

# MAN SET UP \$7 MILLION SCAM THROUGH FAKE ACCOUNTS ON AIRBNB



Shray Goel is a person who has been accused of orchestrating a large-scale fraud on Airbnb through fake accounts. He is known for setting up almost 100 fake properties and has allegedly earned \$7 million from this illegal scheme.

Goel has been charged with wire fraud and identity theft, and it is said that he intimidated Airbnb representatives to avoid giving refunds. Vice first alerted the public to this fraudulent activity in 2019, and Goel is now facing criticism for his actions.

In January 2018, Shray Goel started a fraudulent scheme that lasted until November of the following year. **He used various fake host accounts on Airbnb and, to a lesser extent, on Vrbo, a competitor owned by tourism giants Expedia and Abridel, among others.**

These fake accounts had names such as "Alex & Brittany," "Becky & Andrew," and "Annie & Chase." Shray Goel gave himself credit on his website with his image, trying to give visitors a reassuring image and even claiming to have integrated AI into his daily life while posing on a yacht.

Goel's scam involved a system of double bookings to attract several tourists to the same property. He then encouraged them to take a replacement reservation, often in less upscale dwellings. When customers refused to be downgraded, Goel and his accomplices refused to reimburse them. Some properties were fictitious, while others were not affiliated with Goel. The use of stolen identities and fake accounts made it challenging to detect the scam, leaving the victims without a solution.

Goel and his team went to great lengths to support their approach by posting positive but misleading reviews on their ads using various fake accounts. They even deactivated and republished listings under a new host profile to avoid negative reviews from disgruntled guests. The indictment highlights a complex web of deceit where customers were manipulated with false excuses, ownership changes, and lies to rental platforms to keep their money.

The abuse went so far as to pressure and threaten Airbnb employees, with Goel demanding to be transferred to another representative or supervisor to avoid refunds. **Due to these pressures, some customers did not receive the refunds they were entitled to.**

Although an arrest warrant was issued for Shray Goel on December 28, 2023, he has remained silent in the face of the accusations, and his website remains active. A cryptic message posted on his X account (formerly Twitter) on December 30 suggests personal problems. In any case, Airbnb has promised changes after the article and supports the authorities' investigation to ensure the culprits are held responsible. The platform has collaborated with the U.S. Attorney and the FBI to tighten its policies to protect itself from fraudsters in recent years.

Date: 2024-01-08

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/fake-accounts-on-airbnb-led-to-7-m-profit-news14115>