

4 Scams to Avoid as Travel Resumes

As folks venture forth from pandemic isolation after being vaccinated, heading for long-awaited vacations and reunions with family and friends, they're whetting the appetite of scam artists who target travelers.



Here's how experts say you can avoid current travel ripoffs:

- 1. Free or rock-bottom deals.** Phone calls, emails and postcards with enticing travel offers look tempting, but a deal that's way under the value of a trip – like five nights in a hotel plus airfare to Maui for \$200 – means it's probably a scam. Simply walk away from any deal that seems too good to be true. And if a company asks you to pay with a prepaid gift card instead of a credit or debit card, it's not a legit deal.
- 2. Disappearing vacation rentals.** Scammers capitalize on the popularity of legit sites like Airbnb and Vrbo by offering online or via social media, properties that don't exist, don't belong to them, or don't measure up to the gorgeous photos. Keep all interactions with a vacation property's owners on the website of legitimate companies; a request to take your conversation off the site is a sign of a likely scam.
- 3. Rental car cons.** Crooks set up phony customer service numbers online that look just like those of major rental car companies. When you call, they take your money and personal information, then leave you stranded. Before you call or click to reserve a car, verify that you're calling the real customer service department or are on a legitimate website.
- 4. Third-party websites for TSA PreCheck and Global Entry programs.** Look-alike websites are popping up that claim to help you renew or enroll in these TSA programs, which speed you through airport security for a fee. But these sites are actually trying to con you out of money and personal information. To enroll in or renew PreCheck, go to the official government website, [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov)