

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Ready for spring travels? Prepare with scam prevention tips

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MADISON, Wis. – Consumers planning their spring travels are likely considering their transportation, lodging, food, recreational activities, and more. But the planning doesn't stop there. Travelers should also be preparing for scam prevention before, during, and after their trip. A few simple precautions can protect them from fraud, identity theft, and financial loss.

Before a Trip

- Be wary of imposter websites. These fraudulent sites mimic real company platforms but are run by scammers to steal consumers' money and personal information. Verify a website is legitimate before entering personal information to book reservations, check on an existing reservation, or enter payment details.
- Double check bookings. Call businesses where reservations have been made such as hotels, restaurants, or activities, to confirm they have the correct details. This provides an opportunity to fix errors in advance of the trip and could give advance warning that a previous 'booking' may have been fraudulent.
- Research what scams are common at the travel destination, like fraudulent vendors, fake ticket resellers, and taxi service overcharges. Knowing the warning signs ahead of time can help travelers avoid scams and frauds that target tourists.

During a Trip

- Pay with a credit card. This provides the ability to dispute charges and protects the consumer's bank account from being accessed directly by a scammer.
- Avoid using public Wi-Fi networks for transactions involving personal or financial information. These can be set up by scammers who want to steal data entered over their network such as passwords, personal information, and financial account numbers.
- Be skeptical of QR codes, commonly used on menus and for public events, which can be covered up by scammers with their own QR code stickers. When scanned, these scam QR codes direct users to fraudulent websites.
- Practice caution with social media posts. Public posts could share more information than the user realizes they are providing. Social media posts should be made accessible only to a user's trusted friends to limit the opportunity for scammers to access them.

After a Trip

- Before leaving, consumers who rented a vehicle should disconnect their phone and delete any of their remaining phone data from the media console.
- Keep receipts and verify charges. Review credit card statements to confirm there were no mistakes like unapproved or double charges.
- Monitor financial statements, credit reports, and online accounts for any suspicious activity that might occur in the weeks or months after spring break.
 - Access up to one free credit report per week at AnnualCreditReport.com.
- Be suspicious of calls, texts, and emails claiming there are unpaid bills, fees, or fines incurred during travels. If necessary, directly reach out to the business or organization to confirm that all outstanding bills have been paid. Use verified contact information from an official website or receipt, not details provided in the suspicious message.

For more consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at ConsumerProtection.wi.gov or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128 or DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.