



Travel Industry Scams

CONSUMER ADVISORY & PROTECTIVE TIPS

If a travel price or bargain sounds too good to be true, then it may be a scam. People are traveling again. Scammers are more than happy to "assist" you by taking your money and sending you on a trip to nowhere.

Office of the District Attorney - 18th Judicial District
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RETURNING TO TRAVEL

As more and more individuals become vaccinated and our economy begins re-open, Americans are ready to put their long-delayed travel plans back into action. Our airports are ramping back to full capacity and the hospitality sector is opening its doors again to accommodate and help nourish a traveler's dreams and sights for adventure. Scammers are setting their sights towards our renewed thirst to spend, travel, and explore. There are plenty of areas that scammers can manipulate for their own financial advantage.

FAKE WEBSITES TRAVEL AGENCIES & AIRLINES

According to the Better Business Bureau, there has been a big increase in fraudulent or copycat travel agency websites, airline ticketing sites, 3rd party sites, and travel programs like TSA pre-check and Global Entry. Scammers create great looking websites for "new" travel agencies offering amazing deals. Sometimes, they duplicate real travel agency sites, using legitimate logos, and offer amazing deals.

Consumers assume that they are on a legitimate website, working with a reputable agent or that they have come across an amazing price with a major airline. Without verifying the information in front of them, consumers are quick to provide large payments and provide sensitive personal information. As a result, you may arrive at the airport or hotel, only to find out that you do not have an actual ticket or a paid reservation.

One scheme involves criminals opening fake agencies for one month at a time, where they solicit a lot of enthusiastic consumers and have them pay in full for airline tickets, cards are processed right away, and then the business is shut down. Another scam involves you making a card payment, then you receive a call from agency stating that there has been an unexpected price increase or there is an additional fee or processing charge.

"Even if you pay up, the company may never submit your application form through the correct channels. You will have lost money and shared your personal information with scammers." - Better Business Bureau

SUGGESTIONS

- Make sure you are on a legitimate and secure website (<https://>)
- Use known recommendations, visit a real agency, seek reviews.
- Use a credit card to purchase in case there is a dispute.
- Verify with airline, hotel, transportation before traveling.
- If the price or offer seems too good to be true, then it is not true.

TRAVEL CLUB SCAMS

If considering attending a travel club seminar or buying into a membership, beware! Though some travel clubs may be legitimate, buying into most memberships may leave you with buyer's remorse, an empty wallet, and a contract requiring you to pay a great deal of money over a long time.

According to travel guide company Frommers.com, the "exclusive discounts" clubs offer, do not exist or any savvy bargain hunter can find the same discounts. In addition, most travel clubs do not have a cancellation policy or only offer a window of a couple of days once signing up for a membership. Most presentations ask you to have your credit cards ready prior to arriving, make grand promises, and pressure you to sign on immediately at the end of the meeting. Sign on memberships can be as high as \$6k to \$10k, with monthly renewal rates of a few hundred dollars. If you have been scammed, report.

OTHER TRAVEL SCAMS

Credit Card Verification Fraud:

Shortly after checking into a hotel, you receive a call from "front desk" asking you to verify credit card info. Do not verify, caller is not associated with hotel. Hang up or tell them you will go down to the front desk to sort things out.

Vacation Certificates:

Beware. Pre-paid certificates often lead to empty promises, blackout or sold out dates, delays, restrictions or less than desirable properties. The scam - upfront payments.

"You Have Won A Free Trip!":

Most things in life are not free. In this scenario, the scam is to get you to pay a fee to claim prize, to verify your credit card info or provide sensitive information for eligibility. Potential ID Theft. If you receive an unsolicited call, do not provide sensitive info.

Bait and Switch:

Always use legitimate websites, do your research, read actual customer reviews. Disappointing when you expect something amazing, only to get there and find property is in poor condition, lacking promised amenities, or in an undesirable part of town.



Contact Consumer Fraud Protection
18th Judicial District

Hotline (720) 874-8547 | consumer@da18.state.co.us

