

**Double S Travel**

118 Talbot Road  
Roundgreen  
Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 7RA  
Telephone 01582 752752  
ABTA 16297, ATOL 6766, IATA, ACE  
E-Mail [steve@doublestravel.co.uk](mailto:steve@doublestravel.co.uk)  
Web [www.doublestravel.co.uk](http://www.doublestravel.co.uk)



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

**Factsheet for 17 February 2009**

**Stop Press**

EU Directive

A new EU directive has just come into effect which means that all flights booked to EU countries from the UK will require the passport number, nationality and date of birth of each passenger to be given to the travel agent or airline no later than 72 hours prior to travel. This will come into effect as airlines gear themselves up to be able to accept the data. EasyJet for example require this information to all (even those destinations outside the EU) destinations now.

Exchange Rates

Euro. Our tourist sell rate today:	£1 = 1.08031	worse than last week
US Dollar. Our tourist sell rate today:	£1 = 1.36231	worse than last week

**Five different Citybreaks.**

Make sure that you book a package.

- All of the following can be reached by air from London Luton airport.
- When considering a short break make sure that you always book a 'package' that is covered by an ATOL so your money is protected.
- If you book directly with an airline you are not covered by an ATOL. Airlines themselves offer no consumer protection.
- Most good travel agents can offer you a tailor-made ATOL protected package using most 'no frills' airlines out of Luton.

Nice

Flying time from Luton approx 1 hour 45 mins.

In a 'nutshell' - The charming old town is a delight and strolling along the Promenade des Anglais looking out over the sparkling Mediterranean Sea is one of life's great pleasures.

The fifth largest city in France and stretches for 6 miles along the southern coast of the Cote d'Azur. It lies 20 miles east of Cannes and nestles in the foothills of the Alpes. The Mediterranean Sea at this point is tideless. The surrounding countryside consists of narrow valleys and steep craggy hillsides.

The Promenade des Anglais is a magnificent four mile esplanade with corridors for joggers and roller-blading, summer exhibitions and public seating. Vestiges of a grand past are found in the luxury hotels located within a mile of the city centre.

Nice is popular with all nationalities and most tastes. The attractive climate and easy access by air makes it appealing to jet-setters, mid-market weekenders and those needing winter warmth.

By day city bus tours by double-decker and even electric rickshaws! Regular train and bus services run along the coast. By night there are plenty of lively cafes, cabaret bars and discos. There are also two casinos, cinema, theatre and opera. Local excursions include Monaco, St Tropez, San Remo, Antibes, Eze, Rothschild's Cap Ferrat, olive and wine tasting.

Eating out. The old town has an interesting choice of atmospheric restaurants with many small establishments offering local specialities such as Soup au Pistou (leeks, carrot, celery, potato, courgette, and beans in a sauce of basil, garlic and cheese). Porchetta (stuffed suckling pig), Ratatouille, Stockfish (rehydrated dried cod with fried onions, tomato, white wine, anchovies and olives). Around the port are a wide variety of fish specialists, Provençal cuisine is common. There the usual fast-food restaurants and sandwich bars.

### Lisbon

Flying time 2 hours 30 mins approx from Luton.

In a 'nutshell'. Lisbon is one of the friendliest, most charming and unspoilt capital cities in Europe.

Lisbon lies about a third of the way up Portugal's Estoril Atlantic coast and the airport is only three or four miles from the city.

Lisbon has been the capital of Portugal since 1255 and is steeped in history. Its colonial ties and its mixed architectural inheritance give it a cosmopolitan feel. Most of the things of interest to the tourist are within the compact city centre. The oldest district is the Alfamar quarter which dates from the middle ages.

The heart of the city is the Baixa district which was rebuilt to a grid form in the 1700s after a devastating earthquake. Now Lisbon's most popular shopping area.

Lisbon is a popular city-break destination, particularly for couples. Steep streets can be a test of stamina, but there are funicular railways, lifts and city trams to take away this burden.

During the day there are city walking tours and river cruises. Lisbon has plenty of culture with 30 museums.

At night there are bars and live music in the Bairro Alto district and 'fado' houses. There are theatres, dance and classical music at the Belem cultural Centre and the Gulbenkian foundation. The docks area has clubs and noisier bars.

Eating. Lisbon has its fair share of restaurants ranging from snack-bars to tavernas and fine-dining. Traditional savoury favourites are seafood especially salted cod, fish stews and sardines. Delicious desserts and cakes abound (especially sweet and almond based). Local wines and port are also worth sampling.

Excursions include Palace of Queluz. The beaches of Estoril and the Costa Caparica. Sebtul with its many churches, the historic hillside town of Sintra and Capo da Roca – the most westerly point of mainland Europe.

### Vienna

Flying time from Luton approx 2hours 15mins.

In a 'nutshell' Vienna is a city of coffee houses, Art Nouveau, waltzes and imperial splendour.

Vienna lies in the northeast corner of Austria and is 40 miles south of the Czech border, 50 miles northwest of the Hungarian border and 40 miles west of the Slovakian border. It is surrounded on three sides by gentle wooded hills. The

Danube canal runs close to the city centre and the River Danube flows through the outskirts.

Vienna continues to celebrate its' imperial Hapsburg Empire days which actually ended in 1918. It has much in the way of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture and a vibrant cultural life. The city is compact being about 5 miles by 5 miles with most of the interesting buildings being within a 1 square mile are in the centre.

It has many world-class museums. Despite being historical, Vienna is a very forward looking city and has an energetic alternative and cosmopolitan scene. There are many pleasurable pastimes – sitting in the numerous cafes sipping rich viennese coffee and eating high-calorie cakes!

Datime walking or cycling tours. Sweeping views from the top of the 450ft bell-tower of the gothic cathedral – the Stephansdom. The Hofburg where the Vienna Boys choir sings and where the crown jewels are. Several museums are devoted to composers such as Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert and Strauss. There are plenty of festivals, shows and exhibitions during the summer months.

At nights there are bars, cafes, clubs, jazz etc.

Local foods include Wiener Schnitzel (breadcrumb encased veal) and tafelspitz (boiled silverside of beef with chive, horseradish and sautee potato).

Excursions. Wachau and the Danube valley. Bratislava in Slovakia. Budapest, Prague and Salzburg.

### Athens

Flying time from Luton 3hours 30mins approx.

In a 'nutshell'. The rock of the Acropolis, with the ruins of the Parthenon rising above is one of the defining images of western civilisation.

Lying in the southeast of mainland Greece and 16 miles from the airport, Athens is dominated by two hills (the Acropolis and Lycabettus) and is famous for its traffic congestion and its air-pollution! Syntagma Square is the centre for tourists, everything that tourists traditionally visit is within ¾ mile of here. Around the base of the Acropolis is the pedestrianised Plaka district with many restaurants, tavernas, markets and souvenir shops.

Athens is suitable for all ages and particularly those with an interest in cultural history. You need good walking legs as you will be on your feet all day! People with mobility or respiratory problems should avoid Athens especially during their long hot summers.

There is a wealth of ancient sites of interest in Athens. The Acropolis, the Agora and the temple of Olympian Zeus. There are many world-class museums. Parliament buildings, the guarded tomb of the unknown soldier (guarded by soldiers in traditional pom-pom uniform), the Hellenic Cosmos – a virtual-reality representation of ancient Greece, etc..

At night there are nightclubs, discos, bars, rock concerts, opera, ballet and Son et Lumiere at the Acropolis (daily Apr-Oct).

Excursions from Athens include Temple of Poseidon, Aegina Island, Glyfada beach resort.

### Pisa

Flying time from Luton approx 2hours 15mins.

In a 'nutshell'. Pisa is one of Italy's great stylish, aristocratic cities with its handsome Duomo and elegant Baptistery.

Pisa is a small Italian town in Tuscany with a lot of history. Lying on the River Arno, ¾ of the way up the 'boot' of Italy and 2 miles from its airport. Most of the historical

monuments and buildings date from the wealthy periods of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries when Pisa was at the height of its power.

The leaning tower of Pisa is the most well known must see monument. It is surrounded by pricey restaurants and cafes.

Pisa is most suited to mature couples and older families who are lovers of art, architecture and history.

Not much in the way of nightlife. Apart from the restaurants, there are a few bars but it is generally low-key.

Away from the tower the restaurants are much better value and serve pasta, pizza and plenty of seafood. A local speciality is Baccala alla Pisana.

Local excursions include the well-preserved medieval city of Pistoia.

### **News in brief:**

Thinking of going to New Zealand next year? Join my group! Call me on 01582 752752 or email me at [steve@doublestravel.co.uk](mailto:steve@doublestravel.co.uk) for details.

Interested in a cruise? Visit our cruise club website at [www.upadeck.co.uk](http://www.upadeck.co.uk) it contains details of over 20,000 cruises, port descriptions and ship details!

Slovakia joined the Euro on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan this year.

Travelling to the USA? You need a visa (called an ESTA) in order to travel.

European Health Insurance cards have replaced the E111.

FlyLAL. Low-cost Lithuanian airline FlyLAL ceased trading on Saturday 17Jan09.

If you would like to join my emailing-list to receive offers and news, simply email [steve@doublestravel.co.uk](mailto:steve@doublestravel.co.uk) and put 'Mailing List' in the subject box.

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### **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 with you too.
- Put the 24hour UK Consular Assistance number - +44 020 7008 1500 into your mobile telephone – just in case you need emergency help.
- If hiring a car, don't forget to take both parts of your photo driving licence (the card and the paper sheet) with you. Some rental companies no longer accept the old style green paper non-photo driving licences.
- Ensure you have all the visas you need.
- If you have booked connecting flights, the baggage allowance may be smaller than your long haul flights. To avoid extra charges, pack to the lowest baggage allowance.

Our aim is to be your most trusted dream provider

- Tell your credit card and debit card issuer where you are going and for how long otherwise you may find you cannot use your cards.
- Use public transport to get to the airport. Most insurance will only cover you for a missed departure if you used public transport.
- Take a photocopy of your passport with you. If you lose your original it is much simpler to replace if you have a copy available to you.
- Protect your money and your holiday by booking an ATOL protected holiday through a reputable travel agent. Even short-breaks using no-frills airlines can be covered if booked through and agent.
- Declare all medical conditions and hospital visits at the time of taking insurance and tell the insurer if you develop a medical condition before you travel otherwise they may not settle if you try to make a claim.

Remember, travel safely, protect your money by booking through and ATOL holder, but most of all - enjoy your travelling.

All the best,

Steve Pattenden.

[steve@doublestravel.co.uk](mailto:steve@doublestravel.co.uk)

Acknowledgements. DG&G Gazetteers for much of the destination information.

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

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

Finalist Travel Agent of the Year 2005, 2006, Finalist Business Travel Agent of the Year 2006