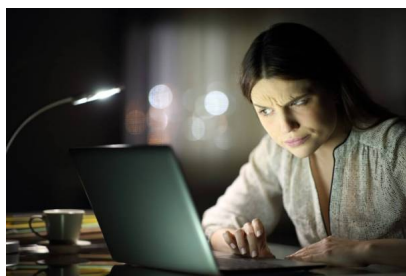


# THREATS TO THE USE OF THE AIRBNB APP



As the most popular hosting platform in the world, Airbnb has unfortunately become a target for criminals seeking to compromise its users' privacy and computer security. Reports have surfaced of hidden cameras being discovered in some listings. It's essential to be aware of potential threats and take precautions while using the Airbnb app.

For those unfamiliar with the Airbnb app, it's an application where travelers can book accommodations such as rooms, apartments, and houses. While the platform has a successful safety track record for guests, it's not immune to those looking to exploit it for fraudulent or privacy-violating purposes.

A recent report from security firm Kaspersky highlights four potential threats that Airbnb users should be aware of. It's important to stay vigilant and take steps to safeguard personal information and privacy while using the platform.

## **Account theft by phone number**

To create a user account on this application, you must link a phone number for identity verification—a verification code is sent to this number via text message. Visitors commonly link to this platform using a phone number obtained from a SIM card purchased while abroad or by changing their phone number and forgetting to update it on the forum.

However, using recycled phone numbers can pose a risk as another user may try to access your account and impersonate your identity, potentially making transactions with your linked credit card. To prevent this, experts recommend keeping track of the expiration date of linked phone numbers and updating them as soon as possible.

It is also important to remember to remove your payment method from Airbnb when the booking period ends (unless the booking is still active). If you pay with a credit card, consider using a virtual card instead of a physical one. Additionally, if your country offers more protection for credit card transactions, consider using a credit card instead of a debit card.

## **Fake Airbnbs**

Many scammers take advantage of the platform's popularity to hunt down victims. They create twin websites of the official forum to hook people with desirable offers and promotions.

Always check the page URL to ensure it is on the official Airbnb portal.

## **Fake listings on the real Airbnb**

Please remember that scams can happen on Airbnb, especially by posting fraudulent advertisements. To prevent being tricked by these misleading listings, checking the property's reviews before booking and contacting the host promptly to confirm details is crucial. If you encounter a similar situation, don't hesitate to contact Airbnb support for help.

## **Hidden cameras in Airbnbs**

According to experts, finding small cameras that can be bought cheaply and hidden easily is becoming increasingly common. This means there is a greater chance of secret video surveillance in rented accommodations than people may think. There are even instances where these stories make it to the news, but it is difficult to gauge how many remain unnoticed by journalists.

A few years ago, a survey among North American Airbnb users discovered that 11% had stumbled upon concealed cameras in their rented apartments. This statistic only accounts for those who found cameras.

There is no guaranteed method to detect hidden devices, but some options include using devices that can pick up their signals, such as the camera and flashlight on your phone. To do this:

1. Turn off the lights and close the curtains to make the room dark.
2. Turn on your phone's flashlight and camera and point them at areas where a hidden device might be located. If a device is present, your phone's screen will glow.
3. If your phone cannot simultaneously use the camera and flashlight, use a separate flashlight.

Another option is to download an app that detects signs of these devices. It is important to note that spying on others is a crime. If you discover a hidden device, report it to the appropriate authorities and any relevant apps. Remember, Airbnb is prohibited from spying on its users.

### **Platform measurements**

Airbnb is aware of the potential security vulnerabilities that may arise and has taken steps to address them.

Airbnb places great importance on security and has implemented various measures to ensure safe and responsible stays for both Hosts and Guests in Latin America. These measures include improving the quality system for Hosts, requiring identity verification for guests and Hosts who make and receive reservations, and implementing technology to minimize the risk of unwanted and unauthorized events like parties. These actions aim to provide greater peace of mind to the community when using Airbnb for living, working, staying, and traveling.

To further enhance safety, the Airbnb app has mechanisms to remove hosts with constant complaints or negative ratings from the platform. Additionally, all individuals within the application ecosystem must undergo identity verification.

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