



ECC Ireland warns holidaymakers to watch out for scams when abroad

- **Unscrupulous traders in Canary Islands use aggressive selling to con Irish holidaymakers**

The European Consumer Centre in Ireland (ECC Ireland) is advising Irish holidaymakers to watch out for unscrupulous traders when abroad. The centre has received reports of consumers, particularly the elderly, being targeted by aggressive selling practises, misled into paying inflated prices for products, and their credit card details used to take more money, sometimes as much as €7,000.

February is the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network's (ICPEN) scams prevention month. It is also the time of year when people are booking their sun holidays, with Spain being particularly popular with Irish holidaymakers. However, some holidaymakers in the Canary Islands have experienced problems when buying goods, especially electronic goods, during their trips.

Although the vast majority of traders are reputable, there are some who have used aggressive or misleading selling techniques to pressure consumers into buying items such as cameras or tablets. ECC Ireland regularly receives complaints of this nature, with some of the most recent involving elderly Irish citizens being conned into paying far more than intended.

There have been other complaints of traders suggesting that the product will not function to its highest standard unless the consumer pays for costly supplementary items such as broadband and software, or insurance. Holidaymakers have been lured in with discounts only to be talked into purchasing other products that have a much higher price tag or are part of a fake subscription. A common scenario involves the consumer paying for a product, but is then told there is a problem and asked for their card details again only to be charged a large sum of money.

ECC Ireland have also heard of reports of traders being very manipulative and in some cases specifically targeting consumers at their hotels, offering extra attention such as the delivery of the product or an escort to the shop. Although majority of cases involve sums of between €200 and €300 being fraudulently taken, there have been instances of consumers left with €5,000 to €7,000 less money in their bank accounts and credit cards.

Martina Nee, press and communications officer with ECC Ireland said: "Scams have always posed a problem for consumers and they take various forms. While there are many legitimate traders in the Canary Islands and other holiday spots, there are others who have used very manipulative tactics. So be vigilant, don't be too quick to hand over your personal details, and always use a secure method of payment such as a credit card.

Some scammers can try to confuse you but always take your time and question everything. Never allow your card to be out of sight, always look at the card reader screen to make sure it is the amount you agreed to pay. Go away and think about it before purchasing – any reputable trader

would be fine with this. Maybe bring a friend or relative along, particularly as rogue traders tend to target the elderly and vulnerable consumers.”

ECC Ireland advises anyone who feels they have been caught out by a scam or fraud to contact their bank or credit card company immediately as it may be possible to get assistance by way of a chargeback procedure. It can also be possible to cancel the card to prevent further transactions.

Under Spanish law there is a mandatory system of ‘hojas de reclamaciones’ (official complaint forms/sheets) available at all retailers and local consumer information offices. Where possible, ECC Ireland highly recommends addressing the matter on the spot and, if no resolution follows, putting the complaint in writing using the official forms. If a retailer refuses to facilitate an official complaint form upon request, Guardia Civil or Policía Local can be called upon to assist, as this may prove effective to reach a settlement without the need of further escalation. You can also contact the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation on 01-6663777 upon your return.

****ENDS****

For more information/media queries, please contact Martina Nee, ECC Ireland press and communications officer, on (01) 8797 643/ (085) 8895333 or email mnee@eccireland.ie. ECC Ireland can also be found on Twitter [@eccireland](https://twitter.com/eccireland).

Notes to Editor:

Cases examples/further information

- January 2016 - ECC Ireland received a complaint involving an elderly Irish consumer who had been holidaying in the Canary Islands. She purchased a tablet for €160. The trader asked her for the pin code and bank details again for broadband and additional services. When the consumer returned home she discovered she was charged €5,000.
- Other cases involved an elderly consumer who was talked into buying extra insurance, broadband, services/software for the item but which does not exist. The trader convinced the person that the extra items/services were need for the tablet to work properly.
- February 2016 - Consumer wanted to buy one good but was talked into buying more electronic goods such as a laptop, mobile, and a TV deal. He gave his pin code and authorised the payment but later found that he had been charged up to €5,000.
- There were a few reports in the summer of 2015 where people thought they were buying from big brand chain shops in the Canary Islands. In most cases the price for an item is far more expensive than if it was bought in the legitimate shops and often turn out to be counterfeit.
- Please note that in the event of a dispute with a trader, consumers benefit from the regional/national consumer arbitration system if the trader complained about has adhered to the said system prior to the dispute or if it voluntarily engages after the dispute arises. Traders adhered to the said system display a distinctive logo (orange square with three white arrows pointing to the centre).
- Scam Prevention Month: <https://www.icpen.org/for-consumers/what-icpen-does-for-you/fraud-prevention-month>

ECC Ireland is part of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), which covers 30 countries (all EU countries plus Norway and Iceland), and offers a free and confidential information and advice service to the public on their rights as consumers, assisting consumers with cross-border disputes. ECC Ireland is co-financed by the European Commission and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.