

You might think that you can see a scam coming from a mile away but tricksters have gotten increasingly clever. Watch out!!



Scam: Fake delivery menu

Here's the scene. You are overseas in London and arrive back at your hotel room exhausted after a long day of walking around the city. You see a flier for pizza delivery, and after the long day you've had, a no-frills dinner is just what you need. You call for delivery, give them your credit card number, and wait for your pizza to arrive. In reality, the pizza restaurant doesn't exist, your pizza is never coming, and the culprits just walked away with your credit card information.

Solution: Do your research

First, talk directly to your hotel's front desk staff and ask for suggestions for dinner. They know what's in the area and where other guests have had success. Disney World, which actually warns guests about the possibility of fake fliers in its hotel rooms, can offer up legitimate pizza options if that's what you're looking for. If you plan to order off of a flier, it's probably helpful to do a quick Google search. If the restaurant appears on Google Street View or on review sites like Yelp, chances are it actually exists!

Scam: Wi-Fi skimming

People will trip over themselves to get free Wi-Fi. Unfortunately, criminals will use this to their advantage. Wi-Fi skimming involves using a free Wi-Fi network to steal information from unsuspecting people, and sadly, it's becoming more and more prevalent.

The scammer simply sets up a hotspot named "Free Wi-Fi" in a hotel, park, or popular public area. Once you start using the connection, any data you use will be sent directly to the host/scammer's computer. This means the offender will have access to your usernames and passwords of your favourite websites.

Solution: Fight the urge

Although it's tempting, never click on a network that says "Free Wi-Fi." If you're staying at a hotel with free Wi-Fi, be sure to use the correct network, which usually requires a password, such as your room number. Ask someone at the front desk to prevent any confusion. Some phone carriers allow you to use your smartphone as a hotspot, so if you travel a lot, it's worth considering this feature. It will add a few bucks to your bill, but it's better than getting your identity stolen.

Scam: The late night call from the front desk

After you check into a hotel, you typically rely on the front desk personnel to have your best interest in mind. So if they call, claim there was a problem processing your credit card, and ask for the card number over the phone, it may not seem alarming. But it should be. This is just one scam being used to steal money from unsuspecting people. The thieves call late at night from an untraceable number, and by the time you realise that you've been swindled, your bank account is empty.

Solution: Make all payments face-to-face

First, it's important to never give your credit card number over the phone at a hotel. If you receive a call claiming there is an issue with your reservation, take the time to go to the front desk and discuss it in person.

Second, always book your hotel with a credit card instead of a debit card. Many credit cards have fraud protection, and this will prevent the thieves from emptying out your checking account.

Scam: Paid for beachfront, but you can't see the beach

Nothing completes a tropical vacation like having a beachfront view from your hotel balcony. And often, you pay extra to ensure that you'll be able to watch the sunrise over crystal blue waters. But while some hotels do have views of the water, they aren't actually overlooking the beach. There may be a marina, highway, or strip mall between you and the ocean. This might not ruin your vacation in paradise, but no one likes to be misled.

Solution: Visit before you visit

Google Street View is an amazing way to check out the location of your hotel. It allows guests to take a 360-degree tour of the hotel's exterior before they even get there. It's also important to check out websites like TripAdvisor, where many guests post photos of the view from their rooms.

Finally, there is a fantastic resource called The Beachfront Club, which has compiled some of the best beachfront properties from around the world. You can search by beach or country, and with 7,000 hotels in its database, you're guaranteed to receive the beachfront views you paid for.

Scam: Spending a fortune on the hotel's bottled water

Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink. When you're visiting a country with iffy water standards, it can be a stressful experience deciding whether or not the water is actually safe to drink. The issue is that some hotels are taking advantage of these fears. In certain countries, the hotel staff will warn against drinking the water even if the water is safe to drink. This makes guests want to buy the overpriced bottled water in the minibar. Even worse, sometimes the water is set out without a price attached, so guests assume it's free. Unfortunately this realisation that the bottled water is not complimentary occurs only after you get the bill at checkout.

Solution: Check with the experts

Do your research. Before you visit a new country, consult the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for facts and warnings to help you prepare. You simply enter your destination, and the site provides health notices and tips to ensure safe eating and drinking.

If the water is indeed unsafe to drink, consider taking a trip outside the hotel to buy a gallon jug to drink during your stay. It will save you money and give you peace of mind.