About UC Retirees Travel:

Why should I travel with UC Retirees Travel?

You have many choices for group travel, but UC Retirees Travel offers an opportunity to travel with other retired faculty and staff from the 10 UC campuses and three national laboratories. We find that our travelers often share an instant camaraderie and similar approach to world travel because of our shared history working for the University of California.

By traveling on our escorted trips, you help to support CUCRA (Council of University of California Retirees Associations), a systemwide consortium of volunteer representatives from all the UC retiree associations. CUCRA represents retiree interests and advocates for retiree benefits in regular meetings with UC leadership. For example, CUCRA was instrumental in establishing the UC Healthcare Facilitator program, maintaining UC contributions to retiree healthcare premiums, advocating for the establishment of campus-funded retirement centers, and encouraging campuses to offer retiree perks such as free or reduced parking and continued use of UC email. The UC Retirees Travel program helps CUCRA continue to be the voice for UC retired faculty and staff.

Who operates your tours?

UC Retirees Travel partners with three different tour operators:

- **Collette** – Collette is a family-owned company that has been offering guided tours for more than 100 years. Collette offers both standard size tours with up to 44 travelers and small group adventures with up to 24 travelers.

- **Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT), Grand Circle Travel (GCT), Grand Circle Cruise Line (GCCL)** – OAT/GCT/GCCL are the family of travel companies owned by Grand Circle Corporation. OAT specializes in small group tours with a maximum of 16 travelers as well as small ship adventures. GCT offers standard-size tours with up to 44 travelers and GCCL offers river cruises. OAT/GCT land tours feature a limited number of single rooms with no single supplement; GCCL cruises feature a limited number of single rooms with a very low single supplement.

- **Premier World Discovery** – Premier offers both standard size tours with up to 44 travelers and small group adventures with up to 24 travelers. Premier is one of few tour operators that are authorized to travel to Cuba.

Will our trip have a UC Retirees Travel escort?

With at least 12 UC travelers, the trip will include a UC Retirees Travel escort. With fewer than 12 travelers, escorts will still provide pre-trip assistance, but will not accompany travelers on the trip. In this case, travelers will still have the tour operator’s dedicated trip leader for the duration of the main trip.
What is the difference between a UC Retirees escort and the tour operator’s trip leader?

Each tour is led by a trip leader working for the tour operator. The trip leader is an experienced bilingual or multilingual guide in the country/cities you will be visiting. The trip leader coordinates all details while on the tour, including the itinerary, transportation, group activities, any local guides, meals, and accommodations. A UC Retirees Travel escort is a UC-affiliated volunteer that does much of their work pre-trip but also assists the trip leader as needed during the trip.

Do I pay a premium to book through UC Retirees Travel?

You pay the same for our tours whether you book one of our scheduled tours or book the same tour on another date directly with the tour operator.

Where is the UC Retirees Travel Office and how can you be reached?

UC Retirees Travel is managed by volunteer UC retirees working out of their home offices. The best way to reach us is via email at UCRetireesTravel@gmail.com.

Will all travelers be UC-affiliated?

UC Retirees Travel offers a variety of tour types. Many of our tours are exclusive to UC Retirees travelers, but others will be a mixture of our travelers and other group(s) or individual travelers.

- **Small group tours** (up to 16 travelers for O.A.T. and up to 24 travelers for Collette and Premier World Discovery)—The tour operator holds space for us until a specified date (usually six to seven months prior to departure), after which remaining unsold seats will be offered to the public.
- **Standard group tours** (up to 44 travelers)—We usually hold 20+ spaces, so UC retirees are often half or more than half of the total number of travelers.
- **River cruises and small ship adventures** (depending on the vessel, 80-200 passengers)—We usually hold 20-30 spaces, so we will be traveling with other groups or individual travelers.

Choosing a trip:

How do I find out the daily itinerary and activity level for a trip?

It is important that you review the trip flyer, including the daily itinerary and activity level, before registering for a trip. Most of our travelers are moderately active to very active retirees, and daily itineraries may include three or more hours of physical activity and walking on uneven terrain. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of a trip, ask the tour operator or email us with specific questions.

Do you make any provisions for travelers with mobility limitations?

Most of our land tours include daily walking tours that range from one to two hours each. In some cases, the trip leader can offer easier alternatives and travelers can always choose not to participate in certain activities. Most UC Retirees Travel land tours are not appropriate for those who use walkers, wheelchairs, or motorized scooters, as assistance or accessibility in international destinations cannot be guaranteed.

River cruises are usually the best option for those who prefer a more leisurely schedule or for those with mobility limitations. The ship serves as a floating hotel, so travelers just unpack once for the duration of the cruise. Most vessels can accommodate walkers and/or wheelchairs, but not all tours will be accessible. For those looking for tour operators specializing in travelers with mobility limitations, [WheelTheWorld.com](http://WheelTheWorld.com) offers group tours.
Trip Registration:

**How do I register for a UC Retirees Travel trip?**

Register directly with the tour operator for your desired trip. Click on the trip image on the UC Retirees Travel website to view the trip flyer with details and registration information. The trip flyer will list the group number or trip number that you will need to give the tour operator to ensure that you are correctly registered with our group trip.

**Do I have to pay for the trip when I register?**

Prior to the final payment date, trips can be reserved with a deposit, the amount of which varies by tour operator, and the cost of travel protection insurance, if desired. Trip flyers list the deposit amount. If booking after the final payment due date, payment in full is required when registering. Final payment for most trips will be due 90 days prior to departure; trips that include ships typically have earlier final payment dates.

**How early do I need to register, and can I cancel my reservation if needed?**

Many of our trips are popular and fill many months to a year or more prior to departure, so early registration is advised. Each tour operator sets its own cancellation policy, so check the trip flyers for details. Generally, if you cancel prior to the tour operator’s specified cancellation deadline, you will receive a cash refund. Collette and Premier offer an exclusive benefit of refunding trip insurance if a trip is cancelled prior to the specified date for that trip, but OAT does not refund the cost of trip insurance once it is purchased. If you move to another trip with the same tour operator rather than cancelling, your trip insurance can usually move to the new trip. After the specified cancellation date, cancellations will incur a charge that increases as the trip date nears. Trip insurance provides protection from these cancellation charges.

**Can I invite friends and family?**

Yes, friends and family are always welcome on our trips. If they book the air-inclusive option and are flying from other cities, they can meet you at the destination and do not have to route through Los Angeles or San Francisco. Flight prices may vary depending upon departure city.

**What is/is not included in the trip price?**

Our air-inclusive trips include economy flights, a dedicated tour leader, hotels, most group activities, many meals, and transfers, as well as gratuities for local guides, bus drivers, and waitstaff for included group meals. Not included are:

- **Some optional activities** (usually one to three activities on each trip)—The tour operators include optional activities on many trips because some travelers want to see as much as possible and others need a day or two to rest and recharge during the trip.
- **Visas**—For countries where visas are required, the cost is not included. Trip flyers and/or final documents will specify the cost of visas when required.
- **Some meals**—Breakfast is usually included each day. Most days also include either lunch or dinner, and sometime both meals. In our experience, the included meals are hearty, so many travelers pick up a snack or light fare for meals that are not included.
- **Some tips**—For the dedicated trip leader, cruise staff if on a boat/ship, meals that are not included (depending on the country’s customs), and housekeeping staff, if desired.
Flights:

Your trips list airfare from San Francisco and Los Angeles. Can I fly from other cities?

We list air-inclusive prices from San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) because most of our travelers depart from one of those two airports. However, travelers can depart from any city, and do not have to route through SFO or LAX. When booking your trip, let the tour operator know your desired departure city. Prices may vary for other departure cities.

Can I request a particular airline or routing if I book an air-inclusive tour?

The tour operators have contracts with specific airlines, so let the agent know your preferences when you book your trip. In some cases, you will be able to request specific airlines and/or routing, but there may be an additional fee. In most cases, you can arrive early, stay later, or add a stopping point enroute.

Can I upgrade to premium economy, business class, or first-class seats?

Each airline has different policies, but in general, the tour operator can arrange for an upgrade to business class or first-class tickets for an additional fee. Depending on the airline, upgrades to premium economy may be available, but in many cases, you will need to arrange for your own upgrades directly with the airline once the tour operator has ticketed your flights, usually 45-60 days prior to departure. If upgrades are vitally important to you, and the tour operator cannot make the arrangements you prefer, we recommend purchasing the land-only tour and arranging your own flights.

Can I book my own flights?

Our trips include an air-inclusive price as well as a land-only price, so if you prefer to book your own flights, book the land-only tour. Be aware that if you book your own flights, you will be responsible for booking your own arrival and departure transfers between the airport and hotel.

Health and Well-being:

What are your COVID-19 protocols?

Testing for COVID-19 is no longer required unless a country we are visiting has this requirement. Participating in group activities carries a risk of exposure to any number of communicable diseases, including COVID-19. UC Retirees Travel strongly recommends that travelers receive the COVID vaccine as well as all boosters for which you are eligible. Read more about our COVID-19 protocols here.

Should I purchase travel protection insurance?

It is highly recommended that travelers purchase travel insurance.

- If going on a group tour, insurance can be purchased from the tour provider or another insurance provider of the traveler’s choosing. Some insurance providers offer an annual plan that is cost effective if the traveler is taking more than one trip per year.
- The University of California Office of the President (UCOP) offers personal travel insurance for retirees, employees, students, alumni, and their traveling companions. Learn more at https://www.ucop.edu/risk-services-travel/personal.html.
- Certain credit cards offer some level of travel insurance if the card is used to pay for the trip, so check for coverage you already have.
Can you recommend some useful travel services?

- **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to receive information about your destination country and allow the embassy to reach you in case of emergency. Learn more at [https://step.state.gov/step/](https://step.state.gov/step/)

- **Global Entry** is a federal Trusted Traveler program, designed for low-risk travelers, that requires an extensive background check, an interview, and a $100 fee for a five-year period. Global entry can significantly reduce the time needed to reenter the U.S. through customs. Learn more at [https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry](https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry).

- **Mobile Passport Control (MPC)** is a free, secure app that can be installed on a smartphone or other device and allows users to complete customs declaration documents in the app after arriving at the entry point. Instead of vetting passengers like Global Entry, MPC expedites the document formalities. Learn more and check for participating airports at [https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/mobile-passport-control](https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/mobile-passport-control).