

# Understanding Travel Insurance





**Travel insurance** (also known as comprehensive travel insurance) is designed for outbound travellers. Its function is to protect policyholders against losses and cover costs arising from unforeseen events during their trips. Regardless of the length of the trip, people who travel anywhere outside Hong Kong for vacation, business or study are recommended to purchase travel insurance that suits their needs to protect them in the unfortunate events while travelling.

### **Buy travel insurance as early as possible for protection during the pre-departure period**

You should buy travel insurance as soon as your itinerary is confirmed and you have made a payment or deposit for the trip, as the coverage commences only when the policy is approved. That way, if there is an insured event before your departure, you can file a claim according to the relevant policy terms before the trip starts. However, if you purchase an insurance policy only after the insured event has occurred, you cannot make a claim.

### **Choose the insurance plan that best suits your needs**

In addition to general comprehensive travel insurance, insurers offer various types of insurance plans in response to market demand to cater for travellers with specific needs, such as insurance plans for cruise vacations, overseas study, work holidays and short-term study tours. To enjoy a worry-free journey, policyholders should choose a plan that best suits their needs based on their itinerary.



## List of common coverage

In general, common coverage of travel insurance includes the following:

### Personal accident



The insured person will be paid cash compensation in a lump sum in the event of accidental death, permanent disablement or severe burns during the journey.

### Medical expenses



This covers reasonable and necessary medical expenses for immediate consultation and treatment by a local registered medical practitioner, including out-patient and in-patient care, for accidental injury or illness of the insured person during the journey, or for follow-up consultations related to the same accidental injury or illness within a specified period (e.g. 90 days) after returning to Hong Kong.

### 24-hour emergency assistance service



In addition to a 24-hour emergency assistance service hotline, the insurer will generally provide corresponding emergency assistance services according to each situation, including emergency medical evacuation or repatriation, repatriation of mortal remains, a deposit guarantee for hospital admission, arrangements of a compassionate visit, an interpreter and a lawyer referral.

### Compassionate death benefit



This benefit is provided to the legal personal representative or designated beneficiary of the insured person in the event of death as a result of serious injury or illness during the journey.

### Trip inconvenience



- If the trip is delayed due to the covered reasons in the policy (e.g. adverse weather) and the delay is more than a specific number of hours (e.g. 6 hours or more), the insured person can generally claim a cash allowance or additional accommodation and transportation expenses incurred by the delay.
- If the trip is curtailed or cancelled due to the covered reasons in the policy (e.g. adverse weather), the insured person can be reimbursed for prepaid or irrecoverable travel expenses (e.g. accommodation, transportation and tickets to missed events).

### Baggage delay



Insured persons can be reimbursed for the incurred costs of an emergency purchase of essential items if their personal baggage is delayed for a specific number of hours (e.g. at least 6 hours) after their arrival at their travel destination.

### Personal property



- This covers the loss of, or damage to, the insured person's personal belongings due to an accident, or the loss of personal money (e.g. cash, a bank cashier's order or cheques) due to theft, robbery or burglary during the journey.
- This covers the cost of replacing the insured person's travel documents, including passport and Hong Kong identity card, which are lost due to theft, robbery, burglary or accidental loss during the journey, and reasonable additional transportation and accommodation expenses incurred for the sole purpose of arranging the replacement of the documents to continue the insured trip.

### Personal liability



This covers the insured person against claims for legal liability to third parties arising from accidental death or bodily injury, or property loss or damage due to the negligence of the insured person.

### Rental vehicle excess



This covers a rental vehicle insurance policy's excess payable by the insured person in the event of damage due to a car accident or other accident, or if a rental vehicle is stolen during the journey.

### Other benefits



Some travel policies offer protection in addition to the above common coverage, including home content protection during a journey and additional pet accommodation due to a trip delay. Some policies offer free extension of the cover period of insurance (e.g. 10 to 14 days) if the journey is unavoidably postponed or delayed arising out of circumstances beyond the control of the insured person.

## COVID-19 protection

- Some travel insurance policies provide coverage for COVID-19. The insurer may require the insured person to fulfil the entry rules and conditions of both of Hong Kong and the travel destination(s) before departure, including vaccination requirements.
- The definition of an infectious disease or pandemic, as well as their related policy terms, varies from insurer to insurer.



## General exclusions

Travel insurance generally comes with exclusions; the insurer will not cover losses incurred under specific circumstances. Policyholders should be sure they understand the excluded items listed in the policy and their definitions.

Common exclusions include the following:



A war, rebellion  
or coup



Specific sports,  
professional sports,  
or engaging in any activities  
for remuneration



Pre-existing illnesses  
or conditions



Pregnancy, childbirth,  
miscarriage and  
related complications



Suicide or  
self-inflicted injuries



Alcohol or  
drug abuse



Illegal or  
unlawful acts



## Reminders



### Consider your travel frequency and number of travel companions

- You should estimate your travel frequency in the coming year before deciding to take out a single-trip plan, or an annual plan with multiple trips.
- Travel insurance offers individual or family protection plans, but you should check whether the age of your elderly parents and accompanying children is within the upper age limit respectively for coverage of the plan, and whether the plan lowers the maximum coverage for the elderly and children.



### Be sure your entire travel itinerary is covered

- If you are planning to engage in high-risk activities, such as skydiving, diving or hot air ballooning, you should check whether these activities are covered in the insurance plan.



### Read the policy terms carefully and compare products

- Apart from the coverage, you should also consider the benefit limit and exclusions, and read the policy terms and conditions in detail.
- There are a wide range of travel insurance products in the market. Insurers may offer plan options with various benefits and premiums for selection. Compare different insurance plans and choose the one that best suits your needs before making buying decision.



### Make sure you understand the notes on how to make a claim

- First study the claim instructions and procedure to ensure a smooth claim process.
- Complete the claim form as soon as possible, and submit the form with all the required supporting documents by the deadline after your return to Hong Kong (e.g. within 21 to 30 days after arrival), as stated in the policy. Ask your intermediary or insurer if you have any questions.



### Take your policy with you, and keep the emergency numbers in hand

- Take the policy or an electronic copy, and the 24-hour emergency support hotline with you on your trip for emergency use. You should also give a copy of your insurance policy to your family members, so that they can contact the insurer for help on your behalf, if necessary.



### Keep the original copies of your receipts and travel-related documents

- Keep all the receipts for your trip, including receipts for air tickets and accommodation, as well as boarding passes. Your insurer may request the relevant documents for proof that you travelled abroad.
- If the trip is cancelled before departure because of an insured event listed in the policy, you must provide the relevant documents for the cancellation (e.g. medical certificate, or jury or witness summons), and you should keep the receipt of your booked air ticket and accommodation for your claim. Generally, you should first request a refund from the relevant organisation(s).



## Things to keep in mind during your journey



### Expenses for medical treatment abroad and follow-up consultation after returning to Hong Kong

- If you are accidentally injured or fall ill while travelling and receive medical treatment from a local registered doctor at your travel destination, any reasonable medical expenses arising from follow-up consultations and hospitalisation related to the incident are also generally covered within a specified period (e.g. 3 months) after your return to Hong Kong. However, there may be limit to this compensation: e.g. 10% of the aggregate limit of medical benefits. However, if you did not seek consultation and treatment from a registered doctor at your travel destination, you will not be reimbursed for the local medical expenses as well as the expenses for follow-up treatment after returning to Hong Kong, because you could not prove that the injury or illness happened during the journey and required medical attention.



### Loss of personal property

- You should take due care and precautions for the safeguard and security of your baggage and personal belongings. Insurers will not accept claims if lost or stolen personal property was left unattended in a public place or unlocked vehicle.
- Keep any damaged baggage or other items. Your insurer may request a photo of the damaged item as proof or the damaged item itself for inspection.
- Electronic money (e.g. the credit limit of a credit card or stored value of an octopus card) and fragile or brittle articles may be listed as excluded items for personal property protection. In addition, many policies in the market provide protection against mobile phone loss or damage, but the coverage is normally restricted; for example, the repair cost for a damaged screen may be covered, but not the loss or theft of a mobile phone.



### Make official reports and obtain required documents for making claims

- In the event of an emergency or accident during your journey, be sure you make a report to the relevant organisations (e.g. police, airline or medical organisation) immediately, and keep the original copy of the relevant documents (e.g. signed medical certificate, police report or certificate of delay from a public conveyance) and submit the relevant documents when making a claim.

### Notes on purchasing travel insurance through a travel agent

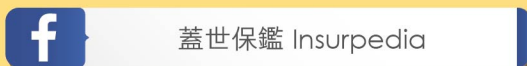
When joining a package tour, some travel agents may require you to purchase a specific travel insurance plan, while others may allow you to purchase your own travel insurance policy. Please note the following before deciding to join a package tour:

- Find out if you must purchase the specific travel insurance through the travel agency.
- Ask the travel agent for the policy details of its recommended insurance plan, and make sure you understand the policy coverage. For example:
  - whether the travel insurance policy covers all activities on the tour (e.g. high-risk activities), and
  - the upper age limit for coverage for older persons, whether the coverage is adequate, and whether the same protection is applicable to children on the tour.
- Check with the travel agent in advance about the claim procedure and the documents that must be submitted (e.g. original receipts of the package tour or travel package).
- Be sure to ask the staff of the travel agent immediately if anything is unclear.



**Learn more**

To learn more about travel insurance,  
please visit the Insurance Authority's **dedicated webpage on travel insurance**.



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