Which? Shorts: the pointless logos on travel websites

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[00:00:09] **James Rowe:** Abta and adult protected. Surely I'm not the only one who's picked up on that on a travel advert and wondered what it actually means.

[00:00:21] **James Rowe:** Hello, it's James here at Witch HQ with this week's episode of Witch Shots, and as we continue through the summer months, perhaps you are just about to jet off somewhere new, but did you see those logos on travel websites? You book through and wonder what they actually mean. Or read an acronym and wondered whether it protects you while you're abroad.

[00:00:42] **James Rowe:** Well, we're here to explain in the July August issue of which travel, Kate Perla listed some of the most commonly seen logos and explained which ones are essential, which ones are useful, and which ones we think are pointless. Here's Kate's Peace Adapted for the podcast this week, read by Ollie, August.

[00:01:03] **Ollie Auguste:** From ATO to ab iata to AB avatar holiday company and airline websites are plastered with an alphabet soup of logos. Some tell you that your rights and money are protected by the holiday company or travel agent. Others tell you the company has won an award or some sort of recognition for good service, and some of them are completely use.

[00:01:23] **Ollie Auguste:** So what do you need to know? Well, atol is essential. This is a government backed legal safeguard that ensures that you get all your money back if your travel provider goes bust and covers any package holiday that includes a flight. If the holiday company fails before your trip, ATOL guarantees a full refund if you're already away.

[00:01:43] **Ollie Auguste:** The scheme will help you to continue your holiday at no extra cost or in the worst case scenario, arrange for your repatriation. You might not think that it's a regular occurrence, but holiday companies collapse more than you might expect. You might remember Thomas Cook's dramatic failure in 2019 when it went bust and left 150,000 British holiday makers stranded abroad, but four other firms went bust last year alone.

[00:02:08] **Ollie Auguste:** So when your booking a package holiday, look for the circular at all logo on your travel company's app or website or in their shop window. Legally they must display it. It will always include the company's unique, four or five digit ATTO number. You can look this up on the atto website to make sure it's legit.

[00:02:25] **Ollie Auguste:** The travel company must provide you with an ATTO certificate when you pay for anything towards your trip. Bring a copy of it when you travel. It explains everything you're covered for who's covered and other important information you might need. What about Abta? Well, this can be useful, but it's not essential.

[00:02:41] **Ollie Auguste:** Formally the Association of British Travel Agents, abta is a trade association that represents travel agents and tour operators. Many of those holiday companies display the Abta badge on their website. While Abta has a code of conduct for members and has previously ejected those that breached the code and abta badge isn't actually an indication of better quality.

[00:03:01] **Ollie Auguste:** Our holiday company survey based on nearly 20,000 holidays regularly rates the ABTA members at both the top and towards the bottom of the table. Abta offers an arbitration scheme to resolve disputes between customers and Abta members. Although this isn't cheap, the fee to apply is 150 pounds for claims up to 25,000 pounds.

[00:03:22] **Ollie Auguste:** Many up members offer financial protection for non flight package holidays. Such as cruises and coach holidays through Abta. But all holiday companies in the uk, whether Abta members or not, must have financial protections in place if they sell package holidays to ensure customers can be repatriated or refunded.

[00:03:40] **Ollie Auguste:** In fact, trail finders a, which recommended provider, ring fences customer money until holidays are complete, which is the gold standard in protection. But it's not an ABTA member. For smaller members, you might see ATO or ABT O instead of abta. Both offer a financial protection scheme for package holidays without flights to ensure travelers aren't left out of pocket if their holiday company fails.

[00:04:03] **Ollie Auguste:** Members are otherwise covered by ato. If the company you've booked a holiday with is a member and fails before your trip, you'll get your money back. If the company fails while you are abroad, you'll be repatriated. A o members must also sign up to a code of conduct. Generally a O members are rated highly in our holiday company survey.

[00:04:24] **Ollie Auguste:** Another useful logo to keep an eye out for, if you don't mind us tooting our own horn, is the witch recommended provider endorsement. You'll see this on travel websites from car hire firms to tour operators. These are companies rated better than their competitors by customers. In our surveys, which we've statistically analyzed and exhaustively scored, our survey panels are independent and can't be influenced by larger operators.

[00:04:48] **Ollie Auguste:** More on that in a moment. We make additional checks too. A hotel chain with poor cleanliness, ratings can't be WRP, for example. All WPS are monitored to ensure they continue to meet our high standards, so you can trust that A WRP stands for quality. You might have also spotted an IATA logo. That one stands for International Air Transport Association.

[00:05:10] **Ollie Auguste:** We'd say this one is useful. Sometimes that's because airlines that are members of this group are required to conduct what is called an ioa International Safety Audit. Now, that's not so relevant to you if you are departing from somewhere in the UK or Europe. Because the UK and EU laws already ban unsafe airlines from flying here, but it can be useful in certain situations, like if you're taking a flight departing from somewhere outside of the UK and Europe.

[00:05:36] **Ollie Auguste:** Perhaps if you're taking an onward flight or a regional domestic airline, that's when you might want to pick up an airline that is on the ioa. Register for safety and peace of mind, but ATA won't be able to help you If you need to settle any sort of dispute related to your flight for that, look at the civil aviation authorities advice on how to complain.

[00:05:59] **Ollie Auguste:** So what about the logos that are quite frankly pointless? Well, this is the main one. The British Travel Awards. You see these gold, silver, and bronze award logos almost everywhere, which is part of the problem. The btas are popularity contest awarded on the basis of public votes alone. While companies are divided into categories by size for awards, the biggest company in each category has a better chance of winning simply because it has more customers.

[00:06:26] **Ollie Auguste:** Companies are encouraged to directly lobby customers and incentivize them to vote for a prize draw. It's even suggested that companies get staff to vote from their home address, so it's not a very fair election. Being big or good at lobbying doesn't mean being good. We did approach the btas for comment, but it didn't respond.

[00:06:54] **James Rowe:** That brings to an end another podcast from which there's loads more for you to read about everything we discuss today. Just head to the episode description for more useful everyday advice. There. You'll also find an exclusive offer for podcast listeners like you to become a witch member for 50% off the usual price, giving you access to our product reviews, our app, one-to-one, personalized buying advice and every issue of Witch magazine across the air.

[00:07:16] **James Rowe:** Plus, your membership helps us to make life simpler, fairer, and safer for everyone. If you like to know when we release a new episode, then make sure you press subscribe wherever you're listening. That way you can be one of the first to listen. And for any questions, comments, or anything in between, follow us on social media at witch uk or email us Podcast at witch co uk.

[00:07:36] **James Rowe:** Goodbye.