



Plan Ahead to Protect Your Vacation

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MADISON, Wis. – Whether you are going on a spring break trip this month or planning ahead for a summer getaway, it is important to prepare so you know what to do if issues occur. The last thing anyone wants to deal with while on a vacation is a business dispute, scam, or identity theft, but understanding how to handle these situations can help you keep your cool, resolve the issue quickly, and protect the rest of your travel plans.

“Nobody wants to take time out of their vacation to deal with unexpected complications,” said Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Randy Romanski. “Consumers should prepare for the worst while they hope for the best. Even a few simple preventative measures could be the difference between a minor inconvenience and an urgent issue that takes hours or days to fix.”

DATCP recommends that consumers take simple precautions to protect themselves when traveling.

- **Verify your arrangements.** Call businesses where you have reservations before your trip begins to confirm they are ready for your visit.
- **Clean out your wallet.** Remove unnecessary cards and unneeded documents containing personal information. Never travel with your Social Security card.
- **Pay by credit card.** By allowing you to dispute charges, this payment method offers more protection than cash or checks.
- **Ask about mandatory resort fees.** Extra costs, often called “resort fees,” can add to the nightly cost of your stay. Be sure you understand the full cost of your lodging.
- **Be wary of public Wi-Fi networks.** These may be fake networks set up by criminals who use it to access your device and track your activity.
- **Put details in writing.** Document all details such as confirmation numbers, booking times, addresses, costs, and cancellation and refund policies.

In recent years, industries like lodging, airlines, and car rentals have faced difficulties that may still affect service. Consumer complaints are often the result of lack of disclosure or miscommunication between the business and the consumer. However, consumers could encounter non-refundable deposits, minimum time requirements, advertised amenities being unavailable, or overbilling. Policies vary, so ask questions when you reserve a room, book a flight, or purchase tickets to events and attractions. Request reservation information in writing.

If you are reserving lodging through an online marketplace or other rental unit service like Airbnb or Vrbo, be wary of scammers who post fake listings to entice vacationers. Although these fake listings are prohibited by the company’s terms of service, it can be difficult to identify and remove them before a consumer falls victim to the fraud. Always book through a legitimate company that can issue refunds if anything goes wrong and look for properties with free cancellation policies. If possible, check the property’s website and listings on other platforms to identify differences that could indicate a scam.

For more information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP’s Consumer Protection webpage at ConsumerProtection.wi.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128.

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