

Insist on visiting the rental yourself, or have someone you know and trust do it for you. If the owner refuses to meet you at the rental, it may be a scam. If the rental is overseas and you can't visit ahead of time, make sure you do business with a reputable vacation rental website and pay with a credit card (Visa, MasterCard, etc.) so you can limit your responsibility if it's a fraud.

Carefully review the lease agreement. Search the owner and listing online. If the same information comes up on a different site, but with different contact information, it's probably a scam.

AVOIDING TRAVEL SCAMS

- Don't post your plans on social media.
- If the person/company you are in contact with is using high-pressure sales tactics and trying to get you to commit without looking too closely at the deal, it's likely a scam.
- If you are unable to verify specific details about the deal, like addresses, phone numbers, company names, etc., walk away.
- Do your research. Is someone advertising something for a price way below market value? If it sounds too good to be true, it's likely a scam.
- Never, ever, pay for your vacation via wire transfer, gift card, prepaid credit card, or cryptocurrency. This is a sure sign of a scam and once you send the money - you can't get it back. Stick to standard credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, etc.) so your liability is limited for fraudulent charges.
- If you believe you have been the victim of a scam, please notify local law enforcement at (352) 955-1818. You can also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/>.
- For more consumer advice on travel scams, visit the FTC at <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/avoid-scams-when-you-travel>.

CONTACT Us:

9-1-1 FOR EMERGENCIES

352-955-1818 FOR NON-EMERGENCIES

ACSO Important Phone Numbers

ACSO Main Administration	352.367.4000
Crime Prevention Unit	352.374.1800
Crime Stoppers & Gun Bounty	352.372.7867
Dept. of the Jail	352.491.4444
Evidence Section	352.367-4076
Human Resources	352.367.4040
Narcotics Tip Line	352.374.1849
Patrol	352.367.4101
Public Information Office	352.367.4050
Property Unit	352.367.4078
Records Bureau	352.367.4006
Victim Advocate Unit	352.367.4199



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ACSO 2023

ALACHUA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



TRAVEL SCAMS

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With pandemic fears in the rearview mirror, the vacation has returned. Plans for visits to, and stays at, amusement parks, beach rentals, cruises, European tours, mountain cabins, and many other destinations adorn the calendars and social media feeds of Americans. Unfortunately, those very same plans are a prime target for scammers who are all too eager for an “in” to separate you from your money.

The Federal Trade Commission reported a 25% increase in travel-related scams in 2022. Last year, they received more than 65,000 reports with consumer losses totaling more than \$105 million.

Scammers reach out to their potential victims via phone calls, text messages, or e-mails. They can pose as travel agents, hotels, or airlines in official-looking (or sounding) messages seeking your financial information.

POPULAR TRAVEL SCAMS

FREE VACATIONS

How often have you received a call or e-mail about a supposedly “free” cruise that you’ve just won despite never having entered into a contest? If you didn’t enter into a contest, that is your first clue that this is a scam. If you do respond, you will discover that in order to claim your “free” vacation, you must pay a fee and/or taxes up front. Don’t fall for it.



DISCOUNTED VACATIONS

It is against the law for a company that you have not granted written consent to contact you in an attempt to sell something via robocall. If a company that you do not have an established relationship with calls you out of the blue to offer you a discount vacation, they are already committing a crime, so they are likely not legitimate and only after your money.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SCAMS

When you see an ad from a company offering to help you obtain documentation for overseas travel, like a visa or passport, just say no. These companies are going to charge you high fees for every service - including those that you can get for free from the U.S. Department of State.

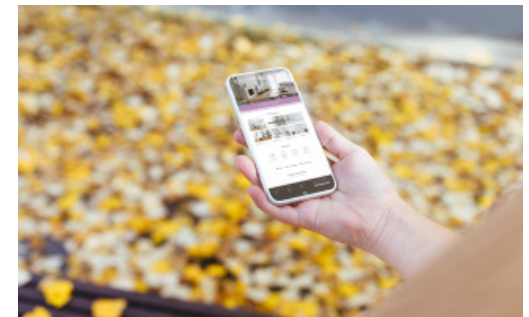


There are also scams offering to get you an international driver permit. The only entities that are allowed to issue international driving permits are the Dept. of State, the American Automobile Association (AAA), and American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) and none of

them will be calling you. If you go through with this offer, you will be out a lot of money and have documents that are not only worthless, but could get you detained for using them to drive in a foreign country. The bottom line here is that if you need any documentation related to overseas travel, start with the U.S. Department of State at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>.

VACATION RENTALS

Vacation rentals are easy to find online. They are also very easy for scammers to make a few quick bucks ripping you off. Modern scammers are tech savvy. One way they try to pull off this trick is to take a real advertisement from a reputable site and post it on another site with the contact information changed to their own. A potential renter contacts them and goes through the motions, but when they arrive at the rental to begin their vacation, they find the location is already rented to someone else. They are then out of their money and a place to stay.



So if they are using legitimate sites to perpetrate this fraud, how do you get around it? Look for the signs of a scam. If the “owner” or “agent” asks you to pay for an application fee, security deposit, first month’s rate or vacation rental fee via wire transfer or prepaid credit card, that is a major red flag. These thieves don’t have any connection to the actual property, so all they are interested in is convincing someone to send them the fees. With many victims, the amounts add up fairly quickly, representing a windfall for the thieves.