

Airlines keep taking money for flights that will never fly

Major airlines are continuing to sell tickets for flights that are unlikely to take place in what consumer experts have described as “fundamental misrepresentation”.

Entire fleets have been grounded across Europe since most countries imposed a lockdown. However, airlines are still taking money from people desperate to get home.

There are still flights operating, but options are limited. British Airways has reduced the number of flights it is selling, but is advertising one flight a day on many routes, despite government restrictions on travel.

EasyJet has listed all flights until May 17 as “sold out”, protecting customers from purchasing tickets. However, it advertises a full schedule of flights from that date onwards.

The airline said there could be no certainty of the date for restarting commercial flights at this stage. A spokesman said: “We have an ongoing rolling cancellation programme in place and tickets are not on sale until the middle of May, so customers cannot book on to flights until then at the earliest.”

Ryanair has grounded more than 99pc of its aircraft until April 30, but is selling tickets to most destinations from early May. That is despite Michael O’Leary, its chief executive, having said he expected European flights to stay grounded until a “limited” resumption in June.

Keith Brown, 75, has been stranded in Tenerife since flights were grounded. He has booked several flights in an attempt to get back to Manchester, all of which have later been cancelled. He called for the Government to stop airlines “robbing people” by taking bookings they have no intention of fulfilling.

Martyn James of Resolver, a

complaints service, said airlines should not be offering something for sale when it did not exist. He called the practice a “fundamental misrepresentation”.

People stuck abroad should not have to arrange their repatriation flights in the first place, Mr James said, as it is usually the carrier’s responsibility to get customers home when a flight is cancelled.

Skyscanner, a flight comparison service, has advised travellers to be flexible in an attempt to keep pace with rapidly changing timetables.

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