

**Search Smarter**

**BOOK**  **BOOK**  
**SMART**  **DIRECT**



# HOLIDAY TRAVEL GUIDE



# Search Smarter

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When booking your next vacation, have no reservations.

## BOOK SMART. BOOK DIRECT.

Technology has transformed the way guests book their hotel rooms. Today, hotel bookings make up 15 percent of all U.S. ecommerce, with 500 online bookings happening every minute. Unfortunately, online booking scams and fraudulent and misleading travel websites continue to mislead and confuse consumers. That's why we're encouraging consumers to **Book Smart and Book Direct** for their hotel stays this holiday travel season.







# TRAVEL TIPS



**Look before you book.** Some booking sites will even use the hotel's brand name in the URL. Double check the web address to ensure it's not a third-party vendor using a hotel's identity without permission.

**Be aware of false advertising.** Online travel agencies use false advertising tactics to pressure people into purchasing a room. These include offering false discounts ("Special Rate!") and creating a false sense of urgency ("Only 3 Rooms Left!"). These are misleading claims.

**Take advantage of loyalty programs.** Sign up for loyalty programs at your favorite hotels. They're free and offer amazing benefits. Book directly with the hotel to make sure you're getting your points.

Learn more [here](#).



## Fraud Watch Network

**Do your research.** Research third-party travel sites you haven't used before. Search for the name plus "review," "complaint" or "scam" to see if other consumers had bad experiences with the site.

**Watch out for scams.** Avoid cut-rate hotel or airline offers that seem too good to be true. Watch out for websites with odd spelling or grammatical errors - they may indicate a scammer in another country.

**Understand cancellation policies.** Look for written policies on canceling or modifying reservations, and confirm them before booking.

Learn more [here](#).



**Avoid broad internet searches.** Avoid entering phrases like 'best deals' into whichever search engine you use. Broad search terms like that can sometimes lead you to fraudulent websites.

**Plan ahead.** The earlier you make reservations, the better the deals you will find and the lower the risk of your favorite destination being booked solid. Making reservations in advance also locks in rates and prevents you from paying higher prices later.

**Pay with a credit card.** Paying with a credit card gives you additional protection if something should go wrong with the travel reservation.

Learn more [here](#).

For more facts & tips, visit [www.searchsmarter.org](http://www.searchsmarter.org)





# TRAVEL ADVICE

## Tipping Guide

Hotel and restaurant staff work hard every day to make your experience the best it can be. While hotel employees are paid well and a tip is not a substitute for salary, it is a nice way to show your appreciation. But knowing how much to tip can be confusing. We're breaking down who to consider tipping and how much to give.



### Hotel Courtesy Shuttle Driver

Tip \$1-2 per person or \$4-5 per party.



### Housekeeping

Tip \$1-5 per night. The tip should be left daily (preferably in an envelope or with a note so that it's clear it's for housekeeping).



### Valet/Parking Attendant

Tip \$1-5 when your car is delivered. Tipping when your car is parked is optional.



### Delivery of Special Service

For special requests (like an extra blanket), tip \$2 for one item, \$1 for more. Tipping is not required for someone fixing something broken or bringing something missing.



### Bellstaff/Porters

Tip \$1-5 per bag when you are escorted to your room (especially if your luggage is heavy or they prepare your room or show you around). Tip the same if you request bell staff service checking out.



### Room Service

A gratuity of 15-20% should be added if the hotel did not already include a room service charge on the bill.



### Doorstaff

Tip \$1-2 for getting a taxi. If they unload your luggage, tip in proportion to the amount and weight.



### Bartender

Tip 15-20% of the total beverage tab.



### Concierge

Tip from \$5-10 depending on how involved the service (booking a restaurant vs. hard-to-get tickets) or a lump sum upon departure.



### Waiter/Waitress

Tip 15% of the total bill, up to 20% for exceptional service.





# TRAVEL RESOURCES



**Learn More About Search Smarter.** Visit [www.searchsmarter.org](http://www.searchsmarter.org) to get more information and tips on how to Search Smarter and avoid scams this holiday season.

**Check out AARP Fraud Watch Network.** This free resource, online at [www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork](http://www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork), provides free resources that empower and educate consumers about staying safe from scams and fraud, including travel and vacation scams. Contact the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at **877-908-3360** to report a scam or to get help if you or a loved one has fallen victim.

**Better Business Bureau Consumer Tips.** Check out the Better Business Bureau (BBB), which offers a tips page to educate consumers on how to avoid costly and painful scams when booking hotels online. Access the tips [here](#).

**File a Complaint.** If you've ever been scammed by a third-party travel website when booking a hotel room, you can file a complaint [here](#).



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