

NEWS RELEASE

Trouble in Paradise

On the third day of National Consumer Week, West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service is highlighting the problems many of us face when booking and taking holidays, and offering advice on how consumers can protect themselves and avoid trouble.

What happens when things go wrong? It may be that dream holiday advertised in the local travel agents window, that bargain on the internet, or that paradise island in the brochure; all of these might seem like great deals. But are they really?

All tour operators selling package holidays must be bonded or protect the prepayments they hold. This means if they go bust before its time to travel, customers should get their money back or if already on holiday, travellers should be able to complete their holiday and return home.

Trading Standards are offering some handy tips to avoid that disaster holiday we all fear:

- Make sure the tour operator is a member of a trade association, such as ABTA
- Make sure you read the booking terms and conditions carefully
- Get any special requests you make in writing
- Ensure you have adequate insurance
- Check your booking confirmation; notify the agent as quickly as possible of any amendments
- If you have a problem whilst on holiday, complain to your local representative and ask for a copy of the report
- Take photographs to back up your complaint
- If your complaint is not resolved in the resort, take it up with the tour operator on your return home.

Holiday clubs operate in the UK as well as abroad. If you get invited to a presentation, whether it be here or abroad, Trading Standards' advice is 'proceed with caution.' Think carefully about whether a timeshare deal is the best option – very often the presentation will be 'hard sell'. If tempted to attend, don't take credit cards, large amounts of cash or cheque books so that you can't be parted with your money without having time to consider the options. It might be too late to change your mind after the event.

With electronic shopping on the rise, millions of travellers are now booking via the internet. Consumers should beware of companies that make price

changes between booking and travelling, making sure that the booking price offered is the full cost of the holiday. Trading Standards advise consumers to avoid websites where credit card details have to be given before prices are confirmed, to avoid any hidden increases being added to the bill.

Graham Hebblethwaite, West Yorkshire's Chief Trading Standards Officer said,

'Millions of us have great holidays each year and for most it's a happy, relaxing experience, and the majority of travel operators are reputable. However there are a small minority whose actions turn what should be an enjoyable adventure into a nightmare for some consumers. My advice to anyone thinking of booking a holiday is that before parting with any money, take time to consider what it is you are getting, and what you may or may not get for your money. The holiday industry is an extremely competitive market place and it does pay to shop around.'

Councillor Keith Wakefield, Deputy Chair of the Trading Standards Committee added, 'Trading Standards regularly checks prices offered by travel operators to make sure they are accurate and not misleading, and that descriptions quoted in relation to properties and services offered match the facilities in reality. Hopefully most of us will not experience any problems whilst on holiday, but by taking the above precautions and advice it will help in resolving any problems that you may come across. For advice on any holiday issues, contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.'

Notes to Editor

For further information contact:

David Lodge, Divisional Manager - 0113 2898 243

Helen Andrews, Education & Promotions Officer - 0113 3836 433