

How to Organize Your Group for a Custom Bike Tour

From small groups of friends to large fundraising cycling holidays, we use our expertise to craft the perfect custom trip for each unique group.



Group organizers, our heroes

Thank you for your interest in promoting a custom bike tour (or hiking tour) among your friends. To assist you in becoming an effective group organizer, we'd like to provide you with some tools and tips that have been useful to our group organizers in the past. This document serves as a guide for group organizers about how to successfully gather the people needed for a tour to be confirmed and run in the best way possible.



Who is a group organizer?

A group organizer can be anyone who is involved and is constantly engaging in a social network of like-minded people whom they feel would be great traveling companions. No one will ever spend the energy to try to put together a group of people they don't like or *just because*.

A group organizer could be the experienced one (somebody with many tours under their belt) or the enthusiastic beginner who, once they've found out how lovely it is to take an active vacation, cannot wait to spread the word.

For custom trips with Tourissimo, the process involves a 23-point questionnaire that allows us to learn more about your group's specific needs.

We then plan an interview with you to finetune the program to the interests, aspirations and expectations of the group.

It is important that you do some prep work and start with some questions for your group.

Step One

Interview or get together with at least three other potential participants and answer the following questions:

- Why are we going or what are we celebrating? A tour that has a purpose or that is for an anniversary or a celebration is far more enticing when presented to potential participants.*
- Where are we going? Narrow it down to two potential destinations among the four of you.
- What are the pros and cons of each destination? Weigh them against the group's interests, abilities, needs and budget. Then, decide on a destination.
- Why was the destination chosen and why is it the best option? It goes without saying that the small committee can/should have more weight on the decision, but be prepared to explain your decision. When you talk to your travel company, you'll gather insights that are also helpful.
- When are we going and is there enough lead-time? The sooner you start the better, and it's not uncommon to bring together a group one year ahead of time.

** There could be a special, once-in-a-lifetime event at the destination, too: the anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's birth, a festival or race of some sort that fits the group's interests, a major historical date of something that changed the world.*



This preliminary conversation should be kept within the small committee and moderated by the group leader/s. The group should be presented with the final picture and not with a work in progress.

Connect with your travel company to get a first draft of an itinerary and an offer. At Tourissimo, we fit the tour to the group, not the other way around, and we make adjustments until the program is just right.

Step Two

Step Two is to create two lists of contacts: the "A" core list and "B" general list. Gather the committee and make sure you agree on those names. As a rule of thumb, you want the "A" list to have at least double as many names as spots available, and the "B" list to have four times as many names as spots available.

Did you say you don't need a committee? Trust us, you need allies in this, and people will be much more willing to come on board if a small group has already formed and you are not the only one committed.



Step Three

Step Three is to send an invite to the A list. You should include:

- What you are celebrating (see above)
- Where you are going
- Highlights of the program
- Dates

You should mention that you would love for them to join and that they are the first to know but that a second email to a much larger group is going out on [insert a date a week away] and they should secure their spot now.

Next, list the cost and the inclusions. Do not leave out the level of accommodation, number of meals included, guide-to-guest ratio and perhaps a link to the cancellation policy.

Be responsive and engage with your travel company when needed because they are the experts and they can address most of the questions and concerns.

Send a reminder and follow-up after three days.

Step Four

The email to the general list goes out for the number of spots left.



Step Five

Start a waiting list. Cancellations are a fact of life (12 percent statistically), and therefore you should be able to fill the spots that become vacant. Why is this important? Often you get quotes based on the number of participants, and you don't want to find yourself in the situation of falling in the higher price bracket without anyone to contact.



Inviting people outside of the group

Groups are dynamic, and sometimes participants ask to invite friends. You, as the group organizer, essentially vouch for all of the participants on the trip. If you're not familiar with all of the participants first hand, having to vouch for friends of friends can put you in a potentially awkward situation.

The simple rule to follow is that the inviter vouches for his/her friends and they are responsible for their behavior and attitude. Everyone wants to have a good time; strive to keep out difficult and potentially problematic individuals as much as possible.



We hope you understand that you are not promoting a scheduled tour where people can say, "I pay, therefore I belong." No, you have to strive for and be firm about reaching awesomeness. Participants will respect that you are protective and sensitive to group dynamics. It means that you value their friendship and also respect their vacation time and the best quality time they can possibly have with friends.

The timetable ideally would be the following:

- **Twelve months prior:** Contact and select the travel company.
- **Twelve to 10 months prior:** Committee is formed.
- **Ten months prior:** Invitations go out.

Several other things will have to happen, but the travel company handles most of them.

Who does what

GO = Group Organizer; TC = Tour Company; P = Participant:

GO	Receive and share the final tour summary.
TC or GO	Sign contract if applicable.
GO	Approve any last-minute changes.
TC	Collect deposit.
TC	Discuss insurance options and cancellation terms.
TC	Collect balance payment.
P	Complete online booking form and sign waivers.
TC	Share pre-trip information.
TC	Collect travel plans.
TC	Send out tour surveys.

Any tour that is only six months out is at risk of not filling, and sometimes it is better to decide to postpone for one year.

It is not hard to gather a group for a fun and memorable active vacation, but it does not just happen on its own. Talk to and rely on your tour company to keep things on pace and to remind you about the next steps. By following this simple plan, about nine tours out of 10 end up running.

If you are ready and would like to start, fill out [this form](#) and we can discuss the next steps. I can even give you sample invitation emails that have been successful for past groups.

