



LEGAL NOTICES



BUSINESS

SHARE

COMMENT

Mass. AG sues companies for alleged discount travel scam

By Matt Rocheleau

Boston.com Staff

MARCH 31, 2014 3:42 PM

The state attorney general's office announced today it has sued a Pittsfield-based discount travel company and its affiliate for allegedly

scamming at least 25 customers out of thousands of dollars by luring them with misleading offers of deeply-discounted or free travel prices.

The lawsuit filed in Suffolk Superior Court is seeking \$108,000 in restitution for alleged victims and another \$170,000 in civil penalties from Berkshire Concepts, LLC, Netrate Concepts, LLC, their Yarmouth-based affiliate CRW Marketing, Inc., and their owners Charles Whiteman, of Dennis, and Daniel Merritt, of Pittsfield, official said.

The companies allegedly used “high pressure sales tactics” to convince customers to pay thousands to access an online database advertised as an exclusive listing of wholesale travel prices that allows members to book extremely low, or even free, travel, authorities said.



But the database did not deliver the promised discounts, the attorney general's office said. And the companies allegedly failed to send log-in information for the membership website until after a three-day cancellation period, authorities said

"As a result, consumers were unable to determine whether they were satisfied with their purchases until it was too late for them to cancel," the office said.

A family in Carlisle paid nearly \$6,000 for a "platinum level" membership that they were told included six weeks of accommodations in luxury

condominiums throughout the world, unlimited cruises, and “dream trips.” But, according to the attorney general’s office, the website referred them to a different travel search engine that did not offer the promised deals.

Others found that the database’s prices were about equal to, or in some cases higher, than prices available through free travel sites, like Orbitz or Expedia, authorities said.

The companies allegedly lured residents in Massachusetts and other states between Feb. 2011 and last April by sending postcards that either said the recipients could call a toll-free number to redeem a free travel prize or the postcards offered residents a free cruise or airfare in return for attending a presentation, the attorney general’s office said.

Customers later learned the “free travels” cost hundreds of dollars in taxes and fees, officials said.

The companies also allegedly offered a “concierge service” to plan customized travel. But, according to the attorney general’s office, service agents were often slow to respond and made major errors while booking the trips.

None of the customers received refunds from the companies.

The office said the companies have been ordered by a court “to stop using allegedly deceptive marketing to sell travel memberships.”

“Vacation or travel scams offer free or discounted deals that often never materialize, and our office alleges these companies stole thousands of dollars from consumers through their deceptive memberships,” Attorney General Martha Coakley said in a statement.

“While many travel opportunities are genuine, we want to educate the public as much as possible to protect themselves and be wary of deals that sound too good to be true,” she added.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).



FROM THE WEB

Sponsored Content by Taboola



Saving A Life From Allergies
LiveStrong



You Won't Believe Which 14 Famous Couples Have Open Marr...
Celeb Guides



12 Cheap Cars That Look Extremely Expensive
MensMagazine.com



These Are The Best Credit Cards For 2014
Next Advisor



Social Security: How To Get \$1,000 More a Month
Moneynews



Glen Campbell Has Been Moved Into a Facility
PEOPLE.com

FROM THE WEB

- **14 Benefits Most Seniors Didn't Know They Had** (Newsmax)
- **If You Drive 35 mi/day Or Less You Better Read This...** (Lifestyle Journal)
- **10 Dogs Most Often Blacklisted By Insurers** (Bankrate)
- **An Ex-Lululemon Employee Tells All** (Lululemon)
- **The Trick Beginner Whiskey Drinkers Should Know** (Yahoo Food)

FROM BOSTON.COM AND PARTNERS

- **Doug Flutie's \$1.7m house for sale**
- **Milan Lucic is Pissed**
- **Yankees Starter Michael Pineda's Idiocy Defies Logic with Latest Stunt**
- **Brad Marchand Says a Lack of Focus Contributed to His Poor Performance in Playoffs**
- **Bruins Focused On Strong Start, Staying Disciplined In Game 6 (Video)** (NESN.com)

All

News

Sports

Business

Entertainment



Lifestyle

Cars





Harvard Prof. Henry Louis Gates Gets Unreal Housing Perks From NYU

Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s side gig as a consultant to New York University has apparently won him some enviable New York City housing benefits.

News  33 min ago  Share

Three Injured in Fitchburg Shooting



Three people were shot at KC's Pub on River Street in Fitchburg after midnight Saturday, NECN reports.

News  1 hour ago  Share



Boston Celtics Owners Invest in Skateboard League

There might not be many obvious similarities between high-tech electric car racing and some dude in a hoodie riding a skateboard.

News  1 hour ago  Share



BDC Now - Weekend Event Picks

Looking for something to do this weekend? Check out some events that include plenty of wine, a chance to meet some Red Sox players, a burger bash,



and more. Watch BDC Weekend with Jenny Johnson.

Entertainment 1 hour ago Share



US Ordered Not to Force Feed Guantanamo Prisoner

A federal judge in Washington ordered the U.S. military on Friday to at least temporarily stop force-feeding a hunger striking prisoner at the Guantanamo Bay naval base.

News 2 hours ago Share

Zappos.com

FAST & FREE SHIPPING & RETURNS

365-DAY RETURN POLICY

LAUREN Ralph Lauren Luna

SHOP NOW



Genetically Modified Foods Confuse Consumers

Genetically modified foods have been around for years, but most people in the United States have no idea if they are eating them.

Vt. Sex Offender Faces Sentencing in Niece's Killing

A convicted sex offender who killed his 12-year-old niece after luring her to his house with a ruse about a pool party is due to be formally sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

News 2 hours ago Share



Hike with Caution at White Mountains

Campgrounds in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest are open, but the Forest Service is warning people that some areas still have snow, and spring melt-off can lead to some slippery footing.

News 2 hours ago Share



Will Connecticut Schools Ban Chocolate Milk?

Connecticut lawmakers moved forward this week on a new nutrition bill that could remove chocolate milk from public schools.

Health 2 hours ago Share



Lacrosse Team Honors Fallen Officer and Coach

The girls lacrosse team at Exeter High School is honoring their late coach Stephen Arkell, a New Hampshire police officer who was killed in the line of duty.

News 3 hours ago Share



The Platinum Card from American Express



with up to \$200 in Airline Fee Credits annually

Plus, earn **40,000 points**

[Learn More](#)



Terms and Restrictions apply.



Celebrating 10 Years of Gay Marriage

On May 17, 2004, Massachusetts offered the first marriage licenses to same-sex couples. We asked five couples to talk about what they've learned about themselves and their relationships over the past decade.

Life 3 hours ago Share





10 Parting Shots at SNL Heading Into The Season Finale

Here are "10 Parting Shots at SNL" as the show's 39th season comes to a close Saturday night with Andy Samberg as host.

Obnoxious Boston Fan 3 hours ago Share

Environmentalists in Portland Oppose Tar Sands Oil


Environmentalists will rally at the Deering Oaks Park bandshell in Portland to oppose the Keystone XL oil pipeline and the shipping of tar sands oil through Maine.

News  3 hours ago  Share



Broke Beats: F.Stokes – ‘Liquor Sto’ Diaries’

Broke Beats is BDCwire’s open-source hip-hop column. Every Saturday, we showcase the best new albums, EPs, and mixtapes available for free stream or download. The Midwest has long been a stronghold for spirited rappers and producers who haven’t quite pierced the East Coast market. F.Stokes is among the most fearless of of these artists, and the... [Read more »](#)

BDCWire  3 hours ago  Share



Oprah’s Network Postpones Sam Documentary

The planned documentary by the Oprah Winfrey Network on Michael Sam, the NFL's first openly gay player, has been postponed.

Sports  4 hours ago  Share



LET US PICK UP
YOUR DONATION.





SCHEDULE PICKUP



Woman Falls Down Elevator Shaft at Fenway Park

A 22-year-old woman is hospitalized after falling down an elevator shaft at Fenway Park Friday during a Red Sox game, according to the Boston Fire Department.

News  4 hours ago  Share



Obama, Congress Move to Address Veterans Affairs Firestorm



The Obama administration and Congress are moving quickly to respond to a growing political firestorm over allegations of treatment delays and falsified records at veterans hospitals nationwide.

Business  5 hours ago  Share




Conn. Exhibit Looks at Benedict Arnold as Hero

A new exhibit on display at the Slater Memorial Museum is the latest effort to bring heightened visibility to a subject Norwich has deliberately ignored for centuries.

Travel  5 hours ago  Share

Testing Inconclusive, Suspected Bobcat Returned

A judge has returned a 38-pound feline to a New Jersey woman after DNA testing couldn't conclusively say whether it was a purebred bobcat.

News  5 hours ago  Share





Clearing This Afternoon with Sunshine for Sunday

Weather Wisdom  5 hours ago  Share



Nissan's Taxi of Tomorrow Hoping for a Fare Future



Members of the New England Motor Press Association had the dual experiences of driving and riding in this Taxi of Tomorrow when Nissan brought a pair of the hackney versions of its NV200 van to town.

Cars  12 hours ago  Share



Teen's Arm Reattached After Pasta Accident

Four surgeries later, 17-year-old Brett Bouchard can move his arm after it was severed below the elbow.



News  12 hours ago  Share



Red Sox Fall to Tigers, 1-0, Back Under .500





The loss drops the Sox back below .500, at 20-21, and 10-12 at home.

Extra Bases  12 hours ago  Share

North Reading Man Busted Allegedly Selling Drugs Out of Restaurant

Richard "Ricky" Ward faces a number of drug charges following a six-month investigation by police.

News  13 hours ago  Share



Feds Deny Tsarnaev Lawyers' Complaint About Leaks

Federal prosecutors say there's no need for a hearing on what defense attorneys have called leaks and improper comments in the case of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

News  14 hours ago  Share



Get yours

 Certified Pre-owned

[Shop Now](#)



Free shipping or in store pick-up

GET OUR APP iOS | Android

 **LISTEN LIVE**
The Raconteurs
Steady, As She Goes


RadioBDC LIVE ALTERNATIVE
MUSIC AND MORE






19 Best Cars, Vans, & SUVs for Families

Cars  Share

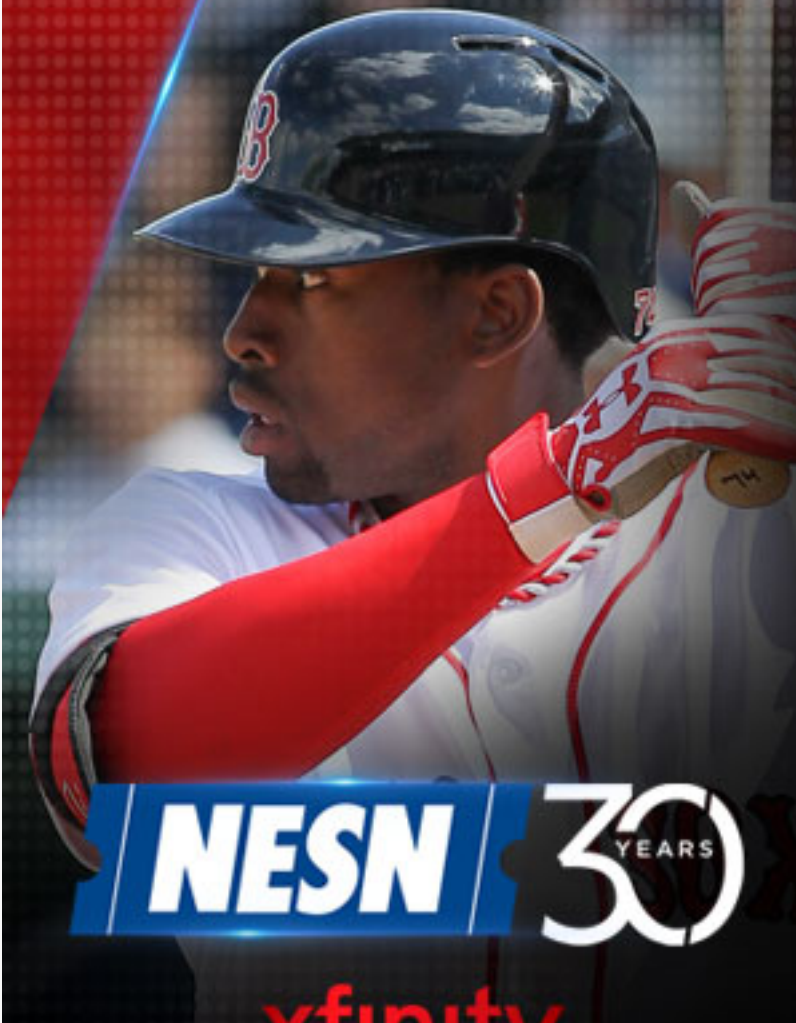


Celebrating 10 Year Marriage

Life  Share

TIGERS AT RED SOX

TONIGHT 6^P_{ET}





Ad Choices | ©2014 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC

