatres. Know where you are going and plan your rout.

*While funny to read, all these events **have actually happened** and caused considerable disappointment to students and staff.*

You can avoid making similar mistakes by following our simple advice. Whether you choose to book everything yourself, or work with Theatre Workout to plan your trip for you, the advice below should help make sure you get the best theatre experience possible!

PLANNING

RESEARCH

It is worth researching the trip you want to do before discussing the trip with senior staff, students and parents. Knowing things like costs and logistics for the trip, and that potential dates do not clash with other activities in the school calendar (exams, other trips, etc.) will help get your trip the green light.

QUOTES AND RESERVATIONS

Quotes and reservations are two very different things. Quotes are good for research, but unless you reserve activities, they may not be there later, and prices may change with availability.

With this in mind, it is worth making reservations at least three months in advance, four-six months is better!

Once reservations have been made, keep to the deadlines you are given. If you miss payment dates and do not liaise with suppliers, reservations may be cancelled and may be given to someone else.

If booking free activities, such as museum entry, you still need to book in advance for groups so the venue can manage visitor numbers and prevent overcrowding. Once you know your itinerary, book everything at once and keep track of all references, deadlines and contacts.

CHECKLIST

Here are the most common tasks you need to think about:

- ✓ Prepare your trip itinerary
- ✓ Reserve theatre tickets
- ✓ Reserve coach hire or train tickets
- ✓ Plan and reserve additional activities, such as workshops, theatre tours and museum entry
- ✓ Plan packed lunches and meals
- ✓ Organise lesson cover
- ✓ Organise additional staff to join you
- ✓ Ensure you book enough tickets for both students *and* staff
- ✓ Organise accommodation if staying overnight
- ✓ Get parental consent and deposits
- ✓ Plan payments for suppliers
- ✓ Pay deposits and invoices on time to avoid losing bookings
- ✓ Prepare contingency plans for bad weather
- ✓ Organise trip insurance and risk assessments
- ✓ Ensure you plan for any access or health requirements
- ✓ Get trip insurance

OTHER ACTIVITIES

A theatre trip is a great experience for any group, and can be full of opportunities to learn and support your curriculum. However, you can make more of it.



Theatre Tours

Several London theatres offer backstage or theatre tours which give insight into the internal workings of the theatre. You may even get to go on stage!

Most regional and local theatres will offer tours too on request, which can expand your group's knowledge and interest in the theatre and everything that goes on behind the scenes. It's not just about what goes on on-stage!



Workshops

A theatre workshop can offer huge opportunities to your students to learn and grow as they work with industry professionals. They help build confidence, inspire creativity and teach strong social and life skills we all need, such as teamwork and leadership.

Theatre Workout specialises in workshops and we offer exclusive show programmes and bespoke workshops created on request. Read more [here](#).



Meals and Packed Lunches

You and your students need to eat and, unless you plan to go to McDonalds, it is unlikely you can just turn up at a restaurant, so book in advance.

Most London restaurants offer set menus for groups with fantastic pre-theatre deals.

You can also order packed lunches to be delivered to workshop venues, your school, hotel or hostel in the morning of your trip if you want it.



Accommodation

If an overnight stay is required, most youth hostels offer outstanding facilities which are clean and affordable in dorm-style rooms with private rooms for staff.

If you prefer something a little more comfortable, hotels also offer great deals for groups. For both, prices may vary with availability, but they usually offer great payment plans!



Travel

Coach travel is often the most economical and convenient form of transport for most groups, as are trains for longer journeys, but there a few things to consider, especially if travelling to the West End.

Travel in London can be smooth, or a nightmare. Congestion, accidents or roadworks can cause considerable delays, making you risk missing the start of a performance or other activities. Aim to arrive early if you can.

To be on the safe side, London Underground is fast, efficient and reliable, and group discounts are available. If you have a full itinerary, consider traveling by tube for the final leg of your journey. London schools may also get free or heavily discounted travel via the TFL website.

SECURING ACTIVITIES

You've researched your trip, made all the reservations, gathered payments from students and now you're ready to confirm everything – you're almost done...but not quite!

DEPOSITS

Most suppliers, especially theatres, do not take deposits, so you need to pay for the tickets you need by the booking deadline. Other suppliers, such as hotels, hostels and coach companies, may be more flexible and enable you to pay in instalments.

In all cases, it is essential you pay on time, and that you know how payment will be made. Can you pay by card online or over the phone, by bank transfer from your school office, or do you need to send invoices to your Local Education Authority or other Head Office to be processed?

MAKING PAYMENT

A common problem occurs when teachers approve an invoice and confirm with suppliers, and assume that is the end of it.

It isn't!

Your finance office may need a few days to process a payment, post cheques and finalise everything, so make sure invoices are approved and handed in for processing ahead of the deadline.

In some cases, invoice take weeks to actually be paid by the school office or LEA. These delays can result in booking cancellations and disappointment for students and staff alike.

CONFIRMATIONS

Once paid for, you should receive tickets or vouchers from all suppliers. If you don't, chase them.

Once you get them, check them! You need to make sure everything is correct. If you've booked the matinee instead of the evening performance, or forgotten to book staff tickets, or the coach is booked for the wrong date, now is the time to fix it!

ETIQUETTE

We've seen the headlines when an actor breaks character to tell off an audience member for using their phone. It's highly disrespectful to audiences and performers and unacceptable behaviour.

If your group hasn't been to the theatre before, it is wise to discuss theatre etiquette with them in advance of the trip to prevent this from happening to you!

- Large groups should arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the show to ensure you locate your seats, use facilities, buy refreshments or merchandise, etc. before the start of the show.
- The theatre is not the cinema. It is a live performance and respect should be shown to the performers and fellow audience members.
- The acoustics are great in theatres, so any noise carries. Rustling sweet wrappers, opening fizzy drinks and any talking will be heard all around you. Even whispering should be avoided.
- No food or drink should be consumed in the auditorium
- Latecomers will not be allowed to enter until a suitable point in the performance, if at all. Large groups may be permitted to enter in smaller groups at different times.
- Likewise, if you leave the auditorium, theatre staff may prevent you from returning to your seat until a suitable point in the performance.
- Mobile phones must be switched off and no filming or photography of the performance is permitted.
- If your group makes too much noise, theatre staff may ask you to be quiet. If noise continues to distract the audience or performers you may be asked to leave at the interval.

Likewise, at workshops and attractions, students should always be respectful of other visitors, venue guests and staff, and practitioners.



SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE SHOW!

You want to have a good time too, so here are a final few suggestions to help the trip go to plan:

- Restrict how much spending money students can bring. £5 to £10 should be more than enough for a programme, drink or souvenir.
- Ban electronic devices, especially game consoles and tablets. They don't need them in the theatre, workshops, or on tours.
 - Make sure mobiles are set to silent!
 - Ensure you have *all* their numbers, and that they have yours, just in case they get lost
- Make sure each member of the group has a copy of the itinerary. If they get separated from the group, they can at least get help to join up with you
- Ensure they have suitable clothing – it's a school trip, not a fashion show. They also need to be prepared for all weather and activities booked, so avoid unsuitable footwear or clothing
- A buddy system, especially for younger groups, is always advised

GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

If you don't have the time or the confidence to book everything yourself, Theatre Workout can advise, plan and book everything you need for your trip.

We are a Destination Management Company (DMC) with extensive knowledge, expertise and relationships with theatres, restaurants, attractions and hotels etc. We can save you time and money doing the job yourself.

We also have access to special trade rates for hotels, hostels, restaurants and attractions, which are not available to the public, so sometimes we can save you even more, and you can be confident in the knowledge that a professional is looking after everything for you.

OUR SERVICE INCLUDES:

- Advise and planning of your itinerary
- Gather quotes and availability checks
- Make and manager reservations
- Liaise with suppliers to get you the best service
- Send you invoices and payment plans
- Manage payments, tickets, vouchers etc. for each activity booked

Theatre Workout is not a tour operator. We simply offer a booking service to take the pressure off you through our bespoke hospitality service.

CONTACT US TODAY!

T: 020 8144 2290

E: enquiries@theatreworkout.com

W: www.theatreworkout.com

