

# THE RISKIEST DESTINATION FOR ONLINE TRAVEL FRAUD REVEALED



McAfee has published its Safer Summer Travel Report. This comprehensive study includes a top 10 list of the "riskiest" travel destinations that scammers use to lure travelers to malware or risky websites. The report offers insight into new trends and online travel fraud risks in summer travel, and it highlights Americans' growing concern about increasingly credible, AI-generated online scams.

The global study surveyed 6,000 adults in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Australia, and Japan. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of online travel fraud and the measures travelers can take to protect themselves.

## Travelers Plan Adventures and Stay Alert

Despite the looming threat of cyber scams, the majority of Americans (85 percent) are resolute in their travel plans for 2024, demonstrating their unwavering spirit. **This determination is accompanied by a heightened sense of caution, with 57 percent expressing worry about the rise of scams due to AI and deepfakes.** While a third (34 percent) admit their confidence in planning and booking vacations has waned, they remain steadfast in their commitment to travel. The increasing use of AI and deepfakes may have made detecting and avoiding scams harder, but it has not dampened their enthusiasm.

Experts note that cybercriminals use peak travel seasons to attract travelers with enticing offers. With the rise of AI, these scams have become more sophisticated and prevalent. Travelers must practice cyber hygiene, think carefully before clicking on an offer, and utilize advanced AI-powered security solutions, such as antivirus software with AI threat detection capabilities or AI-powered browser extensions that can identify and block malicious websites. This will help safeguard consumers' vacation plans from potential cyber threats and ensure a safe online experience.

## Travelers Often Fall Victim to Booking

Concerns about cyber threats are justified. Nearly one in three respondents has fallen victim to a travel scam, which can include situations where they were tricked into booking non-existent accommodation, making a payment to a fraudulent website, or being misled about the quality of service. Many victims have lost \$1,000 or more in a single scam.

The frequency of travel fraud when booking varies considerably depending on age. While around one in three (28 percent) said they had fallen victim to travel fraud when booking, 40 percent of those aged 18 to 29 said this, and only 13 percent of those aged 50 to 65 said the same.

The three most common scams that travelers face when booking a vacation are:

- Fraudulent payments after entering credit card or bank details on a fake website (15 percent).
- Clicking on a malicious confirmation link from an unknown source (10 percent).
- Finding manipulated photos of the destination (8 percent).

The three most common fraud cases affecting travelers on vacation are negative experiences with

deposits and services that did not meet expectations. Travelers reported accommodations where, after paying a deposit, they discovered upon arrival that the rental accommodation did not exist (13 percent). This can include situations where the property was misrepresented in the listing, or the host was fraudulent. Event or excursion providers did not show up (10 percent), leaving travelers without the planned activity and out of pocket. And excursions that were utterly different from what was promised (9 percent), such as tours that did not visit the advertised locations or activities that were not as described.

### **Berlin Is a "Hotspot" for Online Travel Fraud**

To compile the Safer Summer Travel Report, experts have created a list of the "riskiest" global travel destinations online. These are places where online travel searches often lead to unsafe results, potentially resulting in the installation of malware.

To identify online travel fraud, the McAfee Labs team analyzed search results associated with travel-related keywords such as "discount," "Airbnb," "local cuisine," and "tours." Travelers should exercise extra caution when conducting online searches for these destinations.

### **Here are the top 10 "hotspots" for online travel fraud:**

1. Berlin, Germany
2. Cyprus
3. London, UK
4. Paris, France
5. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
6. Bali, Indonesia
7. Azores, Portugal
8. Amalfi Coast, Italy
9. Bermuda
10. Machu Picchu, Peru

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