

# The resort, the breakfast and the bill

Owners of holiday or business accommodation have remedies available to them when guests slip out without paying.

Insurance is available to cover the loss and perpetrators can be sued for fraud.

But, as one holidaymaker discovered, there seems to be no protection for guests when the establishment overcharges them.

Brendan Boyers and his family booked a weekend getaway in the northern Drakensberg at a resort called Alpine Heath, part of the international Three Cities group.

"Unbeknown to us, we somehow booked through Hip Holidays, when we thought we were booking with Alpine Heath directly," said Brendan.

Hip Holidays' Debbie Goosen sent them the resort's rates, including separate rates for self-catering chalets sleeping six - at a cost of R2,450 a night - and chalets sleeping different numbers of people with breakfast included.

Brendan's wife, Roxy, e-mailed Goosen, asking her to book a chalet sleeping four, with breakfast, at R620 per person per night.

Roxy also completed the booking form, which she e-mailed to Goosen and R4,960 was debited to their bank account before Goosen confirmed the booking via e-mail.

"Unfortunately, [Roxy] was unable to open the attachment on her BlackBerry, but we did not worry too much about it as they had our money and instructions on e-mail," said Brendan.

The family duly went to the Drakensberg and enjoyed their weekend away.

But when they checked out on Sunday afternoon, Alpine Heath presented them with a bill for more than R3,000.

Brendan said: "I went through the bill and noticed that I had been billed again for breakfast.

"I questioned this with the receptionist, who asked another lady to assist her.

"The lady advised that they had only received a voucher from Hip Holidays for accommodation and not breakfast. I advised her that there must be some mistake as we had paid R4960 for two nights that included breakfast."

A man named Ernst-Jan Hiltemann came to the reception desk to find out how he could assist, and Brendan said he was not happy with the bill.

Brendan asked that the resort get in touch with Goosen, but was told she could not be reached on a Sunday. Therefore, he suggested that Alpine Heath resolve the issue with him later, as the resort had his personal details anyway.

"Hiltemann was adamant and advised that I could not leave the resort until I had settled my bill in full," Brendan said.

An argument ensued and during the altercation Hiltemann allegedly demanded that the police be called and Brendan charged for not paying the bill. Brendan says he was deeply embarrassed because the lobby was full of guests at the time.

He paid for his family's extras - but not the breakfasts - and left.

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