

## TRICKS CRIMINALS USE : 10 Popular Travel Scams Around the World

### Orlando

Here's a scam so bad even Mickey Mouse took a stand. Guests in hotels around Disney World have been finding pizza delivery menus conveniently slipped under their doors, but place an order and make the mistake of giving your credit card number-and you'll really pay. The phone number isn't connected to a pizza parlor but to identity thieves. Disney World supported a law designed to crack down on the people handing out the fliers, but Orlando police say the problem persists.

**Solution:** If you're craving a slice, get a recommendation from the hotel.

### Vietnam

In Vietnam, open-ended bus tickets are the best way to travel at your own pace between Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, and the Sinh Tourist line is widely considered the best. So widely considered, in fact, its many impostors call themselves Sinh Tourist, too. Because of Vietnam's lax intellectual property laws, it's difficult to know which Sinh is the real deal. Take the wrong carrier, and you'll get iffy service or, worse, an unexpected overnight stop at an overpriced hotel in cahoots with the bus line. "In summary," says Stuart McDonald of [travelfish.org](http://travelfish.org), which travel advice site covering Southeast Asia, "it is a snake pit!"

**Solution:** Always use the bus company's official website: [thesinhtourist.vn](http://thesinhtourist.vn).

### New York City

New Yorkers are famously pushy, but Times Square's so-called CD Bullies take the stereotype to new lows. A guy on the corner barks, "Check out my music!" and hands you what seems to be a free copy of his CD. He's so nice, he'll even offer to autograph it. But once the disc is in your hands, the aspiring rapper-suddenly surrounded by friends-refuses to take it back. You need to pay \$10 or so to stop them from menacing you.

**Solution:** If the rapper won't take the CD, gently place it on the ground and walk away.

### Las Vegas

You go to Vegas to gamble, but you don't want to risk your luggage, too. Sin City's cabdrivers are notoriously sketchy; one common scam involves a cabbie who insists on unloading your bags at your hotel or the airport. He says he's in a rush, slams the trunk, and speeds away. Only later do you notice that one of your bags is missing. "When you're coming to Vegas, you gotta be on your A-game with your stuff," says Sergeant Jerry MacDonald of the Las Vegas PD. "Trust me when I tell you, they'll snatch your luggage up faster than you can blink an eye."

**Solution:** Note the driver's name, cab number, and company when you get in; that way, if anything should happen, you have recourse.

### United States

Some criminals who want your money are brazen enough to come right out and ask. An increasingly common scam involves hotel guests who receive a phone call in the middle of the night from someone claiming to work at the front desk. There's been a problem with your credit card, they say. Could you read the number back one more time? The scammers are banking you'll do something while half-asleep that you never should-give out credit card info by phone.

**Solution:** Hang up and call the front desk directly to make sure the request is legit.

## Egypt

The pyramids around Cairo are one of the world's best photo ops, and some tourists up the ante by posing on the back of a camel. Often, there are trainers standing by to coax the eight-foot-tall, 1,500-pound animals to lie down passively in preparation for riding. Once you've paid your \$15 and mounted the beast, though, some touts will insist that you pay again to disembark and hold you hostage on the hump until you do.

**Solution:** "Never just get on a random guy's camel," says Kara Lucchesi of STA Travel. Stick to rides arranged via an established tour company.

## Bali

Bali has an altogether unexpected kind of crook-the monkeys who are so beloved that they have their own sacred forest and temple, where they're allowed to roam free. These monkeys can have sticky fingers, going after food if it piques their interest-and, worse, valuables. Some enterprising locals are usually on-hand to coax the monkey to give back its plunder, though they'll ask for a small tip of up to \$3.50.

**Solution:** Seek out a staff member for assistance if a monkey snatches something from you. Better yet: hold on tightly to purses and backpacks and remove and secure glasses or anything else that can be easily purloined.

## Rome

While some pickpockets make their living on not being noticed, others do it by getting aggressive and in your face-then ripping you off while you're distracted. Rome is home to the infamous "fake baby" ruse, which sees a woman trip and throw a bundled doll into your arms, or just drop it on the ground, in an attempt to draw your attention away from pickpockets, often children, nicking your wallet or making away with your camera bag.

**Solution:** Beware of women who "throw" their babies or any other unusual distractions.

**Bolivia** The cramped and congested passageways of Cochabamba's famed La Cancha-the largest market in Bolivia-make it the perfect staging ground for "the squeeze." Overwhelmed by the chaos and distracted by the overflowing stalls, you might find yourself suddenly pressed among a group of burly men, unable to move your arms. By the time the surprise wears off, the thugs have already rummaged through your pockets and disappeared.

**Solution:** Pay extra attention at cross-streets, which lend themselves to fast approaches and easy escapes.

**Colombia** It costs nothing to spend the day at Barú Island's Playa Blanca, which with its white sands and crystal Caribbean surf might be Colombia's most beautiful beach. Lying on your towel, you might feel a pair of warm hands on your shoulders, and hear the soothing voice of a woman saying to accept this massage as a gift. Tempting, but if you aren't prepared to part with at least \$10 in pesos, the price will be an especially histrionic fight.

**Solution:** Remember, there is no such thing as a free massage.