

UK OFFICE

June 2018 REPORT

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UK Director

Tour Operators

- **American Sky** – We met with Kathryn Glover, who advised that bookings to the US were looking really healthy compared to 2017 travel. They are seeing a substantial amount of early bookings from the UK (50% of bookings are for 2019 travel), whereas the Irish tend to book last minute (90% for 2018 travel). Orlando is currently tracking at +8% vly for 2018, whereas St. Pete/Clearwater is +2.6% vly. The USA is +20% vly. Kathryn mentioned that they are working on a new website which will be more upmarket and focus on tailor-made. This will be more inspirational, but customers will still need to book via their call centre. The website is due to go live towards the end of the year. They have also expanded their sales team, which now includes 10 home workers who have a strong knowledge of Florida. They are in conversations with Marriott regarding a direct XML link which will assist with more competitive rates and inventory. We discussed possible training in August and September, so Kathryn will follow up with some dates. Since our meeting, we have provided Kathryn with images for use on their website.
- **British Airways Holidays/LIME** – We met with Natalie Blanchard (Lime) and George Beguinot (BA) to discuss opportunities to work together in the future. Lime are a fare distributor in the UK, exclusive to the IAG. They sell British Airways exclusively, offering Inclusive Tour leisure fares to be packaged with an ATOL bonded operator/agent's own ground arrangements. In 2017, they booked over 70,000 flights from their 450 accounts. Natalie advised that they would be keen to work with us on training events, particularly targeting agencies in London as well as Scotland and Newcastle, and would be happy to discuss marketing opportunities to promote the Tampa route with their key accounts including stays in St. Pete/Clearwater. We will follow up with Natalie in the new fiscal year.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We met with Keri Mulqueen, who advised that they were pacing down compared to last year, which was largely driven by a couple of hotels in our destination. Overall Florida is tracking at +15%, but Orlando and Miami are struggling for 2018 travel. 50% of the bookings for St. Pete/Clearwater are for single centre holidays. Keri mentioned that they are seeing strong bookings overall for mobile bookings. She advised that their promotions and campaigns were stronger last year, they didn't have a Premium Leisure campaign this year. They are currently working on a flash sale and potentially a Tampa and Gulf Coast campaign, details still to be confirmed. Their website is now personalised (98% of customers will be served relevant content based on their recent searches), and they are working on more targeted marketing through their emails, homepage, Executive club members based on where they are in the booking process.

- **Travel Counsellors** – We spoke with Samantha Spencer who advised that their business to the US was looking strong. Currently Florida is tracking at +14% vly, driven by Orlando, Kissimmee and Miami. They are seeing good growth for Fort Lauderdale due to the extra flight capacity and their cruise business. St. Pete/Clearwater continues to be their top Florida beach destination behind Miami. The last couple of weeks of trading has been a little slow due to the good weather and the World Cup, but they aren't concerned. They are seeing that beach destinations are their best sellers, but city breaks are increasing as well as multi-centres. Their marketing, such as weekly offers to the consumer focus on multi-centres rather than single centres. Samantha mentioned that they are working on their USA takeover month in September, but we could possibly have some standalone activity.
- **Funway Holidays** – A meeting was held with Amy Shine, Product Manager at Funway Holidays. Amy advised that overall sales for 2017 were down slightly YOY but that overall Florida sales for 2018 was trading 8.5% up year on year and our area is up 1.9% year to date for travel in 2018. She advised that beach areas were doing really well in terms of sales and this is largely down to the annual Florida's Beaches campaign that we have participated in since the initiative started. Amy also advised that Mark International was recently sold to ALG (Apple Leisure Group). Amy advised that 70% of their bookings still come through the Funway Holidays brand which works directly with the UK travel trade and that My America Holiday, their direct consumer brand counts for the other 30% of sales. The meeting was held in partnership with our area hoteliers (Holiday Inn Harborside, Sirata Beach Resort & Tradewinds Resorts) who very kindly offered to provide special offers as part of the next Florida's Beaches Campaign should this continue into 2019.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We met with Nicole Gibson to discuss the Virgin Retail Travel in-store campaign that is currently taking place as well as providing her with general updates on the area including supplying her with the most recent New & Now newsletter. Nicole also discussed the recent co-op marketing campaign with us and advised that sales for our area during the campaign period were a total of 837 (1st April – 31st May) but that the final campaign report will be provided to us at the end of July in order for them to gage a true picture of bookings that would have resulted from this campaign.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Funway Holidays** – We attended their Florida agent evening event, which formed part of our marketing agreement, and was to celebrate the launch of their new Florida Beaches brochure. We were joined by; Fort Myers, Daytona, Florida Keys, Miami and Virgin Atlantic, and the evening consisted of short presentations from each partner, networking, cocktail making class, quiz and prize draw. Approx. 12 agents attended the event which was well received.
- **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – We had a meeting with Simon and Reka to discuss our forthcoming SeaWorld/VSPC Mega Fam in October. We have agreed on the Tour Operators we would like to invite, and will soon be sending details of the trip to our contacts. Reka is going to advise of their brochure deadlines, giveaways they plan to

send, and assets required for our destination to be included in their training programme. We will work with the US office in the coming weeks to start planning the itinerary.

- **Gold Medal Travel** – We participated in joint training with some of our area hoteliers ((Holiday Inn Harborside, Sirata Beach Resort & Tradewinds Resorts) at Gold Medal Travel in Preston. A total of three training sessions were conducted and approximately 15 staff were trained. We provided the sales staff with up to date literature/brochures and also handed out branded giveaways.

TRADE LIAISON

- **Boardmasters** – We have been working with the relevant people to finalise elements of this activity ahead of the festival in August. Vision 9 have provided initial concepts to share with the US office ahead of our call this month. Our landing page on the Boardmasters website, promoting the holiday prize and destination, has been approved by all partners and has gone live. The VR footage has been shot in Newquay and will be available for us to edit at the end of the month. We have confirmed the large TV screen and are currently working with the US team on the video for this. We have sourced suitable giveaways and staff clothing to be produced in the UK. Cornhole game has been agreed and we are awaiting on the final creative for production in the UK. We have sourced additional staff to support the various activity on the stand. We are in the process of finalising the microsite which will be used for the competition entries. We have provided Rooster with relevant tags from Brand USA and Ocean Florida, and they now have a final social media plan which has been shared with Vision 9, Brand USA and Ocean Holidays, and has been approved. The final ticket competition giveaway was promoted on Facebook and went live this month. We will be working to finalise the remaining elements ahead of the event in August.
- **Thomas Cook, Scandinavia** – Ahead of our campaign with them in August, we have provided Bjorn with all of our assets so they can begin working on the creative. We have received the banner, landing page, social media and email which have been approved.
- **Virgin Holidays** – Fiona Lewry advised that they are planning internal training for their Florida staff at the end of the month, so we have arranged for brochures, maps and giveaways to be sent to their office. Fiona is going to revert on when we can visit to provide dedicated training to their staff. We are working with Michelle to finalise the itinerary for their in-house fam trip next month, but in the meantime, we have provided Fiona with waivers for completion by the participants ahead of their arrival.
- **Virgin Holidays Retail** – Finalised all details relating to our joint retail in-store promotion that commenced on the 24th May and which ran for a period of 2 consecutive weeks. The additional free of charge activity that has been confirmed via their plasma screens is taking place in early July.
- **Barrhead Travel** – We participated in their Florida focus month, which consisted of providing a goody bag for the top booker for our destination. It was reported that the bookings were very low during the campaign despite the incentive. The feedback we

received was that overall, the Florida focus month performed well and created a great momentum in their branches, however as the focus was on the whole state rather than one particular area, they did not see a huge spike in any particular beach destinations. As the campaign was in house, they believe that it raised awareness on the various destinations out with Orlando, and got our staff speaking about the different Florida beaches to their customers. Numbers for St. Pete/Clearwater are not massive for them as a business, but it is an area that they have more focus on and recognise the potential for twin centres with Orlando.

- **Scandinavian Sales Mission** – We are working with Sigga and John at Icelandair, to find a suitable venue for our event in Copenhagen in November during our sales mission. We will continue to work with them in the coming months to get this finalised. We had a follow up call with Rukhsana and Norbert to discuss the remaining meetings and training to be scheduled and will work on getting these confirmed by August.
- **British Airways** – Discussions are continuing to take place with Marc James at British Airways regarding our joint annual FAM to St. Pete/Clearwater. Dates in September are at present being discussed.
- **Visit St. Pete/Clearwater/ SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment VIP Event** – Site inspections have taken place at various venues in London for the joint event that will be held on the 20th September 2018.
- **Visit America, Ireland** – We confirmed our attendance in the next quarterly meeting, which will take place in Dublin next month. We have also provided them with copy and an image for the craft beer scene which will be included in their next newsletter and featured on their website.
- **USA Summer Soiree** – We have confirmed our attendance at their annual event next month, which is hosted by Travel Media. The event will consist of a formal dinner and networking, and will have approx. 50 USA suppliers, Tour Operators, airlines and destination partners in attendance.
- **American Sky** – St. Pete/Clearwater was featured in their email as part of a twin centre with Orlando. This was offered as complimentary.
- **Kuoni** – Since our meeting at IPW, we have followed up with Vicki Bramley to arrange dedicated training for their agents at their head office. We are waiting for confirmation on dates for later in the year.
- **Trailfinders** – Since our meeting with Melloney Styles at IPW, we have begun conversations on a possible summer evening training event in London for their sales agents. We will follow up with her to discuss further.
- **Norwegian** – It has been announced that Norwegian are launching a new Gatwick to Tampa route, which will begin operation in winter 2018 (31st October). This will be a twice weekly service, on Wednesday and Sunday. We have a call scheduled to meet with the team next month to discuss opportunities to work together.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

1 June 2018, Source Travolution

One in five book travel on mobile, says Holiday Hypermarket

One in five people are now buying holidays by mobile phones, according to new research carried out by Holiday Hypermarket. The statistic is backed up by transactional data, which has shown a rise from 15% to 20% in bookings made from mobile devices in the first three months of 2018, versus the same period last year. While desktop still generates the majority of holiday bookings, tablet and mobile transactions are likely to overtake within a matter of years based on the current trend. There is now an even split between desktop and smaller devices. Holiday Hypermarket representative Craig Duncan said: "Travel companies have worked hard to improve the mobile booking experience for their customers. "With the increased usage of smartphones boasting larger screens, and the rise of apps, it's made booking easier as consumers become more confident in mobile commerce." The end of March saw Google announce it has started migrating websites to mobile-first indexing. This means the world's leading search engine will use the mobile version of a page for indexing and ranking, further cementing the shift from a desktop to mobile-centric connected world. Duncan added: "We certainly expect to see mobile bookings increase exponentially in 2019 and soon surpass desktop. "We know our customers like to use more than one device when exploring our site too, so our focus is on creating a frictionless booking journey experience for our users. "This focus takes into account trends in voice search and represents the on-going commitment we have to our customers in providing a modernised online shopping experience that is personalised, seamless and secure."

1 June 2018, Source Travolution

'Older generations more likely to use internet to research holidays'

Older generations are most likely to use the internet when researching their holidays than younger, digitally-native travellers, according to research from Kayak. Four in five (80%) baby boomers (aged 54-72) say they turn to the internet for holiday inspiration and 70% of pre-baby boomers (aged 73+) say they do, compared to 69% of millennials. In fact, millennials are the least likely to use the internet of any generation, according to the travel search engine's research. Despite the assumption that millennials are ever-connected to their mobiles, those aged 22-38 were found to be the biggest fans of the guidebook. More than a quarter (26%) of millennial respondents said they wouldn't be without a hard-copy of a guidebook when they go on holiday, more than any other generation. And millennials were most likely to make use of local knowledge, being more likely to ask advice from their hotel reception (26%) or ask locals for suggestions (18%) than any other generation. Using data from its Mobile Travel Report 2018, Kayak asked Brits whether their mobile gives them the confidence to be more spontaneous while travelling. It found that 57% of young travellers say their smartphones have had an effect on their travel habits – 30% say they feel more confident to be spontaneous when they travel thanks to their mobile, while 24% feel more connected to the destination they're in. But holidays are still seen as a chance to switch off

completely, says Kayak. One in four respondents (25%) said they turn off their devices completely and never look at them while on holiday, and 43% say they only use them from time-to-time. Around 20% use their mobile every day. The research found younger people are more likely to plan ahead for network connectivity issues. The most popular safeguard is to take screenshots of important documents like boarding passes and hotel confirmations (31%), to download information directly to their phone (30%), or to save notes in their phones (30%). Most respondents agreed that internet access is not a commodity worth paying for when on holiday. When travelling outside the EU, 40% wait and connect to a free Wi-Fi network where they can, whether at their hotel, restaurant or other location, rather than buying a local SIM card (5%), purchasing a mobile travel plan (5%), paying for internet at a hotel (3%), or taking the risk of racking up expensive roaming charges (9%). In terms of payment via mobile, women and young travellers are more comfortable paying for accommodation using their devices. Overall, 56% of Brits would be happy to pay for accommodation on their mobile while 44% would feel more comfortable making the payment in person on-site. But two-thirds (67%) of the younger generation would rather pay on their device. Females prefer to pay by mobile rather than in person (60-40%), while males are split 50/50. Kayak's Mobile Travel Report also found that the most searched-for destination via iOS and desktop users is New York, while Bangkok is the favourite destination for those who use Android. It found that iOS users were more likely to seek out high-end hotels – 28% of all searches made on iOS devices were for 5-star hotels, compared to 26% on Android and just 17% on desktop. Desktop users were also most likely to search for one or two-star hotels (12%) compared to 8% for iOS and 11% for Android users.

6 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Kuoni secures brand presence in Northern Ireland for first time with new agency deal

Kuoni has secured partnerships with two independent travel agencies, Feherty Travel, which will give the brand a presence in Northern Ireland for the first time, and TravelLab's new store in Macclesfield, Cheshire which is due to open in late summer. The addition of the two agencies will take Kuoni's portfolio of partnership stores to 12. The operator said this highlighted its ongoing commitment and investment to the trade. Feherty Travel and TravelLab Macclesfield will remain fully independent, said Kuoni. Both agencies will receive a marketing budget, in-store point of sale material, training alongside Kuoni staff at its Surrey head office and educational places. The agencies will also be mentioned on the back of Kuoni brochures as well as on its website, from where customers can book appointments direct. Kuoni said the deal meant it would secure distribution in new areas and take the brand closer to a new customer base, as well as strengthening its relationship with key trade partners. National sales manager Brad Bennetts said "The strategy that we have with our partner stores is strong and continues to work. These new investments that we are making are all about working hand-in-hand and sharing best-practice to build more business together." Feherty Travel has 45 years' experience in the business with a team of seven travel consultants. Managing director Scott Parker said, "We share the same customer service values and passion for travel as Kuoni and have a loyal base of customers looking for premium holidays worldwide, making this partnership a natural fit." The new TravelLab in Macclesfield will be the agency's second branch, their first being Frodsham, Cheshire, which Kuoni has had a relationship with for a number of years. TravelLab MD Jai Porter said: "After a prosperous relationship with Kuoni over the years it felt like the right move to turn our brand new branch into a Kuoni partner store. Situated on trendy Chestergate we plan to make it a vibrant and edgy place where customers will want to come and be inspired by our team of experienced travel consultants."

6 June 2018, Source Travolution

Don't expect immediate ROI from social, says Holiday Pirates

Many travel business are too focused on immediate return on investment on social media, according to fast-growing deals publisher Holiday Pirates. Speaking at this week's EyeforTravel Europe summit in London, the firm's chief executive David Armstrong said firms need to invest in content and brand and not be too sales focused. He told delegates how the German firm has grown from a travel blog purely on the back of its social media presence, ostensibly Facebook, and has spent nothing on Google Adwords. "Many businesses are focused on immediate ROI and that's the wrong thing to be focused on if you work on social media. "It will come, but it will come over time. If you invest in content and in brand and not be too sales pushy, that's a big mistake companies make trying to sell things the way they do on Google. "That won't work. You have to invest time and resources and technology but when the ROI comes it's really worth it. "Other businesses want people to immediately buy what they want them to buy. That's not our approach. We try to keep in touch day after day. "People want contact with our brand every day to see nice deals. That's what they want, good value for money deals and when they see one they like they really hop on it." Armstrong said Holiday Pirates took the decision to "fish where the fish are", highlighting fantastic deals to its 10 million Facebook fans in a relevant and engaging way. The firm has also seen 10 million app downloads, and is ramping up its presence in messaging apps like WhatsApp which its users are increasingly turning to engage with brands. "It sounds easy, but you really have to go into all these channels and understand them. They all work differently. "That does not just mean throwing money in to new channels and buying traffic somewhere else other than Google. It's about organic growth." Armstrong added: "Be relevant with content and deals but also address topics that are current. Have a call to action and be creative to foster engagement. That builds trust and inspiration. "Stay fresh, inspire and traffic and revenues will come. You have to really inspire people, draw their attention and everything else will come more or less on its own." Holiday Pirates says it is seeing increased mobile usage but continues to enjoy 93% organic traffic across all channels while 66% of users are existing followers and 34% new to brand.

8 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Mintel warns of 'continued decline' in overseas travel

Mintel is forecasting a slowdown in growth of travel overseas in the next three years. It says the ongoing Brexit negotiations and its impact on the Pound has already dampened travel abroad, with overseas volume growth slowing from 6.8% in 2016 to only 3% in 2017. "With the Pound susceptible to changes in the Brexit narrative, and only subdued real wage growth projected by the end of 2018, it is possible that people will choose to holiday in the UK, marking a continued decline in foreign travel," it said in its British Lifestyles Report out this week. "In line with this change, Mintel expects a slowdown in total growth over the next three years due to the impact of ongoing Brexit negotiations and a fluctuating Pound." It said if rising oil prices continue this would also push up air fares. But the report said there is 'some good news' as the number of overseas trips has finally surpassed the 45.5 million trip milestone, the record high reached before the 2008 recession. The report says spending on packages increased slightly, but independent bookings saw stronger growth because 'consumers feel like they can get a cheaper deal by researching and booking online themselves'. "The number of package bookings is expected to have remained fairly flat in 2017, while spending increased by an estimated 1.2%," said Mintel. "In contrast, independent

bookings are expected to have increased by 6.2% in 2017, while independent spending is estimated to have risen by 6.9%." Mintel said while Brits are still keen to go on overseas holidays, many will need to cut back on spending to afford their trips abroad. "Consumers want to take the same amount of holidays than they did the previous year. However, they will think about spending differently - many will be looking to cut back and economise on holiday services," it said. "This means that travel companies may take on a hit on ancillary revenues." It suggested that travel companies can get around this by encouraging 'spontaneous feel-good spending', by making purchasing ancillaries and upgrades as frictionless as possible. Fergal McGivney, senior travel analyst, added: "Many (British holidaymakers) will choose to drop their supplementary short breaks in the low season; however, they will be reluctant to give up their longer summer holiday. As a result, there is an opportunity for big brands to attract customers by diversifying their summer product offerings to fill the void of these missed short breaks."

8 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Barrhead Travel expands marketing team

Barrhead Travel has expanded its marketing team as part of growth plans across the UK and is looking to recruit more. It has appointed a digital marketing manager, Deborah Green, who was previously marketing manager for Diamond Resorts in the Costa del Sol. Ryan Dunlop is the agency's new marketing manager. He has a digital and marketing background, with recent freelance projects including digital producer at BBC and vision content manager for the Commonwealth Games. Katie Speirits, previously content creator at Scape, joins in the new role of social media manager. The new additions will report to Nesta Gilliland, who was recently announced as marketing director prior to the acquisition by Travel Leaders Group. The Glasgow-based team has also welcomed two additional social media executives, an additional senior marketing executive with another marketing executive due to join the team in the coming weeks. It is still on the lookout for 'talented, creative and forward-thinking' individuals to join the newly-created social media sales team as digital sales executives. Gilliland said: "The continued growth of Barrhead Travel is hugely exciting and the marketing team will continue to expand as a result. "Specifically, we have bolstered our social and digital teams with significant experience in line with our strategy to provide our customers with a full multi-channel offering. "Timely and relevant customer communications are key and the expansion of our digital and social teams ensures that we are offering our customers more opportunities to communicate with us via their preferred channel and at a time convenient to them."

8 June 2018, Source Travel Weekly

Package Travel and Atol Regulations finally released

The Civil Aviation Authority has finally released amended Atol regulations to meet the requirements of the European Package Travel Directive which comes into force in three weeks. The CAA published the amended regulations this afternoon together with its response to an industry consultation on its proposed changes. New Package Travel Regulations (PTRs) come into force alongside the amended Atol rules. These extend the rights enjoyed by consumers buying package holidays to millions of holiday bookings which previously sat outside the rules. They mean online travel agents (OTAs) and traditional high street agencies which sell flights and accommodation will become "organisers" of package holidays and carry the same liabilities towards consumers as tour operators. Such holidays are currently sold as 'flight-plus' arrangements, offering financial protection but not other package-holiday

protections. The EU directive was passed in 2015. The UK PTRs should have been passed last year to allow businesses at least six months to prepare ahead of the compliance deadline of July 1. However, the final version of the PTRs was only published late in May. Abta hit out at the lengthy delay this week as “unfair to the industry” following repeated assurances that publication of the Atol rules and Department for Business (BEIS) guidance on the new regulations was imminent. Simon Bunce, Abta director of legal affairs said: “It is very unfair on the industry to leave it this late. “Businesses should know by now they need an Atol if they are selling flight packages. “Where it gets difficult is in the detail – the statements people need to make in marketing and in booking conditions. It’s difficult for business to plan and to build wording into systems.” There has been no explanation for the prolonged hold up. Abta chief executive Mark Tanzer blamed a “logjam” in government. The CAA has previously said it will allow businesses a three-month ‘grace period’ before enforcing the new Atol Regulations. But Tanzer said: “It’s all very well the CAA saying it will take a loose attitude [to enforcing the regulations] to begin. It doesn’t matter. The customer has these rights from July 1.” However, the Abta chief welcomed the changes, insisting: “The big thing is that online travel sales –come under the Package Travel Directive from July 1. That will bring a few million [more] holidays into the PTRs. That is good for consumers and good for the industry.”

8 June 2018, Source Travolution

OTAs dominate paid search on Google in first quarter, Kantar Media study finds

A study into paid search by travel firms on Google has found OTAs Booking.com, On the Beach and Trivago were dominant in the first quarter of 2018. The research, by Kantar Media, found each spent over £7 million on search with the dominant global search engine on the keywords that were monitored. Unsurprisingly global OTA Booking.com was found to have splashed out the most – almost £20 million. The study used data from Kantar Media’s Digital Advertising Intelligence Solution, combining insights on both pay-per-click and organic search/display ad spend. The study identified TripAdvisor as the clear leader when it came to organic search in the first three months of the year. TripAdvisor saw over twice as many impressions and almost twice as many clicks as lastminute.com, its nearest rival in the travel sector, with an estimated PPC value of over £120 million. Of the three biggest PPC spenders, only Booking.com features amongst the top six sites for organic search impressions. ‘Hotels’ was the keyword with the highest spend during the three-month period, with businesses spending an estimated total of £8,504,262, over seven times more than on the next most invested-in keyword, ‘air bnb’. Booking.com, in particular, made huge investments in hotel related search terms. The site’s top ten keywords for both spend and estimated PPC value in organic impressions all contained the word ‘hotel’ or ‘booking’, accounting for a total spend of around £4.8 million. Outside of accommodation, the key battleground for PPC in the travel sector is around low-cost breaks. ‘Cheapest holidays’, ‘cheap holidays’ and ‘cheapest flights’ all feature among the 20 most sought-after travel related keywords, accounting for almost £2 million in spend between January and March this year. Twenty one separate advertisers were spending on the keyword ‘cheapest holidays’ and 19 on ‘cheap holidays’, making them some of the most competitive keywords in the industry. In comparison, for all the spend on ‘hotels’, the keyword was only contested by 14 advertisers. Richard Poustie, chief executive of Kantar Media UK, said: “Both search and display advertising are incredibly competitive in the travel sector, especially in the first quarter of the year, and this is reflected in the huge investments brands make in this space. “It’s important, therefore, to remember that spend in itself is only one part of the campaign – if brands want to get a good return on their advertising investment, it is vital that there is consistency across

their online search and display, and that their chosen search terms complement their display advertising. “In such a competitive space, being able to see what competitors are investing in – across both search and display – and to understand why, will help businesses tailor their own advertising strategy in order to stand out from the crowd and to continue to attract consumer spend.”

8 June 2018, Source Travel Weekly

Six Virgin Holidays concessions to shut amid House of Fraser closures

Six Virgin Holidays concessions in House of Fraser will be closed as the department store chain announced it was to shut 32 retail locations. Travel agency Virgin Holidays said it is confident that all the agents working in the six stores affected will be found roles at alternative locations. Customers were reassured that the shop closures will have no impact on their holiday bookings. House of Fraser has 59 retail locations across the UK. The 31 closures could affect up to 6,000 jobs. Stores scheduled for closure will stay open until early 2019, as will the Virgin Holidays concessions inside. The House of Fraser stores which include Virgin Holidays concessions and face closure are: Lincoln, Sutton Coldfield, Carlisle, Chichester, Leamington Spa and Worcester. A spokeswoman for Virgin Holidays told Travel Weekly: “Virgin Holidays is working closely with House of Fraser following today’s announcement. We’re speaking with our staff in stores that are affected by House of Fraser’s CVA plan and are confident we will be able to offer alternative locations for our people in the event of store closures. “All our stores continue to be open as usual and we’d like to reassure customers who have booked through a House of Fraser store that it will have absolutely no impact on their holiday.” Speaking to the BBC, House of Fraser chief executive Alex Williamson described the move as “brutal”, adding: “we have not taken this decision lightly”. Virgin Holidays also has concessions in department store Debenhams, fashion retailer Next and supermarket Tesco.

18 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Brits say Brexit won't impact their travel plans

Most Brits say Brexit is not impacting its holiday plans, with many still planning to travel to Europe. This Saturday will be exactly two years since Britain took the vote on whether to remain or leave the EU. Travel insurance comparison site Cuuver.com reveals that, despite the restrictions Brexit is set to have on travelling to Europe, the majority of Brits say the leave vote has not impacted their holiday plans. A nationwide survey of over 2,000 participants, revealed that 63% of Brits believe Brexit will have no impact on where they travel and 57% of respondents will be taking their next holiday in mainland Europe. Cuuver.com said: "Despite the new rules and regulations for travelling to Europe after Brexit, this new research proves that Brits aren't prepared to let these hinder their travel plans."

18 July 2018, Source Travel Weekly

Brexit travel concerns among millennials ‘highest of any age group’

The biggest Brexit concerns among UK travellers appears to mainly be coming from millennials. More than 40% of respondents aged 18-25 to a new poll believe Brexit will have an impact on their travel plans in the next five years – the highest percentage for any age range. However, the majority of British people do not think Brexit will affect where they travel any time soon, according to the research. The result of a poll of more than 2,000 respondents comes almost two years since the vote to decide whether to remain or leave the

European Union. The survey showed that only 36.5% of Britons believe Brexit will have any kind of effect on where they travel in the next five years. Other results showed that 38.3% of people spend less than £500 on booking a holiday, while 37.3% can have a great trip for less than £1,500. The poll conducted by travel insurance comparison website Cuuver.com found 56.7% of Britons prefer to take their holiday in the summer months, with 43% opting for a beach break.

22 June 2018, Source Travelbiz

Why you should avoid these holiday destinations this summer

HOLIDAYS during peak season are known for being expensive, but new research has revealed that flights to popular destinations can be as much as £400 more during the busy summer months. Going on holiday in the summer months is unavoidable when travelling with the whole family. Summer holidays, often during July and August, are some of the most expensive months to travel. This is due to the peak season being more in demand for trips when children break up from school. New research by search engine KAYAK has found that some flights to popular destinations can increase more than £400 per person when booking in the school holidays. European destinations can see an increase of 150 per cent. Zanzibar in Tanzania saw a huge increase in flight prices of £450. Compared to June, which sees flights as low as £355 on average, August flights soar to £803. For families who can travel slightly earlier, the last week of July saw flights for just under £600, making a slight saving. Safari holidays are becoming more popular with travellers, with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle reportedly visiting South Africa earlier this year. More popular destinations with British travellers are also hit with price increases, in particular Orlando and New York. The US cities saw ticket prices of £268 more and £200 more, respectively. Orlando flights increase from £396 to £626, making a family of four's holiday more than £1,000 more expensive. Holidays in Spain seem to be the best value destination this year. For travellers wanting to choose a destination that doesn't increase in price, there are a number of locations which have been found to cost approximately the same. Split in Croatia rarely increases by more than £29 when choosing the summer months. Egypt and Toronto can also stay cheap with costs rarely increasing more than ten per cent. Neil Cartwright, travel expert at KAYAK, comments: "Our data shows that it can be especially costly to travel during the peak summer holiday season of the school break - meaning parents complying with the rules around taking children out of school can result in higher expenses on the trip for the family overall. "Sometimes, even during the peak summer season, some times can be much better than others. "If you have a bit of flexibility, checking it before you book is a no-brainer as it can save you hundreds."

25 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Norwegian adds new route and more flights to Florida schedule

The airline Norwegian has expanded its winter Florida programme, adding more flights on existing Fort Lauderdale and Orlando routes as well as introducing a brand-new twice-weekly Tampa service. In addition, the carrier has announced its Buenos Aires service will become daily, in response to passenger demand, while its Las Vegas and Boston services have also been expanded. Norwegian's new Tampa service will operate out of Gatwick from October 31, with one-way prices from £175. Its Fort Lauderdale service will increase from three flights a week to daily, while its Orlando service has been increased from three to four flights a week. One-way prices start at £175 in economy and £515 in premium. In response to strong demand for the airline's Gatwick-Buenos Aires route, services will increase from four flights a week to a daily service. Lowest one-way fares are now available from £315 in economy and

£640 in premium. Norwegian's Vegas service has been boosted by an extra flight and will now operate three times a week, from £195 one-way, while Boston will increase from five flights a week to daily, from £155 one-way. Gatwick Airport chief financial officer Guy Stephenson said: "Norwegian's new Tampa service, a new daily schedule for the existing Buenos Aires and Boston routes and increases to other services, all give our passengers yet more choice and flexibility. "This choice, combined with the airline's competitive prices and high quality service, are appreciated by both our business and leisure passengers and are an important reason for Norwegian's success at Gatwick." Norwegian's long-haul flights from London Gatwick are operated by brand new Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft offering up to 344 seats in a two-class configuration. A new extended premium cabin has been introduced, with a 56-seat cabin configuration. Other network changes this winter include a recently announced third daily service to JFK, with London Gatwick to Chicago reducing to four weekly flights from a daily service, Oakland (San Francisco) reducing to three weekly flights from four per week and Austin and Seattle becoming seasonal routes from October 28.

27 June 2018, Source Travelbiz

Don't book your package holiday until THIS date due to new government regulations

PACKAGE HOLIDAY enthusiasts should wait to book their next trip abroad until July 1, as new government legislation being brought in will change the way consumers are protected going forward. Package holidays are a popular choice for British tourists wanting to take the stress out of booking their next trip. With flights and hotels combined in one booking, it can make it easier when planning a holiday with the family. What many Britons may not realise is that they are often not protected when booking a holiday through a third party provider. Despite the Package Travel Regulations that were brought into place in the 1990's, this didn't apply to package holiday providers. New government legislation coming into effect from July 1 is about to change this for the better for consumers. Travel litigation expert Anthony Hey from Hudgell Solicitors explained to Liverpool Echo how travellers are caught out with the current package holiday laws. He said: "When you begin to dig into your agreements, you can find the website which you used to arrange your holiday has no responsibility for any cancelled flights, the transport to your accommodation not turning up, or the defective hotel premises which maybe lead to injuries." New regulations within the new Package Travel Directive mean the third party providers will no longer be able to hide behind this in their terms and conditions. A package holiday, that is any company that sells at least two travel services, will be subject to the new regulations. This means that problems abroad such as illness or flight cancellations will be directly dealt with them. Joanne Brine, partner at JMW Solicitors told bt.com: "Should anything happen while you're on holiday – such as an accident or injury on hotel property – subsequent claims will be more straightforward to deal with, since the operator you booked with will hold liability if travel services aren't provided with reasonable skill and care." This means travellers will not have to deal with foreign services that may not be straightforward or in English. It also provides protection against flight problems such as "weather conditions or industrial action". However, certain holiday bookings are still not protected by the new rules. Anyone booking different parts of their holidays through different providers will not be protected. For example, if booking flights and hotel with different package providers, the protection will not be the same.

28 June 2018, Source TravelMole

Holiday prices set to rise due to Brexit

Holiday prices are set to rise further due to Brexit, operators predicted this week at the ABTA Travel Matters conference. Data from Travel Trade Consultancy revealed average selling prices for summer 2018 are already up 3% over last year. Cosmos CEO Giles Hawke said his average selling price was up 'quite significantly', adding that it was likely to rise further in 2019. The fall in the value of the pound following the referendum has already increased operators' costs, while the loss of freedom of movement could also have an impact. "British consumers are already suffering today because of the Brexit vote," said Hawke. "I think holidaymakers will find over time their holidays becoming more expensive because it's a global market and already hoteliers are saying to us that if we don't pay the price they are asking they will sell them somewhere else." Dnata Travel Europe MD Lisa McAuley was more upbeat, saying overseas hoteliers still see the UK as a major source market.

29 June 2018, Source TravelMole

US travel agents urge Trump administration to make sure visitors feel welcome

The American Society of Travel Agents has added its voice to industry groups calling for a united front in showing the US is still very much a welcoming place. Opposition to the Trump travel ban has come to an effective halt now that the Supreme Court upheld the President's executive order on immigration. ASTA believes this is the time to stick together and deliver a welcoming message to visitors. "As it is imperative that the travelling public maintain confidence in an industry so vital to our nation's economy, we ask that the administration set clear implementation guidelines in short order such that travel disruptions are kept to an absolute minimum," said ASTA advocacy executive vice president Eben Peck. "At the same time, we align with the sentiment expressed by the US Travel Association and other industry leaders that an overt message welcoming legitimate international travellers to the United States should accompany any security steps aimed at terrorists." The US Travel Association this week called on the government to make it clear that travellers are welcome in the US. The USTA wants to see a 'coherent and durable set of policies' in place that support a message that 'legitimate business and leisure travellers are as welcome as ever'.

29 June 2018, Source Travelbiz

Flights: The BEST airlines for comfort and food revealed - do you travel with them?

THE BEST regional airlines for passengers have been revealed in new awards, with Virgin Atlantic, Norwegian Air and Aeroflot Russian Airlines winning the most accolades for Europe. Airlines in Europe have been ranked on their excellence in seat comfort, cabin service, food and beverage, entertainment, and Wi-Fi - and the results have been announced. The Passenger Choice Awards has unveiled the best regional airlines for passengers in Europe. The results were drawn from passenger feedback and insights gathered through the travel-planning app, TripIt by Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). Aeroflot Russian Airlines was ranked the best global service for Europe as well as being the best for seat comfort. Norwegian Air also won two titles in the awards. It was rated the best low cost carrier for Europe and the best for Wi-Fi. Virgin Atlantic was rated best for cabin service as well as food and beverage. Icelandair was voted best for Entertainment. "Regional airlines around the world constantly strive to set new standards of in-flight excellence for their passengers; from regional content selections, to elevated meals, faster Wi-Fi, or service with a personal touch," said APEX CEO, Joe Leader. "Airlines hold the feedback of their passengers in high regard, which is why they value receiving an honour like the APEX Passenger Choice Award, which represents the collective verified voice of their travellers." Norwegian Air have recently hit the headlines with their introduction of new slimline seats on

their new fleet of planes which will offer more leg room for taller passengers. Norwegian will introduce the new seats on their fleet of Boeing 737 Max's and they will be 16.8 inches wide with a 30 inch pitch. The average seat width is approximately 17 inches, while some American airlines offer as much as 19 inches. This allows extra space onboard the flight, which tall passengers will be pleased to hear. The seats are also much lighter; they weigh 10kg, 1kg less than previous seating. It will mean less weight onboard as well as less fuel being burned. Norwegian's new fleet will be used for their UK to New York and Boston routes.