

Travel refunds Frequently Asked Questions

Airline Refunds – the reasons behind the delays

The airlines are largely falling into 3 main categories:

1. Maintaining business as usual, and are allowing customers to process refunds. It is taking longer simply because of the huge numbers of people wanting refunds. (eg through the GDS) allow 1 month
2. A group of airlines have blocked refunds through the normal channels and customers are having to apply directly to the airline for refunds (eg no GDS) – allow 3 months
3. Airlines that are offering no immediate refunds, neither cash nor vouchers, with a refund sometime in the future – allow up to 12 months

To date, there has been a 95% drop in bookings, equivalent to £3tn, which is 4% of the global GDP.

- Why are the TMCs taking so long to refund me?

The TMCs are all refunding any money from airlines as soon as they have it. The delays are being caused by the airlines, due to the huge numbers of cancellations they are processing.

- Why am I getting a voucher or credit note?

The airlines simply don't have the money to make cash refunds. By issuing vouchers they are attempting not to go into liquidation.

- Isn't this against the law?

Yes, the airlines know it and they also know that changing the terms of booking after issuing the ticket is also against the law, but they're doing that too. The independent travel bodies, IATA etc, are petitioning the EU to alter the law regarding refunds to prevent the collapse of any airlines.

- Why is taking so long to get my refund?

Because of the sheer numbers of cancellations and people trying to get their money back.

- What happens if I get a voucher and the airline then collapses?

At present, the vouchers and credit notes are not indemnified, so you would lose that money. This is where you can either claim via credit card, or via your insurance. This is being addressed by the Business Travel Association.

- I've been issued a voucher, but that traveller won't be taking that journey now? Can I transfer the balance?

Each airline is operating slightly differently, so you'd need to check the status of each voucher. This is also being addressed by the Business Travel Association to allow the vouchers to be redeemed by any other traveller on any other route.

- What are SUPC doing to support the sector?

We're writing to the Business Travel Association, with the endorsement of all our TMCs explaining the unique way in which much of travel is funded (from grants) and to explain that vouchers are not a good enough solution. We will update you when we have heard back from them.