

How to avoid and recognize a rental scam

Although rare, sadly we usually see several students per year who have come across a scam.

If you want to search for a flat on your own, we recommend you not to pay any amount before arriving to Madrid. It is better to make sure that everything is correct (condition of the apartment, contract, location...). It is advisable to sign a proper legal contract for the rent with the house owner at the beginning as well as signing an "end of contract" document in order to get back your deposit.

Please follow the advice below to avoid being the victim of a rental scam.

Top Scam Warning Signs:

1. You have to pay rent (or other costs) in advance to a non-trusted person or organization without having seen the apartment or having met anyone. We strongly advise against paying or signing anything before viewing a property. This is partly so that you don't arrive to your new home to find any unexpected surprises, but also in order that you can check that the property really exists.
2. Check out the address on Google. Make sure the apartment really exists. The pictures sent do not resemble the location in any way.
3. You have to transfer money to a bank account using money transfer services such as Western Union or Moneygram to make payments. While these services can be useful when used properly, often the money is untraceable once you've paid it.
4. The rental price is much lower than other apartments in the same area/location.
5. Scammers often use stolen identities. Search for their picture on the web. Make an appointment to meet in person or through Skype. Make sure the landlord is actually the person he/she claims to be.
6. Never send a copy of your passport or credit/debit card to strangers. These could be used to carry out more serious identity fraud.
7. Because of housing scarcity in Madrid you might receive unwanted emails from scammers trying to rent their (non-existing) accommodation to you. Unsolicited emails could be rental scams.
8. Never sign a housing contract without having first read it carefully. Be sure you fully understand and agree with what you are signing for.

There are many variations of rental scam but these are some ways of recognizing one.

9. The scammer is too eager or too pushy to rent the apartment to you.
10. The property owner is travelling on business and/or is unable to personally show you the property.
11. You have a bad feeling about the landlord or how things are proceeding.

Contact the Police if you think you are the victim of a scam.

Take a look at the search suggestions on our website.

