

BUDGET TRAVEL WITH AMERICAN DOLLARS?



The British pound reached the exchange rate of \$2 last year for the first time since 1992 and has remained at around the same rate ever since. The Euro is not far behind as the dollar weakens and the European currencies strengthen themselves. The result of this is that Americans now have to pay more when visiting Europe. However, it is not all bad news as travel experts have come up with ways for US citizens to save money on their trips across the Atlantic.

The first and the most logical method is to try to pay as often as possible in American dollars, thus eliminating any question of exchange rates. This is generally possible on the Internet and in some hostels or hotels. Similarly, using the cash machine, or ATM, could have the same effect, as they offer generally better rates than banks and exchange offices. They tend to give money at the so-called 'middle rate', which does not usually include any commission. Using an American credit card can have the same effect.

The next thing to do is to save on travel. It is very expensive to travel around Europe by car as Europeans pay much more for petrol than Americans do. As most European cities are equipped with highly complex metro and tram systems, a car is not even necessary. It is worth buying a pass in these cities as they offer some substantial savings. Another piece of advice is to try to stay in only a few places and explore specific areas in more depth. This, naturally, reduces travel costs. Similarly, sleeping on overnight trains can reduce accommodation expenses.

In terms of eating habits, it is worth noting that Europeans tend to have much cheaper lunches than evening meals. It is worth eating a big lunch to fill up and have a light snack in the evening. Light snack, or a cheap meal is for example gyros in Germany, curry in London or Parisian baguette. Finally, don't forget that Europeans are not that big on tipping, and leaving the typical American 15/20% could be deemed as a pure waste of money.

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