

A surcharge for John Lennon, Virgin's expensive sale and chaos at Christmas, of course



The whole pet-passport thing has been a mixed blessing. Great, they can come on holiday. Not so great, some of them have been freezing to death in the hold. The solution: keep your pooch off public transport by getting an Avolus card (www.avolus.com). Like a posh Oyster card, it gives you (and your menagerie) access to private jets, helicopters, limos and yachts. For the jet trip from Biggin Hill to Nice, you'll need to put about £7,000 on the card, but Fido can have his own seat

Getty



Readers' rants

I BOOKED three return flights to Prague with Thomsonfly.com, which advertises under the slogan: "No tricks, all treats." I had to ring to make a correction to a passenger name, and expected to pay a small fee for the alteration. But I was charged £25 each way, with an extra charge of £20 for an increase in the cost of the fare. Note that the company does not offer a reduction if the price has been lowered. I therefore had to pay an extra £70, as well as the cost of a lengthy wait on Thomsonfly's 0870 number. Is this a treat or is this extortion?

Marilyn Gregory, North Yorkshire

Thomsonfly replies: "Our booking form clearly states that passenger names must be entered exactly as stated on photo ID/passport, and that once a booking has been confirmed, any changes to passenger details will be subject to a charge. Charges are incurred on both outbound and return flights, as these are sold separately."

AS VIRGIN ATLANTIC's July fare sale drew to a close, I asked my travel agent to hold a seat to New York in October. Within a couple of days, Virgin contacted my agent to say that to get the sale fare of £358, I would have to purchase immediately. So I did. Virgin then launched another sale at the end of August, with the same ticket available for £100 less. Virgin refused to credit me with the difference or offer an upgrade. A third sale was launched in September, offering the same ticket for £283, still lower than the sale fare I purchased when Virgin encouraged all customers to book early for the best prices.

Patrick Hegan, Wimbledon

Virgin Atlantic replies: "We operate in a competitive marketplace and are constantly reviewing fares. Sometimes this means that a cheaper fare is issued shortly after a sale has closed. We can understand your reader's displeasure, but he was sold the best available fare at the point of sale, and the agent at that time would have pursued the finalisation of the booking as the offer was coming to an end."

THOSE WHO preboard an aircraft should stay in their seats on landing until other passengers have got off. I was forced to disembark at the snail speed of a three-year-old with an indulgent father at her side. (She had refused to be carried off.) If you can't board without help, the same should apply at landing.

Jan Gordon, Llanelli, South Wales

■ Got a rant? E-mail us at readersrants@sunday-times.co.uk

Imagine all the people queuing

TURNSTILES ARE to be introduced at John Lennon airport, in Liverpool, in the new year as a means of collecting a £2 departure tax from travellers.

Passengers will queue first to buy a ticket, with the fee payable in cash (pounds or euros) or by credit card, and will then queue again to feed that ticket into the turnstile before proceeding to further queues at passport control and security.

Neil Pakey, of the airport's owner, Peel Holdings, said that the levy is necessary to cover the £5m annual

costs of increased security measures, and claimed that the initiative would actually reduce waiting times: "At present, 95% of passengers queue at security for less than five minutes and improved measures will help ensure these queues are kept to a minimum."

The Air Transport Users Council (AUC) disagreed, describing the charge as a scam. The AUC's industry affairs manager, James Fremantle, said: "This turnstile operation is not a practical idea, and will lead to horrendous queues."

Holiday money

The 12 eurozone countries are: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain

Country	Currency	Rate per £1	Country	Currency	Rate per £1
Argentina	Peso	5.86 (5.16)	Malta	Lira	0.61 (0.61)
Australia	Dollar	2.41 (2.27)	Mexico	Peso	19.42 (17.26)
Brazil	Real	3.96 (3.76)	New Zealand	Dollar	2.72 (2.43)
Canada	Dollar	2.22 (1.99)	Norway	Krone	11.85 (11.41)
Cyprus	Pound	0.83 (0.81)	South Africa	Rand	13.27 (10.80)
Eurozone	Euro	1.44 (1.42)	Sweden	Krona	13.14 (13.57)
Hong Kong	Dollar	14.85 (13.30)	Switzerland	Franc	2.31 (2.21)
India	Rupee	79.26 (71.52)	Thailand	Baht	63.81 (66.52)
Kenya	Shilling	125 (117)	Turkey	New lira	2.71 (2.29)
Malaysia	Ringgit	6.70 (6.40)	USA	Dollar	1.92 (1.72)

Traveler sell rates for currencies as of Thursday. Bracketed figures show exchange rates this time last year