THE SURVEILLANCE PRICING CHEAT SHEET

PHOTOGRAPH IT. KEEP IT. USE IT BEFORE YOU BUY ANYTHING.

1 THE 5 TELLS

- Price **changed** since you last looked
- **Different** on another device or logged out
- Countdown timer or “X left” banner
- Only visible **in-app or logged in**
- Feels **urgent** — pressure to decide now

2 or more tells → run the tests.

2 THE 3 TESTS

1. **Refresh** — close the tab, wait 10 min, reopen cold
2. **Incognito** — private window, logged out, search fresh, compare all-in totals
3. **Second device** — another device, another network if you can

> **Compare the whole results page, not just the item.** Being shown different *products* is more common than being shown a different *price*.
>
> A difference is real evidence. No difference proves nothing.

3 WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- ✕ **Clearing cookies for cheaper flights** — fares jump when fare buckets sell out, not because you looked twice
- ✕ **“Book on Tuesday”** — and every best-day rule. True once; the mechanism is long gone
- ✕ **Assuming Black Friday is the low** — often beaten elsewhere in the year. Check the chart

4 TOP 10 MOVES

Ranked by typical dollar return.

1. **Log out to research, log in to buy** — the highest-leverage habit there is, and it’s free
2. **Check the price history** before anything over $50 — turns “good deal?” into a chart
3. **Compare all-in totals** — fare + bags + seats; rate + resort fee + parking; item + shipping
4. **Wait 48 hours** — cart abandonment triggers discounts. That software exists to win you back
5. **Call retention** two weeks before any promo expires. Calendar it the day you sign up
6. **Claim the price adjustment** — if their price drops after you buy, most refund the difference
7. **Unit price, not shelf price** — at grocery, every time. Two seconds, fifty trips a year
8. **Get a second quote** — in rideshare and delivery, the other app is your only reference price
9. **Use the 24-hour rule on flights** — book the good fare, keep shopping a day, cancel or hold free (booked 7+ days out)
10. **Build a 20-item price book** — the reference price nobody gives you and no company can revoke

6 WALK AWAY WHEN

- “Only 2 left” / “price rising soon” — manufactured urgency
- A countdown timer that **resets when you refresh**
- Nonrefundable prepaid rate, no price-drop protection
- App-exclusive price you can’t verify anywhere else
- A “was” price you can’t find in a price history
- You feel rushed and can’t explain why

5 ESCALATION LADDER

> Most of this is legal. **Escalate the misrepresentation, not the unfairness** — a price shown but not honored, a fee not disclosed, a claim that wasn’t true.

1. **Company** — specific, documented, calm. Ask for a supervisor or retention. Get a reference number
2. **Platform** — if you bought through a marketplace or app. Cite their own guarantee. Windows are short
3. **Card issuer** — a dispute is a process with deadlines, not a complaint. Credit ≠ debit protection
4. **Regulator** — sector first (utility commission, airline, insurance), then your state attorney general
5. **Small claims** — documented losses over a few hundred dollars. The filing itself often settles it

> Each step up costs more time and wins more often. Federal consumer complaints are mostly **data** — you’re contributing to a case, not opening one. File anyway.

You can’t opt out of the modern economy.
You can stop being an easy mark.

The goal isn’t paranoia.
It’s parity.

— Jan Lukin, *Checkout Math*
janlukin.com