

UMA suggests the following guide line

Every field of endeavor has its own lingo, and the bus charter business is no exception. Here's a quick guide to help you decipher the language of buses ... make that *motorcoaches*.

What is the difference between a motorcoach and, say, a school bus?

A school bus is built for short runs: Kids get picked up in their neighborhoods, transported to school, and taken back home again at the end of the day. Day in and day out, those big yellow workhorses complete their runs with mind-boggling efficiency, sometimes even doing double duty on field trips. But they are not comfortable. They're not supposed to be. There are no restrooms, no DVD players, and certainly no Internet access.

As for **motorcoaches**, that's a whole different story. You may hear a motorcoach referred to as a deluxe motor coach, a highway motor coach, a tour bus, or a charter bus. Sometimes it's just referred to as a "coach," like the one Cinderella's fairy godmother transformed from a pumpkin so Cinderella could get to the prince's ball – remember? Well, modern coaches are also built for luxury and comfort – though they run on diesel fuel, not horsepower – and they almost always have an exciting or important destination to reach.

Today's motorcoaches are designed to accommodate long trips, so they often have adjustable reclining seats with footrests, personal reading lights, individual climate controls, and overhead luggage racks for carry-on bags. You'll also find wireless Internet access, power plugs, DVD players, and restrooms. Typically, there is an outside baggage hold for luggage. Newer coaches may come with GPS systems, and some have special accessibility features such as wheelchair lifts and hearing loops.

A motorcoach can be used for **charters, tours, shuttles**, or regular **routes**. These terms bear defining, too.

Charter:

A charter is a temporary lease of a vehicle and driver for the purpose of moving a group of people. Maybe your son's Boy Scout troop is heading to summer camp up north, or your company's marketing department is traveling to a trade show in a neighboring state. Chartering a motorcoach for these trips would be a convenient and economical option, and many groups use the time together for socializing, team building, and fun.

Tour:

A tour is a group excursion – often on a motorcoach – for the purpose of sightseeing, education, shopping, entertainment, or whatever activity a group might enjoy. A tour group operator might plan a museum tour for retired people, complete with lunch and a lecture. Or a service club might plan its own tour to a battlefield or other tourist attraction.

Shuttle:

Shuttle service is a method of transporting people back and forth between one designated point to another, often at regular intervals. You might find a shuttle at an art fair, sporting event, or any gathering where people have to park far from the venue and need a way to get there and back.

Route:

A route is a regularly scheduled city-to-city bus run on a motorcoach – a comfortable and affordable option for commuters and day-trippers who don't want to drive.

You get the idea. Motorcoaches can be many things to many people. A coach can serve as a charter bus, tour bus, shuttle bus, or city-to-city carrier. It can do day trips and road trips, make casino runs and airport transfers, drive inter-city routes, or even get a modern-day Cinderella to the ball.

Bonus: Here are a few more bus charter terms you may hear in your journeys.

Deadhead: Miles traveled without passengers before the pickup or after a drop off.

Live Miles: Miles traveled with passengers on board.

Pick and Drop: Short for “pick up and drop off” – meaning the bus drops passengers off at their destination and returns home rather than staying with the group.

Now that you know the basic lexicon, you can communicate with confidence about charter buses. But if and when a question arises, never hesitate to quote the French philosopher, Voltaire. “If you wish to converse with me,” he often said, “define your terms.”