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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

VIDEO CA: Stay Away from Spring Break Scams



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert with tips for Floridians to avoid common scams during spring break travel. Spring is a popular time for families and students to take vacations. It is also a time when scammers may try to take advantage of people on the move. Florida schools statewide will be adjourning for spring break in the coming weeks.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Florida is a perfect spring break destination with its pristine beaches and great year-round weather. Thousands of visitors are coming into our state, adding to the many Floridians who travel around the state during the spring season. I want everyone to be vigilant when making travel arrangements so that scammers don’t put a damper on their vacations. That is why I am issuing these spring break travel planning tips.”

A common spring break scam involves scammers placing fake vacation home rental listings and advertisements to try to swindle consumers. Fraudulent listings may show fake photos of supposedly available rental homes or even include pictures of actual properties owned by legitimate homeowners that are being offered for rent without the owners’ knowledge. Inspecting the property prior to rental or sending a trusted friend who lives nearby to check the purported rental property is a good idea. If the deal seems too good to be true, it usually is.

Tips for a scam-free spring break include:

- Only book accommodations through legitimate, recognized rental agencies or hotels. Check the company’s name in the Better Business Bureau database at BBB.org;

- Be savvy about rentals priced far below the market rate—this could be scammers looking to defraud as many people as possible;
- Consider making purchases with a credit card or via PayPal. With these options, it is easier to dispute a fraudulent charge;
- Document issues and take photos if, upon arrival, a rental listing is not as advertised. This will provide proof to the rental site that the listing is not authentic. Additionally, consider taking photos upon arrival and departure anyway, in case a host alleges damage was done, so that the allegations can be disputed;
- While on vacation, be cautious about ordering takeout from places that slide advertisements under hotel room doors. Look up the establishment online before placing an order—it could be a scammer trying to get credit card information;
- Lookout for scam artists on the street. Keep personal belongings close and be aware of surroundings; and
- If scammed, report fraudulent charges to credit card companies and banks as well as local law enforcement. Scams can also be reported to the Attorney General's Office at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or MyFloridaLegal.com.

Rental car companies often advertise low prices, but sometimes there are hidden fees. To be savvy consumers, consider the following tips when booking a rental car:

- Inspect the car carefully before leaving the lot. Note any damage and take a photo, if possible, to document any pre-existing damage;
- Ask what fees and taxes are included in the final bill;
- Fill the gas tank up before returning the car, as rental companies often charge more than the market price for gas if a car is returned with less than a full tank; and
- Read the full rental agreement carefully prior to signing.

Report scams to the Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To view recent Consumer Alerts and for other information about avoiding scams, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.