

Tour Operator

A tour operator organises package holidays within the UK and abroad. This includes arranging transport and accommodation. They advertise them so that travel agents can sell them, or on the internet for direct sale to the public.

The Work

You could be:

- researching and creating holiday packages
- negotiating costs with hotels, airlines and coach companies, drawing up contracts and setting holiday prices
- making sure travel arrangements run smoothly and acting as a link with suppliers such as airlines
- dealing with customer requests and last minute changes to itineraries
- visiting resorts in the UK or abroad to check up on the facilities
- producing holiday brochures, making sure descriptions, prices and dates are correct
- monitoring the level of bookings for each holiday
- gathering customer feedback and market research and providing information to managers and suppliers
- specialising in one area such as accounts, reservations, IT, brochure design or product development.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

As a Modern Apprentice, you may start on the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026).

Starting pay can be around £16,000 to £19,000 a year. With experience this can rise to £25,000 a year. As a tour operations manager, you could earn up to around £38,000 a year.

Conditions

- You work in an office, but possibly travel for meetings.
- Some tour operators personally visit resorts to inspect the accommodation and facilities.
- There are busy and stressful times of the year when you work longer hours.
- You may have to work weekends and public holidays.
- You may have to take your own holidays in the off-season.
- You may get additional benefits such as discount on holidays.

Getting In

- There is no one single way into this career.
- Some entrants do a degree, Higher National Diploma or Certificate (HNC or HND) in travel and tourism, or a related subject such as business or marketing.
- For entry to a degree course you usually need 4-5 Highers and for an HND you usually need 1-2 Highers.
- You might get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in Travel Services and study Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Travel Services (Leisure and Business) at Levels 2 and 3 (SCQF Levels 5 and 6).
- Ability in foreign languages is useful and may be necessary.
- You should be able to show a genuine interest in travel.

Jobs are advertised in trade journals such as Travel Weekly, Travel Trade Gazette and on websites, such as traveljobsearch.com. Once you have relevant experience you can register with a travel related employment agency such as New Frontiers.

What Does It Take

You need:

- good written and spoken communication skills
- a good awareness of business
- to be a good negotiator
- organisation and planning skills
- the ability to pay attention to detail
- to be able to make decisions
- to have initiative
- research and IT skills
- the ability to work under pressure and meet targets.

Training

Many tour companies offer in-house training.

Getting On

- With experience you could be promoted to a senior manager or general manager position.
- Most promotion opportunities are with large companies.

Contacts

Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) Ltd

Tel: 020 3117 0599

Website: abta.com

X: @ABTAtravel

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ABTAlovetravel

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH)

Tel: 020 7258 9850

Website: www.cthawards.com

X: @cthawards1

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ConfederationOfTourismAndHospitalityCth

Institute of Travel and Tourism (ITT)

Tel: 0844 4995 653

Website: www.itt.co.uk

X: @ittnews

Springboard

Email: info@springboarduk.org.uk

Website: careerscope.uk.net

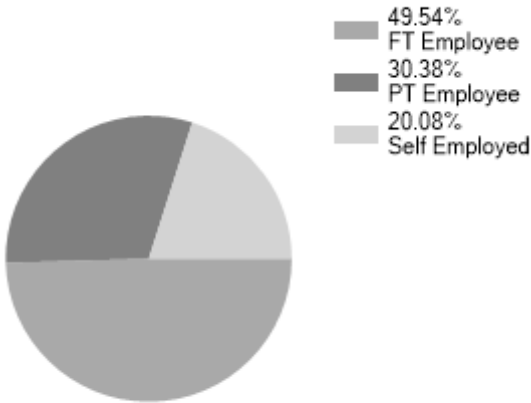
Website (2): springboard.uk.net

X: @CareerScope_

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SpringboardUKCharity

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

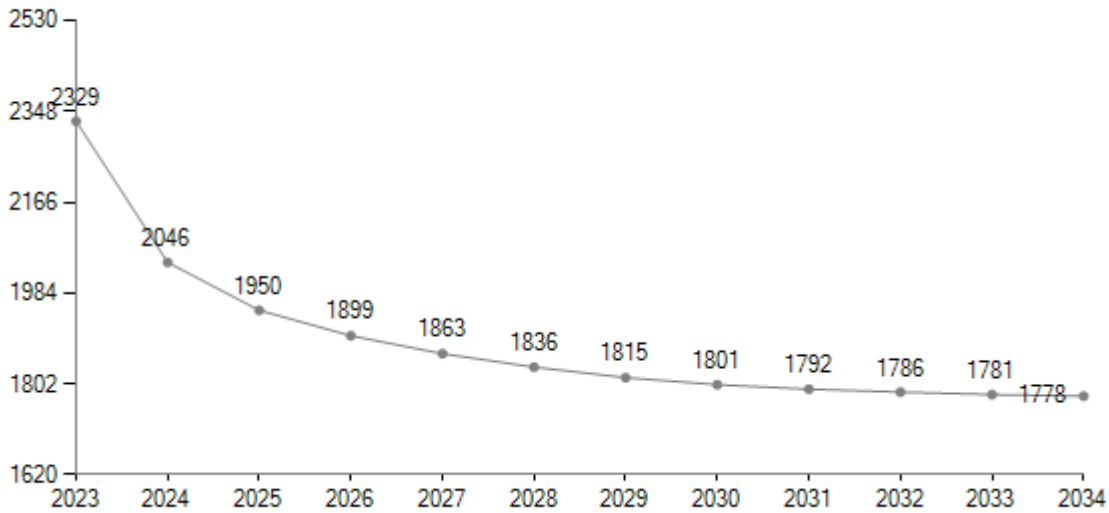


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)