

## Air meal misery

**FOOD**

Finding the best fare for a flight is tricky, but it can be harder to find an airline that caters for special dietary needs.

David Lass told us about his experience when trying to request a kosher meal on his GB Airways flight from Gatwick to Nantes. As GB is part of British Airways, he requested online his meal and a gluten-free option for his wife, Annie, but was told they were unavailable in economy on that route.

He was informed that special meals were supplied in economy on only nine short-haul routes. Club and first-class flyers can get kosher meals on all flights. 'It sounds a bit like discrimination to me,' he said. 'I think the same choice should be available to all passengers on the same flight.'

BA said it did not offer special meals on shorter flights for logistical reasons. 'Offering a full range of meals would prevent us from being able to serve everyone and collect any waste back in the time we have,' a spokeswoman said.

We looked at special meal provision on other UK airlines' short-haul flights and it appears to be a lottery.

The charter arm of Monarch Airlines and MyTravel Airways offer kosher meals on all flights in economy class without charge, but BMI, Monarch Scheduled and Thomas Cook Airlines don't. The availability of other special meals, whether requested on health or religious grounds, also varies.

### TAKE ACTION!

#### Check before you fly

■ If you have special dietary requirements, check the airline's policy carefully before you book.



David and Annie Lass: let down

YouTube concern as budding thieves given masterclass

## Free tips for would-be burglars

**INTERNET**

Security experts fear that internet videos showing how to pick household locks could be seized upon by budding thieves.

Thousands of people have viewed more than 200 clips which reveal locksmiths' secrets on free website YouTube, including how to use tools such as 'bump keys'.

Some clips are accompanied by viewers' comments. One user chillingly says: 'Made my first bump key today using a file and a vice. It took me ten minutes to file the grooves and 0 to 40 seconds to open my friend's front door. Sleep tight, people.'

Jeff Turner, Chairman of the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA), said: 'We wouldn't want to cause undue worry but some of the techniques should not be in the public domain because of the risk they'll be used by would-be thieves.'

He added: 'We see cases where people have been burgled but there's no sign of forced entry. The police say a key was used. The householders say that no keys are missing but even then the insurance company refuses to pay out.'

YouTube, one of the most popular sites on the net, was unavailable for comment.

**'Some of the techniques should not be in the public domain'**

YouTube clips show various 'tricks of the trade', including how to make and use a 'bump key'



### TAKE ACTION!

#### For peace of mind

■ We have asked YouTube to remove the clips. If you're worried about security, contact an MLA-approved locksmith on 01327 262255 or visit [www.locksmiths.co.uk](http://www.locksmiths.co.uk)

## A consumer calls... Royal Mail

There are three ways of opting out of receiving unaddressed junk mail from the postman. We call the Royal Mail's customer service line to see whether it knows – it doesn't

**Royal Mail:** Good morning, how can I help?

**Which?:** Hello, how can I get rid of the unaddressed junk mail that the postman delivers?

**Royal Mail:** You need to write to Door-to-door Opt Out, Royal Mail, Kingsmead House, Oxpens Road, Oxford OX1 1PX. Tell it that you want to opt out.

**Which?:** Can you do that for me over the phone?

**Royal Mail:** We don't do it here.

**Which?:** So you have to write?

**Royal Mail:** Yes, you have to.

**Which?:** Is it a freepost address?

**Royal Mail:** It doesn't say if it's a freepost address. Just bear with me and I'll double check for you. No, it doesn't say it's freepost.

**Which?:** Should I use a stamp?

**Royal Mail:** Yeah.

**Which?:** Sorry, what's the last posting date for Christmas?

**Royal Mail:** The last posting date for first-class items is 19 December but there are different dates for different services.

**Which?:** Thank you

Using the Royal Mail's advice would have cost us the price of a stamp when the address is actually a freepost service – add Freepost RRBT-ZBXB-TTTS to the beginning of the address above. Alternatively you can opt out by calling 0845 795 0950 or sending an email to [optout@royalmail.com](mailto:optout@royalmail.com)



Boiler rooms back in the news again

# High-risk shares snare more victims

## FINANCE

**W**hich? has been contacted by more victims of 'boiler room' share scams, following our news story in October.

Boiler rooms are so called due to high-pressure sales techniques, which their unregulated operators adopt to sell shares in high-risk companies.

Reader Arthur Mayer lost out after buying shares worth £5,000 in three companies over the past year through one American boiler room. The company wasn't authorised to trade in the UK, so it broke the law by selling Arthur shares. His shares are now worth far less than he paid.

Arthur bought regulation 'S' shares, which are sold to UK investors both by illegal overseas boiler rooms and UK-licensed firms.

Regulation 'S' lets US companies sell shares that don't meet US standards to non-Americans overseas. These shares can not be sold back into the US for at least a year, and even then, a US lawyer must be paid to remove the restriction before the shares can be sold. This makes these kinds of share ideal vehicles for scams.

Theresa (not her real name) contacted Which? and told us that she had lost the £150,000 she inherited from her father by investing in 'S' shares bought from Langley Advisory, a Swiss boiler room.

'It called repeatedly, gaining my trust, until I started cautious investing,' she said. 'Over the months, it slowly pressured me into investing more money. Unfortunately, I didn't see the alert from the the Financial Services Authority (FSA) saying Langley Advisory wasn't registered to operate in the UK until it was too late.'

David (not his real name) also lost money through 'S' shares from another Swiss boiler room. His stockbroker disappeared shortly after the purchase but turned up later in another boiler room, offering to help get the shares de-restricted for a fee.

**TAKE ACTION!**  
**Fight back**  
■ If you've been sold regulation 'S' shares by a UK-licensed firm and think you weren't informed of the true risks, complain to the firm or contact the Financial Ombudsman Service:  
[www.fos.org.uk](http://www.fos.org.uk)  
or phone  
**0845 080 1800.**

This is a secondary scam – if David had sent money, he might never have seen it again.

The FSA's website contains warnings about these shares. It states: 'There is no guarantee that when the year-long restriction on the shares is removed, you will be able to trade them on.'

But despite this, the FSA still allows the sale of 'S' shares. It says: 'We permit regulation "S" shares to be sold on the basis that the firms selling disclose fully the risks involved. It's up to investors to decide whether they want to get into high-risk stocks from a position of being properly informed.'

Our message is clear: don't buy these shares. If the US regulator thinks they're not good enough for US citizens, they're not good enough for you.



Arthur Mayer with the boiler room share certificates

## Which? tackles mail-order problems – again

Liz Edwards forces company to respond, finally



One of the greatest strengths of *Which?* is you – our readers. It's you who can tell us when companies'

promises to mend their ways prove sadly hollow in practice.

William Laurenson read this column in June's issue. I told how a customer of mail-order firm Modern Originals had to wait three months for a refund after it couldn't supply his goods. The company blamed 'technical difficulties' and assured us its refund backlog would soon be cleared. But in William's case, at least, the reality was very different.

As if a three-month wait wasn't bad enough, Modern Originals topped this record by ignoring William's refund request for five months. And it acted only when I contacted a manager.

William, 84, from Sheffield, ordered and paid for goods in January and March. In May, finally fed up with waiting for them to arrive, he asked for his £81.90 back. But despite the company's general assurances to us that very month, his requests were ignored.

William said: 'It was unwilling to respond – or incapable of responding – to a letter and phone calls from me.'

Modern Originals apologised and sent William his refund and a free shaving kit. The company blamed human error and assured us that this was an 'extremely rare case'.

It said it had tightened procedures for when items were out of stock and promised to recheck for missing refunds.

If you're still waiting for a refund from this company, let us know at [news@which.co.uk](mailto:news@which.co.uk)