

Double S Travel

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Double S Travel Worldchoice - Celebrating Twenty Four Years of service to residents and businesses in the South Bedfordshire area 1985 – 2009

Factsheet for 20 January 2009.

In Brief:

- Euro. You should pay no more than £... for 1000 Euros
- US dollar. You should pay no more than £... for 1000 US dollars
- Slovakia joined the Euro on 1st Jan this year.
- Travelling to the USA? You now need a visa (called an ESTA) in order to travel.
- European Health Insurance cards have replaced the E111.
- Join our cruise club, get special cruise offers. Email me to join at no cost.
- FlyLAL. Low-cost Lithuanian airline FlyLAL ceased trading on Saturday 17Jan09.
- Thinking of New Zealand in 2010? Join my group! Call me or email me or details.

How to protect your money and your holiday.

2008 saw the demise of the country's third largest tour operator, some thirty airlines and countless hotels. Many people lost a lot of money because they had not booked a package which was protected by an Air Travel Organisers Licence (ATOL). ATOL cover also protects you whilst you are abroad, if there is a natural disaster or political unrest, the ATOL holder is responsible for repatriating you. It is therefore important that anyone booking their own holiday ensures that it is ATOL protected and the the ATOL is genuine. Flights booked on the internet directly with an airline are very rarely covered by an ATOL, however if you book through a travel agent or tour operator the price is normally the same or similar and it should be ATOL

Proprietor: SJ Pattenden TD BA(Hons). VAT Number 449 3040 53.

Nominated Travel Agent of the Year 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005

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protected. Even short breaks from your local airport using some no-frills airlines can be protected. It is worth remembering that bookings made direct with an airline or hotel using a debit or electron card do not have any protection and that those made by credit card are not always protected.

Currency

Always ensure you get the best rate for the pound. Often the airport or the bank is not the best place to exchange your money.

In the last year the pound has taken quite a battering on the foreign exchanges. There are some countries whose currency have stayed at a similar exchange rate since last year and it is worth considering these countries as holiday destinations for 2009. The USA and the Eurozone are nowhere near as cheap as they were at the beginning of 2008 but there are a few short-haul destinations that off better value than the Eurozone.

If you are thinking of travelling further afield then there is plenty of scope to avoid big currency losses since last year. We are even getting more currency than we were at the beginning of 2008 if you travel to the Seychelles or to Iceland!

Notice that the Pound is better against the Canadian currency than the United States dollar. It represents far better value than the USA at this moment.

The Pound is also reasonable against the New Zealand dollar and the Australia dollar. Maybe it is time to consider going downunder!

The strongest currencies against the Pound are the Swiss Franc, the Chinese Yuan and the Japanese Yen. Therefore your Pound will not go anywhere near as far as it did in 2008 in these three countries.

Iceland

2h:45m flying from London, go in our Summer! The pound is worth 40% more this year than last making it far less expensive to buy things than it was. It is a good short-break destination.

Iceland is a natural haven for geologists, ecologists, bird watchers, walkers and hikers. Reykjavik has a fashionable club scene.

Not for those on a tight budget but better value than it has been for years!.

Reykjavic is the gateway for the full day excursion to the Gullfoss waterfalls, Geysir's hot springs and geysers, and Thingvellir National Park.

A shorter trip is to the Blue Lagoon (short day) to bathe in the curative, warm, mineral-rich water produced by the nearby geothermal power plant.

Do the "South Shore Adventure" to see waterfalls, glaciers, sea birds, seals and the south coast scenery.

Do the Westman Islands to see the latest volcanic island, Surtsey, which erupted from the sea in only 1963 and Heimaey, the main island which last had an eruption in 1973. .

Reykjavik is the world's most northerly capital and remains one of the least polluted cities in the world. Steam rises from hot springs in the bay.

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Although the local economy is traditionally reliant on fishing, tourism is the country's biggest growth industry and Reykjavik increasingly features on many 'must see' lists. Some are attracted to its vibrant nightlife, some by clean, rugged and spectacular scenery.

The compact old town – about 1 square mile – is easily covered on foot and contains most of the historical places of interest. At the centre is the attractive Austurvollur Square where the diminutive Parliament House and small Lutheran cathedral are located.

North of here, old narrow residential streets with colourful wooden and corrugated-iron-clad houses lead down to the old and new harbours. To the south lies the picturesque artificial lake complete with resident wildfowl and surrounded by walks, gardens and modern civic buildings. Go east for shopping, restaurants and nightlife.

South Africa

The pound has lost only 1.16% and prices are cheap anyway when you are there. Coupled with the fact that South Africa shares our time-zone means no jet-lag either! However – do remember that it is in the Southern Hemisphere so our Winter is their Summer!

Capetown is a must, it is one of the most beautiful parts of South Africa and is normally a 3-7 day part of a larger itinerary, often the Garden Route (Capetown to Port Elizabeth)..

Attractions. Plenty of city sightseeing including V&A Waterfront, Table Bay harbour, museums and galleries, castle, Parliament building, Tuynhuis (State President's mansion) and Groote Kerk church (oldest in SA); Table Mountain cable car; brewery tours; Robben Island, the maximum-security prison where Nelson Mandela was held; cricket and rugby at Newlands Stadium. Nightlife: bars, discos and nightclubs congregate around Sea Point area.

The central commercial area of the city is good for upmarket shopping as well as playing host to a number of museums, churches, street markets and guided historic walks. The pleasant beach suburbs to the W resemble smart British seaside resorts.

Local excursions include: Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. Various spectacular coastal or mountain drives. Beautiful scenery of Constantia Valley wine region. Visit Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and the West Coast National Park, with its flora and fauna. Nearby "Wine Route" towns, such as Paarl and Stellenbosch are also worth visiting.

Cape Town is considered one of South Africa's safest cities.

New Zealand

The pound has lost only 3.56% and New Zealand never fails to impress. Their seasons are the opposite to ours so their mid-winter is our mid-summer. Lots of way to reach New Zealand and a break in the journey down and back is recommended. Choices include Fiji, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Singapore and the middle East. The most common way to visit is by doing a two week, North and South Island tour either by coach or self drive.

A country of contrasts and often called a 40year step back in time! Mountains, plains, historical towns, cities, beaches – everything! A country so tempting that we are organising an escorted tour to New Zealand for February 2010. If you are

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interested in joining us – simply email us at steve@doublestravel.co.uk or phone us on 01582 752752.

The North Island has two-thirds of New Zealand's population, Auckland and the capital city Wellington both being here. The northern part of North Island is sparsely populated, rolling farmland with spectacular bays and beaches. Cape Reinga is the most northerly point where the South Pacific Ocean meets the Tasman Sea and the different colours of the two seas is plainly visible. Ninety Mile Beach on the northwest coast is actually 55 miles long and at times the sands can be firm enough to drive on, tides permitting. The central district is mountainous with lakes, hot springs and mud, active volcanoes and unspoiled forests.

The South Island is home to a quarter of New Zealand's population, the landscape of South Island is in total contrast to that of North Island with excellent roads and little traffic congestion. The Southern Alps extend for over 370 miles along much of the northwest-facing coast of the island. They reach a height of over 12,000 feet in the Mount Cook National Park and cover an area larger than Switzerland. Further south is Fiordland National Park which takes in the whole SW corner of the country and has thick virgin forest, lakes and sea inlets, the best known of which is the Milford Sound

Cruising

If you book a cruise with a cruiseline where the on-board currency is Sterling – there is no loss of money due to exchange rates!

Cruising is fantastic value for money, your board, and entertainment is already included. You sail from place to place overnight, waking up to a new destination every day without living out of your suitcase!

There are some real bargains to be had this year. The cruise industry launched 8 new ships in 2008 and a further 13 will be launched this year – that's an extra 46000 passengers. They will all be chasing your booking. Some have halved fares for early booking, some are offering fares of under £700 for a transatlantic cruise including a flight back to London (but USD is the onboard currency!).

We are members of ACE (the Association of Cruise Experts) so feel free to call us if you would like guidance.

UK

The pound has lost nothing! Northumbria is very underrated part of the UK, castles (eg Alnwick), long sandy beaches, forests and plenty of wild countryside and some large towns and cities as well. There are even horse-holidays! This is where anyone can ride, from complete beginners to accomplished riders. Children and adults alike can have fun. Canal or narrowboats are also a great way to holiday. You see the countryside and are located pretty-much all over the country from the Broads to the Thames.

Canada

The pound has lost 10.26% but Canada is still fantastic value especially when compared to the USA.

My favourite places are:

Nova Scotia which is only 6½ hours from London – only 2 hours further than the Canary Islands!

Halifax is a beautiful seaport. Sightseeing in historic downtown and the resored waterfront wharves. Impressive Citadel Hill fort with guided tours and military pageantry. Lots of maritime museums – including one for the Titanic; art galleries.

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Various harbour pleasure boats; ferries to and from Dartmouth. Nightlife: lively and cosmopolitan. Everything from friendly pavement cafes to dozens of well-established, atmospheric European-style pubs and bars.

A favourite tour is Vancouver to the Rockies. Vancouver is another impressive city. Shopping for all tastes, especially around Robson Street, Visit Gastown, Stanley Park, museums, planetarium and the cruise-ship terminal area. This is also the terminus for the famous Rocky Mountaineer train. Excursions include Vancouver Island, Victoria and it's famous Buschart Gardens.

The most impressive city is French speaking Quebec on the St Lawrence river – the only fortified walled city in North America and a UNESCO world heritage site. A maze of cobbled, hilly and quaint streets with grand colonial architecture ranging from 17th – 19th century (the most famous being the Chateau Frontenac) overlooking the river.

Currencies in detail*

Seychelles	+46.00%	Thailand	-25.42%
Iceland	+40.00%	Kuwait	-26.87%
UK	00.00%	Taiwan	-26.96%
South Africa	-1.16%	Trinidad & Tobago	-27.33%
New Zealand	-3.56%	Latvia	-27.44%
Turkey	-6.43%	Jordan	-27.54%
Norway	-6.78%	USA	-27.55%
Australia	-7.71%	Bahrain	-27.60%
Mexico	-8.24%	Saudi Arabia	-27.62%
Canada	-10.26%	Qatar	-27.63%
Kenya	-11.45%	Barbados	-27.64%
Philippines	-16.79%	UAE	-27.65%
Fiji	-17.81%	Oman	-27.68%
Jamaica	-19.09%	Egypt	-27.79%
Mauritius	-19.60%	Singapore	-27.98%
Dominican Rep	-22.29%	Hong Kong	-28.16%
Croatia	-24.60%	Hungary	-29.62%
Malaysia	-24.52%	Israel	-31.84%
Czech Rep	-24.63%	Switzerland	-32.23%
Eurozone	-25.22%	China	-32.32%
Denmark	-25.42%	Japan	-42.26%

*The exchange rates are Double S Travel foreign exchange rates 31/12/08 compared to 31/12/07.

Always:

- Check that your passport does not expire within six months of your return date.
- Ensure you have taken out good travel insurance and if going to Europe, take your EHIC card.
- Put the 24hour UK Consular Assistance number - +44 020 7008 1500 into your mobile telephone – just in case you need emergency help.

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Our aim is to be your most trusted dream provider

- If hiring a car, don't forget to take both parts of your photo driving licence with you.
- Ensure you have all the visas you need.

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