

TRAVEL SMART TIPS

Steering Clear Of Travel Scams

(NAPSA)—Record-low prices mean families can find great deals on vacations—but as costs plummet, it's important not to be taken for a ride by travel scams.

One of the best ways to guard against scammers is to remain skeptical. Be wary of unsolicited e-mails, postcards and phone calls saying you've been selected to receive a free trip. And be especially wary of firms requiring you to wait at least 60 days to take your vacation.

Try these additional tips for steering clear of travel scams and for evaluating travel offers and so-called deals. They come from experts at the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

- **Read the fine print.** Certain offers impose so many requirements and restrictions that you may never have the chance to take the trip or you might end up paying more than if you had made arrangements on your own or with a travel agent.

- **Get the facts.** You should receive complete details in writing about any trip prior to payment. These details should include the total price, cancellation and change penalties and specific information about all components of the package.

- **Follow up.** Once you have the complete details of your trip, contact the hotel and transportation companies on your own to make certain the reservations have been made.

- **Know when to walk away.** High-pressure sales presentations



A few tips could help you avoid some common travel scams.

that don't allow you time to evaluate the offer or that require that you disclose your income are red flags.

- **Pay with a credit card.** Under the Fair Credit Billing Act, credit card customers have the right to refuse paying for charges for services not rendered. Details of the Fair Credit Billing Act can be found at the Federal Trade Commission's Web site.

- **Run a "background check."** Search for the company you plan to book a vacation with by checking to see if it is a member of ASTA. If you feel you have been scammed, contact the group's Consumer Affairs department at consumeraffairs@asta.org for information and assistance.

Regardless of travel plans, using a professional ASTA travel agent could save you time and money. For more information, including a Find a Travel Agent Directory, visit TravelSense.org.