



Travel Right – 5 Tips for Avoiding Vacation Pitfalls

- **Know before you go** – Research travel agents, tour companies and all-inclusive resorts before you book your trip. Check with the Office of Consumer Protection to see if there are complaints and read on-line reviews and recommendations. Keep in mind that unhappy customers are more likely to post reviews than happy ones, so use more than one source when making your decisions.
- **Get it in writing and read carefully** – Before you pay any money, read the terms and conditions relating to airfare, hotels or tours, making sure you are aware of all fees and restrictions and the providers' cancellation policies.
- **Pay by credit card** – Unlike paying with check or cash, you usually have the right to have credit card charges reversed if you do not receive what you paid for. Check with your credit card company for details about its charge-back process.
- **Confirm travel plans directly** – If you use a travel agent or tour company, it is good practice to confirm all your travel arrangements directly with the companies providing the transportation, hotel or car rental. Confirming hotel reservations also gives you the opportunity to verify the details of your accommodations, which may differ from how they are advertised.
- **Beware of Solicitations offering “Free” Trips or Gifts** – Solicitations that require you to attend a sales presentation in order to receive a gift or prize are illegal in Maryland. The sales agents often use high pressure tactics and may misrepresent the quality or features of the travel product. In addition, “free” trips are seldom ever free. You will usually have to pay their higher costs for some services and/or pay “reservation” or “handling” fees. Most also use a difficult reservation process that makes it next to impossible to book the trip.

For more information on this and other consumer topics, or to obtain this factsheet in an alternative format, contact the Office of Consumer Protection 410-313-6420 (voice/relay) or consumer@howardcountymd.gov.