



American Society of
Travel Advisors

PRESS KIT
2023



We'll take you there.

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL ADVISORS

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ASTA FAST FACTS



ASTA is the leading global advocate for travel advisors, the travel industry and the traveling public. Its members represent 80 percent of all travel sold in the United States through the travel agency distribution channel. Together with hundreds of internationally based members, ASTA's history of industry advocacy traces back to its founding in 1931 when it launched with the mission to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism.

ASTA represents approximately 7,500 travel agencies and supplier travel companies employing over 90,000 people. Our members are in every U.S. state and Congressional district and range from large business-focused travel management companies such as Carlson Wagonlit and BCD Travel to household-name online agencies like Expedia.

ASTA

- » Has **7,500 MEMBER COMPANIES REPRESENTING MORE THAN 90,000 TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS**
- » Has over **250 INTERNATIONAL MEMBER COMPANIES**
- » Since 2021, ASTA has held **OVER 700 MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS** and their staff, **25 DIFFERENT FEDERAL AND STATE GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS**, nearly **90,000 ADVOCACY MESSAGES TO LEGISLATORS**, and **MORE THAN 9,500 LETTERS TO EDITORS OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS**—all in support of the travel industry

AS FEATURED IN



The New York Times



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Sources: ARC, Census Bureau, Phocuswright Travel Agency Landscape, Travel Weekly Power List, Company financial reports, MMGY's Portrait of U.S. Travelers, TNS Global's TravelsAmerica, Statista.com




TRAVEL ADVISORS →

Sell
830K
AIR TICKETS
PER DAY

Sell
2/3
of ALL
CRUISES

Sell
68%
of all TOUR
PACKAGES

TRAVELERS →

45% agree that the **EXPERTISE OF A TRAVEL ADVISOR WILL PUT THEM AT EASE.**

78% of those who have used a travel advisor in the last 5 years **BELIEVE ADVISORS LOOK OUT FOR THEM.**

40% anticipate **SPENDING MORE ON TRAVEL** than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

75% expect to **SPEND THE SAME OR MORE ON TRAVEL IN 2023** than before.

Sources: ARC, Census Bureau, Phocuswright Travel Agency Landscape, Travel Weekly Power List, Company financial reports, MMGY's Portrait of U.S. Travelers, TNS Global's TravelsAmerica, Statista.com



OUR MISSION

WE ARE THE
**LEADING
ADVOCATE**
FOR TRAVEL ADVISORS,
the travel industry
and the traveling public.



ASTA, short for the American Society of Travel Advisors, is the world's leading association of travel professionals. Our members include travel advisors and the companies whose products they sell—tours, cruises, hotels, car rentals, etc.

We are the leading advocate for travel advisors, the travel industry and the traveling public. The mission of ASTA and its affiliated organizations is to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism. ASTA and its affiliates comprise the world's foremost travel trade association with members in 120 countries. Our work encompasses every aspect of the travel experience. Here is just a sample of the activities in which ASTA is involved:

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS: We promote and defend the travel agency community and the traveling public at all levels of government and within every segment of the travel industry.

INDUSTRY AFFAIRS: We fight to ensure a level playing field and fair competition throughout our industry which, of course, benefits industry professionals as well as consumers.

EDUCATION: We provide our members with the finest education and information resources available, so that they can provide the utmost in professional service to their clients. ASTA's educational research allows member agencies and future travel professionals the opportunity to expand their business through specialization, giving advisors the tools to sell unique travel experiences, comply with government regulations and adhere to a code of ethics.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS: We constantly monitor the travel industry to identify "scam" operators and others whose practices cheat consumers and negatively impact our industry. Only ASTA members subscribe to a 12-point code of ethics which stands for "Integrity in Travel." This is the pledge our members stake their reputations on. And we provide traveling consumers with a complete range of informational resources.

CONSUMER AWARENESS: Through its advertising and public relations efforts, ASTA strives to make the traveling public aware of the many benefits of using a travel professional to arrange and purchase travel.



ASTA - A LIVING HISTORY



Since our founding in 1931 as the American Steamship & Tourist Agents Association, ASTA's mission has been to promote professionalism and advocate for its members. As modes of transportation evolved, so did ASTA, widening our focus and renaming ourselves the American Society of Travel Agents in 1944. Then, reflecting the shift from booking agent to trusted advisor, in 2018, ASTA became the American Society of Travel Advisors. Here's a decade-by-decade look at some highlights from our storied past.

1930s

ASTA was formed in 1921 as The American Steamship & Tourist Agents Association. At a time when agents were booking about 85 percent of all steamship travel, ASTA was urging ship lines to adopt agent-friendly policies and working to persuade hotels and railroads to pay agent commissions.

1940s

When World War II curtailed all but essential travel, ASTA members fought for the survival of their association, and in 1946, when airlines cut agent commissions, we were there to fight for our members. Reflecting shifts in the industry, we changed our name to the American Society of Travel Agents.

1950s

ASTA won a 27-year battle for rail commissions. Plus, as part of fulfilling our mission to encourage and enhance professionalism in the industry, ASTA introduced the travel industry's first basic training tool, a home-study course for agent.

1960s

ASTA made impressive progress in education. We held our first School at Sea and opened seven travel schools. In 1968, when President Johnson announced plans to restrict travel outside of the United States, ASTA waged the largest grassroots campaign in our three-decade history.

1970s

The 1970s brought airline deregulation, leading to increased airline competition and the first rise in air commissions in 25 years. ASTA established ASTA Marketing Services, Inc. (AMSI), negotiating member discounts on quality products and services and the ASTA Political Action Committee (ASTAPAC) to help support our advocacy efforts.

1980s

We continued our emphasis on education, holding Trainingfest, School on Rails, School at Sea, and School on the Road. The decade was a period of significant growth for travel agents and the industry.

1990s

In 1995, seven airlines capped agency commissions on domestic tickets. We responded by filing an anti-trust lawsuit and settled out of court for \$86 million. Plus, advocating for agents and consumers, ASTA drafted and promoted an Air Travelers Bill of Rights which led to the Consumer Access to Travel information Act.



ASTA - A LIVING HISTORY



2000s

In 2007, we re-launched our brand with a new logo and membership structure and enhanced benefits, including a redesigned website, member tools for advocacy, advertising and public relations campaigns, increased opportunities for global networking and improved online and home-study courses.



2010s

ASTA advocacy efforts scored major victories at the federal and state levels, saving the travel agency community an estimated \$630 million in taxes, fees and other costs. ASTA led the fight to prevent airlines from passing along merchant fees to travel agents and their clients, petitioned the Department of Labor to remove travel agencies from a regulatory “blacklist”, helped get more than half of the U.S. Senate to support Cuba travel freedom and successfully opposed legislation against the use of independent contractors. ASTA fought new disclosures in the FAA Reauthorization bill before Congress—saving travel advisors \$56 million.



2018

New branding was unveiled, changing the name to the American Society of Travel Advisors. Advisors are trusted counsel from inspiration to complex itineraries, and no longer seen to the traveling public as a booking intermediary. The rebrand comes to life in this video. [insert video] [astaConsumerVideo_2023Rebrand.mp4](#)

2019

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened the travel industry as a whole. ASTA was there, front and center, as an advocate in state and federal governments and in front of the traveling public on local and national news. ASTA helped ensure that travel agencies had access to resources to stay in business while times were tight and kept a safe return to traveling norms in the forefront of everyone’s mind.



2020s

In the months and years emerging from the pandemic, ASTA experienced unprecedented grassroots engagement and public advocacy exposure. In 2020, ASTA helped secure CARES Act funding, which was utilized by 78 percent of ASTAs then-14,000 members. In 2021, over 170 ASTA members lobbied congress for the Alaska Tourism Restoration Bill to resume cruises between Alaska and Washington state. The very next day, the bill unanimously passed the House of Representatives.

ASTA empowers members to reach out to consumers; it provides tools for members to launch or improve their own advertising and public relations campaigns.

From 1931 through the present, the industry has continually faced rapid changes in technology and shifting alliances among the travel community. Yet through all those advances and realignments:

ASTA HAS REMAINED THE ONE TRUE VOICE OF TRAVEL ADVISORS.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



ARE TRAVEL AGENCIES STILL A THING?

Yes! Travel agencies and travel advisors still exist. We work with them every day. Don't take our word for it.

There are **OVER 402,835 TRAVEL AGENCIES** currently in the United States.

98% The percentage of travel agencies that are small businesses based on SBA's definition.

Nearly **70%** of the travel advisor industry is **COMPRISED OF FEMALE-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES.**

\$48.53 BILLION: The **2022 MARKET SIZE OF THE TRAVEL AGENCY SECTOR** in the United States.

Of all travel sold in the U.S. in 2021, **29%** was **BOOKED THROUGH TRAVEL AGENCIES,** making it the largest sales channel.

\$43,810 The **MEDIAN PAY PER YEAR** for travel advisors

20% INCREASE IN JOB OPPORTUNITIES OVER THE NEXT DECADE, outpacing most industries in the United States

Travel Advisors were **USED BY 22% OF U.S. TRAVELERS**

Travel agencies **GENERATE AN ANNUAL PAYROLL OUTPUT** of **\$7.3 BILLION**

Travel agencies earn **ANNUAL REVENUES OF \$15.1 BILLION**

THEY'RE THERE
**FOR
YOU**
IF SOMETHING
GOES WRONG,
providing a
safety net
beyond travel
insurance.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TRAVEL ADVISOR AND HOW HAS IT CHANGED?

In today's increasingly complex world of travel, a travel advisor (also known as a travel agent) facilitates travel, provides consultation and options for consumer consideration, and books travel on behalf of those consumers to provide the best trip imaginable meeting their needs and requirements. Travel advisors do more than book travel. They assess suitable options and arrange all components of travel before, during and after trips, serving as the point of contact for the traveler, supporting their trip to ensure a great experience and providing a lifeline should travel plans change or an emergency occur.

Travel Advisors are the experts for the international destinations that you've never heard of.

They can make recommendations when you're not sure where to go.

A travel advisor understands what you truly want to get out of each trip, even when you don't.

The world is more connected, and travel advisors specialize in complex itineraries.

They ensure you truly experience the destination—not just tick landmarks off a list of things to see.

Travel Advisors understand the true value of some experiences.

They have access to benefits you can't get otherwise—our industry is built on relationships.

The travel agency community specializes in those things you simply cannot find online.

ETHICS & TRAVEL ADVISORS:

ASTA members must adhere to a strict code of ethics. Any traveler who works with an ASTA member and has a problem, has the option to file an official complaint with the association—and our consumer affairs team will investigate the matter and work with the consumer and the member to achieve an amicable resolution. If the member company does not cooperate or it is discovered that it has engaged in dishonest or fraudulent conduct, ASTA will remove that member from the association. Travelers who wish to file a complaint against an ASTA member can email our Consumer Affairs Department at consumeraffairs@asta.org.

WHERE CAN I FIND A TRAVEL ADVISOR?

Go to ASTA.org and get a Trip Quote from a verified travel advisor. Search for advisors with expertise in destinations or specific subjects that interest you and connect with an advisor who can help create your treasured memories. Rest assured that every travel advisor you find on ASTA.org is an ASTA member in good standing. How? Because it's tied to our membership database!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



HASN'T THE INTERNET REPLACED THE TRAVEL ADVISOR?

There are some things technology simply cannot replicate, and personal touch is one of them. It also cannot replace the expertise, guidance and personal service of a trusted travel advisor. At a time when travelers are stressed out with hectic schedules, travel advisors have all the information at their fingertips, saving valuable hours of Internet research. Advisors also can offer insider tips based on personal experience.

It's fun to imagine a world where daily activities like cleaning and driving are made easier. But travel is a highly personal and emotionally complex experience. In a complicated world of automation and information overload, travel advisors are more important than ever because of their experience-based insight.

Advanced technology plays an important role in the travel industry. But as access to purchasing travel broadens, those truly unique experiences will become less and less available. If you really want to get the inside track, try working with a travel specialist who has been there, done that, and has your best interests in mind.

Today's successful travel advisor leverages new technologies to help them better serve their clients. They're connected on social media, using advanced booking platforms, and even integrating AI to streamline the customer experience on their websites.

WE'RE LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE HUMAN CONNECTIONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER. **IT'S HOW WE BUILD TRUST.** WHEN WE TRAVEL, WE'RE CONNECTING TO THE WORLD THROUGH THE PEOPLE WE MEET AND THE EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE US FEEL ALIVE.



DO TRAVEL ADVISORS CHARGE FEES?

There is no simple way to answer the fee question, except to say that yes—many travel advisors charge a fee. This could range from \$50 to several hundred dollars depending on the complexity of the trip. Don't be scared off by fees. Remember, you're paying an expert like you would your accountant or a lawyer. That fee will come back to you through the added value your advisor provides such as upgrades, complimentary breakfast, perks and other exclusive access their connections unlock for you.

Sources: ARC, Census Bureau, PhoCusWright Travel Agency Landscape, Travel Weekly Power List, Company financial reports, MMGY's Portrait of U.S. Travelers, TNS Global's TravelsAmerica, Statista.com

* Large online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Expedia and Priceline may not be included in the data.

** Includes online or intranet tools that agencies provide. Multiple booking methods applicable for different portions of each trip planning



ASTA REMAINS THE **WORLD'S LEADING ASSOCIATION** OF TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS.

Our membership numbers reflect the shift and consolidation taking place within the travel industry—specifically among travel agencies. In response to the changes, ASTA has adapted its membership criteria to provide opportunities for all travel professionals and travel businesses to join, from home-based individual advisors to larger travel agencies and affiliated travel suppliers.

Our membership encompasses 7,500 member companies representing more than 90,000 travel professionals.

Looking for a member? *Visit our membership directory.*

HOW DO I CHOOSE A TRAVEL ADVISOR?

Every travel agency is different and accordingly, some are better suited to a given consumer than others. Here are some tips on choosing a travel advisor who is right for you.

LOOK FOR THE ASTA LOGO: Through its continuing education and training programs, ASTA prepares its members to operate high-caliber, competitive businesses. ASTA members are required to adhere to an enforceable code-of-ethics.

SEARCH ONLINE: Request a trip quote from an ASTA Verified Travel Advisor.

ASK AROUND: Tap friends, neighbors and relatives who use an advisor they trust. You may want to visit or call several agencies to find the one that best suits your needs.

INTERVIEW THE ADVISOR: Consider the advisor's willingness to listen and answer questions. The best advisors want to establish a long-term relationship with a client, not just make one sale.

ASK ABOUT FEES: Good advisors will notify their clients of any additional fees, including service fees, up front. Doing otherwise is pointless, as the fee will appear as a separate charge on the client's credit card bill.

CHECK INDIVIDUAL CREDENTIALS: Many advisors have been trained in business management, travel and tourism or geography. Others have supplemented their agency experience with extensive education and training courses. Some travel advisors are Certified Travel Counselors (CTC), having completed an educational program with the Travel Institute, or Master Cruise Counselors (MCC), having completed a program with the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

Sources: ASTA 2016 Financial Benchmarking report, ASTA 2017 Consumer Research.

ASTA
MEMBER
AGENCIES
PRODUCE
80%
OF AGENCY
SALES*





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