



Fraud in Apartment Hunting

Are you looking for an apartment? It's not easy these days – so be careful: criminals are targeting your data and money on real estate portals and online classifieds. We will show you how to recognize fake apartment listings and protect yourself from them.

Fraud Schemes

Texts and images of advertisements are often copied from real apartment listings or completely forged. They initially seem credible and entice with low rental prices and good locations.

Obtaining Personal Data and Identity Theft

- › After you inquire about the apartment ad, a seemingly reputable real estate company responds and asks you to provide SCHUFA reports, other personal data, or even a copy of your ID card.
- › In other variations, you are asked to open email attachments that install malware on your device.
- › Or you are redirected via a link to a fake website of a real estate portal where you are asked to enter your login details.

With these tactics, fraudsters can assume your identity and use it for further criminal activities.

Demanding Deposits and Fees

- › The supposed landlords claim to be abroad for work reasons and cannot come in person. However, against payment of a deposit, you would receive the key to view the apartment. This key, however, does not fit the apartment lock.
- › In other cases, you are put on a viewing list for a fee.
- › Or you receive a direct approval and a supposed lease to sign. After signing the contract, you are asked to transfer the deposit or the first month's rent.

In all these situations, the contact breaks off after your payment and your money is gone!

How to protect yourself

- › Be suspicious if offers seem too good to be true.
- › Compare offers with the current local rental index or similar ads.
- › Check on-site or with a search engine if the details of the apartment match reality.
- › Be suspicious if no personal contact is desired and your payments should go to a foreign account.
- › Never give out personal or sensitive data to unknown persons.
- › Carefully check emails and do not click on links or attachments.
- › Never make advance payments! Pay only after you have viewed the apartment and signed the lease. Use a secure payment method.

Advice and Assistance in Case of Fraud

- › If you have already transferred money, try to immediately stop the transfer with your bank.
- › Inform the respective real estate portal about the fraud and report suspicious apartment ads.
- › File a complaint with the police.

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You can also find further information and tips at www.polizei-beratung.de or from the Baden-Württemberg Consumer Center. Additionally, the WEISSE RING offers help for victims of fraud.

Additional Tips for Booking Vacation Rentals

Online ads for vacation rentals can also be faked. Here's how to avoid falling into the fraud trap:

- › Always book vacation rentals through reputable intermediary platforms.
- › Check the authenticity of quality seals.
- › Compare prices with other booking portals or inquire with the local tourist office if the property actually exists.
- › Be suspicious if a high down payment or even the entire amount is required at the time of booking.
- › Use the payment function of the intermediary platform so that you can get your money back through buyer protection in case of fraud.