

C & J TOURS Ltd

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Dear customer,

We trust you are keeping safe and well and are in good spirits given the strange times we are living in.

We MISS YOU – it has been along time since we were all together, so we thought we would write this letter to let you know what C & J Tours have been up to and our plans for the future. With the restrictions relating to COVID-19 gradually being lifted, the future is beginning to look brighter and we can soon see a time when we can be together again with friends on our excursions and holidays. We are open for business and are taking telephone bookings for our excursions and holidays and private group bookings.

First of all we want to say a big thank you to all our loyal customers for your support, patience and understanding over the last few months. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown our normally ordered world upside down. No one could have planned for the situation we now find ourselves in and the future we all now face. We will be honest and say that there have been times recently when we thought enough is enough, we cannot continue. However, we have been overwhelmed recently by all your kind words, touching messages of support and generosity. It has not just been heartwarming it has given us hope and the strength to continue through what is being one of the most difficult, emotional and frightening times of our lives. We say ‘Travel with C & J Tours, travel with friends’, from the support we have received recently, Tina and myself, certainly do travel with friends.

We appreciate that for some, COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on their lives, taking friends and loved ones far too early. Our sincere thoughts and condolences go out to all those so affected.

Whilst we are open for business and are taking telephone bookings, all our planned excursions, tours and private group bookings to the end of July have now either been cancelled or rescheduled. Our coach is officially off the road as we have no work for it. For safety reasons it is being looked after by the main Mercedes coach dealer in Coventry. Being with them they can give it a full safety inspection before we put it back on the road. Our coach may be parked up, but we have not just been sitting around, we have been busy behind the scenes. First of all cancelling, rescheduling and transferring passengers, then restructuring our finances, looking at what we need to have in place for when we can start operating again and what we will be able to do in the near future and plan for next year.

For those passengers that have booked with us and have been affected by the pandemic, we have tried to lessen the impact of the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, by quickly offering alternatives that are fair to everyone and offer something for everyone, as well as protecting the future of the company.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the travel and tourism industry, especially on coach companies, with the industry coming to an abrupt halt almost overnight back in March. In order to operate and survive, coach companies require 2 things. Firstly, a constant cash flow and secondly to be able to generate enough income during the summer to survive the coming winter when there is little or no work. For coach companies, COVID-19 came about just at the wrong time, bringing work and consequently cash flow, to a stop just at the start of the period when coach companies begin to generate income after the previous winter. With restrictions still in place, no sign of when they will be lifted for coach companies and people frightened to travel when they are lifted; coach companies are facing the prospect of 18 months of little or no income, coming out of last winter then into a summer with very little or no work at all and a bleak winter ahead. In order to give C & J Tours some chance of survival we have had to make changes to our finances, how we operate, and made difficult decisions in the hope of minimizing the devastating operational and financial impact COVID-19 will have on our business. We have been in talks with our finance company and arranged a payment holiday on the finance on the coach and with the bank to look at ways we can survive financially. The government has offered some assistance, though this is not available to all businesses and what is available is in the form of loans which have to be repaid. Taking on more finance on top of the finance on the coach is not something we want to do but in order to survive we have no choice. To put this in perspective, in order to survive we have accepted the banks’ offer of a Bounce Back Loan and borrowed £50,000 over 6 years, with interest this becomes around £52,000. The first 12 months there are no repayments or interest, so the loan is repaid over 5 years which equates to repayments of just under £900 a month! This is going to be a lot of money to find each month on top of what we already pay out, so we are going to need your support now more than ever.

There is a new word in our vocabulary – furloughed (grant leave of absence). Both Tina and myself cannot fit in our office at the same time, and as there are no bookings at the moment, Tina has been furloughed till August, with the government paying 80% of her wages. As we are both joint directors of the company, taking our directors’ salary as a basic wage (£730.00 each per month) with anything else we take out classed as dividends. We only get 80% of Tina’s directors’ salary as the government does not count dividends as part of a wage. So this is not a great deal, but it does help when we have no money coming in. We cannot furlough both of us as one of us needs to be in the office to look after the day to day running and future well being of the company, plus the cancelling and rescheduling of our excursions and holidays then the transferring of passengers, keeping up to date with guidelines and regulations and planning for the future.

As the government grapples with the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of everyone and the economy, guidelines and regulations are being amended on an almost daily basis. To keep on top of this Dave has been attending weekly webinar meetings and completing online training. One topic that Dave has been involved with is our risk assessment to ensure that when we can restart, we as a company and our vehicle are considered COVID-19 secure. Whilst the webinar meetings are free the online training comes at a cost and the cleaning materials and items we need to keep you safe as part of our risk assessment have to be paid for and at a time when we have no money coming in.

The government has indicated that the hospitality sector may re-open early July. With this in mind we are looking at the possibility of restarting our excursions and hopefully our holidays from August. We will only do so when we are allowed to and then only under the guidelines laid out by the government and the Health & Safety Executive concerning social distancing and cleanliness. For awhile at least, travel will not be the same, things will be different and life as we knew it will not be there. We will all be coping with a situation we did not ask for and that we will not be familiar with. For this to work, we are all going to need common sense, and show each other courtesy, kindness and understanding.

COVID-19 in itself is frightening, put this with media coverage and the actions of the government, it becomes terrifying. On top of this we have been on lockdown for 3 months. So we can understand people’s reluctance to start to travel again once the restrictions regarding COVID-19 are lifted. We can also sympathize with this, as a coach driver I am reluctant to go out with a coach full of passengers, because as an owner I cannot afford to catch this virus and be off work. Nor can I catch the virus with the possibility of bringing it home with me and passing it onto Tina, with the health issues she continues to have after breast cancer. In order that I can reduce my chances of catching the virus and to allay my fears, I have to put my faith in the

safety procedures we have put in place. In order for C & J Tours to survive and not to be a victim of the virus we need your support once we start our excursions and holidays. Continuing on from the last paragraph, we do understand if anyone does not want to travel straight away.

We want to try and allay any fears or concerns anyone may have about travelling with us once we can restart our excursions and holidays. The protection and safety of our passengers and driver is always one of our main concerns, this is even more so with the COVID-19 pandemic. With your help we would like to limit the chance of anyone on our tours/excursions becoming infected with or spreading the coronavirus. We politely ask you not to travel and follow government guidelines, if you are infected with coronavirus, think that you may be, or have been in contact recently with someone that is infected prior to you travelling with us. It would be better for you not to travel, than risk infecting others. If you have to cancel your trip with us as a result of these viruses, sorry our normal cancellation charges will apply. On our coach we are aiming to provide a controlled, hygienic environment that is pleasant to travel in, that takes into account the health and wellbeing of all those on board and assists in making all those who travel with us feel comfortable and safe, both during the pandemic and in the future. Based on current government guidelines and C & J Tours' COVID-19 risk assessment we have put in place the following measures, which will be constantly monitored and modified according to any changes in government guidelines:

- It is mandatory that face coverings are to be worn whilst on the coach unless you have a justifiable reason for not doing so on the grounds of health or disability. We are politely asking that all our passengers have their own face covering, have their own hand sanitisers or disinfectant wipes and tissues. There will be a limited supply on the coach. Good basic hygiene can help to limit the spread of the virus. Contaminated hands are the single most common factor for the spread of diseases. Passengers should avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands. Passengers should frequently clean their hands during the day, either by using soap and water or hand sanitisers/wipes, especially after using the toilet, coughing or sneezing. Please cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and safely discard the tissue. At the end of the day, passengers must take off the coach with them any used face masks, wipes and tissues and dispose of them safely and hygienically.
- Whilst waiting for the coach, passengers should maintain at least 1 metre from each other and look to maintain this distance whilst boarding, travelling on and alighting from the coach. At each pick up point the driver will alight, confirm the passenger's seat number and provide hand sanitiser and invite them to board the coach. We have purchased a non-contact thermometer so we may conduct random temperature checks on passengers as they board the coach. Passengers may be refused travel if their temperature is 38C or above. Sorry, our normal cancellation charges apply. On boarding the coach please do not shake hands, kiss or hug when saying hello or greeting fellow passengers.
- The forward facing seating arrangement on our coach avoids the issue of people facing each other and the physical barrier of the high back seats plus the use of face coverings will all help to reduce the transmission of the virus. The seating capacity on our coach will be reduced for the time being, from 53 to around 26 based on those living in the same household occupying a double seat. The front seats immediately behind the driver will not be available and where a double seat is occupied the seat across the aisle will not be used. If friends are travelling together, we may sit you immediately behind each other in your bubble. Only two seats out of the five will be available on the rear row. As a result, on boarding your seat allocation may change from that given at time of booking. The toilet on the coach will only be available during this time for extreme emergency use.
- Whilst travelling, where possible the roof vents will remain open. The driver will wear a face covering whilst passengers are boarding or leaving the coach, but not necessarily whilst driving for safety reasons. The driver will wear gloves if having to assist vulnerable passengers boarding the coach.
- At the destination or comfort stop, the driver will exit first. After that, passengers will disembark in row order starting from the front. Only the front door will be used. On re-boarding the coach we ask that passengers do so in row order starting from the rear. Please be patient, boarding and alighting the coach will take longer than normal. Any refreshments available on the coach will be complimentary, so we are not dealing with cash.
- Before leaving the destination, and/or at suitable times throughout the day, in accordance with driver's hours, rules and regulations, the driver will disinfect and clean the interior of the coach. We have purchased cleaning materials that are effective against the coronavirus. A more involved cleaning procedure will take place at the end of the day. This will involve the normal cleaning of the coach plus all grab handles, windows, hard surfaces and those frequently touched and the toilet will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes. We have also purchased a fogging machine which sanitises and deodorizes the coach, destroying all germs, bacteria, viruses and spores that are airborne, lingering on surfaces or in the air conditioning system. This will be used at the end of each day as required.

People have expressed concern about the air conditioning system on the coach and its effect on the spread of the virus in the coach. We would like to stress that the air conditioning system is perfectly safe. On most modern coaches like ours, the air conditioning system actually replaces the entire volume of air within the coach every 4-6 minutes. Fresh air is brought in above the windows, which is why if you sit next to the window you feel a cool draught of air between you and the window. This then sinks to the floor and leaves via the grills in the aisle, through the luggage area and out of the coach. The position of the air vents above your heads, if you have them open, forces fresh air down onto you and around you, keeping you in a safe bubble of fresh air.

We are very pleased to announce that in recognition of the safety measures put in place by C & J Tours, Visit England are happy that we meet the COVID-19 Industry Standard and have awarded us with the 'We're Good To Go' COVID-19 accreditation.

In all the years we have been operating we have never gone out and openly asked for your support like we are doing now. Please support us and other small, local businesses, so we can all survive and play a part in your future.

For information on our rescheduled day excursions and holidays, please see our website or ring us for more details.

Until we can meet up again, which hopefully will be soon, look out for each other, stay safe, stay well and stay positive.

David & Tina Houghton

Travel with C & J Tours, travel with friends. We look forward to the pleasure of your company.



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