

SCAM WARNING FOR CLIENTS ABOUT APARTMENT RENTALS IN PARIS

There seems to be an ever increasing number of on-line scams offering furnished apartments for rent in Paris, misappropriating thousands of dollars from unsuspecting Australian travellers.

Australians are extremely fond of renting a furnished apartment in Paris for one or two weeks, to be able to live like a Parisian. Particularly families who enjoy the extra space provided as well as a fully equipped kitchen avoiding the need and the cost of eating out every night.

Scammers simply steal the text and photographs from a genuine website to create their own and offer illegally apartments at ridiculously low rates. A potential customer is required to send a deposit between 35% and 50% of the rental fee to secure the apartment. This is usually between \$1000 and \$3000. After that they never hear from the scammer again. A few more innovative ones will at a later stage request payment for the full balance. Then the unsuspecting customer will arrive eventually at the given address to realise that the apartment does not exist, that he lost all his money and has nowhere to stay.

There are hundreds of privately owned apartments on offer, and sometimes it is difficult to know which ones are genuine. However there are a few giveaway signs to warn the unwary:

- Most of the fake online advertisements are on free sites, giving few details.
- The rates offered are extremely low to lure in a customer, often about half of the regular rate. If it is too cheap, it is too good to be true.
- The correspondence received following an enquiry is in poor English with excessive spelling mistakes.
- Payment can not be made by credit card or bank transfer, but only by Western Union or similar wire service, which are much harder to trace. Although some scammers seem to have managed to open bank accounts, but in different countries around the world.
- Often the online listing disappears after a couple of weeks, but will of course reappear somewhere else.

Of course the only foolproof answer is to book your Parisian apartment through Aurora Travel.