



While summer is traditionally the time for holidays and relaxation, with the news dominated by discussion of the recession, consumers are becoming increasingly careful about how they spend their money. For this reason ECC Ireland would like to offer you some tips that will allow you to enjoy your holiday in a safe and cost-effective way.

Our consumer query of the month concerns problems arising from the purchase of a car that developed a fault soon after purchase.

If you have had a problem with a purchase from another EU country, please contact us on 01 8090600 or at info@eccireland.ie. For information on your consumer rights in Europe, see www.eccireland.ie

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Editor

1. Sun, Sea, Sand and Savings! Advice for the Cost-Conscious Consumer

If you are about to take your holidays ECC Ireland would like to offer you some tips to enable you to enjoy your holiday, while still saving money:

Before you go.....

1. **Insurance:** Make sure that you take out a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This free card entitles you to avail of public health care throughout the EU, the EEA (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Switzerland, at no cost or low cost if you become ill while visiting these countries. If you are travelling to the UK, you do not need the EHIC card to gain access to the NHS, merely proof that you are normally resident in Ireland, such as a bill addressed to you. Irish people are far less likely to have an EHIC card than people from other EU Member States so make sure that you do not miss out on this. Also before you take out insurance for your trip, check to see if your private health insurance covers you for illness or injury while abroad, as may often be the case. You could also consider taking out travel insurance which would cover you in the event of flight cancellations for instance, and if so you should make sure to shop around for best value.
2. **Check in:** Airlines want you to check in online because it is cheaper for them, and several have begun to impose charges on passengers who choose to check in at the airport, so in most cases planning ahead and checking in before you go to the airport will save you money, as well as time. Also familiarise yourself with the luggage policies of the airline you are travelling with, as weight allowance and fees vary significantly from airline to airline.

When you get there....

3. **Roaming:** Staying in touch has never been easier but often the cost of calls made while abroad can lead to shock bills when you return home. New European legislation which came into force on July 1 this year is designed to ensure that

consumers no longer get a nasty surprise when they get their mobile phone bill. When roaming within the EU, the new maximum limit for calls made is **43 cent + VAT** per minute while the maximum limit for calls received is **19 cent + VAT** per minute. SMS text messages are capped at **11 cent + VAT**. The new legislation also applies to downloading data which is capped at €1 per MB.

be aware...

- There are several mobile networks in each country.
 - When you arrive at your destination, you will probably be automatically connected to one – not necessarily the cheapest one for you.
 - Before your trip, check with your mobile provider or ComReg so you can select the best network available as soon as you arrive. Don't forget!
 - Consider switching from your current home network to another operator if they have a better deal.
 - If you travel regularly to the same destination, it may be worth your while to purchase a local SIM card. This will allow you to make calls at a local rate.
4. **Avoid fakes:** While the local market may sell a Gucci handbag at a knock down price most of us know that it is unlikely to be the real thing. What few people know is that this cheap handbag can make us liable for a fine of up to thousands of Euro. In Italy for instance legislation governing the sale of counterfeit goods imposes on the spot fines on the seller and also on the buyer so if you are stopped and found with dodgy Dolce and Gabbana gear in your possession you can be fined €10,000. As counterfeit goods are linked with organised crime ECC Ireland's advice is while abroad never fake it.

The European Single Market offers good value for money to the consumer and EU consumer legislation means that you are equally protected whether you shop in Turin or at your local corner shop. Remember if something does go wrong you can always contact us. ECC Ireland offers free and confidential information, advice and assistance about cross-border consumer purchases. For more information see www.eccireland.ie

2. Last year I purchased a car from a dealer in England. A few weeks later I noticed that the air conditioning was not working. I contacted the dealer but they told me to contact the car manufacturer's local dealer as the car is still under the manufacturer's warranty. Is this correct or what comeback do I have with the dealer in England as they clearly stated that the car had air conditioning?

Under European Directive 99/44/EC, as transposed in the UK by the Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumers Regulations 2002, amending the UK Sale of Goods Act 1979, in the event of lack of conformity with the contract, consumers can seek remedies directly from the final seller since the contract is concluded between the buyer (ie. the consumer) and the final seller (ie. the English car dealer in this case).

It may be reasonable for the seller to refer the matter to the people who are in a position to assist in verifying and fixing the problem, e.g. a manufacturer's local representative, as this may be more convenient than bringing the vehicle back to the UK for inspection and necessary repairs. However, this arrangement should be organised by the seller, if required. If the lack of conformity becomes apparent within the first 6 months from the date of delivery, it is for the seller to prove that the product conformed or provide for the remedies stated in the legislation (e.g. repairs or replacement free of charge). After the initial 6 months, it is for the consumer to prove the defect.

Consumers may also rely on the manufacturer's warranty and contact the warrantor directly but it must be noted that remedies available under a warranty or guarantee are in addition to and not in substitution for your rights as a consumer.

If you want more information about this or any other cross-border consumer issue you can contact us on 01 8090600 or at www.eccireland.ie.

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Disclaimer: Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the European Consumer Centre cannot be held responsible for matters arising from any errors or omissions contained in this publication. The information provided is intended as a guide only and not as a legal interpretation.