

Travel Outlook

Lower dollar means expensive vacations in US

The sudden, sharp drop in the foreign-exchange value of our dollar, beginning last week, puts an extra squeeze on the budget of Canadians travelling outside the country.

From a value of more than 86 cents U.S. in the second week of May, the Canadian dollar fell below 85 cents this week - and could go even lower.

That makes it all the more important to shop around among financial institutions for the best rate of exchange, if you will soon be needed U.S. greenbacks or other foreign currency for your travels.

Dealing in foreign exchange is a speculation at any time. None of us can be sure of future trends in foreign-currency markets.

But if you believe that the downtrend of the past week or two is likely to be extended, and if you are facing a substantial bill for a forthcoming trip in (say) the U.S., then you would probably want to acquire the necessary U.S. funds sooner rather than later.

DOLLAR AT PAR

Here's another point to consider: At any given time, some elements of the U.S. travel industry are sure to be offering to accept Canadian dollars at par with U.S. funds (a level that hasn't been seen since 1976 on foreign-exchange markets), as a promotional gimmick to attract Canadian customers.

If the prices quoted to Canadians are in fact the same as those that Americans pay, then the dollar-at-par incentive represents a worthwhile saving.



Vince Egan
Travel

Let's look at a few such promotional offerings currently in effect:

- Royal Viking Lines, based in Coral Gables, Fla., features dollar-at-par prices on dozens of selected cruises of four of its ships between now and Dec. 21.

- The Village at Smugglers Notch, Vt. (a year-round resort near Stowe), is accepting Canadian funds at par on its five-day and seven-day programs designed for families with children (FamilyFest) and for tennis players (TenPro) between June 15 and Sept. 3. Details: 800-356-8679.

- The 308-room Ritz-Carlton in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn features several dollar-at-par

weekend packages, such as the Greenfield Village Get-away at \$115 per night for a deluxe room, breakfasts for up to four people and two tickets to the nearby Henry Ford Museum or Greenfield Village. For information and reservations: 800-241-3333.

A visit to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn will probably be even more interesting than usual this summer. From May 26 to Sept. 2, it will be the site of what sounds like an intriguing special exhibition that explores the evolution of the American vacation since the early 19th century, with more than 500 artifacts.

The 7,000-sq.-ft. display will have four major sections: Planning a Vacation; Getting There (contrasting 19th-century trains with today's planes, for example, or the stagecoach with the modern station wagon); Being There (destination attractions such as a 1900 city-tour bus), and Recalling the Vacation (actual scrapbooks, snapshots and souvenirs).

Visitors can even have their picture taken at an old-fashioned

"sailor and mermaid" graphic cutout.

TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Here are notes on news of current interest to travellers:

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. has launched a major expansion program. New or refurbished hotels are being opened this year in Washington, St. Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Hawaii and Sydney, Australia. Next year: Another in Sydney, as well as Amelia Island and Palm Beach Island (Fla.), McLean (Va.), Aspen (Col.), Pasadena (Calif.), Cancun (Mexico), Maui (Hawaii), Hong Kong and London.

- Dover, on the English Channel, is staging several special events between May 27 and June 4 to mark the 50th anniversary of the evacuation of 300,000 troops from Dunkirk, France, in the early stages of the Second World War.

- In Singapore, the week beginning May 26 is being celebrated as Merlion Week. (The sea-dwelling lion is the symbol of the city-state). Highlight is the World Invitational Dragon Boat Race, with some 20 of the world's fastest teams competing for prizes of about \$21,000.

- Toronto's second annual Dragon Boat Race Festival will be held at Ontario Place June 16 and 17, organized by the Toronto Chinese Business Association. Its president, Clement Lee, expects

that 50 teams, each with 22 members, will vie for first place and the right to represent Canada at the 1991 international championship.

- Thomson News Service.

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