

2026
EDITION

TRAVEL, SCAMS, FRAUD & UNETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

 A GUIDE FOR OREGON CONSUMERS,
WORKING FAMILIES, AND OLDER ADULTS

Travel can be exciting but can also come with risks. It can involve large purchases, unfamiliar businesses, third-party booking sites, or contracts. Scammers and dishonest businesses may use fake websites, misleading prices, hidden fees, or pressure to get you to pay before you have time to verify the offer.

This guide offers information and hyperlinked resources to help Oregon consumers and working families recognize unethical business practices, ask questions, make informed decisions and know where to get support if something does not seem right.



WHAT'S INSIDE



Part 1: What to Know

The basics of safe travel



Part 2: What to Watch For

Unethical business practices and warning signs



Part 3: Before, During & After

Tips to help you book and reserve



Part 4: Where to Get Help

Report problems and get support

WHY THIS MATTERS

In 2025, the Oregon Consumer Advocacy Program received numerous complaints about misleading prices of food and beverage products, placing these issues among the top ten complaints for the year.

COMMON CONCERNS INCLUDE:

- ✓ False or misleading advertising
- ✓ Posted prices changing at checkout
- ✓ Automatic subscriptions, delivery services and unexpected charges
- ✓ Misleading product claims



1 PART 1: WHAT TO KNOW

Travel, fraud, scams & unethical business practices



Whether you are booking a flight, hotel, vacation rental, campground, cruise, rental car, tour or timeshare, take time to understand who you are buying from, what you are buying and what you will actually pay.

Know and Understand

CHECK WHO YOU'RE BOOKING WITH

Before entering information

- ✓ Ensure you are on official websites or trusted platforms.
- ✓ Check the web address carefully.
- ✓ Research the company, hotel or rental.
- ✓ Be cautious of unfamiliar links, emails or text.



BEFORE YOU PAY

Look beyond the advertised price

- ✓ Look for taxes, fees and additional charges.
- ✓ Check for resort, baggage, service, fees, or additional charges.
- ✓ Make sure the final price matches the initial price disclosed.



BEFORE YOU AGREE

Read the terms and know

- ✓ Cancellation deadlines, cooling periods, fees and refund policies.
- ✓ Get any promises in writing.
- ✓ What is and is not included.
- ✓ For timeshares, know ongoing fees and cancellation rights.



BE AWARE OF

- ✓ "Free" or low-cost offers.
- ✓ Watch for hidden fees, restrictions, sales pitches or other restrictions.
- ✓ Be cautious if you never entered a contest.
- ✓ Too good to be true offers.



Consumer Tip:

If you cannot understand what you are buying, who you are paying or what happens if plans change, **pause before entering payment or personal information.**

2 PART 2: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Warning Signs & Unethical business practices



Not every bad travel experience is a scam or an unethical business practice. But certain practices should cause you to slow down and verify the information before you pay. Many unethical practices involve deception or misrepresentation by a seller.



Fake or look-alike websites

- Slightly different URLs or logos
- Sponsored search results
- Contact info does not match



Unusual payment requests

- Unusual payment request (gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, etc)
- Payment outside platform requests



Hidden or unexpected fees

- Extra charges at checkout
- Resort, destination, booking or extra fees
- Large upfront resale fees



Pressure to pay

- "Limited time" offers
- "Someone else is booking"
- Push to pay immediately



Vacation Rentals

- Photos or descriptions don't match
- Pay before documentation
- Communicate off platform



Timeshare & Resale

- Guaranteed buyers or profits
- Large upfront fees or resale fees
- Pressure to sign immediately



REMEMBER:

If you feel rushed, confused or pressured, PAUSE. You can take time to research, ask questions or walk away if needed it.

File a complaint or search Oregon's complaint database: oregonconsumer.gov



3 PART 3: BEFORE, DURING & AFTER

PROTECTING YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR COMMUNITY

A few simple steps can help prevent problems and make it easier to resolve them if something goes wrong. Focus on understanding what you are booking or paying for. A good travel decision is an informed decision.

BEFORE YOU BOOK:

- ☐ Research the company, hotel, airline, or rental listing.
- ☐ Read reviews and check for consumer complaints.
- ☐ Compare prices from multiple sources.
- ☐ Verify the property or provider.
- ☐ Double check the website URL
- ☐ Perform a reverse image search to see if photos appear elsewhere.
- ☐ Be sure the agency is licensed before buying travel insurance.

DURING THE PURCHASE:

- ☐ Confirm the final total before paying.
- ☐ Use a secure, traceable payment method.
- ☐ Avoid paying outside the platform.
- ☐ Contact the company independently.
- ☐ Keep confirmation, tickets, receipts and advertisements.
- ☐ Take photos of rentals on arrival and departure.
- ☐ Review charges and fees.

AFTER YOUR TRAVELS:

- ☐ Review your credit and debit card statements.
- ☐ Check for unexpected charges.
- ☐ Save all emails, texts, ads, receipts and contracts.
- ☐ Contact the business promptly about a problem.
- ☐ Report concerns if the problem is not resolved.
- ☐ Secure your personal accounts.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What fees are required?

What is included and not included?

Is this the official website or platform?

Can I take time to review it?



Check information



Document everything



Report issues

4 PART 4: WHERE TO GET HELP

Reporting Problems



If you believe a business has misled you, charged you unexpectedly or engaged in an unethical business practice you have options. Start by reviewing the details, contacting the business, documenting what happened, checking the business policies and using the guide below to help determine where to report a concern.

Oregon Department of Justice

[Q oregonconsumer.gov](https://oregonconsumer.gov)

U.S. Depart. of Transportation

[Q transportation.gov](https://transportation.gov)

Federal Aviation Administration

[Q faa.gov](https://faa.gov)

Complaints about travel

[Q usa.gov/travel-complaints](https://usa.gov/travel-complaints)

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

[Q ftc.gov](https://ftc.gov)

Oregon Real Estate Agency

[Q oregon.gov/oda](https://oregon.gov/oda)

Better Business Bureau

[Q bbb.org](https://bbb.org)

Transportation Security Admin

[Q tsa.gov](https://tsa.gov)

BEFORE YOU REPORT GATHER:

- ☐ Booking confirmation
- ☐ Receipts/invoices
- ☐ Ads/Website URL
- ☐ Screenshots
- ☐ Contract/terms
- ☐ Emails / texts
- ☐ Business name/phone
- ☐ Date, time, location



PAUSE



CHECK



ASK



DOCUMENT

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