

Everyone 'wins' in this Travel Promotion

Burnaby, February 4 2008: The British Columbia Crime Prevention Association is reminding consumers to be on the alert at trade shows for travel/ cruise packages to the Bahamas offered by entering a contest.

At a recent Vancouver consumer trade show, a woman entered a contest to “Win a Cruise to the Bahamas”. Amazingly enough she won (as did everyone else who entered). She received a phone call telling her that she would be charged U.S. \$ 299.99 dollars for her highly discounted "luxury" vacation.

Fortunately for her, when she got off the phone, she googled the toll free number she was given to call to book her trip (1-800-203-9783) and realized that she'd been misled. She immediately called her credit card company who reversed the charges.

Previously this travel promotion, Ramada Plaza Resorts, was sent through the mail but currently consumers are more likely to be reached through contests to win a cruise to the Bahamas at trade shows and exhibitions. The payment is non-refundable and the condition of travel is that the consumer takes a “guided tour of a vacation ownership resort”.

“Contests are a way of developing marketing lists for sales promotions,” according to Valerie MacLean, Executive Director of the British Columbia Crime Prevention Association. “There is almost always a condition attached to the so-called ‘free’ vacation.”

The British Columbia Crime Prevention Association warns prospective vacationers that the minimum steps they should take when considering accepting these types of offers would be to:

- Do your homework; an Internet search for Ramada Plaza Resorts would produce about 169,000 Google entries, most of them negative.
- Check the BBB website www.bbb.org for company reports; the Bureau for south-east Florida records a litany of consumer complaints.
- Don't provide any credit card information when you are contacted by telephone; you have no guarantee it will be used legitimately or for the correct amount.

To view more crime prevention tips, visit www.bccpa.org.

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This news release is one of a series in which the BCCPA offers advice under its Crime Shield banner to give the public the tools they need through education and awareness to protect themselves against crime.

Our new Ask an Expert column is an additional resource for crime prevention information pertinent to British Columbia. The column can be viewed at www.bccpa.org. Topics will be frequently updated and refreshed depending upon response.

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