How to avoid a vacation rental surprise

By Christopher Elliott, USA Today

When it comes to vacation rentals, there are surprises – and there are surprises.

Good surprises, such as the one Ana O'Reilly encountered when she checked into a villa in Palm Springs, Calif., are rare. She was dumbstruck to discover the home looked better than the pictures in the listing, which was a first. The refrigerator was stocked with champagne and bottled water, and bowls of M&M's were left in the kitchen as a welcome snack.

And there are the not-so-good ones, such as the one encountered by Timothy Trudeau when he rented a home in Santa Barbara with his family. After getting settled, he decided to take a dip in the pool.

"As we were floating around, I started to notice that the property had small infrared cameras mounted all over the place," recalls Trudeau.

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