

11th Aug 2023







RYANAIR CALLS ON THE UK CMA TO ACT AGAINST “ONLINE TRAVEL UK” GROUP OF INTERNET PIRATES WHO ARE DUPING AND SCAMMING CONSUMERS

Ryanair, the UK’s no.1 airline, today (11 Aug) rejected the false claims made by the “Online Travel UK” association against Ryanair’s enhanced-security check-in procedures for passengers whose bookings were made by OTA bots.

Ryanair pointed out that this policy is designed specifically to ensure it can communicate with passengers directly and not via an OTA bot, in order to comply with legal obligations and to allow passengers to correct their contact details so that Ryanair can meet any customer needs that may arise regarding flight changes, refunds, etc. Unsuspecting consumers are being duped and/or overcharged by this group of OTAs who unlawfully scrape Ryanair’s website (a clear example of “internet piracy”), who then use this unlawfully obtained data to mislead consumers and mis-sell our flights with significant mark-ups. Among the members of this “Pirates of the European” association, are OTAs who knowingly overcharge consumers for Ryanair fares and/or ancillary services such as bag check in, seat allocation, flight changes, etc. They use fake single-use credit cards to conceal the real cost of Ryanair flights from consumers, fake single-use email addresses to prevent Ryanair directly contacting these consumers, and in some cases, these “internet pirates” also provide fake customer addresses.

Ryanair has repeatedly called on the Competition and Markets Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority to take action to prevent these “internet pirates” from blocking communications between airlines and passengers, and from overcharging or duping consumers. Ryanair continues to offer licenced access to its air fares and inventory for price comparison purposes to online platforms such as Google Flights. However, the members of “Online Travel UK” don’t wish to take up this licence as compliance with a Ryanair licence would prevent them from overcharging their customers for Ryanair’s air fares or ancillary services.

“ONLINE TRAVEL UK” OTA MEMBERS AUG 2023

	OTA Name	O’charge Fares	O’charge Anc’s.	Fake C’mer Card	Fake C’mer Email	Fake C’mer Address
1	 KIWI.COM		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	 lastminute.com		✓	✓	✓	
3	 Beach.co.uk	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	 Booking.com	✓	✓	✓		✓
5	 eDreams	✓	✓	✓		
6	 opodo	✓	✓	✓		

✓ = the OTA has passed on fake info or has overcharged the customer.

The practice of these “internet pirates”, who are among the largest travel companies in the world, means they are enriching themselves at the expense of unsuspecting consumers. Apart from overpaying for air fares or ancillaries, many consumers are not receiving airline notifications about their bookings, including safety, security and public health instructions, disruption notifications, etc., and suffer considerable harm during periods of flight disruptions. Because many of these OTAs withhold customers’ genuine contact details from Ryanair, our customers are often denied flight disruption information as in many cases SMS and email messages are not passed on to them by these “internet pirates”. When a customer qualifies for compensation or refunds, Ryanair is often unable to make these payments directly because many OTAs withhold customers’ genuine payment details from Ryanair.

Ryanair’s Michael O’Leary said:

“It is critical that our customers are directly informed of important safety, security and flight update information and can always access the lowest air fares and the lowest price ancillary services every time they book. These OTAs scrape our data (without authorisation or permission) in a clear act of internet piracy, and then dupe unsuspecting consumers into making bookings via their websites, which inevitably means that consumers are either overcharged for Ryanair’s air fares, or overcharged for Ryanair’s ancillary services. These internet pirates’ business models can only survive if they manage to overcharge consumers for air fares or ancillary services which they know are lower priced on Ryanair’s website.

Multiple online platforms licence Ryanair’s inventory for price comparison purposes. A clear example of this is the Google Flights service. However, when internet pirates, such as these OTAs, engage in unauthorised data scraping,

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and then use this unlawfully obtained data to overcharge our customers or to deny Ryanair accurate customer contact and payment details, then we believe that UK consumer protection laws should apply in the same way in which they protect consumers from ticket touts at concerts and sports events. Ryanair will continue to promote price comparison websites, and campaign to eliminate airline ticket touting, so that all customers booking a flight or ancillary services on Ryanair can be certain and confident that they are getting the lowest available prices at the time of their booking.

We are amazed that the UK Consumer Agencies and the UK Govt have failed to take any action against this rampant internet piracy, and this overcharging of unsuspecting consumers for air fares or ancillary services. We call again on the CMA, Martin Lewis, and other consumer champions to expose this internet piracy and expose this “Online Travel UK” association whose unauthorised data scraping and mis-selling to consumers clearly requires them to be renamed as the “Pirates of the European”.

ENDS

**For further information
please contact:**

**Press Office
Ryanair DAC
Tel: +353-1-9451799
press@ryanair.com**