



Traveller's check

Going away? Finance Editor Susanna Stuart helps you, and your money, journey safely

RECENTLY I FILLED OUT a travel insurance form for my partner prior to his journey to Cambodia. I'm a believer in travel insurance since falling sick once in New York and facing a skyscraper of a doctor's bill.

Taking out insurance in case of a medical emergency or stolen luggage seemed simple. But the TravelCare document from Southern Cross, though well written, proved comprehensive to the point where it might as well have been a "See New Zealand First" campaign! It covers, among other things, hijacking, false arrest, loss of eyesight, kidnapping – including the do's and don'ts of ransom payment – and 'acute dental pain' (ouch).

While any one of these scenarios is possible, a far more common concern is keeping our money secure. So what is

the best way to conveniently and safely transport your funds?

While traveller's cheques are ideal when you want to limit the cash you're carrying, credit cards are by far the most convenient option (though be aware that some countries prefer cash transactions).

New travel cards from banks including National Bank and Westpac let you load up foreign currency before you travel; reducing potential exchange rate losses and other typical credit card charges on foreign transactions. They are not available for all countries, so you should check with the banks first.

If you're planning a longer stay in the UK or Australia, or you make frequent trips, you can transfer funds to a sterling or Australian bank account which you can open at the ASB Bank here. **N**

Travel tips

Some pointers for a safe journey.

Before you go:

- Have a medical check-up and visit your dentist. Better to find that filling now than to wait for those 'acute dental pains' in the middle of your camel trek.
- Sort out your finances. Organise traveller's cheques before you leave. Check your credit card limits. Decide how much cash you'll carry.
- Plan your journey well. Search for deals on the internet and explore your options. You can stretch your precious dollar a lot further by exploring different travel times and seeking off-peak options.
- Set yourself a spending budget.
- Take out travel insurance.

While abroad:

- Carry suitable cards with reasonably low spending limits (in case they are stolen). Take some cash also.
- Protect your cash. Even in civilised destinations, a hidden money belt (avoid bum bags) is a good idea.
- Avoid doing internet banking in cyber-cafes overseas. A client of mine was horrified to find her account emptied out by online fraudsters.
- Take emergency contact numbers with you, including your bank, travel insurance company and our consulate. Imagine a worst-case scenario – a stolen wallet for example. Who do you need to call?
- Take a phone that works. And check beforehand! Our Telecom mobile was hopeless on a recent trip to the US.
- Get to know the exchange rates. If you're in a foreign store or market, make sure you know how much you are actually spending.
- Don't go crazy. The holiday mood is mysteriously connected to our inner Desire to Shop – and we can easily spend up a storm.