

TIMESHARES

European Consumer Centres (ECC-Net) regularly hear from unhappy consumers who feel they have been trapped by hard-sell techniques into a long-term contract for holiday accommodations that they do not really need. These are often described as timeshares or holiday clubs, but may have different names. What they have in common is locking you into a contract for a number of years, maybe as many as 50, in exchange for the right to save money on future holidays. For the right person at the right time in the right place and sold by the right company, the right contract can be a good deal. But unfortunately this industry attracts many companies who will try to scam you. There are traps to avoid and one thing to remember: EU law offers you robust protection if the contract is for more than one year. This is summed up in the tips below.

Top Tips

1

Don't spoil the holiday of a lifetime with a purchase you'll spend a lifetime regretting. Think - hard - before you buy a timeshare, a membership in a holiday club or anything similar.

2

Beware of "free holidays", lotteries that you win, or party invitations. There is not such a thing as a free lunch.

3

The more aggressive the sales pitch, the more suspicious you should be. But wolves also come in sheep's clothing, speaking your own language.

4

Never pay anything at a presentation. Never ever pay anything at a presentation.

5

Ask for the contract in your own language. It is your right. Reputable companies will provide that without hesitation.

6

Do your sums. Watch out for hidden extras, like insurance or maintenance. Work out what they will add up to over the life of the contract.

7

Before signing anything check the website of the company - and what other people have said about it on other websites.

8

Beware of contracts that offer accommodation or leisure time activities for one year or less. They are not covered by the same protection from scams.

9

Never pay anything when you sign the contract. You have 14 days to change your mind. You don't have to give a reason. Just cancel.

10

Too late? Do not despair. If the trader did not treat you fairly, you may still have a case for getting out of the deal. Ask your European Consumer Centre what you can do.