



THINGS THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW – 2

So, cheap train fares are available, it's now official. These were called **value advance** and were usually booked online, except with Southern Railways, of course, where you have to go to the station in person.

Until now, finding the best fares has been very complicated, as each company gave its tickets different names and hedged them round with all sorts of conditions. From **May 18, 2008** all these fares from all the train operators are going to be simplified and given the same names to make it easier to find the best fares. They are now called **ADVANCE**, **OFF-PEAK** and **ANYTIME**, but finding them is not easy.

Virgin Trains will take you to **Birmingham** from **Euston** for **£6.85** each way, so with the **£6** return from Brighton, Brighton to Birmingham New Street is about **£20** if you take in the cost of the Victoria-to-Euston Tube transfer. Not at all bad, but you can beat even that.

Chiltern Railways, which operates the **St Marylebone to Birmingham Moor Street** route, will sell you an **e-ticket** for **£10** return. Take the text-to-mobile option and they send your ticket to your phone; all you do is pass the text message over the special reader at St Marylebone and off you go. Birmingham Moor Street Station is great; straight out of *Brief Encounter*. It's a listed building that has been preserved in its original 1930s style. Even better, it is right opposite the entrance to Selfridges in the Bull Ring. So you can get from Brighton to Birmingham for **£16** return. The No 2 bus will take you from Victoria to St



Marylebone and if you're lucky enough to have reached your 60th birthday and have your new National Bus Pass, that bit is free.

Chiltern Railways is an American-owned operation that seems to keep a very low profile but it is excellent in every way. It runs clean, modern trains that run on time with friendly staff – now that's unusual for a train operator.

Want to go to **Wales** or the **West Country**? Take a look at **First Great Western**. **Paddington to Cardiff** is just **£23** return... I could go on, there are some pretty remarkable deals around.

On my next attempt to buy **advance tickets**, this time at the **One Stop Travel** shop on the Old Steine, which I was surprised to find open on a bank holiday, I was able to buy a **£3** ticket to **Victoria** but there were none available for the return three days later. The helpful staff member was completely puzzled, as he admitted that these tickets should be available – he could see them on his system but could not sell them.

I called **Southern** on their 'secret' **0800 138 1016** number to ask the reason. Sam was her name, and she was the classic 'company' girl and quoted – three times – that the website says that these tickets were subject to availability. Fine, but what does 'availability' mean, I asked, as I have yet to see an off-peak train with no available seats at all. She didn't know the reason and said she would take my query further and would get back to me. They did, and this time it was a William Henry, informing me that they offered six or seven (note the accuracy) of these tickets on some trains. More from his email next month.

You can travel very cheaply by train, but it depends entirely upon the individual operator on how easy they make it to get hold of them. It can take a long time. **TSSA**, the transport union, has conducted a survey and has accused the train companies of deliberately misleading the public and states that these deals are a mirage. Watch this space.

LONDON UNDERGROUND? THAT'S SO GAY

Amro Worldwide has launched a new gay advertising campaign at **Leicester Square** and **Covent Garden** Tube stations that attempts to break down the sting of 'so gay' as an insult by reclaiming the term as part of an advertising slogan in its campaigns. The campaign equates being 'so gay' with a travel destination really being 'so good' as seen from a gay and lesbian perspective.

Andrew Roberts, CEO of Amro Worldwide, said: "Clearly we want the many thousands of gays and lesbians travelling to London Pride next month to know that Amro is a travel company with hand-picked travel options designed especially for the gay travel market."



"We also wanted to send a clear message to everyone who sees this campaign that it is long past time that 'so gay' should be used as a negative phrase of disapproval.

From where we sit, and for all our many customers, being described as 'so gay' is not a negative thing at all. We think it is just great to be so gay."

So, too, it seems, do many of the leading tourism destination marketing offices of the United States. Amro's *So Gay* campaign has received the funding and support of six leading US gay

travel destinations: **Atlanta, Boston, Las Vegas, New Orleans, South Carolina and Washington DC.**

The **Amro Worldwide So Gay** campaign runs on escalators in **Leicester Square**, and in elevators at **Covent Garden London Underground stations**, from **June 30** until **July 14, 2008**.

FIRST LOOK: ZOOM

An airline has honoured Brighton by naming its newest transatlantic jet after it. **Zoom Airlines**, which operates out of **Gatwick**, has called the most recent addition to its fleet **Brighton & Hove** in honour of the popular seaside resort.



City mayor Cllr Garry Peltzer Dunn, who attended the naming ceremony for the new Boeing 767, said: "It's a great accolade to have an aircraft named in the city's honour. I'm hoping it helps spread the good name of Brighton & Hove to people in North America

and Canada and elsewhere, as well as encouraging them to visit us one day. Together, Zoom and Brighton & Hove will be reaching new heights."

The name was chosen after the airline conducted a company-wide survey asking which UK city employees wanted the aircraft named after. The company believes Brighton & Hove was chosen because many staff live in the area.

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