

FYI WYSWYG

What You See Is What You Get (WYSWYG) may not always be the case when it comes to online hotel booking sites. There are many travel and reservation sites that try to pass themselves off as “real or official” hotel company booking sites. All it takes to look like the real thing is the simple addition of a number or a letter to the URL containing the actual hotel name and the unsuspecting searchers can find themselves making a reservation through a third-party having

no connection to the hotel. Many of these questionable booking sites will show up on Internet search engines before the actual hotel company site, easily confusing the inexperienced shopper. Although these reservations may result in legitimate transactions taking place through a reputable intermediary, they may also be fraudulent. The American Hotel and Lodging Association estimates that 15 million bookings are affected by site-spoofing each year, resulting in consumers making

bad bookings of over \$1.3 billion. The old adage of “buyer beware” is especially true when booking hotel reservations online. Look closely at the site before you book and make sure you are dealing directly through the hotel or a trusted online booking site or you may find yourself receiving a blank look at the front desk when you arrive at your destination and discover that you have been duped!

Source: New Study Reveals: Some 15 Million Online Bookings Are Scams By Rogue Websites, American Hotel & Lodging Association. Retrieved (12/2/2016). Available at <https://www.ahla.com/press-release/new-study-reveals-some-15-million-online-bookings-are-scams-rogue-websites>.

practices has shown that OTAs provide customers with reliable information on hotel quality based on guest comments and that customers are willing to pay a price premium for hotels with a good review record.¹³

Internet as a Travel Tool

The Internet exploded onto the scene in the last years of the 20th century and changed the tourism industry forever. As online users have become more comfortable, confident, and convinced of the security on the Internet, more and more travelers are relying on this medium for their travel needs. Research has demonstrated that in addition to booking, online leisure travelers use the Internet for three purposes: ideas, inspiration, and information. More than nine in ten U.S. travelers use the Internet at some point in the travel planning process.⁹ And where are their searches taking them? In descending order of importance, they are seeking information on accommodations, attractions, where to visit, when to visit, and sample itineraries for their visits.¹⁴

The Internet affects our travel habits in other ways as well. We routinely turn to the Web as a source of customized maps to our destination and for on-the-go directions on how to get from place to place at our destination. We also use weather sites for up-to-the-moment travel weather reports before and during our trips. And we rely on the Net to check the on-time status of flights and trains, and traffic congestion on our driving routes.

The Internet has become a major source of information about travel products and destinations. Many potential travelers routinely turn to their computer or mobile devices whenever they have a travel need or question. Guidebooks come in downloadable form and can be carried on a smartphone, tablet computer, or other mobile devices. Many destination tourist boards have fully utilized the current technology in providing podcasts of destination information, participating in blogs, and offering travel intermediary training programs on demand. With the use of email, mobile phones, and other personal technologies, we can “get away from it all” while still staying in frequent contact with others. Cyber cafés have already cropped up on cruise ships, and WiFi access is available in tourist destination areas where, for a nominal fee or free, one can jump online and retrieve and send emails or messages. Most hotel rooms are equipped with Internet access, if not full-technology suites. The postcard may become extinct as vacationers use their digital cameras to download and share images with friends and loved ones who “wish they were there” instantly through emails or social media sites.