

Official TripAdvisor Statement Concerning Raquel Rutledge/USA Today Network Story

NEEDHAM, Mass., Nov. 1, 2017

The following is the official statement from TripAdvisor concerning the article by Raquel Rutledge of the USA Today network:

"TripAdvisor's site includes more than 535 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 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. More than seven years ago that meant all language needed to be G-rated. A few years ago, we changed that policy to allow more descriptive reviews on the site about first-hand accounts of serious incidents like rape or assault. We recognized then that our previous guidelines went too far in preventing information like this from being shared.

Over the last several years, this policy change has yielded many first-hand accounts of serious incidents being published on the platform. A simple search of TripAdvisor will show numerous reviews from travelers over the last several years who wrote about their first-hand experiences that include matters of robbery or theft, assault and rape. We believe any first-hand experience should be posted to our site as a means to communicate to other consumers looking for information on where they should travel.

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

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

In order to better inform consumers and provide them with even more information about their travels, TripAdvisor is creating a "badge" notification to apply to businesses to alert consumers of health and safety or discrimination issues at that business reported on within the media or other credible sources of information.

We will continue to work to improve and evolve our moderation and publishing guidelines as we work to provide the most accurate information in the travel industry available online."

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