

FIRST CHOICE OFFERS FANTASTIC SAVINGS AND TIPS ON HOW TO BOOK A CREDIT CRUNCH FAMILY HOLIDAY

Submitted by: TUI UK

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First Choice today launched a range of money saving offers including discounts of up to £200* per couple off its Summer 2009 holidays, as well as expert tips on how families can make their holiday budget stretch further next year.

It is also offering thousands of new free child places, low booking deposits and no flight supplements for summer 2009 holidays. Prices start from £1269 per family for a seven night holiday in Portugal staying at the 4 Sun Holiday Village Algarve departing from Gatwick Airport on 2nd May 2009. This price is based on two adults and two children sharing, and includes accommodation on an all inclusive basis, flights, transfers and all taxes and charges.

First Choice's customer director, Tim Williamson said; "At First Choice, we understand that families are feeling the pinch this year and that value for money and financial security are top of the list when it comes to booking their holiday. Research has shown that most families regard their annual holiday as a necessity rather than a luxury, and will still be planning a break this year. So we've put together some money saving tips to help your holiday budget go further."

CREDIT CRUNCHING HOLIDAY TIPS FROM FIRST CHOICE:

- 1) Book early. With the collapse of XL, and with many tour operators offering fewer holidays, it is unlikely there will be many last minute holiday bargains this year, so it's best to book early and take advantage of the early booking discounts. It is particularly important for families with school age children who are less flexible and have more specific needs on holiday. And with low deposits on offer at First Choice, there is no reason to wait. So take advantage of the early booking discounts available in January and then sit back, relax and look forward to your break in the sun.
 - 2) Look out for free child places. Free child places are a genuinely fantastic bargain that can make a real difference to the cost of your holiday. Check the brochure, visit your local travel shop or look online. They do sell out quickly so search them out and book them fast!
 - 3) Always book with a well known ATOL protected tour operator. This will give you peace of mind that you will get your money back should your holiday company collapse. Tens of thousands of people were caught out with the demise of XL in September when they discovered their holidays were not financially protected. Many people simply do not realise that most low cost carriers and accommodation-only providers are not ATOL protected, so it is essential to check when you book.
- It's best to stick with a well known brand like Thomson or First Choice whose holidays are ATOL protected. Look out for the ATOL logo on brochures and other sales materials, but if you are in doubt, visit your First Choice shop where Holiday Advisors will be happy to offer advice about any company, even if you are not booking your holiday through them.
- 4) Be as flexible as possible.

If you have pre-school children, book outside the school holidays. Not only will you get a better deal, the resort will be quieter.

If you are tied to school holidays, consider travelling at the very beginning or end of the school holidays, as sometimes these can be cheaper. Look at alternative regional airports or consider a night flight which might be a lower cost option.

5) Be open-minded about your accommodation. Lower star rated hotels don't necessarily mean lower standards in accommodation and service. Smaller, family run hotels may have fewer facilities, but are often the most charming, friendly and well-run places to stay. First Choice offers ratings based on feedback from customers who have stayed there, so you can get an independent opinion on your accommodation before you book. Other websites such as www.holidays-uncovered.co.uk or Tripadvisor.com can also give impartial feedback on your accommodation.

6) Travel with other families Many tour operators offer great group discounts, which can save you all money. Your children will also have friends to play with, and the grown ups can take it in turn to babysit, giving you all a well-deserved night out without the kids.

7) All-inclusive holidays are very popular with families and can make your holiday budget go much further, as meals, drinks and snacks are taken care of. First Choice offers a range of all-inclusive properties ideal for families, including nine Holiday Villages which are resorts in themselves, built with families in mind.

8) Keep it local. If you prefer to go self-catering and plan to eat out, try venturing off the tourist track, and eat where the locals eat. The food will often offer better value for money, and you can try some authentic local cuisine. Your Holiday Advisor is a source of local knowledge and can offer advice on the best restaurants to go to.

If you are eating in, shop for locally produced food, which will be fresher and more authentic. Avoid imported food as it can be very expensive. If you can't live without your Heinz ketchup or PG Tips teabags, bring them with you!

9) Book holidays with kids clubs. Keeping kids amused on holiday can be expensive, and it is costly and time consuming to bring loads of toys and activities with you. Kids clubs are available at many family accommodations, and are designed to keep your little ones entertained for little or no extra charge.

10) Shop around for foreign exchange but don't leave it to the last minute as you could get stung with high charges at the airport or in resort. Ask your travel agent about their deals when you book your holiday. First Choice offers commission-free currency and a buy-back guarantee, and will even deliver it to you door by 3pm the next day.

11) Car hire can offer a cheaper way for families to explore their holiday destination. Make sure you book through a reputable dealer, or ask your travel agent or Holiday Adviser who can arrange car hire or offer tips about where to go for the best deals.

12) If you are being bitten by the credit crunch this year, don't assume you have to forgo your

holiday. There are a wide range of holidays on offer these days, to suit all budgets and taste, and may not be as expensive as you might think. First Choice's prices start from just £239 per person. Travel advisers are there to help and their expert advice won't cost you a penny!

For further information customers should visit their local First Choice shop, call 0871 664 9019

Ends

For further press information please contact:

Liz Bartlett - First Choice PR Manager

Tel: 01582 644117 Email: liz.bartlett@firstchoice.co.uk

* Savings of up to £200 per couple for bookings over £2000, or £150 per couple for bookings over £1500 or £100 per couple for bookings over £1000 for Summer 2009 departures only on First Choice package holidays, subject to terms and conditions. Booking period: 23 December, 2008, to 31 January, 2009. Low deposits, free kids and no flight supplements apply to selected holidays only.