

# OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

Coronavirus & Travel

April 14, 2020

## Travel Plans During a Pandemic?

Travel is being greatly affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Unfortunately, the situation is changing day by day, and answers are not always readily available. Below are links to help find the best information about what is going on with the travel industry.



## Airlines

Airline policies are one area that are subject to much change. If a flight is cancelled by the airline, or if the airline makes substantive changes to your itinerary, you will be eligible for a cash refund. If you cancel, you will be subject to whatever policy is in place at the time that you try to make a cancellation and change. The best advice would be to wait as long as possible to try to make any changes, as better options might be available if you do. The [Master List of All International Airline Coronavirus Change and Cancellation Policies](#) is regularly updated.



*Ensuring Integrity in  
our Marketplace*



If you have been a victim of a scam, or if you have any questions about a merchant's activities, please contact the Office of Consumer Protection.

100 Maryland Avenue  
Suite 3600  
Rockville, MD 20850  
Main: 240.777.3636  
Tip Line: 240.777.3681  
Fax: 240.777.3768

You can also file a complaint online by clicking [HERE](#)



## Hotels

Hotel policies are also rapidly evolving. What that means for you will depend on which party cancels. You can refer to this [Master List of Hotel Coronavirus Change and Cancellation Policies](#) maintained by Forbes Magazine.

## Short-Term Rentals

Two of the most popular short-term rental websites are Airbnb and VRBO. Each is handling refunds in its own way and the timing of the cancellation plays a big part. Below are links to their policies:

Airbnb's [answers for travelers about COVID-19](#)

VRBO's [answers to coronavirus FAQs](#)

If you used a different short-term rental platform, please review the company's website for further information.

## Online Travel Agencies

Many consumers make their travel plans through Online Travel Agencies, such as Travelocity, Priceline, etc., rather than directly with airlines and hotels. This can result in the application of a *different* cancellation policy than what may be listed above. Forbes Magazine also maintains a regularly updated list of [How Online Travel Agents Are Responding To Coronavirus](#).



## Car Rentals

Policies for car rentals made through online travel or booking agencies can be viewed using the link for online travel agencies above. Otherwise, consumers should review the

individual rental company's website, as each company may have a different policy. The policies for some of the major car rental companies can be [found here](#).

## Tours

Many tour operators are suspending scheduled trips. If the booking was made through an online travel or booking agency, you can view the cancellation policies using the link above. Otherwise, consumers should review the website for their tour company, as each company may have a different policy.



## Cruises

On April 9, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control renewed the [No Sail Order](#) for cruise ships originally issued on March 14, 2020. You can read more about [Updated Cruise Ship Policies and Cancellations](#). Note that the No Sail Order supersedes any date that a specific cruise line may have previously set for a return to service.

## Keep Following Up

The bottom line in looking for a refund is that you will need to be patient. Changes are happening every day. Customer service centers are struggling to keep up with these changes.

Subject to specific deadlines identified by the company, it may be that the longer you can wait to cancel or make changes to a trip, the better off you will be. Make sure you are constantly checking your travel provider's cancellation policies for any updates, and do not hesitate to contact or recontact them directly if you do notice a change in your best interest. If the current policy has a deadline, and you can meet that deadline, do not let it pass.

### **Future Travel**

Spring Break plans are behind us. However, consumers will have questions about early summer vacation and travel plans. Make sure to be aware of the cancellation provisions that apply if you are making reservations now for future travel. Investigate travel insurance options and [know the difference](#) between standard and CFAR (cancel for any reason) policies. Companies are going to assume that consumers are aware of the risk associated with the virus and further potential limitations if the trip is booked this Spring. Therefore, new reservations may be treated as any standard booking, and be subject to standard cancellation policies and procedures. Do not assume that any of the above cancellation policies will remain in effect for future bookings.

