

## UK Office February 2019 TDC Report

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander  
UK Director

### Tour Operators

- **Tour America** – We met with Kathleen Maher who advised that January started off slow for them, however she believes that people took extended holiday over the Christmas period and didn't return to work until the first full week. For the remainder of the month they have seen some very strong bookings. Their prices were very competitive for USA holidays, but has meant they have needed to confirm additional bookings to maintain revenue growth.
- **Nordmann's Reiser** – We met with Elisabeth Stai, Product Manager who advised that they have had a busy January, particularly for the USA. Their customers continue to want the fly drive packages and are looking for experiences when they travel.
- **USA Specialisten** – We met with June Lundebly who also advised that they had a good January for bookings. They did receive queries about Red Tide which put people off from travelling last year, however we updated her on the situation.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We had a call with Amy Alfieri to discuss our marketing budget for 2019. She advised they are currently working on a potential Florida campaign for later in the year and other opportunities to help support the growth of our area. She said that she will work on a proposal which will be available for us to review by the end of the month.

### Meetings/Training/Events

- **Tour America** – We visited their office in Dublin to provide dedicated training to their sales agents to support the launch of our joint campaign with Kissimmee. We provided a detailed overview of the destination to 13 of their agents as well as their Cork office and homeworkers. We distributed brochures, maps and giveaways. In addition, we also participated in a short video which will be used on their Facebook page.
- **Florida Beaches/Explore the World** – This was the first year for this new show in Norway, which replaces Reiselivsmessen. It was held at the Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel in the centre of Oslo and took place over 2 days, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> February. Our Florida Beaches stand was located by the entrance of the room alongside other USA partners including; Discover America Norway, Miami, Alamo and Fargo, so was in a prominent position for visitors. Over the two days we met with people who were traveling within 4 weeks and were looking for accommodation suggestions as well as attractions and activities to do in each of the destinations. There were also a number of people just looking for some inspiration. Overall the event was not as busy as other consumer shows, but of the people we spoke with they were keen to learn more.

- **Discover America Norway** – We attended their networking event which was held in Oslo after the Explore the World show. The event attracted other US suppliers and travel trade partners.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – We attended their quarterly meeting held in Dublin.
  - Mairead Keegan, Click and Go advised that they had a strong January for bookings, particularly for Orlando and New York. Las Vegas was tracking at flat. Miami was seeing growth which was driven by cruise. February bookings are currently flat which is a slight concern.
  - Bev Fly, Bookabed, commented that January had been good although the last week of January was down compared to last year. The USA is doing better than other destinations with Miami in their top 5. They have seen some very competitive prices with airfares making long-haul destinations more favourable than short haul.
  - Ciara Folley, Platinum Travel, said that they had a strong January and February was currently looking positive. Many of their customers were booking fly drive itineraries, and they had seen strong demand for family bookings to Orlando. As it stands they are expecting a good year.
  - Sunway advised that January and February had been good, but the last couple of weeks had dipped a little. Customers are booking multi-centre trips and they are seeing very competitive airfares to New York and Orlando.
  - American Holidays, mentioned that the first two weeks of January were slow, but it has bounced back. They are seeing demand for fly drive, as well as Deep South, New York, Las Vegas and Orlando.
  - Travel Department said that the USA Tours were going very well which include New York and Washington, DC. Due to demand they are adding additional dates to some of their tours. Ireland bookings up, however Brexit is affecting their UK business.
  - Aer Lingus suggested that the first few weeks of January were good but it has slowed down since. They are launching their USA sale to stimulate demand.
- **London Shuffleboard** – In partnership with Rooster PR, we have confirmed a joint media and trade event at London Shuffleboard in May. We will invite key partners from the industry to learn more about the destination whilst enjoying a game of shuffleboard with some food and drink. We will be working on the coming months to confirm all of the details including invites and branding opportunities.
- **VSPC and SeaWorld joint event** – We have been working with Ruth Roseweir, SeaWorld to start planning a joint event for our key partners. Due to other commitments we are looking to postpone this until our new fiscal year.
- **Kew Gardens/Chihuly Collection** – We have now received a proposal from Kew Gardens for an exclusive event at the venue in September. We will continue to work with the venue in the next few months to finalise the details.

## **TRADE LIAISON**

- **UK National Consumer Campaign** – This campaign launched 1<sup>st</sup> January and finished 31<sup>st</sup> January. The campaign included display, search, Gmail and YouTube campaigns generating nearly 12 million impressions with all elements driving to a dedicated Expedia

landing page. Room night generated during this period were 1831 which is down from 2527 over the same period the previous year. Expedia note that Florida is tracking flat with a general slowdown from the UK throughout the State. However future stay bookings for the next 6 months are tracking at 26% up over the same period last year. We are also running a 3 month campaign with ROS advertising on Expedia Point of Sale from 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> March and results are still to come in.

- **British Airways Holidays** – Ahead of the campaign launch in March we have provided a detailed brief to BA who will share with their agency. Brand USA have received a copy of the proposal which has been approved. We have received the first draft of the Telegraph articles and provided our amends. We will wait for the revised proofs and remaining activity.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We have provided Brand USA with the full proposal for the activity which will run in March, which has been approved. The activity includes; mini brochure, retail USA map, social media, instore video and email. The brochure and map have been approved ahead of the launch next month. We will await the remaining creatives for our approval. Amy is currently working on some other opportunities for us and will share a proposal next month with us.
- **British Airways Summer Beach Event** – We have now received the final proposal for the upcoming sponsorship opportunity in the BA First Class Lounge at Heathrow Terminal 5, which has been shared with Brand USA and now approved. The activity as title sponsor includes; central terrace bar wrap, weekly brand ambassadors for the duration of the event, branded invitation upon entry to the lounge, archway signage upon entrance, branded floor vinyl, graphics on the window, branded bunting and umbrellas, 2 posters, 15 table top displays, 3 drop boxes for competition entries, brochure stands, back wall imagery and announcements to encourage the consumer to engage in the activation. We will work with the BA team in the coming months to finalise the activity and our branding.
- **Brand USA** – We have received the final creative for the St. Pete/Clearwater Experiences web page, which forms part of their UK Attractions program and part of our overall marketing agreement with them. This has been approved and will go live on their website. We have also received the online brochure which has been signed off.
- **Visit USA, Ireland and UK** – We have provided full details of the recently announced TripAdvisor award for the Best Beach in the USA, for the second year running. We have requested that this information is added to their websites and included in upcoming newsletters.
- **Discover USA, Scandinavia** - We have provided details of the TripAdvisor award for the Best Beach in the USA, for the second year running to the Discover America committees in Demark, Norway and Sweden. We have asked that this information is added to their websites and included in upcoming newsletters.
- **Thomas Cook** – We have now received the final proposal for the activity which will launch in April. The campaign will focus on Florida beaches and includes; digital across the Thomas Cook website, audience re-targeting, instore plasma screen, retail window plasma screen, and 2 emails. We have provided assets and will await the creatives for

approval. We are in the process of trying to confirm training at their Head Office in Peterborough ahead of the launch of the campaign.

- **Funway Holidays** – We received and confirmed our initial interest in the Funway Holidays/My America Holiday Florida Beaches co-op marketing campaign that is due to take place in the second quarter of 2019. The proposal has already been sent to and confirmed by Brand USA. We are currently working on providing all assets needed to the marketing team working on the campaign. This year the activity will include Florida Unlocked - an interactive campaign with both B2B and B2B2C functionality with offers an engaging training platform combined with suggested itineraries and selling messages. Funway Holidays B2B activity includes: Florida Unlocked Micro Site, Florida Unlocked Promotion through 3 x emails to a database of 12,000, weekly social media posters on Facebook, a dedicated homepage banner on Funway4agents.co.uk and A4 double sided collateral production and distribution to their travel agent partners / Funway Holidays dedicated Florida Beaches Brochure 20K copies / Reservation agent holiday prize for the top performing FB's booking reservations agent at Funway Holidays. My America Holiday B2C activity includes: Email campaign dedicated email to 50K consumers / My America Holiday Sponsored social media and Google display network campaign with paid ads on Facebook and Instagram with links to destination landing page / promotion of video content on their YouTube channel and ads on Google display network / homepage coverage via banner ads / 'Dropped In' B2C campaign promoted by paid Facebook & Instagram advertising
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have started the approval process for the joint Gold Medal national retail in-store campaign creative. As previously mentioned, the promotion will run from the 1<sup>st</sup> March for a period of 2 months.
- **Virgin Retail** – Progress still needs to be made on the Virgin Retail Store Sponsorship opportunity. We received some details but needed further information to be able to look at this in depth. We are currently waiting on this information.
- **Tour America/Experience Kissimmee/VSPC** –The joint campaign commenced on the 4<sup>th</sup> February and lasted for a period of 2 weeks. Results will be due to follow in the next 4 - 6 weeks.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – Creative for both the B2B USAirtours campaign due to launch in March and the B2C TravelPlanners campaign due to launch in May is at present being received and being approved.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have been working with Michelle to finalise the itinerary for the group who will be visiting in March. The trip includes; The Dali Museum, boat trip, breakfast at Maggie Mae's, cycling the Pinellas trail from Dunedin, Lunch at Kellys Chica Boom Restaurant, Clearwater Beach, and dinner at John's Pass Village. We have also provided Emily Underhill with the waivers for each participant to complete before they arrive in resort. We have provided the draft version of the itinerary to Emily with the final copy due at the beginning of March.
- **Ocean Florida** – The final co-op marketing proposal has been received by Ocean Florida, sent to Brand USA and duly signed off by them. We have now provided all assets needed by Ocean Florida to start working on the campaign creative. The 2-month campaign will

run in both April & July 2019 and includes website and email marketing including banner ads, social media activity, a blog, third party activity, deal of the week offers email, landing page, educational emails to trade and in-house sales training (which will take place at the end of March in time for the start of the campaign). We are also discussing the possibility of an in-house staff incentive to run at the same time and this should be confirmed soon.

- **Visit USA, UK** – We updated our profile on the Visit USA website to include details of our new visitor’s guide.
- **Funway Holidays** – We have confirmed a visit to the Funway Holidays offices to engage and drop off Easter treats to the in-house reservations team. A meeting is also planned with Malcolm Davies for a general update.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners/Visit Florida** – We have confirmed our attendance at the forthcoming Visit Florida training that has been secured with USAirtours/TravelPlanners in early April. Further details to be confirmed in the coming weeks.
- **Ocean Holidays** – We have been advised that Lisa Airey, Head of Commercial is now on maternity leave and that Anna-Marie Janssen will be covering her during this time.
- **Ireland** – Meetings with Bookabed, Platinum Travel, Tour America and American Holidays are being scheduled for a sales trip to Dublin in March.
- **TradeWinds Island Resort** – We have advised our trade partners via email about the recent announcement of the changes taking place at The Guy Harvey Outpost so that they are aware of the re-branding of the resort.
- **Virgin Holidays** – Emma Hook advised that Amy Alfieri is the new replacement for Nicole Gibson and will be their Partnerships Manager going forward.
- **Discover America, Scandinavia** – Karin Gert Nielsen advised ‘From January 1st to May 31st 2018, a total of 564,565 Nordic travelers crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and even though this is still a slight decrease of -0.5% compared to the same period last year, it is a clear indication that visitation is already getting back to the same positive development that has dominated the Scandinavian tourism to USA for years. As the 4th largest European market for traveling to USA, following UK (1st), France (2nd) and Germany (3rd), the Nordics are without a doubt an important part of the USA tourism.’
- **American Sky** – Clearwater Beach was featured as part of a multi-centre package in their offers newsletter. This was complimentary.
- **Risskov, Denmark** – Trine Vennekilde, Product Manager, contacted us to advise that one of their sales agents will be visiting Florida in April and would like to visit St. Pete/Clearwater for one night. We have contacted our office to see if our hotel partners may be able to support and they will respond directly to Trine.

- **British Airways Holidays** – We have confirmed a meeting with Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive, next month to gain an insight into their performance for our destination.
- **Gold Medal** – We have confirmed training with their sales agents at their Head Office in Preston in May.
- **Swansons Travel** – We have sent our pop up banner to Swansons for use at their annual consumer show next month. The booth will promote St. Pete/Clearwater and Fort Lauderdale.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – We have received their quarterly marketing report;
  - New website – They are currently working on their new website, which is due to launch April/May. This will make it easier for consumers to navigate between the pages to gain information from each partner. It will have rotating banners on the homepage, news, events, interactive map and themed content. It will also be easier for partners up upload content.
  - Website sessions – 2009, Users – 1784, Page views – 5050 +8.3%, Ave session duration – 1m14s.
  - Social – Facebook 3677 page likes, Twitter 715 followers, Instagram 321 followers, LinkedIn 40 followers.
  - Email – Performing really well with 28.5% open rate and 1.3% click through.

## **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

56

## **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

1 February 2019, Source TTG

### **British Airways enlists top celebs for centenary campaign**

BA has enlisted a group of movie stars and other celebrities to help promote the airline's 100th anniversary this year. The new marketing campaign, launched on Friday (February 1), features actors such as Gary Oldman, Olivia Colman and Riz Ahmed, alongside sporting personalities including heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua and England rugby player Chris Robshaw. Pop star Paloma Faith and artist Grayson Perry also make appearances. They are taking part in a new advert, entitled British Airways. Made By Britain, where they discuss what they think makes Britain so great during a special centenary flight, BA100. The advert, which airs for the first time on Friday evening, also features customers, cabin crew, pilots and engineers as they prepare for the special flight. It will be aired on TV, video-on-demand and cinema, and across social media. Carolina Martinoli, British Airways' director of brand and customer experience, said: "This campaign is about thanking the amazing people who fly with us, work with us and partner with us. "As it's our 100th birthday, we plan to make this year very special for all of them – past and present – which is underpinned by our ongoing £6.5 billion investment programme to deliver new aircraft, cabins, service and destinations. "Our airline has been forged over 100 years. As we are

inherently made by Britain, it's fitting that our campaign captures and celebrates everything great about our home nation." BA is also organising a range of other activities and events for the centenary including painting aircraft in the liveries of the airline's forerunners, such as BOAC's colours on a Boeing 747. Another project sees the airline working with experts on compiling a list of BA's 100 Great Britons, which will identify people around the UK who are "currently shaping modern Britain".

4 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Travel Counsellors smashes sales record**

Travel Counsellors has broken the company's sales record, smashing through the £5 million barrier on the last day of January. January 31 saw the highest figure achieved in a single day with £5.1m in sales, marking the first time Travel Counsellors has surpassed the £5m mark in its company history. The news comes as the independent travel company enjoyed a record-breaking month in January, seeing a 15% rise in sales on the same period last year. As a result, 307 Travel Counsellors celebrate best sales month in January. Travel Counsellors achieved global sales of £82m last month. In total six out of 10 of the firm's top sales days were achieved in January 2019. Travel Counsellors also saw record levels of bookings through its in-house booking platform, Phenix, with £2.2m in sales secured. Booking made through the company's directly contacted hotels increased by 10%. Furthermore, the company saw a 40% increase in Travel Counsellor business owners booking TC Packages, which provide the opportunity to act as the tour operator and tailor-make bespoke packages with complex itineraries, supporting further business growth for the company's franchise owners.

4 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **BA says new advert is 'a love letter to Britain'**

British Airways has denied that its new advertising campaign, Made by Britain, is a response to Brexit. Instead, head of brand and marketing Hamish McVey told Marketing Week that it was a 'love letter to Britain'. The advertising campaign has launched online today and will first appear on TV this evening. Featuring stars such as actor Olivia Coleman, boxer Anthony Joshua, singer Paloma Faith, artist Grayson Perry and astronaut Helen Sharman, it describes what people love about Britain. It's BA's biggest brand marketing campaign since the 2012 Olympics and forms part of its centenary celebrations. So far, the video has received a mainly positive reaction on Youtube, with 374 'thumbs up' and 54 'thumbs down'. The campaign will run for six weeks on TV, video-on-demand and on social media channels including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. McVey said it had made a 'significant' investment in the campaign, which is very much targeted at a UK audience, although it has also been tested in other markets, including the US.

4 February 2019, Source Travel Weekly

### **Norwegian sale 'scuppered amid Brexit uncertainty'**

A sale of budget carrier Norwegian failed to materialise last year amid Brexit uncertainty, it has been reported. Chairman Bjorn Kise said that he and chief executive Bjorn Kjos, who is also a major shareholder, had a plan to sell the airline to an unnamed bidder before Christmas. "In November a stakeholder approached us with a bid. The offer was good enough for us to proceed, and it was supported by the board," Kise told Norwegian news site E24. However, the bidder kept delaying an announcement amid economic uncertainty. "There was a lot of market turbulence in December, and no clarity on Brexit," Kise said. The carrier's

shares fell by 25% last week after it was forced to go to shareholders to raise cash. The 3 billion Norwegian krone fundraising came after bids from British Airways owner International Airlines Group were rejected last year as being too low. IAG now plans to sell its 3.93% stake. A vote on the rights issue is due on February 19, with around a third of shareholders already on board, Norwegian said. Kjos said the rights issue was planned in secret as the stakeholder kept delaying. "We had to ensure that we had liquidity and capital. We have never been in breach of our credit limits, and never will be," he told E24. The disclosure came as it was reported by The Sunday Times that credit card processing companies withheld payments from the airline amid fears about its future. Norwegian told the newspaper: "Some acquirers had taken the decision to hold back payments but the situation has now improved and is stable due to our liquidity situation."

6 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Hotel booking sites to ditch misleading sales tactics**

Six of the biggest hotel booking sites are to change the way they advertise to consumers following an investigation by the competition watchdog. Expedia, Booking.com, Agoda, Hotels.com, ebookers and trivago were all subject of a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation last year. The CMA said it had 'serious concerns' around issues like pressure selling, misleading discount claims, the effect that commission has on how hotels are ordered on sites, and hidden charges. It said some hotel sites engaged in practices such as giving a false impression of a room's popularity or not displaying the full cost of a room upfront, which could mislead people, stop them finding the best deal and potentially break consumer protection law. However, companies under investigation by the CMA have cooperated with its work, it said, and voluntarily agreed to the following;

Search results: making it clearer how hotels are ranked after a customer has entered their search requirements, for example telling people when search results have been affected by the amount of commission a hotel pays the site. Pressure selling: not giving a false impression of the availability or popularity of a hotel or rushing customers into making a booking decision based on incomplete information. For example, when highlighting that other customers are looking at the same hotel as you, making it clear they may be searching for different dates. The CMA also saw examples of some sites strategically placing sold out hotels within search results to put pressure on people to book more quickly. Sites have now committed not to do this. Discount claims: being clearer about discounts and only promoting deals that are actually available at that time. Examples of misleading discount claims might include comparisons with a higher price that was not relevant to the customer's search criteria. For example, some sites were comparing a higher weekend room rate with a weekday rate or comparing the price of a luxury suite with a standard room. Hidden charges: displaying all compulsory charges such as taxes, booking or resort fees in the headline price. Sites can still break that price down, but the total amount the customer has to pay should always be shown upfront. CMA chairman Andrew Tyrie said: "The CMA has taken enforcement action to bring to an end misleading sales tactics, hidden charges and other practices in the online hotel booking market. These have been wholly unacceptable. Six websites have already given firm undertakings not to engage in these practices. They are some of the largest hotel booking sites. The CMA will now do whatever it can to ensure that the rest of the sector meets the same standards." The CMA emphasised that not all hotel sites engaged in all of the practices it investigated, but all have agreed to stick to the principles set out in the undertakings. All changes must be made by September 1. It said the sites have already started making improvements. The CMA will also write to other hotel booking sites, online travel agents, metasearch engines and hotel chains, setting out clear expectations for how they should

comply with consumer protection law. The CMA also expects these sites to make necessary changes by September 1, or it will consider taking further enforcement action.

6 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Norwegian traffic increases, but not as fast as capacity**

Budget carrier Norwegian saw an 18% increase in traffic in January, but the growth in passenger numbers failed to match its 27% increase in capacity. As a result, it managed to fill only 76.1% of its seats, which was almost six percentage points fewer than a year earlier. Nevertheless, CEO Bjorn Kjos said the management team was pleased with the passenger growth, saying there was traditionally less demand in January. He added: "Norwegian has been through a period of significant growth, but now the company will change its strategic focus from expansion and growth to profitability." Norwegian's yield for the quarter to date grew to 0.35 Norwegian crowns from 0.32 crowns a year earlier. Analysts had expected an increase to 0.33 crowns, said Reuters. The loss-making airline, which has rapidly expanded its transatlantic business, recently announced plans to cut costs and raise cash from owners after British Airways' parent IAG abandoned its attempt to buy it.

7 February 2019, Source Travel Weekly

### **Term-time fines hit family bookings**

Almost a third of agents say term-time holiday fines are impacting sales of family holidays. Nearly 60% cited rising prices, 31% said term-time fines and half reported Brexit as having an effect on family holiday sales in January. The findings come from a poll of 337 agents carried out exclusively for Travel Weekly by supplier marketing organisation Tipto and follow official data from analyst GfK showing that family bookings for summer 2019 were outperforming the wider market. School absence figures for England will be released in March, but the latest data, for spring 2018, shows 8.6% were unauthorised family holidays and 1.6% were agreed holidays. In Northern Ireland, one in 10 primary school absences in 2017-18 were for unauthorised term-time holidays. Parents should get permission from headteachers to take their child out of school for a holiday in "exceptional circumstances". Fines of £60 per child can be issued for unauthorised absences, rising to £120 if not paid in 21 days. Last month, Lancashire County Council denied media reports claiming it planned to raise fines to £1,000 per parent per child. Despite the Tipto findings, some parents are still willing to risk fines due to differences in prices. Paul Waters, director at Premier Travel, said families still wanted to travel in the holidays for most of their trip but some were willing to include one or two school days. A Kayak poll in January suggested 41% of parents were happy to take children out of school due to "skyrocketing" prices. It found 69% of those who had done so had told the school and were not fined. More positively, Hays Travel said some schools had changed holiday dates, enabling customers to travel out of mainstream school holidays without incurring fines.

7 February 2019, Source Travel Weekly

### **Brexit uncertainties prompt long-haul sales**

With family holidays driving 2019 bookings, according to industry analyst GfK, Travel Weekly examines trends in this key market. Families are looking farther afield for their annual holiday, but rising prices and Brexit uncertainty are hitting sales, agents and operators say. More than half (53%) of agents polled by Tipto exclusively for Travel Weekly reported more demand from families for long-haul or breaks beyond Europe. Barrhead president

Jacqueline Dobson said “farther-flung destinations [are] becoming more appealing [to families]”, while Tui said Florida had been particularly popular. Thomas Cook did not disclose its latest data, but its trends report showed family long-haul trips were up 64% year on year in July 2018. Karl Thompson, managing director of Beaches owner Unique Caribbean Holidays, said: “People are looking to bypass some destinations closer to home and are heading to the US, the Caribbean and other long-haul destinations.” However, almost 60% of those surveyed said increased prices were impacting sales of family holidays, while just under 50% said Brexit uncertainty was a factor. Tipto surveyed 337 agents in January on the topic of family holidays. Just over 41% said they had seen a rise in demand for shorter or more flexible durations, while almost 14% reported a rise in demand for domestic breaks. Just under 49% said families were making enquiries but were taking longer to book. Less than 10% said the family market was busier, 22% said it was quieter and 19% said there was no change from last year. Family bookings were 7% up year on year for the summer season to date on February 2, according to data from analyst GfK, compared with a 3% rise in total bookings. Jet2holidays and Hays Travel are seeing growing demand for all-inclusive family holidays. Melanie Hart, Hays’ divisional sales manager, said all-inclusive “tends to be much better value for money”, adding that families don’t have to worry about the cost of meals and drinks. Jet2holidays’ head of product, Zoe Towers, said all-inclusive was popular because “budgets are set with entertainment and facilities included”, and flexible durations were also in demand. Operators and agents have reported an upturn in demand for multigenerational holidays as grandparents are staying fitter and healthier for longer and have money to spare. Barrhead president Jacqueline Dobson said the emergence of the multigenerational holiday was “the most noticeable shift in trends for the family holiday” at the agency, while Beaches, Jet2holidays and Premier Travel reported marked increases in people travelling with extended family and as part of a larger group.

7 February 2019, Source TTG

### **Bookings for Easter and summer facing squeeze**

Easter and summer 2019 bookings will be in the spotlight over the next few weeks as agents continue to see unusual booking patterns. At TTG’s Industry Leaders Forum earlier this month, The Advantage Travel Group and The Travel Network Group were among organisations to report a “squeezed middle”, with winter 2018-19 and 2020 holidays selling well, but summer 2019 seemingly lagging behind. And agents speaking to TTG have reported further nuances. This week, Shona Thorne, managing director of Kilwinning-based agency Thorne Travel, said despite a strong January, it had seen a 15% slump for sales of family holidays around Easter compared with last year. “We’ve had a lot of demand for UK breaks and some city breaks in Europe, but the higher-value family holidays have dropped off,” she said, adding Thorne Travel had also seen a 13% rise in all-inclusive sales, with post-Brexit currency fluctuations “on customers’ minds”. Claire Moore, co-owner and manager of Peaks Travel Elite in Shrewsbury, reported “less than normal demand” for May half-term holidays despite trading well for later in the summer. Vim Vithaldas, group commercial and finance director at The Travel Network Group, said the consortium had seen strong demand for winter 2018 and “single-digit growth” for Easter, but its members were reporting slow conversion for summer. Tivoli Travel’s Jo Richards echoed these findings, describing trying to convert summer sales as “like getting blood out of a stone in some cases”. Alan Bowen, legal advisor to the Association of Atol Companies, said: “There’s no denying trading for spring and summer is flat because Brexit is the only story in town. “Travel has a real issue towards the end of March, as there are still so few assurances – indeed, will we even leave on March 29? People still want to go on holiday but it’s a case of when they’ll book.” Tony

Mann, director of Idle Travel, said he believed February would be “massively telling” in how summer 2019 would play out following an “unpredictable” January. “We haven’t seen people coming in to mop up summer 2019 as we have in previous years,” he said. “Brexit is really starting to chip away at confidence the longer it drags on.” Richards agreed, adding: “Things are ticking along, but we didn’t see the January rush to book for the summer.”

8 February 2019, Source Travolution

### **Expedia full year figures beat expectations**

Global travel giant Expedia Group beat City expectations this week as it released a fourth quarter and full year trading update. The year to the end of December 2018 saw Expedia generate gross bookings of \$99.7 billion, up 13% year on year while revenue was up 12% to \$11.2 billion. Operating income rose 14% from \$625 million to \$714 million. The firm said full year net income was up 7%, adjusted income rose 33% and adjusted EBITDA, a measure of profitability was up 15% year on year. Earnings per share and adjusted earnings per share up 10% and 35% respectively. Room night sold on Expedia’s platforms increased 13% for the full year and 11% in the fourth quarter while nights for its HomeAway holiday homes brand was up 29% for the full year. The number of HomeAway properties integrated into listing now number over 370,000 taking the total number of properties Expedia offers to over one million. HomeAway reported a 31% increase in gross bookings to \$11.45 million while travel management company Egencia saw a 14% increase to \$7.96 million. The core OTA recorded gross bookings of \$80.32 billion, up 10%. Air revenue increased 13% in 2018 on a 5% increase in tickets sold and a 7% increase in revenue per ticket. Advertising and media revenue increased 2% for the full year, driven by growth in the group’s Expedia Media Solutions arm, offset by declines in hotel metasearch site Trivago. Other revenue increased 14% in 2018 reflecting growth in travel insurance and car rental. In 2018, Expedia said it returned \$1.1 billion to shareholders including repurchasing 7.7 million shares for \$903 million and paying \$186 million in dividends. Shares in Expedia rose 7.5% as trading opened this morning after results exceeded expectations.

12 February 2019, Source TTG

### **All-inclusives and package breaks soar as Britons seek pre-Brexit deals**

Budget conscious Brits are increasingly looking out for good value all-inclusives and package holidays as Brexit looms, On the Beach has said. All-inclusives account for half of all On the Beach bookings to date this year, up from a 46% share in January 2018. The OTA says Brits are looking to safeguard against currency fluctuations, control their budgets and in-resort spend, and get maximum value for their pounds. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of On the Beach’s family bookings during January 2019 were for all-inclusives, up from 58% last year, while 44% of couples’ breaks and 39% of group getaways have so far been booked on an all-inclusive basis. Package holidays, meanwhile, accounted for 91% of On the Beach bookings in January, up from 87% last year. Alan Harding, On the Beach marketing director, said: “All-inclusive holidays are not only great for relaxing, but also give greater control over holiday budget and in-resort spending. “While we have seen little evidence Brits are holding back on booking their holidays, it seems more holidaymakers are looking to book money saving all-inclusive breaks this year.” Spain is so far proving the OTA’s most popular destination, with Tenerife bookings edging out Majorca to date, followed by Greece where Crete has overtaken Corfu as On the Beach’s the most popular Greek island. Turkey’s resurgence continues, leapfrogging Portugal to rank third, with Cyprus fifth and Egypt sixth, closely followed by Malta, Morocco, the UAE - a new entry at ninth - and Tunisia as more

Britons consider long-haul for a week's fly-and-flop. "As expected, Spain will dominate in popularity this year, but our booking data shows that destinations such as Greece, Portugal and Cyprus will all be very popular," said Harding. "Turkey is back on the map, now our third most popular destination, and we wouldn't be surprised to see it push for second place over the coming years."

13 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Regulator clears Virgin Atlantic takeover**

European Union anti-trust regulators have given the go-ahead for a proposed acquisition of joint control over Virgin Atlantic by Air France-KLM, Delta and Virgin Group. The European Commission said its investigation showed that there would still be strong competition in the market after the deal, which involves Air France-KLM buying 31% of Virgin Atlantic from Virgin Group. The deal would give Air France-KLM joint control of the airline, along with Delta and Virgin Group.

16 February 2019, Source Travel Newsgram

### **HEALTHY AIR PASSENGER DEMAND CONTINUES IN 2018 WITH ANOTHER RECORD LOAD FACTOR: IATA**

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced global passenger traffic results for 2018 showing that demand (revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose by a healthy 6.5% compared to full-year 2017. Although this represented a slowdown compared to the 2017 annual growth of 8.0%, it was another year of above-trend growth. Full year 2018 capacity climbed 6.1%, and load factor edged up 0.3 percentage point to a record 81.9%, exceeding the previous high set in 2017. December RPKs rose 5.3% against the same month in 2017, the slowest year-over-year pace since January 2018 and a continuation of the trend that saw demand growth decelerate to an annualized rate of 5% over the course of the 2018 second half compared to a 9% pace in the first half. "2018 was another year of strong passenger demand, as aviation continued to support the global economy. We expect similar, if somewhat moderating performance in 2019. Nevertheless, slowing growth in the second half of 2018, coupled with concerns over issues including Brexit and US-China trade tensions, are creating some uncertainty to this positive outlook," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO. International passenger traffic in 2018 climbed 6.3% compared to 2017, down from 8.6% annual growth the year before. Capacity rose 5.7% and load factor climbed by 0.4 percentage point to 81.2%. All regions recorded year-over-year increases in traffic, led by Asia-Pacific. However, North America and Africa were the only two regions to post stronger demand growth in 2018 compared to the prior year's performance. North American airlines had their fastest demand growth since 2011, with full-year traffic rising 5.0% compared to 2017, an increase from 4.7% annual growth in 2017. Here too, however, demand growth slackened noticeably in the last two quarters. This may be owing to increasing concerns over the US economic outlook and trade tensions with China. Capacity climbed 3.7%, and load factor edged up 1.0 percentage point to 82.6%, second highest among the regions.

16 February 2019, Source Travel Newsgram

### **TRAVEL TRENDS IN U.S.A.: DOMESTIC BIZ TRAVEL PROJECTED TO SURGE, INTERNATIONAL INBOUND TRAVEL FALTERS**

Travel to and within the U.S. grew 3.6 percent year-over-year in December, according to the U.S. Travel Association's latest Travel Trends Index (TTI)—marking the industry's 108th straight month of overall expansion. The growth trend is tempered by concerning signs in the lucrative international inbound market, however. That segment grew at a rate of 2.8 percent in December—well off November's hot pace of 3.8 percent growth year-over-year. Worse, the deceleration trend is expected to continue, with the Leading Travel Index (LTI) projecting international inbound travel to slow to 2.0 percent through June 2019. "A projected global economic cooling and persistent trade tensions will continue to threaten international inbound travel growth," said U.S. Travel Senior Vice President for Research David Huether. "The expected softening of the dollar and the de-escalation of the U.S.-China trade conflict should be positives for the international segment, but the market will not be able to fully capitalize on those advantages without some help." Huether pointed to the long-term renewal of Brand USA and the enhancement and expansion of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) as two legislative initiatives that could help the U.S. regain its share of the global long-haul travel market in the face of increasing competition for international travelers. Timely reauthorization of Brand USA by Congress is critical to helping turn this trend around, as is the inclusion of additional qualified countries in the VWP.

19 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Travelbag announces more senior appointments**

Travelbag has made two more senior appointments as part of a new team working alongside soon-to-join managing director Lesley Rollo. The long-haul specialist, owned by Dnata Travel Europe, has named Suzanne Harvey as its new head of product. Harvey, who until recently was head of purchasing and contracting for long haul tailormade brands at Travelopia, brings with her over 15 years of travel industry experience, having started her career at First Choice before moving to Sandals to work as business account manager. Leading the seven-strong product team, she will report to chief commercial officer B2C long haul, Matt Bell. She'll work closely with Rollo - who joins the business as new MD after Easter - on the development and delivery of Travelbag's worldwide product strategy. Dnata Travel Europe CEO John Bevan said: "We're looking forward to leveraging Suzanne's experience. We have big ambitions for Travelbag in this its 40th year, and she'll be critical in bringing those to life." Travelbag has also recently appointed Darren Hitchcock, as commercial manager. Reporting to head of commercial Marco Rocha, he comes to the business with more than 20 years' experience in product and commercial roles at the likes of Solo's Holidays, Thomas Cook and Hotels4U.

20 February 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Collapse of Flybmi is 'only the beginning'**

The collapse of Flybmi is 'only the beginning', an airline body has warned as it called for urgent action to finalise Brexit aviation plans. The European Regions Airline Association says unless the European Commission and UK Department of Transport act now, there will be more casualties. It says the challenges caused by Brexit are 'unsurmountable' and the collapse of Flybmi shows airlines have not had time to prepare, plan or react. ERA director general Montserrat Barriga said the disastrous consequences for the aviation industry, both in the UK and the rest of Europe, will be significant unless the uncertainty is ended. "I was deeply saddened to learn that ERA member British Midland Regional Limited, which operated as flybmi, had filed for administration on 16 February," she said. "Rising fuel and carbon costs coupled with the uncertainty, unfairness and challenges surrounding Brexit has

led to the airline ceasing all operations. "I will once again be in direct contact with the European Commission and the UK Department of Transport, as a matter of urgency, to persuade them to act immediately. It is imperative that they put in place a comprehensive agreement for aviation that mirrors the current situation with the UK as the highest priority, and that they reach a solution that will allow airlines to continue operating as they do today, enabling Europeans to continue benefiting from affordable and stress-free travel. "This is a sad day for European aviation and a clear example of the impact of a too long uncertainty surrounding Brexit."

21 February 2019, Source Skift

### **Florida Sees Tourism Gain Despite Another Decline in Overseas Visitors**

Florida's tourism picture is still setting records, but the persistent drop in overseas visitors is troubling — especially for a warm-weather destination with global appeal. Florida set another tourism record in 2018, reaching 126 million visitors for the year — an increase of 6.2 percent from the previous year. But the state saw a less positive trend persist too: The number of international tourists dropped for the fifth year in a row, according to preliminary figures out Wednesday afternoon. Last year, an estimated 14.33 million visitors came from Canada and overseas locations; That's down by about 49,000 from the 2017 total of 14.38 million. The drop comes as the growth in visitation to the United States overall slows. New research from Tourism Economics earlier this year showed that international visits to the country grew 2 percent in 2018. Florida had some unique struggles last year. The Gulf Coast battled red tide, a toxic algae, throughout the year and Hurricane Michael devastated parts of the Florida Panhandle in October. After falling from 2014 to 2016, the number of Canadian visitors to Florida has been slowly increasing. Just over 3.5 million Canadians came to the state last year, an increase of 2 percent. Overseas tourists — a group that does not include Canadians — have been declining in Florida since 2016. The 2018 total, about 10.82 million, represented just a 1 percent drop compared to roughly 2 percent each of the previous two years. Last year's number of overseas visitors was the lowest that figure has been since 2012. Information about visitation from specific countries in 2018 was not available Wednesday. But a representative for Visit Florida, the state's tourism marketing corporation, said certain markets showed promise. "Visit Florida tailor fits marketing for each international market and remains highly optimistic regarding international travel to the state, particularly in Canada, the U.K., France, and a rebounding Brazilian market," spokeswoman Sara Sowerby said in an email. "Florida is a warm, welcoming and diverse destination and that is what we will continue to promote and focus on." Sowerby pointed out in an email that visitation to the state had increased 56 percent since 2009. Wednesday's numbers showed that domestic visitation leapt more than 7 percent to nearly 112 million in 2018. "With today's announcement of an eighth consecutive record-breaking year, it's clear that by focusing on value and data-driven campaigns, Visit Florida and the tourism industry have achieved unprecedented success," President and CEO Dana Young said in a statement. Young, a former state senator who lost her bid for re-election in 2018, was named to head the once-embattled organization in January by Florida's new governor, Ron DeSantis. She earned praise from tourism insiders for her support of the industry during her time in office. Visit Florida survived threats to slash its budget in 2017 following a scandal that erupted around a marketing deal with the rapper Pitbull — and forced the CEO, chief marketing officer, and chief financial officer out. DeSantis has called for the organization to keep its \$76 million budget for the coming year.

26 February 2019, Source TTG

## **Long-haul benefiting from Brexit uncertainty says Kuoni trends report**

Long-haul sales remain buoyant in the face of Brexit, Kuoni's annual industry report has found. This year will be "a year like no other for the travel industry", with booking patterns affected by Brexit but with long-haul sales getting a boost, Kuoni has predicted. In its annual Worldwide Travel Report, Kuoni said Britain's exit from the EU will mean bookings spread more evenly throughout 2019 while consumers take time to understand the situation, but that long-haul will be the beneficiary. The report says demand for Kuoni's core destinations "remains solid", with sales to countries including Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and the US up 4%. The operator adds this is because consumers are looking beyond Europe for this year's travel plans. Derek Jones, chief executive of Kuoni parent company Der Touristik UK, said: "With a news agenda dominated by the on-going EU debate, many people are looking further afield than they may usually do." Kuoni's traditional bestseller, the Maldives, remains its most popular destination, with Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mauritius and the US following, as in 2018. Kuoni's Japan sales are up 74% and are "set to remain strong" with the launch of the new British Airways Osaka service on March 31. Japan enters the top 25 for the first time, while Spain drops out. Kuoni has added Istanbul and Cappadocia for 2019, mirroring other operators in boosting Turkey. Also trending is Western Australia, with Kuoni's sales up 18%, spurred by Qantas's non-stop Heathrow-Perth flight, which the operator described as "almost a badge of honour". The pillar of Kuoni's business – 82% – remains couples, but other client types are increasing. The operator said its youngest client in 2018 was three months old and its oldest couple had a combined age of 187. Kuoni is planning a new programme for single travellers in 2019, while its team of LGBT travel experts have prompted a 34% increase in same sex honeymoon bookings. The reasons for booking holidays are changing drastically, Kuoni's research further finds, with 70% acknowledging their motivation had changed. Nearly half of respondents say the variety of activities, workshops and retreats on offer had prompted their choice of holiday. Almost three-quarters had been on at least one holiday as an adult where they had had the opportunity to learn something new. Similarly, 60% of adults said they had learnt something on holiday as a child, with more than half believing this had improved their life as an adult. One key reason for learning new skills when abroad is that shy and retiring Brits feel less inhibited, with 38% saying they "did not feel embarrassed to try something new" on holiday. Top of Kuoni's list of holiday learning experiences is conservation, including coral reef planting and turtle rescue. Photography was in second place, with Kuoni offering tours of Russia and Japan in 2019 following sell-out trips in previous years. Cookery was Kuoni's third most popular activity, with diving and snorkelling in fourth place. Mindfulness was also on the agenda, in sixth place. The survey revealed 39% of people chose destinations that provided a learning opportunity and a further 29% said they would definitely choose this on future trips. A key market segment here is the older generation, with only 29% saying they would feel inhibited when it came to learning something new, compared to 44% of 18-24 year-olds. Wendy Kenneally, Kuoni commercial director, said: "We're seeing a thirst for exciting new workshops, classes and excursions not just from the family market but for adults of all ages, from twenty-somethings to those in their seventies who want to pursue their interests, take time out and try something different in new surroundings."

27 February 2019, Source Travelbiz

**TripAdvisor names America's top beaches and Clearwater steals it AGAIN – as Florida lands SEVEN of the top ten**

TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice awards reveals top 10 beaches in the United States. Clearwater Beach in Pinellas County, Florida took the top ranking in the TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards. Coming in at No. 2 is Ka'anapali Beach in Lahaina, which is located on the Hawaiian island of Maui. Panama City Beach, St. Pete Beach, Pensacola Beach, and Siesta Beach take the next four spots. The best beaches in America are in the Sunshine State, with Clearwater leading the way. For the third time in the last four years, Clearwater Beach in Pinellas County has been ranked No. 1 in the TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards. Clearwater is one of seven Florida beaches in the top 10. The Sunshine State also has 10 of the top 25 beaches on the list. The rankings are based on the quantity and quality of reader reviews in the TripAdvisor community, according to the Orlando Sentinel. The second best beach in America is in Hawaii - Ka'anapali Beach in Lahaina, which is on the island of Maui. Florida, however, takes the next four spots. Panama City Beach is ranked the third best beach in the United States, followed by St. Pete Beach, Pensacola Beach, and Siesta Beach. Hawaii has another beach in the top 10 - Hapuna Beach, ranked No. 7, on the island of Hawaii. The eighth and ninth spots are reclaimed by Florida, with St. Augustine Beach ranked No. 8 and Fort Lauderdale Beach ranked No. 9. Rounding out the top 10 is Driftwood Beach on Georgia's Jekyll Island.