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**MONEY BOX LIVE**

**Presenter: VINCENT DUGGLEBY**

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**DUGGLEBY:** Coming up to the Easter weekend seems a good time for Money Box Live to look at how the holiday season is shaping up. Cutting back on leisure spending is one way of tightening your belt in the present economic climate, and if you still haven't booked your summer holiday, should you do it now or hope for a bargain if you leave it to the last minute? And as for foreign currency, you'll certainly notice that the pound buys fewer euros and dollars than it did this time last year. You have to budget for higher air passenger duty and charges for extras, which used to be free. Then there's the worry about booking air tickets and hotels online or through a travel agent. What if the firm goes bust? It can take months to get your money back. And we have the added concern over the strike by British Airways cabin staff. Who's responsible for what if the holiday is ruined? The airline? The travel agent? The tour operator? The insurance company? What rights do you have to cancel or move to another airline if you can find one with spare seats? We'll do our best to help if you'd like to call us on 03700 100 444. And just in case you are planning a restful weekend break in the UK, are you sure you'll make it if there's a rail strike? Dear oh dear, maybe I'm being far too gloomy and my guests will take a more positive view. Frances Tuke is from ABTA, the travel association; Stephen Howard is from the Association of Travel Insurance Intermediaries; and Bob Atkinson in our Manchester studio is from Travelsupermarket.com. A reminder of the number - 03700 100 444 - and straight to our first caller, Jackie in Scotland. Hello Jackie.

**JACKIE:** Hello. Well I'm travelling on Easter Monday with British Airways and

thankfully I should be okay with the strike. But today, for example, there's a flood outside my house, a landslip in Berwick, the road closed between me and Edinburgh, you know, with the snow. So my concern now is what if I can't get to Heathrow due to the weather?

**LEWIS:** Okay, have you got an insurance policy?

**JACKIE:** I do have insurance.

**LEWIS:** And where are you going?

**JACKIE:** Miami.

**DUGGLEBY:** You're going to Miami. Okay.

**TUKE:** That sounds fantastic.

**DUGGLEBY:** Sounds fantastic. Well I'll bring in Stephen first off on this on the insurance side.

**HOWARD:** It's a tricky one because effectively the policy can cover you for missed departure - in other words if public transport fails to get you to Heathrow in time.

**JACKIE:** Well we were planning on driving from our house to Heathrow.

**HOWARD:** Right, in that case the policy will say you have to leave enough time to make that journey given the known travel conditions. So bearing in mind that the weather isn't very good at the moment, the policy would expect you to leave in plenty of time to get there.

**JACKIE:** But if the road ... Because I live in the Scottish borders, I'm trapped between two very small roads which get closed, you know, at the slightest fall of any

snow. So if the road is actually closed, how far around Britain do they expect you to drive in some sort of detour?

**TUKE:** (*laughs*) Start now, Jackie.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah, I mean it raises the general principle ...

**JACKIE:** My daughter came home from school today and said, "Mum, we should just pack and go the minute it melts."

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah, I mean there is a general principle here. I mean obviously you're driving, so you're taking a certain responsibility for getting there. But I mean public transport can be held up, and I mean if you make a genuine attempt to get to an airport, I don't think it's very reasonable if you have to sort of leave three days ahead. I mean that cannot be right.

**HOWARD:** The policy covers you for failure of public transport. It doesn't cover you if your car ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, so public transport is covered. So if you get on a train and it gets stuck or doesn't arrive ...

**HOWARD:** Yes, you would be covered.

**DUGGLEBY:** ... then you're covered. Bob, have you got a comment on this one?

**ATKINSON:** Well the other alternative I'd mention here is if you are worried about it and you can try and get maybe down to Heathrow the day before and give you that time longer, not only will it make the start of your journey a little bit easier in terms of you're not having a long drive, then a long flight, but it also is going to mean you're probably going to then worry less.

**TUKE:** I would agree with that.

**ATKINSON:** But I guess that depends on the snow melting outside. I think the weather forecast is due to get a little better as the weekend goes on, so I'm hoping you should be okay.

**DUGGLEBY:** We've had a variety of calls on air lines, rail travel and all sorts of things, as you'll imagine from the news as it changes. Now this is an email from Jessica. She lives near Gatwick and she says: 'I collect BA airmiles and I've managed to get two tickets for a flight on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. And on the basis of this, I made tour and hotel bookings for the holiday on which I paid deposits, but if there's a strike and I don't fly, I'll probably lose my bookings and I might get my airmiles back. But you know where *do* I stand on this?' May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Frances?

**TUKE:** Well no strikes for that period have been announced yet. I know that British Airways - the unions have threatened some strike action after 14<sup>th</sup> April. But that hasn't come through yet, and so if you have some travel insurance, that will cover you because there isn't anything announced right now. And it's quite likely, as we've been discussing a bit earlier, that many of the British Airways flights have actually been flying over these past four days and only about 7% have not been able to get onto their flights. So at the moment, the way that British Airways is working with these things, she really should be feeling quite comfortable at this stage.

**DUGGLEBY:** But this is almost consequential loss, isn't it? It's saying because one thing happens, then I lose a deposit on a hotel - which sounds to me as though she probably made them direct.

**HOWARD:** Yes. I mean if she booked through a tour operator and put the whole thing together as a package, there'll be slightly more protection.

**DUGGLEBY:** It doesn't sound like that to me.

**HOWARD:** No. The travel insurance policy is basically say for strike action - i.e. would come under your travel delay side of the policy. You must go to the airport, you must check in, and you must wait 12 hours and then abandon the holiday. If you don't make any effort to get to the airport, you don't try and check in, then there wouldn't be any cover anyway. So that's the crucial point.

**ATKINSON:** And the other thing that the listener would need to do as well is she would then need to try to cancel those onward arrangements as well, so that when she made a claim for those irrecoverable losses, she's minimised the actual kind of like costs she's putting to the insurance company. But, yeah, I mean Gatwick flights over this weekend have actually operated at 100% from British Airways, so it's a good chance she should be able to get away.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. Christine, your call - I know you've been waiting - because you need to get out quickly.

**CHRISTINE:** Thank you. My question is last August my husband, as a surprise for me, booked two return flights to Paris for this March using my daughter's computer at her home. When we arrived in March for the early morning flight, we were informed by the low cost airline that the flights had been cancelled. But not only had they been cancelled, they were cancelled in January and they forwarded an email to us to inform us, but we didn't receive the email.

**DUGGLEBY:** Oh, right. So you turned up for a non-existent flight?

**CHRISTINE:** Yeah, we turned up.

**DUGGLEBY:** And well you didn't get anywhere? I mean you lost your hotel bookings, everything, did you?

**CHRISTINE:** To be fair, the airline re-booked our flight, but 36 hours later. So we then had to decide were we going to go and lose everything or do we rebook a hotel

for the last night, which is what we did?

**DUGGLEBY:** Right, okay. So that's cost you ... Your point being that it's cost you extra money, has it?

**CHRISTINE:** Yes.

**DUGGLEBY:** And did you have an insurance policy?

**CHRISTINE:** Yes, we got insurance but we weren't covered.

**DUGGLEBY:** *(over)* And what did they say?

**CHRISTINE:** Sorry?

**DUGGLEBY:** You weren't covered.

**CHRISTINE:** No, they said we weren't covered.

**DUGGLEBY:** That's right. Stephen's shaking his head very strongly here.

**HOWARD:** Yeah, the policy again for cancellation element will cover you for things like strike. It covers you for death, illness and injury. It doesn't cover you if the tour or the flight is cancelled by the flight organiser or any changes to your itinerary by a tour operator, unfortunately.

**CHRISTINE:** They did say that, yes. So I accepted that.

**ATKINSON:** I know that you mentioned there that you made the booking on was it your daughter's PC?

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINE:** Yes.

**ATKINSON:** Now I don't know what email address was put in - whether it was your own email address, whether you've got access to email - but for any listener who has that kind of thing, what I would always recommend is even though these days most airlines say you don't need to reconfirm a flight, even myself who's travelled extensively for years and years and years, I'm travelling again tonight at 6 o'clock. I've checked my flight is going earlier on today. So I always do still check that just in case I haven't received anything. Having said that, the airlines do rely on the information that you give them at point of booking to be able to send that out to you, although in some circumstances emails may not get through.

**CHRISTINE:** Yeah. They did confirm that the email went out on 19<sup>th</sup> January.

**DUGGLEBY:** Frances?

**TUKE:** And indeed the denied boarding regulations in terms of refunds, re-routing and that kind of thing would only come if it was in a much shorter period of time. I think it's 14 days actually.

**HOWARD:** Yeah, that's correct.

**DUGGLEBY:** Interestingly enough on that point, we've got an email saying how much notice has an airline got to give to their passengers when they cancel a flight? Is there any standard period of time?

**TUKE:** Well these particular denied boarding regulations kick in within the kind of 14 day window before your flight goes, and then they have to give you a re-route or a refund.

**ATKINSON:** So there's no actual official notice period they have to give. It's the notice period that they give you determines what they have to do for you and whether they have to pay you anything.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. We'll move on now and take a call from John in Saxmundan. John?

**JOHN:** Hello. Hello?

**DUGGLEBY:** Yes, I'm here.

**JOHN:** My wife is going to the States for the whole of May and she wants to know the best, most advantageous way of exchanging currency.

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. Well the States is, you know, pretty straightforward, but there are plenty more options probably than you've been used to. So, Frances, take us through them.

**TUKE:** Well you're actually slightly better off right now if you're going to the States than you were a year ago because the exchange rate's looking about 1.5 dollars to the pound right now and it was 1.43 this time last year. Not much better, but a bit better. Certainly, yes, I would always suggest to anybody going to pretty much any destination in the world that you have a variety of options on hand, so that you never get stuck. At the moment, you can take travellers cheques. They tend to be quite expensive because you have to pay commission when you buy them and then you're dependent on the exchange rate and the commission perhaps when you change them as well. But they do give you a lot of security. Obviously credit cards are good if you want to buy big ticket items when you're away, but probably not always the best idea when it comes to taking out small amounts of money.

**JOHN:** She doesn't want to fly big.

**DUGGLEBY:** Bob, what's your advice here?

**ATKINSON:** Yeah, what I would do here is I would take a mixture of cash and either a prepaid card or travellers cheques. What you don't want to rely on is using your own normal bank cards - i.e. your debit cards or your credit cards - certainly for withdrawing cash, unless you have one of the Nationwide accounts which have free withdrawals and don't have currency loading on them as well.

**DUGGLEBY:** When you say prepaid cards, what sort of cards are they?

**ATKINSON:** Well the prepaid cards are really a replacement for what travellers cheques were and it acts a bit like a ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Where do you get them?

**ATKINSON:** Well you can go to any of the high street banks. They issue them. You can go to any of the travel agents, that kind of thing. But to get the best deals, you should really be looking online. And companies such as Caxton FX, FairFX, they give you the best exchange rates.

**DUGGLEBY:** And what do they do? They load it up with dollars, do they, at the current exchange rate?

**ATKINSON:** Yeah, you apply for the card. They send you it. You then load up the card with the amount that you want to. Someone like Caxton or FairFX, for instance, the kinds of rates that you're going to get on them today for the dollar are kind of around the 1.47, 1.48 mark, whereas ...

**DUGGLEBY:** So it's below the sort of spot price?

**ATKINSON:** It's always below the spot price. But if you were to go to get it say from your high street bank instead, then you're only going to get a rate of something

like 1.43, 1.42. So it's a much better rate online, applying for the card that way.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay.

**TUKE:** It's interesting at the moment. I know we always say don't get any cash at the airport; but if you book online beforehand, you can get a better rate.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay.

**ATKINSON:** You can do. But beware that one of the three companies that do that, they will do it commission free but they'll give you the rate on the airport, I've discovered this morning.

**TUKE:** Oh.

**DUGGLEBY:** And, Stephen, what's the limit on an insurance policy claim should you be so unlucky as to lose cash?

**HOWARD:** They will vary from policy to policy, but it's somewhere between £250 and £300 generally for cash.

**DUGGLEBY:** But the card loss would be no problem because I mean it wouldn't be useable?

**HOWARD:** It wouldn't be useable and you'd get your refund from the cardholder.

**DUGGLEBY:** Indeed.

**TUKE:** That's the great thing about these prepaid cards.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah. Let's take a couple of emails now. This one from Sue. And she says: 'My husband and I are taking a cruise between Istanbul and Kiev in July. The

flights to and from the cruise are operated by British Airways, so who's responsible if this strike drags on and on and on? Should I be taking some action now, bearing in mind that the holiday is planned a good time ahead?" Frances, I suspect this probably is a package?

**TUKE:** It does sound very much like it's a package, especially if it's a cruise. Quite often people buy their cruises as part of a package, a fly cruise, in which case it's up to the cruise tour operator or the tour operator that's organising this holiday to make sure that you get out there or give you a full refund if necessary for both parts of your holiday.

**DUGGLEBY:** So she's probably safe. But again, contrasting that with those people who do it themselves, there of course there is not the degree of comfort. You know, you would perhaps be a little bit worried?

**TUKE:** You are more on your own.

**DUGGLEBY:** More on your own, yeah.

**ATKINSON:** Although having said that, I think what customers probably need to remember is with a flight like Istanbul - now on British Airways, that would operate from London Heathrow, and London Heathrow has been affected through these strikes. But what British Airways managed to do this last weekend was around about 93% of all the passengers due to travel actually managed to get away in one form or another. So whilst it is a concern, if it has been booked independently you're probably going to have to sit tight because unless you can afford to lose that ticket, you're probably not going to get a refund on it if you want to switch away at this point.

**TUKE:** That's right. And I would always recommend with the strikes - 99% of strikes don't go ahead, so if there is a threat of strikes, you really do need to sit tight until the last minute, I'm afraid.

**DUGGLEBY:** And Trevor is going to mainland China and he's also asking about currency. He knows about the Nationwide FlexAccount card. He also talks about the Post Office credit card.

**ATKINSON:** Ah!

**DUGGLEBY:** But he doesn't really know too much about you know what the Chinese expect. (*laughter*) It's all very well for us to sit in London pontificating, but when you're out somewhere in the middle of China, I mean they're not going to be terribly impressed. It's the renminbi, isn't it, Frances?

**TUKE:** It is - the RMB, the yuan, absolutely. And it depends kind of where you're going. If you're going to be sticking to Shanghai and Beijing and all those big cities, then obviously you'll have a lot of options - you can use ATMs if you want, you've got big hotels that you can change your money in - but perhaps if you're going out more into the sticks, you might want to take some travellers cheques with you.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yuh. I mean are there sort of areas of China where, you know, perhaps the US dollar is more acceptable?

**ATKINSON:** Yes. The Chinese currency is pegged to the US dollar. So whilst, you know, in years past people just said oh take sterling, I would, if I'm going to take any currency over there, I would take it in US dollars as US dollar travellers cheques to use outside of the cities. And as he's got a Nationwide FlexAccount, that is one of the best cards that you can use anywhere in terms of withdrawing cash because the charges are very, very low and you get an excellent rate of exchange.

**DUGGLEBY:** Are there any others that are broadly comparable?

**ATKINSON:** Yes, there are. I mean he mentioned the Post Office card. That is one that you can use. But the other kind of best cards to really use from a debit card point of view, you're looking at people like a Barclays account you could use, any of the

major ones. But I would instead not go with one of those. I'd go with a prepaid card instead because the prepaid cards - we mentioned them before - you will get a far better rate of exchange and most of them now have free withdrawals from a cash machine. People like Caxton, FairFX, Travelex - those kinds of people.

**DUGGLEBY:** And these cards are free, or do you have to pay for them?

**ATKINSON:** They're pretty much ... Excuse me, they're pretty much free to obtain now.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah, to obtain them obviously.

**ATKINSON:** Very few people actually charge for them, and where they were making their money was either on purchases abroad or on cash withdrawals abroad. But it's now got so competitive that people like Caxton and Travelex, for instance, they're free to obtain and they're free to use overseas as well other than a couple of purchase charges. So just check that small print, but they're pretty much getting free all round.

**DUGGLEBY:** Geoff would like us to tell what's the local currency for going to Croatia and can you buy it here?

**TUKE:** Yeah. It's the Kuna, the Croatian Kuna.

**DUGGLEBY:** Kuna - right, okay.

**TUKE:** And we have got so much competition when it comes to foreign currency exchange that, yes, you can buy it in this country. But I would make sure that you probably do it a little bit ahead of time, so that you are very sure that the supplier that you're using will be able to get it in.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, let's take another call. This one is Mary in Northumberland.

**Mary?**

**MARY:** Hi. It's not actually about me. It's my daughter, but she's at work, otherwise I'm sure she'd have rung you herself. She is taking a gap year and she's going out to South East Asia. She's flying to Thailand at the end of May and she's not coming back here until the end of November. So clearly, 6 months she's going to need plenty of money.

**TUKE:** Fantastic.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yes, she's going to need a lot more things than just some money too. She's going to need ...

**TUKE:** Is that the Bank of Mum and Dad?

**MARY:** Well she's been researching a great deal about you know jabs and the right size of backpack ...

**TUKE:** Good.

**MARY:** ... and goodness knows all the other things that you need to do. But particularly I am concerned, and she is too, about how to carry money. I mean I'm very interested in these prepaid cards. Are those going to be available to use in places like Lao?

**DUGGLEBY:** Before we just get into the detail, let's just get a quick checklist from the panel as to what you need to do if your daughter is about to embark on a 6 month visit abroad. I'll start with you, Stephen. I mean you've got to get some sort of insurance in case, you know, which for young people shouldn't be too expensive.

**HOWARD:** No.

**DUGGLEBY:** But is there a problem for that duration?

**HOWARD:** No, not at all. You can get long stay or backpacker travel insurance up to 18 months in fact.

**DUGGLEBY:** And the fact it's South East Asia, does that make it any more expensive?

**HOWARD:** Not at all.

**DUGGLEBY:** It's worldwide cover in fact.

**HOWARD:** Yes, you pay the rate for the worldwide area for the duration that they're travelling. Some of them will allow them to come home maybe once or twice during the course of the gap year and still travel back out on the same policy. There are two or three really good sites out there to go to for that.

**DUGGLEBY:** And in terms of planning the itinerary, Frances, I mean is it sensible just to kind of get a rough idea of where you're going and how you're going to travel and whether you're going to travel ...?

**TUKE:** I mean I would always ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Have you done that yourself?

**TUKE:** I have done exactly that region in fact, probably in reverse: I ended up in Bangkok and flew into Beijing and did it all over land. But certainly, I mean, I used a travel agent, you won't be surprised to hear, and some of the specialist travel agents in those regions, particularly the backpacking ones and stuff, they have experts there that can really sort out some great itineraries for you. But just a few other things that I would suggest kind of thinking about. South East Asia - loads of mopeds, loads of scooters, loads of two-wheel vehicles. Please don't go on them without some kind of

head gear on because that's just silly and it will also make your travel insurance void.

**HOWARD:** That's right.

**TUKE:** There are so many road traffic accidents out there. It's really, you know, the number one thing to do. Foreign office advice, check it. I mean Bangkok and Thailand, absolutely fantastic country, but they have been seeing some protests recently and I would really avoid those. And keep checking the FCO advice once you're out in those destinations because things can change very quickly. Health information. She sounds like she's getting into the programme with that and definitely sort that out a good 6 to 8 weeks before you're going.

**DUGGLEBY:** And Bob, you were just picking up on the actual physical way of taking the money. Obviously these travel cards sounding attractive, these cash cards?

**ATKINSON:** Yeah. Just before I come onto that, a couple of other things. Make sure your passport has got plenty of validity on it and that you've also checked out any visas you may or may not need.

**TUKE:** That's a very good idea.

**ATKINSON:** Young people tend to love their mobile phones and keeping in touch. Please check out your mobile phone deal before you go abroad because you could end up with incredible charges if you're not careful. And also when you're going away for an extended period, there will be a number of things you normally have to pay and sort out at home. Get those all in order before you go to make sure that you're not coming back to kind of unpaid bills and things you might have forgotten about. So a couple of extra tips there. Yeah, for the money, what I would do is I would use prepaid cards as my major way of carrying my money. I'm not carrying physical cash around.

**DUGGLEBY:** Which mum and dad can top up in this country, presumably?

**ATKINSON:** They can. You can do it like a bank transfer into the card. It's fairly easy to be able to do should that be required. You just withdraw it from ATMs over there; and if you pick the right two or three cards, there are no charges associated with that, so you're getting good value for money. In addition to that, if you are carrying some cash around - because obviously you tend to do so - make sure you've invested in like a good quality money belt and you know keep that on you at all times. If you're staying anywhere, try and use a safety deposit box if you're able to do so. If you have to leave your bags or anything anywhere, never leave any of your documentation, especially your money or anything there either. And if you've got any cards that you're taking with you, they always have, obviously, an account number, etcetera, and they've also got something on the back to say what happens if it's lost or stolen. Don't rely on your card if it's lost or stolen. Write the information down somewhere. And also leave it at home as well, so that if you do have a problem and you need to ring up to report your cards missing, then there's someone there to help you.

**DUGGLEBY:** I'm going to interrupt you there, Bob. Quite a long list. And I'm sure this is going to be a very good thing to listen back to on our listen again facility if you want to pick up all these good bits of advice for teenage daughter or son disappearing off round the world, but it's really time to get another call. This is Harry in Huddersfield.

**HARRY:** Hello, good afternoon.

**DUGGLEBY:** Your call.

**HARRY:** Yes hello, good afternoon.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yes, I'm here.

**HARRY:** Okay. My point is really a complaint against insurance companies and travel insurance, in particular, and I'm wondering whether the panel, when I've explained the point, will know anything that's happening to ameliorate this position.

Of course I understand that ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Can you give us your question rather than giving us a life history, Harry. What is your question?

**HARRY:** Well the question is I'm accusing them of ageism.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, right.

**HARRY:** Because if you're over 65, then they think you're about to peg out; and if you're over 75 - god help us, they're sending an ambulance around for you. So I'm wondering whether the panel know of anything that, you know, is being done about this because I think they're just not taking account? It's such a blunt instrument. And I mean I know that I'm in better shape than some guys in their 40s and 50s who might be three or four stone overweight, but they want to ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Yeah. Can we cut to the chase, Harry?

**HARRY:** Yeah, sure.

**DUGGLEBY:** What you're saying is that you can't get insurance or you think you can't get insurance because you're too old.

**HARRY:** Well it's expensive.

**DUGGLEBY:** It's expensive. Alright, okay. So we've got the man here to answer you. I mean he is from the Association of Travel Insurance. So you're expensive, you rip the customers off, Stephen, and they're very miffed.

**HOWARD:** Ripping the customer off is a little bit unfair. Certainly the problem with travel insurance is it goes back to the early days when the only people really travelling were the younger people. Travel insurance was sold through the travel trade and the

travel trade wanted those rates kept down to the most competitive rates going and frankly people over 65 didn't travel a great deal. That has changed as people have got older. Those people who were the youngsters travelling 20, 30 years ago are now the people who are still travelling, but they're over 65. It is all being addressed through the travel industry. A lot of travel policies now are phasing their age loadings through. Rather than having a massive hike at 65, we're no longer putting upper age limits on policies. It is much, much easier for people, older travellers to still get travel insurance - the only restriction being on how long they're normally going to travel and if they've got any health conditions.

**LEWIS:** I'm reliably informed that BIBA does have a website in which you can search for specific companies who will insure older people. I think Saga are one of the big people in this market.

**HOWARD:** That's right. And so you can also do that on the Associated Travel Insurance Intermediaries website as well. We have to signpost now to help people.

**DUGGLEBY:** Are there any sort of names that are particularly ... I mean are there companies which specialise in older travellers?

**HOWARD:** Not really. I mean you can look at Saga, you can look at Age Concern, but they still have age loadings on their policies. But there are other companies out there - people like Travelmaster, Holidaysafe. Their age loadings phase in and they're not quite as steep as other companies are.

**DUGGLEBY:** And of course one has to remember that sometimes age is associated with ill health. I mean Harry said no, he's in absolute tip-top shape, but once you do introduce an element of ill health, it does swing the pendulum against you.

**HOWARD:** It can do, yes, depending on where you're going.

**DUGGLEBY:** Frances?

**TUKE:** I know that we've been talking to the ABI and they did a bit of work with the Equalities Commission looking at whether they could restrict the use in terms of age, and actually they found that it would lead to generally higher travel insurance costs. And in fact any kind of insurance does look at the risks. And in travel insurance, they found that the average cost of a claim made by someone over 65 is nearly three and a half times more than one made by someone under the age of 50. So there is that actual risk to the insurance company.

**DUGGLEBY:** We're running out of time, but there's an email I'd really like to take from Nick whose ageing mother he wants to send abroad for 2 to 4 months, around 3 months while her house is being done up. What a splendid idea.

**TUKE:** How lovely.

**DUGGLEBY:** 'She loves to travel, but she's 84 now and has limited movement. Can you tell us a good way of going on holiday? She wants to be close to some reasonably good medical care and she's aware of the insurance.' What does the panel suggest?

**TUKE:** I certainly would ... This, to me, sounds like a cruise. There are so many options on cruise. Not just for older people.

**DUGGLEBY:** A world cruise?

**TUKE:** Depending on how long she's got.

**DUGGLEBY:** 3 months.

**TUKE:** Well 3 months, definitely.

**ATKINSON:** Or back to back cruises, you know where you can do 7, 14 and 21 night itineraries back to back.

**TUKE:** It's so wonderful in terms of all the different destinations you can get to.

**DUGGLEBY:** So book up a really nice world cruise. And the medical healthcare of course would be good because the ship's got the doctors and the facilities.

**TUKE:** Customer service is amazing on all the cruises.

**DUGGLEBY:** Well I'm sure she'll have a wonderful time. One more call quickly. Janet in Salisbury?

**JANET:** Hi. I'm leaving for Chile on Sunday. My base currency is sterling, pounds. Do I take pounds and buy whatever the local currency is? Or do I buy US dollars, which seems to me a little counterintuitive because it involves two transactions, but I may be wrong?

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, Bob?

**ATKINSON:** If it was me - and I'm going to Chile myself in September - I'm taking a small amount of sterling with me and I'm also going to be changing the majority of my money onto a dollar prepaid card, and I'm going to be doing that for both Chile and Argentina.

**DUGGLEBY:** Have you been to Chile, Frances?

**TUKE:** I haven't, no, but it's a fantastic place for wine. I know that. That's a bit sad, isn't it?

**JANET:** Do they accept our credit cards in restaurants?

**TUKE:** Oh they definitely would, yes. It's a very international, very Western and European feeling destination - both Chile and Argentina, in fact.

**ATKINSON:** But do be wary when you're using your credit card overseas. Make sure you know what your charges are from your credit card company over here. And if you've got time, it might be worth applying for a card that is going to give you very low charges and very good exchange rates. So just be wary. They will accept them, but be wary what you'll pay over here when you come back.

**DUGGLEBY:** Dynamic currency conversation, Bob?

**ATKINSON:** Yeah, if you are offered to pay it in your own currency over there, do not do it. Don't do this thing where it says pay in sterling. Ignore that. Pay in the local currency on your credit card there and let them convert it back.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, well I'm afraid we've run out of time for all your questions. They've been buzzing in in the last few minutes, but I'm afraid we've got no more time to answer them. But we have got a website. We've got [bbc.co.uk/moneybox](http://bbc.co.uk/moneybox) where you can have your say, listen to the programme again, or download a podcast. We've got our helpline on 0800 044 044. And you've been listening to Frances Tuke from ABTA; Stephen Howard from the Association of Travel Insurance Intermediaries; and Bob Atkinson from Travelsupermarket.com. Don't forget to join Paul Lewis for Money Box at noon on Saturday. Paul will also be taking your calls on benefits on Money Box Live next Wednesday afternoon. I'll be back in a couple of weeks.