



ECC Ireland regularly receives complaints from consumers who have bought tickets online for major musical or sporting events and found that they have been scammed. September's ebulletin offers advice on how to ensure that you get what you pay for when buying tickets online.

This month's consumer problem concerns problems arising from the bankruptcy of the Slovak airline, SkyEurope, which has impacted on Irish consumers who have booked flights with the airline.

If you have had a problem with a purchase from another EU country, please contact us on 01 8090600 or at info@eccireland.ie. For information on your consumer rights in Europe, see www.eccireland.ie

Ann Neville
Editor

1. Bogus ticket websites – don't get scammed

Coldplay's concert in the Phoenix Park this week marked the end of the summer's big festivals, and with many concerts being sold out within minutes (or less than one minute in the case of indie favourite Florence and the Machine) it is clear that the demand for tickets among music fans is recession-proof.

ECC Ireland recently received a number of complaints relating to the Miley Cyrus concert taking place in Dublin in December. With tickets for the gig sold out within minutes some parents were delighted to see that there were still tickets available online and made bookings from a site which has no affiliation with the singer, or contact information, as it is legally required to provide. It now seems unlikely that anyone who bought tickets from this site will receive them.

Fraudulent ticket websites are a growing problem, with research in the UK indicating that one in five people knows someone who has bought tickets to a music, sport or theatre event from a scam ticket website, and one in twelve ticket buyers admitting to having been caught out by scam ticket websites, with 80% of those having fallen victim in the last year. Figures from the UK indicate that victims of these fraudulent sites there lost an average of £80 each and to deal with this problem the UK Office of Fair Trading has this week launched a campaign to warn about scam ticket websites.

So when bogus sites frequently carry all the official branding stolen from legitimate sites, and have plausible web addresses, how can you be sure that you are not scammed when you buy tickets online? Using the following steps can help you to avoid being caught out.

1. How has the website got the tickets to sell? Check with the venue to find out when tickets are being released for sale and when the tickets will be sent out.

2. Who is the website registered to? And how long has it been registered?

3. What are others saying about the website? Search the internet to find out what other people's experiences have been.

4. How can you contact the company? Check that you know their full geographic address and check that they have a working landline phone number. They are legally obliged to provide full contact details so that you can contact them easily if you have a problem.

5. Can they provide ticket details? Ensure that the face value of the tickets and the seat location are clearly listed.

6. Do they provide refunds? Make sure that there is a refund policy in case something goes wrong.

2. I booked a flight from Prague to Amsterdam through SkyEurope. Unfortunately they have gone bankrupt and cancelled all their flights. Is there any way to get my money back?

On 22 June 2009, low-cost airline SkyEurope, headquartered in Bratislava, announced it had been granted creditor protection while it restructures its debts. However, even this did not prevent the airline from declaring bankruptcy and ceasing all operations from 1 September 2009.

On 9 September, the Bratislava District Court decided to commence the bankruptcy proceedings on assets of SkyEurope and appointed a bankruptcy trustee.

Those who bought flight tickets via a travel agency should discuss the matter directly with them. Consumers are also advised to check their travel insurance policy, if any, in case they are protected against insolvency. Those who purchased flights using a credit card should contact the credit card company immediately. Unfortunately, those who paid by bank transfer or cash may not get any refund, given the extent of SkyEurope's debt.

In any case, creditors are invited to lodge their claims within 45 days of the date of commencement of bankruptcy proceedings. The applications must be filled out in the Slovak language so ECC Ireland is available to provide assistance to consumers in filling out the relevant forms.

If you want more information about this or any other cross-border consumer issue you can contact us on 01 8090600 or at www.eccireland.ie.

The European Consumer Centre is funded by the European Commission and the National Consumer Agency.

Disclaimer: Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the European Consumer Centre cannot be held responsible for matters arising from any errors or omissions contained in this publication. The information provided is intended as a guide only and not as a legal interpretation.