

# TRAVEL TIPS

## Consumer Alert

Being an informed consumer will make you a wise traveler. This Alert gives you information and tips to help protect you before and during your travels.

### In the news:

The Attorney General received complaints about bus tours that were cancelled just before—and even on—the scheduled departure date. This happened to consumers who booked online and to those who booked through a travel agent. Some lost their deposits and others lost their complete payments.

### What you need to know:

How to spot and stop common tricks used to separate travelers from their money. You need to be mindful when planning and when taking your trip.

## SPOT IT: Signs of a travel scam

Whether you book your trip yourself online or through a travel agent, when planning your trip, do these three things:

1. Research the agent or online booking site;
2. Read all documents carefully; and
3. Pay with a credit card.

Michigan law does not license travel agents, so the best way to research an agent or online booking site is to check with the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division and the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed.

Word of mouth, personal recommendations, and online reviews are also ways to learn more about an agent or online service.

Travel documents and contracts are often long with lots of fine print. But it is important to read them completely and look for hidden costs or fees—especially when you are booking an all-inclusive vacation.



Advertised prices often don't include fees, taxes, or service charges. Look for an asterisk (\*) and then read the details. Take copies of your agreements with you in case you face unexpected fees or charges.

Some of the cancelled bus tour consumers got their money back because they paid for their bookings with a credit card.

Credit cards offer fraud and cancellation protections not offered with other forms of payment. And many cards offer bonus points or miles if you use them to pay for your travel.

When travelling, look out for these common travel scams:



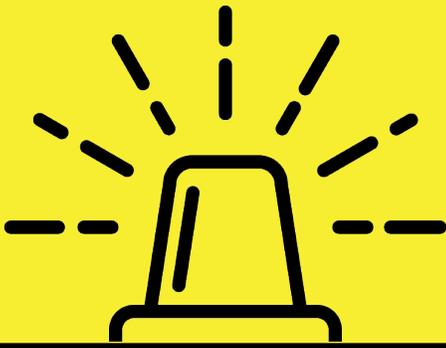
### The "pizza flyer" scam.

Once you are checked in, a flyer to local eatery is placed under your door offering quick delivery.

When you call in your order and give them your credit or debit card number (because that is all they accept), the food will never arrive, but a fraudulent charge will be placed on your card.

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Attorney General





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### The “front desk call” scam.

This is a call to your room from someone claiming to be from the front desk. The caller apologizes for the interruption but needs your credit card number to ensure your stay because a computer glitch failed to verify your account when you checked in.

Like the pizza flyer, the ruse is to get you to give the person on the call your credit card number.



### The classic “bait and switch” scam.

The technique is nothing new, but scammers are endlessly creative in how they present it.

Travelers find out about the “bait-and-switch” when they are lured by outrageously low airfare, hotel rates, or car rental rates, and they wind up being pressured into spending far more money than anticipated.

One example reported to the Attorney General’s office involved a tourist entering a souvenir shop and placing an order for a personalized item at a low price.

When the tourist returned to pick up the souvenir, a more expensive item had been personalized, and the tourist was told that, if the more expensive item was not paid for, the shop owner would call the local police department and file charges.

## STOP IT: How to avoid being scammed

- Read every document and look for fees and charges not included in the advertised price—especially with “all-inclusive” trips.
- Don’t pay for travel with cash, checks, or pre-paid cards: use a credit card with fraud and cancellation protections.

- Take copies of all travel documents with you to dispute any unexpected charges or fees.
- Get all orders and agreements in writing.
- Consider using a designated travel card just to pay for travel-related purchases, such as airline tickets, hotel reservations, rental cars, and other purchases.

### For more travel tips and information:

For travel in Michigan, please visit [Pure Michigan, Michigan’s Official Travel and Tourism website](#).

The [federal Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) provides tips to help travelers navigate airport security.

The [U.S. State Department](#) provides information on traveling safely abroad.

### Report Fraud

If you have been the victim of a travel-related scam, or if you would like to file a general consumer complaint, please contact the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division:

Consumer Protection Division  
P.O. Box 30213  
Lansing, MI 48909  
517-373-1140  
Fax: 517-241-3771  
Toll free: 877-765-8388  
[Online complaint form](#)



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