

# Hidden charges

This is by way of a personal subject this time, but is linked because I wrote about Airbnb in a previous post comparing their business model with our sector.

I have just tried to use their services for the first time and am astonished and extremely disappointed to find them not entirely honest in their actions. I am traveling to UK for a long weekend and thought that I would book accommodation through Airbnb. I specifically set my options to have prices in GBP and expected to pay in GBP. I was then surprised to find that the bill was presented in Euro. I challenged this as I always follow the policy to pay in local currency on other sites to avoid the hidden charges which are applied. In other words, the credit card company use a competitive exchange rate and do not make administrative charges. Amazon is quite bad in this respect and must make a lot of profit on currency dealing for their customers but they do offer the option of which currency to pay in so as long as you are aware of this and careful then it is OK.

But Airbnb policy is to charge in the currency of the country where you live. When I challenged them on this they pointed me to a clause in their conditions which indeed states this. Of course this brings an extra 3% charge to me as this is the administrative charge which Airbnb make for effectuating the currency change - which I do not wish for. In reality they have no costs at all because they are accepting and paying in all different currencies so it is merely a question of balancing their accounts. An extra €20 on each transaction certainly contributes nicely to their bottom line and of course I learn that it is in line with their declared policy; but I can't help feeling it is taking advantage of their customers in a way which I find unpleasant.