

Vacation Rental Scams

Vacation rental scams usually involve fake offers for discounted properties that can be rented by wiring money for an application fee or security deposit. Once the consumer wires the money, they are told the rental is no longer available, or worse, not told anything. This can result in a family showing up to a property for vacation only to be turned away and left scrambling for a place to stay. Vacation rental scammers may make up a listing rental or hijack a real rental listing by changing the contact information and placing the altered ad on a different site.

There are steps consumers can take now to avoid falling victim to a vacation rental scam. Before booking a rental property:

- Search for a reputable rental website that offers protection in the event of fraud or offers payment transfer options;
- Find websites that offer a payment portal, where money is held in escrow until the renter arrives at the property with keys in hand;
- Do not rely solely on email to contact the owner and be wary of foreign telephone numbers;
- Investigate the property and if possible, visit the property before signing a contract or sending payment;
- Check to see if there are additional rental listings for the property under another owner's name;
- Ask for additional photos. A legitimate owner or property manager can likely produce these with little difficulty, while a scammer is unlikely to have access to additional photos; and,
- Pay for a rental with a credit card, via PayPal or through a payment transfer option on the rental listing website, which makes it easier to dispute a fraudulent charge.

Anyone who encounters a vacation rental scam should immediately report it to the Florida Attorney General's Office by filing a complaint online at [MyFloridaLegal.com](https://www.myfloridalegal.com) or by calling 1-866-9-NO-SCAM.