

Mr Treasurer was a highly organised individual when it came to his work, but one of life's most disorganised souls between quitting time and the next day's breakfast. And that's why he found himself in his favourite local pub on a Sunday afternoon, staring at the wall behind the bar, trying to get inspiration.

He had, you see, never quite got around to booking a summer holiday and now he thought he really ought to treat himself to a last-minute break – 10 days away somewhere. But where?

The trip advice websites (you know the ones) held no attraction for Mr Treasurer. He was too interested in money. Cash, in particular. That's not to say he was a miserly creature or someone whose appetite for risk was like a rabid dog's thirst for water. Rather, it was just that he took great pleasure in other countries' paper money.

And so he contemplated the pinboard on the wall behind the bar, which was festooned with banknotes from around the world.

He decided immediately that the US was off the list. Wishy-washy, grey-green banknotes – impossible to tell a dollar bill from a 20 unless you paid a lot of attention. Far too dull a currency. Nope, not going there.

Greece was a possibility. He might arrive with euros and return home with drachma – which would be financial nonsense, but a fun story to tell – and he could be the first customer in his

HAVE CASH, WILL TRAVEL

As you'd expect from someone in his job, Mr Treasurer thinks long and hard about his holiday money



pub to pin a new drachma note to the wall. Worth considering, but unlikely.

Mr Treasurer spotted a 20 tala banknote and decided that Western Samoa had possibly the most beautiful currency. It was a particularly striking shade of bright yellow, with a lovely waterfall on one side and the national bird on the other. It would be a pleasure to have these in one's wallet and to spend a few in that Pacific paradise. Bit far to go for 10 days, though.

Bermuda's new banknotes are delightful, Mr Treasurer noticed. Apart from the images, they are printed 'portrait' orientation rather than 'landscape' – or upright rather than lengthways, if you prefer. Well, then. Bermuda is definitely on the shortlist, Mr Treasurer decided, though he did think that the money looked like it had been designed by someone in PR.

Zimbabwe was intriguing, because exponentially ridiculous inflation had landed the country with

a currency that would devalue between the time you accepted cash in your hand and put it in your pocket four seconds later. A few years ago, the country had a banknote with a face value of one hundred trillion Zimbabwean dollars – 14 zeroes. It was worth less than belly button lint. Now it's worth absolutely zilch. Zimbabwe scrapped its own currency and allowed people to use more than half a dozen foreign currencies as legal tender. That sounded too much like the day job rather than a holiday, thought Mr Treasurer.

In a flash, the banknotes pinned on the wall behind the bar gave Mr Treasurer a brilliant idea. He suddenly remembered that, 15 years ago, there used to be a bar in the town of Stanley in Hong Kong where they did two drinks for the price of one if you paid with a Standard Chartered Bank HK\$20 bill. Is the bar still there? Do they still do the special offer? No idea – but Mr Treasurer decided there was only one way to find out... ❖

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