

PROFIT

Prevention of Fraud in Travel INDUSTRY BRIEFING NOTE

no. 2

E-TICKETS

BACKGROUND

The advance of technology has made it possible to dispense with traditional paper tickets and this method of ticketing known as electronic tickets, or e-tickets, has become increasingly widespread especially amongst airlines, train travellers, sports fans, and for concert goers.

This industry briefing note generally deals with airline e-tickets, although the principles relating to avoiding problems can be applied wherever e-tickets are used.

When purchased from the correct source and used in the prescribed manner, an e-ticket operates as a convenient substitute for a paper ticket.

HOW DO E-TICKETS WORK?

An e-ticket carries the same information as a paper ticket.

The major difference being that an e-ticket is located in the airline's computer database, so that instead of a piece of card in the passenger's possession there is an electronic record of the traveler's airline reservation, containing information such as the time, date, and place of the flight, airport, seat assignment and travel class.

At the time of check-in, e-ticket passengers need only show a valid photo identification card such as a driver's license for domestic flights or a passport for international flights to claim their spot on the aircraft. Some carriers will also require the credit card used to make the on-line ticket purchase to also be produced before they will allow access to the aircraft. Once the airline confirms the traveler's information it issues a boarding pass that the traveler uses to board the plane.

On-line check-in and boarding pass issue is widely available.

DISADVANTAGES OF E-TICKETS

Receiving confirmation of the legitimacy of your e-ticket number or the associated order number doesn't guarantee your admission to the flight. In rare cases, a scam artist may purchase a legitimate e-ticket and then sell copies of it to multiple buyers or purchase tickets using a fraudulently acquired credit card on your behalf.

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ADVANTAGES OF E-TICKETS

An e-ticket offers many advantages for both travelers and airlines which if purchased from a reputable source can far outweigh any disadvantages. Amongst the many advantages are security, flexibility, cost, and convenience. At the same time e-tickets provide the standard assurances of the traditional paper ticket, such as seating choice, travel time options and other flexibilities.

Unlike the traveler who leaves their paper ticket at the office, e-tickets are impossible to "lose" because they reside in a computer database network. For this reason, they are hard to steal, as well. With the old paper tickets, passengers who lost or forgot them might be charged a fee for the airline to make new ones. In some cases, passengers were required to buy new tickets at the full-price. This does not happen with e-tickets.

A passenger may also find it easier to make changes to their travel itinerary using an e-ticket, as the travel agency or airline need only update their database with the requested changes rather than incur the expense of physically issuing a new ticket. Dealing with e-tickets is much less costly to an airline which makes it possible for airlines to offer more competitive fares to passengers. The tickets also are booked and processed in a more timely way, saving staff hours and cutting down on traveler frustration.

E-ticket receipts are perfectly valid and globally accepted as proof of ticket purchase for immigration purposes.

HOW ARE THE AIRLINE TICKETS REGULATED?

IATA sets standards in many areas of the air travel business making it possible for passengers to travel from one place to another using two or more airlines. Reportedly IATA accredits over 70,000 travel agents worldwide to ensure they provide the high standards of service and dependability that airlines and their passengers expect.

IATA's Billing and Settlement Plan serves as the financial backbone of the industry by managing the flow of what is reported to be over \$270 billion generated annually by travel agent ticket sales to airlines.

Since 1930 IATA has been overseeing the way that tickets are issued and for many years it controlled the issuing and use of card tickets and boarding passes. The first e-ticket was issued by an airline in 1994. On June 1, 2008, IATA Billing Settlement Plans stopped issuing paper tickets and the industry made the successful transition to 100% electronic ticketing.

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HOW TO AVOID PROBLEMS WHEN BOOKING AN E-TICKET

The following tips on how to minimise the risks.

1. Where possible travellers should pay using their own credit card to gain the protection of s.75 Consumer Credit Act 1974.
2. Check out the company you wish to buy an e-ticket from and use a well known brand. The IATA logo is one indicator that a company is legitimate.
3. Avoid buying e-tickets from classified websites which sell all manner of things such as cars, villas, books, music, etc. No checks will be carried out on the advertisers on these sites, nor will anyone help you if a problem occurs.
4. Some events (for example the Olympic Games) or concert tickets are only available from an official source. Only purchase an e-ticket for that event or concert ticket from the official source itself.
5. Never buy an e-ticket from someone in the street or in your local pub.
6. Be sure that you have the correct number of ticket segments for airline travel. In some jurisdictions your ticket will not be valid if the correct ticket parts are not presented.
7. When buying an airline journey from a travel company you can check that the flight exists as described by checking the airline's own website where you will be able to find the flight details.
8. When you purchase a sporting event or concert ticket contact the venue by phone or e-mail and ask them to confirm the sale of the ticket.
9. It is always worth checking the owner/property out on review sites before booking. Put the company's name in your browser and a number of review sites will come up.
10. Read the company's terms and conditions before purchasing and especially make yourself aware of any limitations or restrictions or use.
11. If at any stage of the booking process you do not feel happy about the e-ticket process, tell the company whose site you used and do not book it. There are plenty of other companies selling tickets for travel, events or concerts out there.
12. If you become a victim of e-ticket fraud e-mail 'action fraud' www.actionfraud.org.uk with the details and keep all of the evidence.

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Organisations that PROFIT is working with to ensure that travellers are safe when using e-ticketing are:

British Airways
British Midland International
Easyjet