

Official TripAdvisor Statement Concerning New Traveler Notification

NEEDHAM, Mass., Nov. 10, 2017

The following is the official statement from TripAdvisor concerning our latest processes enhancements and new health, safety and discrimination notifications:

TripAdvisor's site includes more than 570 million reviews and opinions from global travelers who write about their experiences at hotels, with airlines, restaurants and local attractions. Like any other content business, we work to adhere to publishing guidelines that are in place to ensure the accuracy and integrity of those reviews.

TripAdvisor has always maintained - since our founding - a strict separation between our commerce and content businesses. Despite assertions and statements made by a recent USA Today/Journal Sentinel article, there is no tie between commercial relationships with our partners and how our content guidelines are applied to reviews or forum posts published on the site.

We apologize to the sexual assault victim reported on in the article, who had her forum post removed seven years ago on TripAdvisor. At the time, we had a policy whereby we judged content to be in breach of our guidelines if it did not adhere to family-friendly language. A few years ago, we updated that policy to allow more descriptive reviews and content about first-hand accounts of serious incidents like rape or assault. Even at that time, we recognized that our previous guidelines went too far in preventing information like this from being shared.

When we were made aware recently that this post had been removed under our previous guidelines, we republished it in line with our current policy.

We are horrified that this victim experienced this assault on her vacation in Mexico, and believe that other travelers should be aware of this incident.

As a company that pioneered the collection and hosting of travel-related user generated content, TripAdvisor has evolved its policies over the years and will continue to do so. Our policy regarding family-friendly language and topics was changed a while ago, which has enabled thousands of first-hand accounts of serious incidents, including incidents of rape, sexual assault, robbery and theft, to be published on our platform – whether in reviews or in our travel forums.

One of our posting guidelines also requires that reviews focus solely on a traveler's first-hand experience. We believe that first-hand experiences should be posted to our site as a means to communicate to other consumers looking for information on where they should travel. Recently, a number of news articles have mentioned other cases of travelers whose reviews had been rejected. Those reviews did not meet our guidelines because they included one or more examples of second-hand information.

In those instances, we encouraged the reviewers to resubmit their content to meet our guidelines, which typically involved the removal of just a sentence or two from their original reviews. Some of these reviewers have resubmitted their content, which was subsequently published. However, given that a review can only be submitted to TripAdvisor within one year of the experience, some of those older reviews could not be resubmitted (although we would welcome forum posts detailing these types of first-hand traveler experiences at any time).

At TripAdvisor, we are always looking for ways that we can improve our site and better inform travelers, and in fact, we have implemented three new processes:

1. We introduced a new notification we can add to individual TripAdvisor listings when there are news reports about health, safety or discrimination issues concerning a business. TripAdvisor will evaluate whether to place this notification on a business listing when we become aware of media reports regarding a notable health, safety or discrimination issue at a property listed on our site where that issue may not be apparent in TripAdvisor reviews or forum content.
2. We are improving the guidance we provide to our travel forum users to ensure our posting guidelines are correctly applied. It's important to note that we also have a process where all forum posts that are removed by the forum community are then manually reviewed by the internal TripAdvisor content moderation team and can be reinstated if they are found to meet guidelines. Note that forum moderation is handled separately from review moderation – none of our volunteer forum moderators have the ability to reject or remove reviews.

3. As mentioned above, because some reviews that are submitted to TripAdvisor include second-hand information, we have amended the communications we send to users whose reviews are rejected for this reason. These communications have previously caused some confusion due to their lack of specificity, so we've made changes in order to make them more user-friendly. Our new emails will clearly identify the phrase or sentences that don't meet the policy, inviting the reviewer to revise and resubmit their review. This should help ensure that more travelers are able to share their experiences on our site.

As we've done since our founding over 17 years ago, we will continue to work to improve and evolve our moderation and publishing guidelines as we strive to provide the most accurate information in the travel industry available online.

Media contact: uspr@tripadvisor.com

<https://tripadvisor.mediaroom.com/NewTravelerNotifications>