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April 12, 2016

ALERT!

With summer quickly approaching (yeah!), many people have begun to plan family vacations. As you start to search for your perfect escape, you might come across some really good-looking vacation deals. It is unfortunate, but some of those “too good to be true deals” are posted by scammers trying to steal your money. Sadly you may end up going nowhere!

Scammers create fake websites that look real, using names and logos of actual hotels. They show you beautiful photos of homes and condos on property sharing websites. They typically try to grab your attention with low rental prices.

Scammers might require you to wire money to hold the rent, sometimes it is just a deposit, but it could be the full amount. I have had people call my office and tell me that they have shown up for their family vacations, suitcases in hand, and the rental property didn't even exist! In other scams, the place you thought you booked was not available. Either way, your money is gone, along with your hope of an inexpensive vacation.

Here are some tips to help you avoid a vacation rental scam:

- Research companies before doing business with them. Look for complaints filed with the Ohio Attorney General's Office and Better Business Bureau.
- Make sure you get details. Carefully review terms and conditions of the agreement.
- Verbal promises need to be put into writing, or else, they may not be guaranteed.
- Consider using a credit card to book your rental, you have better protection this way. Never wire money or pay with a MoneyGram, Western Union or Green Dot cards, these are usually related to scams.
- Keep all documentation. Keep a copy of the contract or purchase agreement. If a problem arises, document the situation and track the names of people you can contact.
- Verify your reservations. If you book a trip through a third party, call the resort or hotel where you will be staying to confirm your reservation.

If you feel you have been a victim of one of these scams, please get in touch with the Ohio Attorney General's Office at 1-800-282-0515.

Stay Safe,

Sherri Bevan Walsh
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