

Travel

Travel, especially by air, has become so much cheaper in recent years largely thanks to the Internet. EasyJet, Ryanair and their competitors have been able to reduce airfares to ridiculous levels by insisting on Web ticketing forcing the big players like British Airways to follow suit. Central computerisation has reduced the need for local travel agents to issue paper tickets and therefore their commission. This battle for seat occupancy means that there are opportunities for very economic travel for us, the travelling public.

How does it work?:

“Fly to Carcassonne for £6.50” sounds too good to be true and, in some respects, it is. The prices quoted are almost invariably the one-way fare, but even then £13 is still ridiculously cheap so where is the catch? There are three.

First, the price rarely covers airport taxes and fees that are often somewhat more than the cost of the ticket. I checked out a flight from Stansted to Prague for which the advertised fare was £1.99. The return was a paltry £9.99. This gives a return fare of £11.98, to which £25.09 of taxes and charges is added, giving a total fare of £37.07 – still very good value but a definite increase on the advertised price.

Second, the airlines will only sell a certain number of seats at these low prices and if you leave your booking until the last moment you will find that all the low priced tickets have been snapped up and you are left paying a much higher price. The ticketing example given in the previous paragraph was booked for a flight in 2 months time. If I needed to travel tomorrow, a Monday, and return the following Friday, then the figures are very different. The outward fare is quoted at £109.99 and the return £69.99 that with the same taxes and charges of £25.09 comes to a total of £205.07.

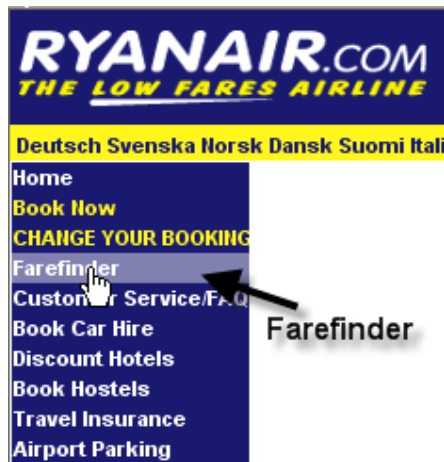
Third, the low advertised costs are often quoted for inconvenient times. The figures quoted above are for the most popular flight times – leaving at lunchtime and returning at a reasonable hour on the Friday morning. I could reduce the cost by electing to fly at unsocial hours. I could leave for Prague at 6.30am on the Monday morning and return on Friday at five minutes to midnight in which case the total cost would come down to £100.07.

Should you need to change your flight times or dates then the penalties will add considerably to the cost of your trip. Forward planning and an acceptance of flying at inconvenient times will ensure a real bargain.

A booking example:

You decide to take a week’s holiday in Venice having seen a Ryanair advertisement for cheap fares.

1. Find the Ryanair site.
2. From the Home Page choose Farefinder



3. Enter your departure and destination airports together with the dates of travel from the dropdown menus.

4. Then click on Search for Flights to view the available fares.

Here are the flights and fares available on the requested date(s). Fares do not include taxes, fees and charges

1. Please review the flights offered. Click a fare name to see fare rules & regulations.
2. Click on a plane or accompanying dot to select the flight of your choice.

Going Out

◀ PREVIOUS DAY NEXT DAY ▶

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|---|----------------|--------------------------------|---|
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Tue , 26 Apr 05 Flight FR 792 | 06:30 09:25 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Tue , 26 Apr 05 Flight FR 796 | 13:25 16:20 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Tue , 26 Apr 05 Flight FR 798 | 19:05 22:00 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Wed , 27 Apr 05 Flight FR 792 | 06:30 09:25 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Wed , 27 Apr 05 Flight FR 796 | 13:25 16:20 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 1.99 GBP | Wed , 27 Apr 05 Flight FR 798 | 19:05 22:00 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |
|  | <input type="radio"/> | Web fare | 4.99 GBP | Thu , 28 Apr 05 Flight FR 792 | 06:30 09:25 | Depart Arrive | London Stansted (STN) Venice Treviso (TSF) |

5. Click on the 'radio button' of the flights you want and proceed to the next step.

Pricing

Going Out (Web fare)

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1 @ 1.99 GBP | 1.99 GBP |
| Taxes, Fees & Charges | 13.93 GBP |
| details | |

Coming Back (Web fare)

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1 @ 4.99 GBP | 4.99 GBP |
| Taxes, Fees & Charges | 11.16 GBP |
| details | |

Total Cost of Flight

| | |
|---|-----------|
| excluding handling fee (if applicable) | 32.07 GBP |
| click here for new information on handling fees | |

6. Notice the blue underlined links that will give you details of the Taxes, Fees, Charges and handling fees. Read the Fare Rules carefully and confirm your acceptance by clicking on the box.

Fare Rules

- All monies paid are non-refundable except in circumstances
- where Ryanair cancels a flight.
- Flight dates, times and routes are
- changeable subject to fees and upgrades see Terms and Conditions for further details.
- Name changes can be made at a standard fee of
- GBP45.00/EUR65.00 per person.
- Ryanair strongly recommends that all passengers
- purchase suitable travel insurance.
- Please see our website for online travel insurance special offers.

Tick this box

Important!

I have read and accept Ryanair's [terms and conditions](#), [photo ID policy](#) and the above fare rules and I will advise all other passengers travelling as part of this reservation of these conditions.

(Please check box to continue.)

7. Now we are getting closer.

Bargain Flights:

There are many websites offering bargain airfares from every UK airport. These sites trawl through the offerings of hundreds of other sites and offer links to these agents. Often the only means of contact with these agencies is by telephone that rather defeats the object of Web booking. Personally, I do not use these sites a great deal because I can find a flight more efficiently by going direct to the airline or travel agent. The prices, timetables and seat availability are usually more accurate on the direct sites.

No Ticket booking:

Many airlines are now using ticket-less systems for Internet booking. You are issued with a reference code to quote at the check-in desk where your details are available on the computer. The first time I used this system it felt very strange not to be clutching a familiar ticket together with my passport and other documents. There was definitely a frisson of anxiety moving up and down my spine as I approached the desk but all went smoothly on that, and subsequent, occasions. It just takes a little getting used to.

The Internet is not necessarily cheaper:

Local travel agents often offer last minute travel deals that are cheaper than those on the Net. The flight agencies that advertise in the travel sections of the weekend papers

can often find a better deal over the telephone rather than relying on their websites. By their very nature websites tend to be inflexible compared to a sympathetic agent speaking directly to you.

Final Travel Tips:

1. Be flexible
2. Avoid busy periods and
3. Book early.

Some Useful Web sites:

For flight tickets –

- Easyjet - www.easyjet.com
- Ryanair – www.ryanair.co.uk
- Flybe – www.flybe.com
- Ebookers – www.ebookers.com

For holidays –

- Thomas Cook
- Trailfinders
- Saga
- P&O Cruises

For train tickets –

- Trainline
- Eurostar