

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS

When the problem arises

- If you can, complain on the spot as soon as a problem arises – at the reception desk or to the holiday rep or the tour guide or the cabin crew. That way it might be put right immediately
- Be polite, but firm.
- Don't be sarcastic or insulting or aggressive - that will only put backs up.
- Be factual, don't exaggerate
- Make it clear what you want as a solution – a quieter room, vegetarian meals, a refund, etc
- Get the name of the person you complained to
- Get written confirmation of anything you were promised when you complained. If you can't get this make a comprehensive note of what was said, or offered, and the name of the person you spoke to and where and when it was said

If you don't get an immediate solution

- Make sure you keep receipts and take photos of the problem e.g. for the meals you had to take out or the cockroaches in the room
- Complain as soon as you get home
- If you booked through a travel agent it might be useful taking up your complaint with them first. Often they can help, not least because you are one of their clients and they want to retain you
- Make your complaint in writing and keep a paper trail. If you are emailing DON'T USE ALL CAPS – this is the equivalent of shouting and it doesn't help.
- It's probably not a good idea to complain by phone because then you have no record of what was said. Certainly don't get angry on the phone.
- Provide reference numbers, dates, names, addresses, flight numbers etc so they can track your complaint
- Make sure you set out the facts clearly but keep it succinct – long rambling letters that go on for pages are not necessary.

- Be precise. Don't just say 'it was horrible' say why it was horrible e.g. "The swimming pool was full of debris and wild dogs were roaming around the resort".
- If the holiday rep. has provided a written report make sure you include that as well as your photos
- Quote the company's terms and conditions back to them if they have broken them
- If you know what your legal rights are quote them
- Make it clear what you want as a solution; at this stage it will probably be some kind of compensation but if all you want is an apology say so.
- If you are complaining via the travel company's website make sure you keep a copy of any text you send to them from their website
- Make sure you get your punctuation, spelling and grammar correct. A well constructed letter will be taken more seriously than one that is badly written
- If you are a regular customer say so, your loyalty might pay off
- Set a deadline for when you want a response
- Tell them you will take it further if you do not get a response.

If that still hasn't worked

- Be persistent and patient.
- Don't give up
- Don't let their refusal or lack of response annoy you, dig in for the long haul
- Write again
- If that fails write to the CEO. Websites like 'The Complaining Cow' have lists of CEOs you can contact
- Remember that for most claims in England and Wales you have six years to make a claim in court if you want to take it that far (although only two years for Montreal Convention claims).

If you still don't have a solution

- Take it further. See ['How to pursue your rights against a travel company'](#)

Further reading

['Holiday Law' by David Grant, Stephen Mason and Simon Bunce](#)

[Saggerson on Travel Law and Litigation by Matthew Chapman, Sarah Prager and Jack Harding](#)

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