



Great Vacation Offers or a Scam?

Rooms101.com Checklist on How to Tell the Difference:

There is still a healthy amount of timeshare marketers who attempt to manipulate a potential vacationer into considering an offer for a deeply discounted, free or “prize” vacation package. The following is a primer on how to spot those gimmicks and how to take advantage of genuine and reputable vacation ownership preview offers.

➤ **Too good to be true?**

If it sounds too good to be true, it is. A vacation in a 5-star hotel or resort that is free or ridiculously priced is either a timeshare gimmick or straight-out rip-off. If you didn't enter a contest for a free vacation, you didn't “win” one.

➤ **Major timeshare markets**

Orlando and Las Vegas are the two largest timeshare markets and aggressively market potential vacationers with a variety of offers from free airline tickets, free show or attractions tickets or deeply discounted and free vacation packages. When searching for deals in these two markets, be especially mindful of the possibility of timeshare gimmicks.

➤ **Sweepstakes**

The sweepstakes boxes in fast food restaurants, gas stations, etc. are, nine times out of ten, timeshare lead generation tools. Everyone who enters is a winner as long as they: (a) are married or co-habituating; (b) have a household income over \$50K; (c) carry a major credit card; and (d) are willing to attend a 90 minute vacation ownership presentation. These qualifications have some variations, but a vacation sweepstakes box is typically a lead generation tool for timeshare.

➤ **Refundable deposits**

If a “free vacation” requires a refundable deposit, then it's probably a timeshare gimmick. This is a timeshare tool utilized to ensure your attendance. There are two strategies here. The first is that although the vacation is “free”, they want you to have a vested interest in attending your vacation ownership presentation. If you have a “refundable deposit” of \$50 or more you are 60 times more likely to show up. In most cases you can easily claim your deposit. The second strategy is called “breakage”. No matter how easy it is for you to successfully claim your deposit, no less than 5% of the average consumer will follow through. It is no different than rebates - people are too busy or preoccupied to take the time to claim their money.

For more information on Rooms 101.com, please contact Josh Williams at 1.877.428.4552

➤ **Free or heavily discounted vacations**

These are almost always timeshare offers. Some explicitly disclose the timeshare element. This is called a “hooked certificate” or “cert”. This means the “catch” or requirement is fully disclosed. The others are called “soft hooks”. These certificates typically ask that you provide multiple desired dates and locations for your vacation and require “steps” to claim your vacation. The point here is to make you grow weary of these “steps” therefore causing you to be open to the option of a vacation of your choice as long as you agree to attend a vacation ownership presentation.

➤ **Timeshare industry regulations**

Most timeshare marketing companies are required to adhere to a comprehensive set of regulations in order to maintain a required “seller of travel license’. If the organization you are dealing with does not have such a license number clearly evident and/or an official ARDA, ARTA or CLIA affiliation, you should be highly suspicious of the offer. The phrase “**THIS ADVERTISING MATERIAL IS BEING USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOLICITING SALES OF A VACATION OWNERSHIP PLAN.** “ is required to be clearly printed in capitalized, bold font for FL/NV licensed marketers soliciting leads for vacation ownership presentations.

➤ **A “Touch of Magic” Walt Disney World Free Ticket**

For Orlando/Disney offers; any vacation package that includes a “Touch of Magic” *Disney World* Ticket is a **100%** indication of a timeshare offer. The Walt Disney World Corporation created this ticket specifically for the timeshare marketing industry. It is indeed a genuine Disney ticket but, is a strictly base product. Disney’s motivation for creating this option for the timeshare industry is simple: Orlando’s two largest tourist/revenue generators are Disney & timeshare marketers. It is also prudent to note that Disney itself markets and sells its own vacation ownership products.

➤ **Free airline ticket scheme**

Most offers with free or heavily discounted airfare are most likely scams or timeshare marketing gimmicks. The fact is that there is little and no room for discount in the airline ticket market. There are a good number of free ticket offers out there and most are bogus.

➤ **Scams**

If you are contacted by a telemarketer, unsolicited, you should not give them any money. Period. This is where most of the charlatans of the industry reside.

For more information on Rooms 101.com, please contact Josh Williams at 1.877.428.4552

Q & A

➤ **Are there reputable and honest promotional offers out there for families?**

Yes. Disney, Hilton, Wyndham, Radisson and many other established and recognizable brand name hospitality providers are themselves in the business of marketing and selling vacation ownership products. In addition, over the last 20 years the vacation ownership industry has undergone an extensive regulatory overhaul with extreme penalties that have transformed it from an “anything goes” atmosphere into a professional, streamlined enterprise that is dominated by major corporate players such as Whitehall properties (Consolidated Resorts), etc.

➤ **How do I find these offers?**

The easiest way is to search online for a vacation and then look at the sponsored ads for the deals. This is where most online marketers solicit clients. The main things to look for are the seller of travel license number clearly displayed, the THIS ADVERTISING MATERIAL IS BEING USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOLICITING SALES OF A VACATION OWNERSHIP PLAN disclaimer and professional affiliations (ARDA, ARC, CLIA, BBB, etc.). It’s best to speak with someone **on the phone** in order to clarify the exact terms of the offer - both financial and accommodations. One thing to watch for is fine print that permits the company to switch your accommodations at their convenience. Make sure you are given the option to call a travel agent that can arrange all of travel plans.

➤ **If I decide I do not want to purchase a vacation ownership product will I be harassed, forced to leave or charged more for my vacation?**

If you are dealing with a legitimate company, NO. You are essentially being compensated for your time. Just like with any salesman, they want you to buy their product, BUT you should not feel obligated to purchase or show interest beyond the presentation. If you like what they have and are genuinely interested, say so. Conversely, if you are really not interested, do NOT pretend to be. They don’t want their time wasted any more than you.

➤ **Why can’t I just use these promotional offers to travel cheaply or free forever instead of buying a timeshare?**

This is unrealistic because there are databases maintained by both the developers and the marketers that will eventually detect your attempt to manipulate the system. These offers are typically one-time only. If you are offered multiple destinations with multiple required presentations by a marketer, you are likely dealing with a bad company. In reality, a vacation ownership plan is the best long-term value for any family that intends to vacation on a regular basis.

About Rooms101.com:

Rooms101.com is a website owned and marketed by MBA Marketing, Inc. and FLVA Adventure, LLC. With over 21 years in the travel and vacation ownership marketing business and over 100,000 families satisfied, Rooms101.com is being coined “the “Travelocity” of the vacation ownership introductory offer travel packages category. They have maintained an excellent BBB record and are members in good standing with the Ormond Beach Chamber of Commerce, CLIA & ARDA and are a valuable option for the current “cash strapped” economy.

For more information on Rooms 101.com, please contact Josh Williams at 1.877.428.4552