

# SCAM.

*One word. One second to write. A lifetime of damage to carry.*

This is an awareness message about one of the most destructive words being used carelessly across travel review platforms today.

## 01

### UNDERSTANDING THE WEIGHT

## This is not just a word. It is a criminal accusation.

In every legal system, in every language, in every culture — a "scam" is not a bad experience. A scam is not a disappointment. A scam is not even poor service. A scam is **deliberate, premeditated fraud**. It means someone set out, with full intention, to steal your money and deceive you.

When you write that word publicly against a business — you are not leaving a review. You are making an accusation of criminal conduct. You are telling the entire world: this person is a criminal.

*"There is a profound difference between 'I was disappointed' and 'I was defrauded.' One is your experience. The other is a claim about someone's character and intent."*

Yet today, on review platforms around the world, the word is typed as casually as ordering a coffee. A link arrives late — "SCAM." An audio file sounds robotic — "SCAM." A museum closes earlier than expected — "SCAM." The word has been emptied of its gravity by overuse, and in that emptying, real businesses and real people are being destroyed.

## 02

### A MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO WRITE REVIEWS

## You are not just venting. You are publishing.

When you feel frustrated after a travel experience — that feeling is valid. You spent your money. You had expectations. Something went wrong. Your right to express that experience is real and protected.

But you have a responsibility that comes with that right. The moment you press "submit," your words become a permanent, public record on a platform visited by millions. You are not texting a friend. You are broadcasting to the world.

| X WHAT "SCAM" IMPLIES                           | ✓ HONEST ALTERNATIVES                               |
|---|---|
| The seller intentionally planned to defraud you | "The audio link was never delivered to me"          |
| No real service or product exists at all        | "The content quality did not match the description" |
| The business is operating criminally            | "No response from the operator after contact"       |
| You are accusing someone of a crime             | "I was disappointed and could not get a refund"     |

Honest alternatives exist. They are more accurate, more fair, and — importantly — more credible. A detailed, specific complaint is taken seriously. A one-word accusation is dismissed as anger. If your true goal is to warn others and improve standards, choose words that are true to your actual experience.

Ask yourself one question before you submit: **Do I have actual evidence that this person deliberately set out to steal from me?** If the answer is no — then that word does not belong in your review.

## 03

THE HUMAN COST

# Behind every listing is a human being.

Consider what it means to build a business. Years of preparation. Investment of savings. Certification, licensing, research, production. A business that has served customers across dozens of cities for nearly a decade represents thousands of hours of someone's life.

Now consider that someone — perhaps a competitor, perhaps simply an angry customer having a bad day — types a single word. Six letters. And presses submit.

Search results permanently link your business name to the word 'fraud'

Future customers encounter the accusation before they encounter your work

Algorithms may suppress your listings based on the review language used

*"It costs nothing to write. It costs everything to the person it is written about."*

You cannot undo it. You cannot remove it easily. You can respond, but your response will always sit beneath the accusation, forever on the defensive. The damage is asymmetric — it takes one second to inflict and years to recover from, if recovery comes at all.

Small businesses — particularly independent operators in the travel industry — do not have legal departments, PR teams, or crisis managers. One review with that word can be the difference between a booking and an empty calendar. Between continuing and closing.

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## 04

A MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO READ REVIEWS

### **Read critically. Not everything written is true.**

When you encounter a review containing extreme language — particularly the word "scam" — pause before accepting it as fact. Ask yourself what the review actually tells you.

Does it describe a specific, verifiable problem? Or does it simply repeat an accusation without detail? Is the tone measured and informative, or emotional and absolute? Is it one voice among many, or an isolated extreme in a sea of positive experiences?

Review platforms are powerful precisely because we trust them. But that trust makes them vulnerable to misuse. An angry customer, a competitor, or simply someone who misunderstood a product can leave language that misleads thousands of future readers. Your critical reading protects not just yourself — it protects the integrity of the platform and the fairness owed to businesses trying to serve you honestly.

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## 05

A MESSAGE TO REVIEW PLATFORMS

### **You gave the world a voice. Now protect those being spoken about.**

Review platforms have built something extraordinary: a system of accountability where consumers can share genuine experiences and businesses must earn their reputation. This is genuinely valuable. It has raised standards across the industry.

But with that power comes a serious responsibility. The word "scam" — and equivalents like "fraud," "criminal," "rip-off" — are not neutral descriptors. They are public accusations of misconduct. When a platform publishes them without verification, it becomes a vehicle for defamation at scale.

*"Freedom of expression does not mean freedom from responsibility for what is expressed. Platforms that profit from reviews must also bear responsibility for the harm those reviews cause when they cross from opinion into unverified criminal accusation."*

A responsible platform should require specificity before extreme language is permitted. If a reviewer uses language that constitutes a criminal accusation, the platform should require them to substantiate it — or reframe it as opinion rather than fact. The technology exists. The will must follow.

Businesses listed on your platform are your partners. They invested money to be there, paid submission fees, built their profiles, served your customers. They deserve a system that protects them from casual defamation as much as it empowers genuine feedback.

## Words are not free of consequence.

Every word published publicly about another person or business carries weight. The ease with which we can now broadcast our frustrations to millions should not make us less thoughtful — it should make us more so. A business that has served customers for years, invested in quality, and operated in good faith deserves to be judged by the truth of their work — not by the careless anger of a single moment.

Use your voice. Share your experiences. Hold businesses to account when they genuinely fall short. But choose your words with the same care you would want someone to choose theirs when writing about you.

*Because words, once written, do not disappear. They stay. And so does the damage they cause.*