Vacation Rental Scam Heats Up as Summer Draws to a Close

August 6, 2014 - You are getting ready to go on vacation with your family and looking for the perfect vacation rental. You have you eye set on a particular house you saw advertised for rent in your destination city. But before you rent, you decide to see if you can find it advertised somewhere else for a little less money. After a couple of internet searches, you are astounded to learn that the very same place that you fell in love with online on a legitimate vacation rental site is also being advertised on Craigslist at half the price. You snap into action and rent it immediately! Unfortunately for you, the only thing that is disappearing on vacation is your money. You've just been scammed.

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It is actually a very simple scam that is crossing the United States right now. Con artists are copying legitimate vacation rental ads and then reposting them at much lower prices on websites like Craigslist and Facebook.

Victims of the scam are most likely to find out that they have been duped when they show up at the front door of their vacation cottage only to find out that it has been rented to someone else. They are literally left standing on the front door step holding their bags.

Law enforcement agencies around the country will be of little help to victims. That's because most of the scam artists involved actually live overseas. But there are some precautions you can take to avoid becoming a victim in the first place.

Most people who rent out a home as a vacation rental don't actually have the ability to accept credit cards for payment. That's why many owners will use vacation rental websites that accept payments on their behalf in return for a commission. Alternatively, many Realtors also work with vacation rentals. If you want to rent a vacation property, these

are probably the two safest ways to go about it without getting scammed.

It you do decide to rent through an online classified ad, you should be suspicious if the person renting the property is pushing you to wired transfer your funds to him or to use a money order and pay in advance. You may also want to check for references on sites like Yelp to see what other people have had to say about their experience with the renter.

The bottom line here is that if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you see the same home advertised in multiple places and at significantly different rates, you should probably just keep on looking for another place to rent.
byJim Malmberg
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