

Travel Agent

Plan and sell other people's trips. The job the internet was supposed to kill, and did not quite.

TYPICAL PAY

\$50,160

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$35k to \$77k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Agency offices, host agencies,
corporate travel departments, ho...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Geography, a second language and anything that involves talking to strangers politely.
- 2 Learn the tools** Weeks to months
 Booking systems, supplier portals and how a cruise or tour is actually priced. Agencies and host agencies teach this, and there are short online courses.
- 3 Join an agency or a host agency** Immediately
 An agency employs you. A host agency lets you work for yourself under its accreditation and commission agreements, for a fee.
- 4 Pick a specialty** 1 to 3 years
 Cruises, luxury, adventure travel, one country, destination weddings, accessible travel. Generalists compete with booking websites and lose.
- 5 Certify and build a client list** 2 to 5 years
 Take a professional certification and turn repeat clients and referrals into a business.

Pros and cons

- + You can start with no degree and almost no money
- + Work from home, set your own hours if you are independent
- + Supplier trips let you see places at industry rates
- Federal projections have the occupation declining as people book online
- Commission arrives after the client travels, so cash flow is slow
- The whole industry stops in a pandemic, a volcano or a war, and so does your income

Optional boosts

Certified Travel Associate. Certified Travel Counselor and Certified Travel Industry Executive. Verified Travel Advisor. Supplier specialist programs.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Travel Agents
 American Society of Travel Advisors
 The Travel Institute: professional certifications
 California Attorney General: Seller of Travel program

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/travel-agent>

Good to know

Airlines stopped paying agents in the 1990s

Airlines cut and then eliminated the commission they paid travel agents, which wiped out a large part of the industry. What survived moved to cruises, tours and complicated multi-country trips, where...

California keeps a fund for stranded travellers

Sellers of travel registered in California contribute to a restitution program, so a consumer who paid for travel that was never delivered has somewhere to claim from. It is one of the few consumer protecti...



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