

Warwickshire Trading Standards scams alert: Copycat Holiday Websites and other scam warnings

Good Afternoon,

Please help us to spread these warning by forwarding this message on, featuring the information on a website or in a newsletter, or posting a link on social media.

The information can also be found here: <https://safeinwarwickshire.com/2021/03/17/copycat-holiday-websites-and-other-scam-warnings/>

Looking for a Cheap Holiday or Airline Flight? Don't be Caught out by the Copycats!

Fraudsters are setting up copycat websites through which they sell fake airline tickets and holidays. The fraudsters use the same names (or very similar names) and ATOL numbers of genuine travel companies.

Before the pandemic, in 2018 UK holidaymakers lost more than £7m to fake sites and fraud. According to ABTA, 53% of reported online holiday scams concerned the sale of fake airline tickets from copycat and bogus websites.

These websites look very professional and even include telephone numbers that use local area codes to where the genuine companies are based! The telephone numbers are actually linked to foreign call centres.

If you are a victim of a bogus website, report it to Trading Standards on 0808 223 1133.

There are many companies that sell holidays and airline tickets online, from large brands to small independents. We've put together a few top tips to help you protect yourself.

1. If the seller is unfamiliar to you, research them online. You can check to see when a website was first registered using <https://who.is/> If the website was registered very recently, but the company claims to be well established, be wary!
2. Pay in a way that offers some form of protection if things go wrong, for example with a credit card. Be wary of companies that will only accept payments that offer little or no protection, such as bank transfer.
3. More advice on holiday and travel bookings is available here: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/shopping-banking/holiday-and-travel-booking/>

Everyone's a Winner!

Beware of bogus 'pop-up' quizzes and competitions that appear on websites and social media sites. Many bogus promotional competitions claim to offer iPhones and other technology as prizes. People are asked to answer a few simple questions and of course, everyone wins! 'Winners' are then asked to provide their card details to pay for posting their non-existent prize to them. When the fraudsters have this information they can start taking money from 'prize winners' bank accounts, often by setting up a continuous payment authority.

More on competition scams: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/prize-draw-scams>

Scam DVLA Emails

Warwickshire residents have reported receiving scam DVLA email messages. The messages state that their car must not be driven on the highway because its road tax had expired and the application to renew it had been refused because the account did not contain sufficient funds to cover it. The recipient of the email is then invited to click on a link to a website to 'resolve the matter'. These links direct recipients to bogus websites from which personal and financial information can be stolen. Be wary of any unexpected emails. Never follow a link in a suspicious email. Always visit the website by typing the correct address in to the browser.

More on phishing emails: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/phishing>

Pet Registration Microchip Copycats

New pet owners are warned to beware of bogus 'copycat' websites offering pet microchip registration services. These bogus websites, that can appear above genuine websites in online searches, take money for falsely claiming to be able to register your pet. Before you register your pet, make sure that you have visited the correct website.

To make a consumer complaint or for consumer help and advice, please contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

For consumer or business help and advice, including details of our approved trader scheme, please visit our website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards>

Sign up for regular scam alerts to your email inbox:

<https://mailchi.mp/warwickshire/scamawareness>

**Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: <https://www.facebook.com/warwickshiretradingstandards>
<https://twitter.com/WarksTSS>**

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please contact simoncripwell@warwickshire.gov.uk

Best Wishes

**Duty Officer
Trading Standards Service**

Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall (Post Room)
Northgate House
Warwick
CV34 4RL

Website: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards

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