

ABTA and Police issue warning on rising holiday booking fraud

Findings from a report compiled by the NFIB reveal the scale of the crime and expose common tactics used by fraudsters.

The most common types relate to:

- **Holiday accommodation** – According to the report almost a third (30%) of holiday fraud victims in 2013 were scammed by the fraudulent advertisement of holiday villas and apartments, with some arriving at their destination to discover they had nowhere to stay.
- **Airline tickets** – where a customer believes they are booking a flight and receives a fake ticket or pays for a ticket that never turns up. This is the most second most common type of booking fraud, accounting for 21% of holiday booking fraud reported to the police in 2013. Average losses are more than £1000 per victim, with flights to West Africa a particular target.
- **Package holidays** – particularly group, sports and religious packages.

A YouGov poll for ABTA back in 2013 revealed that one in ten consumers (9%) do nothing to research their travel company, such as checking if it is a member of a trade association such as ABTA (which has a code of conduct in place to protect consumers), asking friends and family for recommendations, or running a web search.

ABTA, the NFIB and Get Safe Online have published advice on how to avoid becoming a victim of holiday booking fraud – and on how victims should go about reporting it, including the top tips below:

- **Do your research:** Don't just rely on one review, do a thorough online search to ensure the company's credentials. If a company is defrauding people there is a good chance that consumers will post details of their experiences, and warnings about the company, online.
- **Look for the logo:** Check whether the company is a member of a recognised trade body such as ABTA. You can verify membership of ABTA online, at www.abta.com
- **Stay safe online:** Check the web address is legitimate and has not been altered by slight changes to a domain name – such as going from .co.uk to .org
- **Pay safe:** Never pay directly into an owner's bank account. Paying by direct bank transfer is like paying by cash – the money cannot be traced and is not refundable. Where possible, pay by credit card, (or a debit card that offers protection).
- **Check paperwork:** You should study receipts, invoices and terms and conditions, and beware of any companies that don't provide any at all.
- **Use your instincts:** If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Report it** – victims should contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via www.actionfraud.police.uk