

# Cyber Tales by Tenali

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## Online Hotel Booking Scam

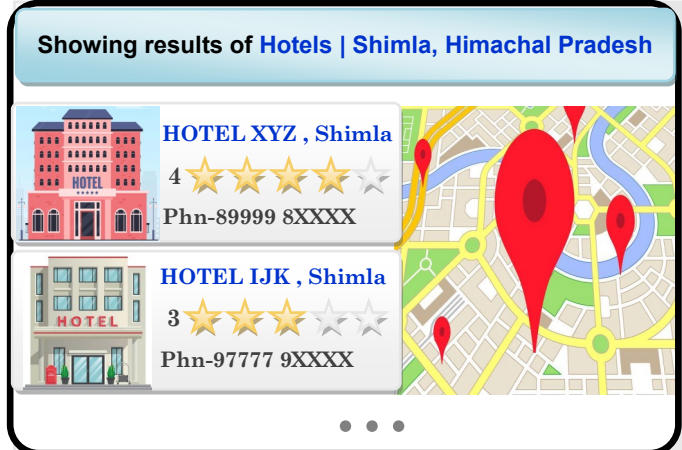


Ecommerce presents tremendous opportunities for businesses and customers, but they go hand-in-hand with new threats. Travel and transportation is the most common targeted industry for online hackers. Tourism fraud is an ever-growing issue as fraudsters continue to abuse the online aspects of the industry, focusing on the ticketing aspect, hotel bookings, manage tour packages etc. Dependency on modern or digital payments technology, leaves fraudsters exposed to online travel & tourism fraud and extort money from gullible tourists in the name of various aspects related to travel.

Today, in this edition I will narrate you how fraudsters lure unsuspecting tourist in the name of online hotel booking with attractive room rates, discount rates etc. and extort money from their bank account.

### How Pinku got scammed?

In this Summer Vacation, Pinku has planned to visit Shimla. One day, while he was searching for *Hotels at Shimla* in the Search Engine, he found some Ads showing on the top of the screen with phone numbers of hotels.



Pinku immediately called Hotel XYZ's number.

**Person 1:** Hello, Hotel Shimla XYZ there?

**Person 2:** Yes. How can I help you?

**Person 1:** I want to check availability of three double bed rooms at your hotel from 1st June to 5th June.

**Person 2:** I would like to inform Sir that right now, there is a tremendous rush at Shimla.

**Person 1:** I understand. In Summers there is a huge rush. But please see what can be done.

## Online Hotel Booking Scam continues...



Sir, I can book Delux Room at Rs.3000/- per day, if you pay instantly. We cannot hold the room without payment.

Ok I am sending the full payment through a cheque at your hotel address.



No cheque payment is allowed here. Only online payment via payment link is acceptable.

If you confirm then only we will send you the payment link at your mobile number.

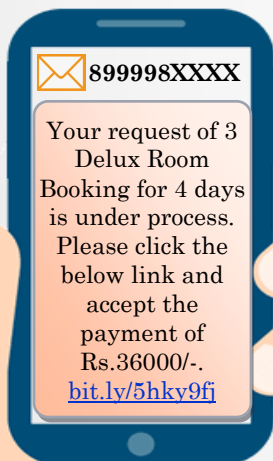
Yes yes. Please book three rooms for me. Check in date- 1st June'22 and check out on 5th June morning.



Details are noted Sir. You have to pay total Rs. 36000/- for 3 rooms for 4 days.

We are sending you the confirmation SMS with a payment link. Your booking will be completed after your advance payment.

Pinku received the SMS within a minute.



He clicked the payment link and accepted the payment.

After that, he received a confirmation SMS.



899998XXXX

Dear Customer,  
Thank you for choosing our hotel. Booking of Room nos 301, 302, 303 at 3rd floor of Hotel XYZ, Shimla confirmed. Check in 01-06-2022 at 12 noon, check out 05-06-2022 11am. For query contact us on 899998XXXX. Hotel XYZ, Shimla

After sometime Pinku got a call from the hotel.



Hello, I am calling from Shimla XYZ hotel.

Your three rooms are being confirmed. Hope you received the confirmation SMS.

Yes yes. I have received the SMS.



We are also having sightseeing packages. If you want to book a car for this then you can book it here.

There is a tremendous rush going on now. So, it is advisable to book your package right now.

It will be very helpful for us if you book a 6+1 seater car for us along with 3 days local sightseeing package.



## Online Hotel Booking Scam continues...



For booking you have to pay Rs. 6500/- per day and total of Rs. 19500/- for three days.

It is on higher side. Please give us some discount on that.



Ok, let me check Sir. For you we are offering the package at Rs. 18000/- . But, you have to pay the full amount in advance.

Ok Ok, I will make the full payment.



Pinku again received a payment link and he completed the payment with that link.

After a month when Pinku reached the hotel at Shimla, he didn't find any room booked in his name. He called at the mobile number at which he discussed after seeing the ad. Mobile was switched off and the Hotel Manager was telling a different contact number for the hotel. He also hinted on a racket of online fraudsters.



Pinku then called Tenali and briefed the complete scenario.

Pinku, I can understand your situation. You were duped by an online fraudster.



These type of fraudsters using Search Engine editing features, can change the phone numbers displayed in Search Engine Ads and then dupe gullible citizens for extorting money from their account.



You should always verify or cross check the contact number from reputable Tourism Websites / Travel Agency / Directly from the Hotel's website before doing any online transaction.

Oh No! What should I do now?



Immediately call the Cyber-crime helpline number **1930** and lodge a complaint at National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal [www.cybercrime.gov.in](http://www.cybercrime.gov.in).



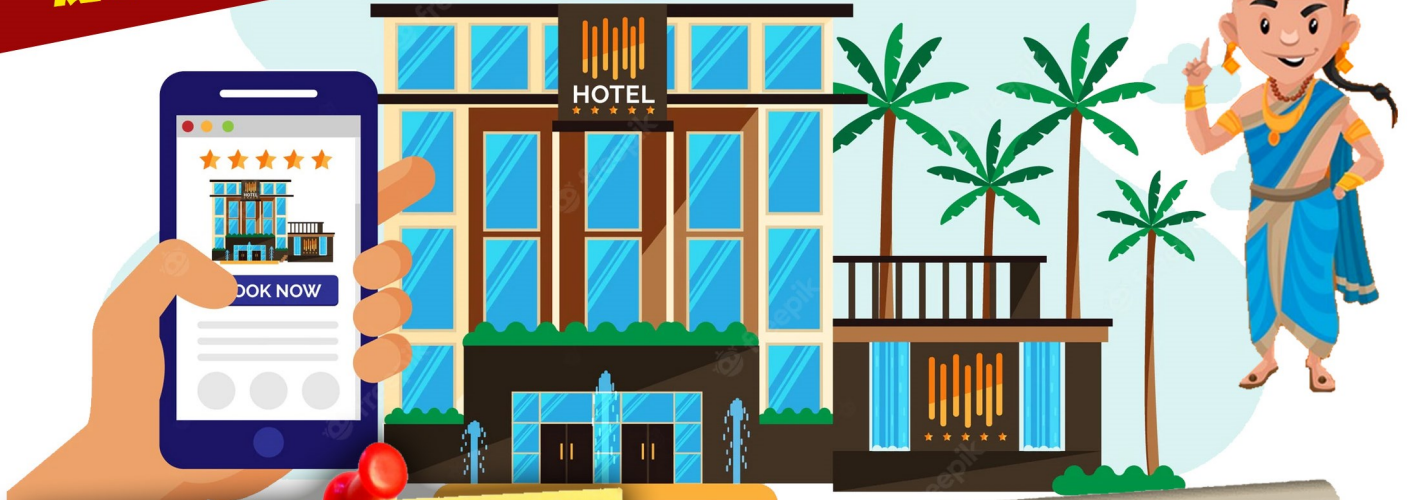
## Safety Tips to Avoid Such Fraud

-  **Do not search Contact number of Hotels randomly at any search engine. It may come up with wrong results.**
-  **Always refer to official website of the hotel or reputable Tourism website for any type of advance booking.**
-  **Do not trust unknown caller, random advertising links etc. for quick & advance booking.**
-  **Go for trusted and popular travel website that are used by large number of people.**
-  **Do not trust deep discount offers which are too good to be true.**
-  **Ask for the original stamped bills / receipts / invoice, if booking is done online.**



**BEWARE WHILE  
BOOKING HOTELS  
AT ONLINE**

**IT CAN EMPTY  
YOUR BANK ACCOUNT!**



Scan this QR Code to Download  
& know the whole story



Govt. of India National Cyber  
Crime Helpline No. 15260  
has been changed.

In case you have fallen prey  
to any cyber fraud -

**DIAL 1930**

and

Register your complaint at

<https://cybercrime.gov.in>



We welcome your valuable  
suggestions / feedback at

[ciso.office@ucobank.co.in](mailto:ciso.office@ucobank.co.in)