

Air travel

Learn your consumer rights if you are travelling by air including compensation, special assistance and what to do if things go wrong.

Your rights if things go wrong

If your flight is delayed or cancelled you are entitled to assistance and in some cases compensation. If you are denied boarding because the airline has overbooked the flight, you are entitled to compensation.

Your rights are protected by UK law (EC Regulation 261/2004 has been written into UK law) and are the same regardless of the airline you are travelling with.

Your rights are protected for any flight from or within the United Kingdom and European Union and on a flight from a non-EU country into the EU, provided the airline is licensed in the EU.

Download our air travel guide below

- Document
[Plane Facts Guide Web 0.pdf](#)

Delayed flights

Assistance

The following assistance must be provided by the airline regardless of the cause of the delay:

- Your airline is required to provide you with meals and refreshments appropriate to the length of the delay and two free telephone calls or emails if you are delayed by:
 - **two hours** or more for a flight less than 1,500 kilometres e.g. Belfast - London
 - **three hours** or more for a flight between 1,500 and 3,500 kilometres e.g. Belfast - Faro
 - **four hours** or more for a flight more than 3,500 kilometres e.g. Belfast - New York
- If you are delayed overnight your airline is required to provide you with hotel accommodation and transport to and from the hotel.

- If you are delayed by more than five hours and decide not to travel, you are entitled to a refund. Refunds should be paid by the airline within seven days.
- If your flight is delayed but the airline does not provide you with assistance:
 - keep the receipts for any meals and refreshments you buy
 - send copies (not the originals) of these receipts to the airline along with a request for a full refund
 - send a copy of your bill highlighting essential calls you made on your mobile during the delay

Compensation

If your flight is delayed you may be entitled to compensation. The amount will depend on the length of your flight and the length of the delay.

Compensation will be paid at the following rates:

Length of flight	Delay in reaching your destination airport	Compensation
Less than 1,500km	More than 3 hours	£220
1,500km - 3,500km	More than 3 hours	£260
More than 3,500km	More than 4 hours	£520

However, if the airline can prove the delay was caused by “extraordinary circumstances” you will not receive compensation.

Cancelled flights

Assistance

If your flight is cancelled you are entitled to:

- a refund within seven days; or
- alternative transport to your final destination.

If the airline cannot fly you to your intended airport, it is allowed to fly you to another airport within the same region. The airline must then transfer you to either your intended airport or a close by location agreed with you.

Compensation

If your flight is cancelled you may be entitled to compensation. The amount will depend on the length of your flight and the impact the cancellation has in delaying your arrival to your final destination.

Compensation will be paid at the following rates:

Distance of flight Impact on arrival time to destination airport Compensation

0 - 1,500km	• Less than 2 hours	• £110
	• More than 2 hours	• £220
1,500km - 3,500km	• Less than 3 hours	• £175
	• More than 3 hours	• £350
More than 3,500km	• Less than 4 hours	• £260
	• More than 4 hours	• £520

However, passengers will not be entitled to compensation if:

- you are told of the cancellation at least two weeks before the departure date
- you are told of the cancellation between seven days and two weeks before the departure date and are offered alternative travel arrangements. The flight(s) must allow you to depart no more than two hours before your original departure time and get you to your final destination less than four hours after your original arrival time
- you are informed of the cancellation less than seven days before the departure date and are offered alternative travel arrangements. The flight must allow you to depart no more than one hour before your original departure time and must also arrive at your final destination less than two hours after your original arrival time.

Passengers will not be entitled to compensation if the flight is cancelled because of extraordinary circumstances. However, they are still entitled to a full refund or alternative travel arrangements plus assistance.

Denied Boarding

When an airline has overbooked a flight, it must first ask volunteers to give up their seats before passengers are denied boarding.

If you volunteer to give up your seat:

- You must be provided with compensation, either cash or airline vouchers. The level of compensation must be agreed with you.
- If you decide to continue your journey, the airline must also book you an alternative flight. If the airline cannot fly you to your intended airport, it can fly you to another airport within the same region. The airline must then transfer you to either your intended airport or a close by location agreed with you.
- If you decide not to continue your journey the airline must refund your ticket and give you a flight back to the original point of departure if relevant. Refunds should be provided by the airline within seven days.

If an insufficient number of passengers volunteer to give up their seats, the airline will deny boarding to a number of passengers. If the airline denies you boarding:

- You are entitled to immediate compensation.
- You are also entitled to a refund or alternative travel arrangements. If the airline cannot fly you to your intended airport, it is allowed to fly you to another airport within the same region. The airline must then transfer you to either your intended airport or a close by location agreed with you.

Compensation and assistance will not be provided to passengers who are denied boarding because they are considered unfit to travel by the airline.

Luggage

This section aims to help passengers by outlining what to do if your luggage is damaged, lost or delayed.

Compensation

- You are entitled to compensation, under the Montreal Convention, of around £1,300 if your luggage is destroyed, damaged or lost.
- If the value of your luggage is greater than £1,300 you need to declare the value to the airline when checking in.

- You should also make sure your insurance policy is sufficient to cover the contents of your luggage.
- If your luggage has been damaged:
 - report the problem to airline staff in the baggage hall before you leave the airport;
 - this should be recorded in a Property Irregularity Report (PIR); and
 - make sure to obtain a copy of the PIR as this will support your claim for compensation from the airline.
- To assist your claim for compensation, keep the luggage tags which were attached at check-in. If possible take photographs of the damage caused to your luggage.
- You must make a written complaint within seven days from the date you receive your luggage otherwise you will be unable to claim compensation.
- To ensure you have proof of delivery, send your complaint by recorded delivery.

Delayed luggage

Airlines have different rules about how they can help if your luggage is delayed. Airlines can offer one of the following options:

- an immediate, one-off cash payment to cover emergency purchases;
- a set amount per day until the delayed bag is returned; or
- a refund for emergency purchases and essential expenses on submission of receipts.

Lost luggage

If your luggage has not been found after 21 days you should write to the airline to claim compensation detailing the value of the items lost.

Special Assistance

All airports and airlines in the UK and EU have a legal responsibility to assist passengers with a disability or reduced mobility throughout their journey. All disabilities are covered including hidden disabilities such as learning difficulties, autism and hearing loss. A passenger may have reduced mobility because of their age or because of a temporary injury such as a broken leg.

It is against the law for airlines, tour operators or travel agents to refuse a booking on

the grounds of disability or reduced mobility. The only exceptions to this rule are:

- Restrictions imposed for safety reasons.
- Instances where the size of an aircraft or its doors prevents access by the passenger requiring assistance

How to book assistance

- You should let the airline know about the assistance you need at least 48 hours before travelling. It is often easiest to provide this information when booking your flight. It is then the responsibility of the airline to let the airport know of your specific requirements.
- If you book through a travel agent it must pass on details of your assistance needs to the airline. The airline must inform your departure and arrival airports of the services you need.
- You are allowed to travel with two items of mobility equipment free of charge.
- If you need to carry any medical equipment you should contact the airline in advance and find out if you require a medical certificate or other documentation.

Depending on the level of assistance you require, the airline may ask you to arrange for another person (a family member, friend or carer) to accompany you in order to comply with safety rules.

Making a complaint about assistance

- If you are not happy with the assistance you receive, complain to the airline or airport to give them the opportunity to put things right.
- If you are not satisfied with the airline's or airport's response, we can help investigate the complaint on your behalf.

Further information is available in our Access to Air Travel guide below.

- Document
[Access to Air Travel Guide Web.pdf](#)

Scheduled Airline Failure

If an airline fails it can be a very worrying time for passengers. Your rights will depend on how you booked and paid for your flights.

Booked directly with an airline

Customers who bought their tickets separately with a personal credit card may be able to claim their money back from the credit card provider under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act. To be eligible, you will need to have paid more than £100 for your flights. If the flight was cheaper, or you used a Visa debit card, you may be able to use the 'Chargeback' scheme that card issuers are signed up to.

Booked through an airline ticket agent

You should speak to the agent in the first instance as they may have provided travel insurance that includes Scheduled Airline Failure Insurance (the type of protection provided may vary depending on the type of policy taken out).

Booked with an ATOL certificate holder

If you bought your flights as part of a package with an ATOL travel firm and received an ATOL certificate you should be ATOL protected. Contact your travel firm for more information.

Using your mobile phone aboard

Since 1 January 2021, the guarantee of free roaming for UK mobile users in 47 destinations in the EU has ended.

[View information about mobile roaming here.](#)

Financial protection for your holiday

ATOL

ATOL (the Air Travel Organiser's Licence) is a financial protection scheme. If you book an ATOL protected holiday or charter flight and your tour operator, airline or accommodation provider goes out of business before you travel you can claim a full refund.

If a service provider goes out of business while you are abroad you will be able to continue your holiday. Arrangements will be made for you to fly home once the holiday

is over.

ATOL certificate

Before booking you should check with the travel agent or tour operator whether your flight or holiday package is ATOL protected. If it is protected you should be issued with an ATOL certificate as soon as you pay, even a deposit. The ATOL certificate is a standardised document which makes it clear how the trip is protected.

Keep your ATOL certificate safe and make sure you bring it with you when you go on holiday.

Financial protection if you are not covered by ATOL

If your flight is not ATOL protected you should make sure your travel insurance policy provides cover if the airline goes out of business. If you buy a ticket using a credit card and the airline goes out of business, you may be able to claim a refund from your credit card company under the Consumer Credit Act. The cost of a single (i.e. one leg) ticket must be at least £100.

If you buy flights using a debit or prepaid card (such as a Visa, MasterCard or American Express card), you may be able to use the card provider's 'chargeback' process to claim back your money if the airline goes out of business. Usually, you must make a chargeback claim within 120 days.

[We have template letters on how to claim a refund from your credit card provider.](#)

Airport and airline charges

Airport parking and public transport costs

Airports have different drop off and pickup charges with varying durations for free parking.

- [View airport parking and public transport costs](#)

Airline charges

Before you book, check additional airline charges such as priority boarding, baggage charges and sizes, seat selection and airport/online check-in.

- [Aer Lingus](#)
- [British Airways](#)
- [easyJet](#)
- [Jet2.com](#)
- [Ryanair](#)
- [Whizz Air](#)
- [KLM](#)
- [Loganair](#)

How to complain

If you need to complain about an airline or airport, follow our three-step guide to complaining effectively.

Step 1

If you are not satisfied with the service you receive, contact a member of the airline or airport staff. They may be able to resolve the problem at the time of travel.

Step 2

If the airport or airline cannot resolve the problem at the time of travel put your complaint in writing with the time, date, route of your journey and the flight number. Send copies of your flight tickets if you are claiming a refund.

If you incurred any additional expenses as a result of a delay or cancellation including denied boarding, include proof e.g. receipts or invoices. [We have template letters available to download for free.](#)

Step 3

If you have made a complaint and you are not satisfied with the outcome:

- [complete our online complaints form](#)

We have the legal power to investigate the complaint on your behalf.

We handle complaints regarding flights to and from Northern Ireland. If your flight was not to or from Northern Ireland, we will direct you to the organisation responsible for handling your complaint.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Many airlines offer an ADR scheme to passengers who are not happy with the outcome of their complaint. ADR is a process of resolving complaints without going to court.



Got a complaint about air travel?

If you have made a complaint to the airline and are not satisfied with the outcome, we can help.

[Use our complaints tool to let us know the issue](#)

Other transport and travel information

Ferry travel

Information on your consumer rights when sailing including compensation, special assistance and what to do if things go wrong.

EU Exit and travel

Advice for Northern Ireland consumers who are travelling to Europe including the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain.

EU Exit and mobile roaming

Information on the impact EU Exit has had on Mobile data roaming charges.

Airport parking and public transport costs

A breakdown of airport drop-off and pickup times and charges as well as public transport costs.