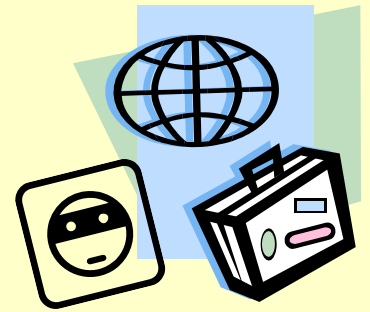


Travel Scams: Don't take a trip to Fraudsville!



To help you avoid being the victim of travel fraud, the NYS Consumer Protection Board offers the following tips:

✱ **Be skeptical of unsolicited travel offers/prizes. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is!**

Scam artists may claim you have won a “free” vacation but then ask for your credit card number for “verification” purposes. Do not give it to them. If they are legitimate and the trip is free, you would not need to provide a payment method. Vacation or travel offers that come in the form of unsolicited U.S. mail, telephone calls, faxes and e-mails should be examined closely. Chances are this same “offer” or “prize” has been sent to thousands of unsuspecting consumers in the hopes that a few will fall for it.

✱ **Exercise caution when looking into travel club offers and read the fine print!**

Travel clubs may offer inexpensive vacations at popular locations but you have to read the fine print. Some travel deals are only valid under specific circumstances. Before you sign up with a travel club make sure you know the applicable restrictions especially in terms of black-out dates which often occur during holidays, school vacations and the destination’s peak-season. Additionally, make sure a “free trial membership” does not come with fees that will begin accruing on your credit card if you do not cancel.

✱ **Consider consulting a trusted travel agency for vacation plans.**

Recommendations from family and friends can lead you to a reliable travel agent whom may be able to offer discounted vacation packages. Ask if there are references available from people who stayed at the same destination.

✱ **Get everything in writing!**

No matter what method (travel agent, on-line, telephone) you utilize for travel plans, make sure you get all of the details in writing, especially the cancellation and refund policies. Make copies and bring them with you on your trip and leave the originals at home. You will need these if you feel your promised accommodations and/or amenities do not measure up.

✱ **Confirm all of your arrangements before you leave.**

Even if you used a third party like a travel agent to make your vacation plans, call all of the individual providers (airline, cruise, hotel, car rental) directly to confirm your reservations. Make sure the seats, accommodations and choice of automobile are what you had agreed upon. Get confirmation numbers and keep them with you.

✱ **Do your travel homework!**

With the touch of a computer you can search locations, prices, weather patterns and anything else that may factor into your vacation decision. Knowing all of these parameters before you start booking travel plans will protect you from being overcharged and/or disappointed in your choices.

✱ **Consider paying with a credit card.**

Using a credit card to pay for your vacation plans may offer you more protection than paying by cash or check if the accommodations are not what you expected. Consult with your credit card company to obtain the details on the conditions of travel expenditure reimbursement. Remember, only use your credit card with reputable companies that you recognize or have checked out with the NYS Attorney General, NYS Consumer Protection Board and/or Better Business Bureau.

✱ **Know your rights!**

The New York State Truth in Travel Act was enacted to safeguard consumers against fraud, false advertising, misrepresentation, and other abuses. Under the law, a travel agent or promoter must provide a consumer with written disclosure of all the terms of the travel service within five business days of purchase or agreement. If you feel you have been a victim of travel fraud, contact the NYS Consumer Protection Board at 1-800-697-1220 or the NYS Office of the Attorney General at 1-800-771-7755.