

**PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE.**

**If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud, please call Essex Police on 101.**

**Report fraud or attempted fraud by contacting Action Fraud at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or call 0300 123 2040.**

With the announcement that the tourism and leisure sectors are permitted to reopen tomorrow (4<sup>th</sup> July) many people will be looking for alternative holiday options and 'staycations'.

Please see the below article from [Action Fraud](#).

### **UK FINANCE WARNS CONSUMERS TO BEWARE OF CORONAVIRUS HOLIDAY SCAMS**



Consumers are being urged to be on the lookout for holiday scams including fake caravan and motorhome listings, refund offers and travel deals, as criminals take advantage of uncertainty around coronavirus travel restrictions and cancellations to target their victims and commit fraud.

With many people looking to book their summer breaks when lockdown ends, the Take Five to Stop Fraud campaign has today published detailed [guidance](#) with information on common holiday scams and advice on how to stay safe from them.

Criminals are experts at impersonating trusted organisations such as airlines, travel agencies or banks. They will use a range of methods to approach their victims, including scam emails, telephone calls, fake websites and posts on social media and auction websites. Customers are therefore reminded to always follow the advice of the [Take Five to Stop Fraud](#) campaign and take a moment to stop and think before parting with their money or information in case it's a scam.

**'Tell2, protect many'** is a communication initiative that empowers you to spread crime prevention messages to others in your life, who otherwise may never know. Start with 'tell2' and ask them to do the same. It starts with YOU!

Katy Worobec, Managing Director of Economic Crime at UK Finance, commented:

*Criminals will exploit the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people's holiday plans to commit fraud, whether it's advertising fake listings for caravans or pretending to offer refunds for cancelled flights.*

*"The banking and finance industry is working closely with law enforcement to crack down on these cruel scams, but we need others to play their part too. It's important that auction websites and social platforms take swift action to remove fraudulent posts and listings being used to promote holiday scams.*

*"We would urge customers to also be on the lookout for scams and follow the advice of the **Take Five to Stop Fraud** campaign. Always be wary of any requests to pay by bank transfer when buying goods or services online and instead use the secure payment options recommended by reputable websites.*

*"It's also important to question any emails, phone calls or social media posts offering refunds for cancelled holidays and not to click on links or attachments in case it's a scam. Instead, contact organisations directly to confirm requests using a known email or phone number such as the one on their official website.*

## **Caravan scams**

Criminals are taking advantage of growing demand for 'staycations' in the UK this summer, by advertising fake listings for caravans and motorhomes on auction sites and citing lockdown restrictions as the reason vehicles can't be viewed in person. These vehicles are advertised at attractive prices to tempt people into believing they're getting a good deal, when in reality they simply don't exist or don't arrive once paid for.

### Always remember:

- Be suspicious of any "too good to be true" offers or prices – if it's at a rock bottom price ask yourself why.
- Do your research before making any purchases and ask to see vehicles over video if you're unable to see them in person.
- Use the secure payment methods recommended by reputable online retailers and auction sites and don't accept requests to pay separately via a bank transfer.
- Where possible, use a credit card when making purchases over £100 and up to £30,000 as you receive protection under Section 75.

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## **Fake refunds for cancellations**

The current travel restrictions imposed due to coronavirus have meant thousands of customers have applied for refunds for cancelled flights or holidays. Criminals may exploit this situation to defraud people via phishing emails, 'spoofed' calls or social media posts and adverts claiming to be offering refunds from airlines, travel providers or banks. Often emails and posts will include links leading to fake websites used to steal personal and financial information that can infect a victim's device with malware.

### Always remember:

- Don't click on links or attachments in social media posts or emails.
- Question uninvited approaches and contact organisations directly to confirm requests using a known email or phone number.
- Only give out your personal or financial information to services you have consented to and are expecting to be contacted by.

## **Cheap travel deal scams**

Criminals will set up fake websites offering 'cheap travel deals' which are used to obtain your money and information. Websites may look similar to the genuine organisation's but subtle changes in the URL can indicate that it's fraudulent. These websites may also seem professional and convincing, using images of luxury villas and apartments that don't exist to convince victims they're trusted and genuine. These are offered for rent, often at discounted prices and require a deposit to be made which is never returned.

### Always remember:

- Be suspicious of any "too good to be true" offers or prices – if it's at a rock bottom price ask yourself why.
- Where possible, use a credit card when booking holidays over £100 and up to £30,000 as you receive protection under Section 75.
- Use the secure payment options recommended by online travel providers and don't accept requests to pay separately via a bank transfer.
- Read online reviews from reputable sources to check websites and bookings are legitimate.
- Access the website you're purchasing from by typing it in to the web browser and avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails.

**If it's too good to be true, it usually is!**

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