

Airbnb Date Alteration and Refund Policy

Exploitative Practices

Airbnb date alteration and refund policies can create an exploitative situation for Americans who may change their minds upon arrival after learning that the accommodations may not be what they appeared to be in the photographs. The accommodations may not be clean, may have cigarette smoke, mildew, loud neighbors, or other conditions that were not apparent when the reservation was made. This experience may affect a person's health, liberty, freedom of choice, and economic well being.

While this may be Airbnb's policy, it should still be considered whether the policy provides enough protection for consumers who arrive and discover that the accommodations are not what they expected. At this time, Airbnb prices are also very high and can be considerable, as can hotel accommodations. Many times, local people or travelers may not be able to find a decent priced accommodation when they need one.

Arrival in Location

For example, I arrived in Location late at night and needed a place to stay. It was around midnight, and I drove to four separate locations that had all been booked. I was eventually able to find one hotel, the clerk was Jamaican and willing to “maybe” consider accommodating me, however, the room for the night would have been approximately \$300 to \$400.

I was also uncomfortable, as I feel that newcomers are not recognizing the cultural norms and needs of the American people at this time, and there is an overall sense of entitlement, as well as a racial difference, particularly with foreigners who can be intolerably rude to White women and have an expectation that we must cater to them because of race, even when we are in our own culture and home. This overall attitude is disheartening to Americans, especially for those of us who have extensively traveled and always respected foreign cultures. The American culture is no different, we also have expectations from foreign travelers here.

I had higher expectations for my experience at this hour of the night. I noticed there were foreigners staying at the hotel, which prompted me to research foreign ownership. Again, I became uncomfortable as I considered whether foreign ownership and the use of these hotels by newcomers could be affecting local culture, demographics, and the American experience.

Airbnb Experience

I was eventually able to find an Airbnb, and the Airbnb also had foreign ownership. However, the experience was not what I thought it would be, and the accommodation had several

issues. I attempted to change my reservation and was kind and thankful while explaining my reasons, including mildew, the metal bed, noise, and uncleanliness.

The host declined my cancellation request, not once but twice. This denial meant that I did not have a meaningful voice or ability to say no to the situation unless I contacted Airbnb directly. The situation left me feeling powerless, and I feel that the experience can be exploitative when a customer has already arrived and has limited alternatives.

The Cost of Temporary Shelter

Furthermore, Airbnb is exploiting the platform by renting out land for prices that can be comparable to hotel accommodations. In some cases, people are being asked to pay \$2,000 to \$3,000 simply for a place to pitch a tent and feel safe. This is a form of exploitation and it is unfortunate that basic temporary shelter has become so expensive.

Americans used to be able to pitch a tent in many places without paying the prices that are now associated with short term accommodations. Today, people may be concerned about potential predators, safety, or other risks in the woods, which makes having a safe place to stay more important. When the cost of a basic place to sleep becomes thousands of dollars, people can lose meaningful **freedom** of choice because they may not have another reasonable option.

American Rights, Culture, and Choice

Americans should be able to feel comfortable in their own communities. The larger issue for me is the repeated experience of feeling that American people are expected to accommodate others while their own comfort, safety, culture, and economic needs receive less consideration. Americans require safe and comfortable places to stay and must be treated well and respected within their own homeland.

This is not an option.

It is the law, a duty, and a sincere issue of whether American rights, values and culture norms are being respected.

These are concerns that must be raised. The American people can advocate for better consumer protections, greater affordability, and stronger freedom of choice when it comes to lodging and temporary accommodations. Empowering ourselves through advocacy may help ensure that people have meaningful options when they arrive somewhere and discover that the accommodations are not available, overpriced or not what they were represented to be.

Consumer Protection and Lodging Laws

Unfair or Deceptive Practices

Airbnb's refund or cancellation policy can potentially be challenged legally for exploitative practices and issues involving consumer health.

Sources

Airbnb's Policies

Airbnb — What to do if the place you're staying isn't clean at check-in

<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2993>

Airbnb states that guests should report cleanliness problems within 72 hours and may be eligible for a partial or full refund depending on the circumstances.

Airbnb — AirCover for guests

<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/3218>

Airbnb says AirCover can provide rebooking assistance or a full or partial refund when there is a serious issue or the listing is significantly different from what was advertised.

Airbnb — Canceling during your stay

<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/544>

This explains the 72 hour reporting requirement and the process for requesting a refund when a problem is discovered during a stay.

Airbnb — If you have a problem or issue during your reservation

<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/248>

This is particularly relevant because Airbnb says that if the host declines a refund request, the guest can ask Airbnb to intervene.

Maine Consumer Protection

Maine Attorney General — Lodging and Time Shares

<https://www.maine.gov/ag/consumer-protection/consumer-help-topics/housing/lodging-and-time-shares>

The Maine Attorney General explains that lodging establishments are subject to generally applicable consumer protection laws and discusses reservation and cancellation policies.

Maine Legislature — Title 10, §1250 P: Price Transparency for Short Term Lodging Rentals

<https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/10/title10sec1250-P.html>

This is especially relevant to concerns about Airbnb and lodging prices. Maine law now requires short term lodging providers to clearly disclose the total price, including mandatory fees, and prohibits misrepresenting fees or charges. A violation is classified as an unfair and deceptive act under Maine's consumer protection law.

Maine Attorney General — Consumer Protection

<https://www.maine.gov/ag/consumer/>

This is the main Maine Attorney General consumer protection resource, including information about consumer complaints and Maine consumer law.

Maine Attorney General — Consumer Protection Complaint Contact

<https://www11.maine.gov/ag/about-us/contact-us>

The Attorney General's office states that consumers can file a complaint about a business and request mediation through its Consumer Protection Division.

The **Maine short term lodging price transparency law** is particularly interesting for the larger argument you are developing, because it expressly treats certain violations involving short term lodging pricing as **unfair and deceptive acts**.