

TRAVEL AGENT

JOB DESCRIPTION

A travel agent organizes business or leisure travel for their customers. They may offer advice on national and international destinations, plan the trip itineraries, and take care of any ticket or passport issues that might arise. They may also make additional travel arrangements, including accommodation and restaurant or rental car bookings, and offer guidance on insurance, travel safety, vaccinations, and tours.



SALARY

Junior travel agent ★★★★★

Experienced travel agent ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Physical travel agencies facing growing competition from online travel sites • Providers that service a particular market, such as business travelers, remain in demand

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Travel and tourism • Geography • History • Business studies • Languages • Economics



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS A basic level of education is enough for entry-level jobs, but a degree in travel and tourism can be advantageous.



LIFESTYLE Travel agents work normal retail hours, including weekends. They may be expected to work overtime during high season.



LOCATION Travel agents usually work in an office or retail outlet. They sometimes get to travel to different destinations as part of their job.



THE REALITIES Agents may have to deal with unhappy customers, which can be challenging. They often have to explain situations beyond their control.

RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **HOTEL MANAGER** *see pp. 304–305*
- ▶ **AIRLINE CABIN CREW** *see pp. 308–309*
- ▶ **CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENT** Answers customer queries and deals with complaints. Customer service agents also take orders and payments, arrange refunds, and maintain computer records of transactions.
- ▶ **LEISURE CENTER MANAGER** Runs sports and recreation centers. The job involves arranging timetables for activities, supervising a range of staff, controlling budgets, and promoting and marketing the facilities on offer.
- ▶ **TOURIST INFORMATION ASSISTANT** Provides information about locations, facilities, and places open to visitors. Often based in airports and major railway stations, tourist information assistants use their knowledge of transportation schedules to advise visitors.

CAREER PATHS

There is no set career path for a travel agent. Your network of contacts in the industry will be your most useful asset in seeking higher positions. You will stand out if you specialize in a few particular destinations or sell to specific kinds of travelers, such as those with special interests.






ASSISTANT You may start your career as an assistant with a travel agency. This role usually combines on-the-job training with work experience.



TRAVEL AGENT Once you have become a travel agent, industry-run courses in sales or customer care will help you develop your career. With experience, you can seek professional accreditation to move to more senior positions.



SKILLS GUIDE

-  Good communication skills, telephone etiquette, and sensitivity to cultural differences.
-  The ability to complete all necessary arrangements for customers in a careful, well-organized manner.
-  The strength to stay calm and polite with clients who are difficult to please.
-  Excellent attention to detail to check, order, and relay travel information accurately.
-  Knowledge of other languages when talking to people of different nationalities.



TOUR OPERATOR
Plans and organizes group travel. The work includes organizing cruises, rail, and bus travel, or chartered flights to a selection of destinations.



BUSINESS TRAVEL AGENT Arranges travel and accommodation for corporate clients, negotiating special rates on their behalf.



CALL CENTER AGENT
Sells travel products to customers on the telephone or the Internet, and handles product queries and complaints. May work shifts to deal with customer calls at evenings and weekends.



RESORT REPRESENTATIVE
Represents a travel company at a vacation resort or destination, looking after the needs of vacationers and liaising with travel and accommodation suppliers.