

## UK Office January 2019 TDC Report

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander  
UK Director

### Tour Operators

- **Travel UP** – We had a call with Sara Dolan, who has recently joined the company as Product and Partnerships Manager. She advised that she has been brought in to drive the business to the USA and to build relationships with the tourist boards. We mentioned the previous support we had provided to the business and was keen to support going forward. She said there are various pieces of work that need to be done such as looking at their product range, updating the website, sales agent training and will be discussing their strategy internally within the coming months. She will follow up in due course, but we have provided copy and images in the meantime.
- **Ocean Florida** – Met with Lisa Airey, Muna Abanour, Colleen Creevy and Rachel Thacker to discuss the recent co-op marketing proposal they had submitted, as well as training their call centre staff at the end of March, a staff incentive to coincide with the marketing campaign and to provide them with a general update on our area. We were advised that 2018 sales to our area were down -7.9% versus 2017 but that 2019 is looking strong already with 857 room nights booked as of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The St. Pete Beach and surrounding areas are doing well and outselling Clearwater Beach, which Muna believes is due to their clients being mainly families and because the area has more condominium style resort accommodations (Sunset Vistas/Guy Harvey Outpost etc.) that UK families like to stay in as they offer ‘a home away from home’ holiday.
- **Virgin Holidays & Virgin Retail** – A meeting was held with Emma Hook and Kirsten Greenaway to discuss the possible Virgin Retail Store Sponsorship opportunity. We advised Virgin Retail of all of the information we needed to be able to consider this opportunity and are currently waiting for the information to be received before we are able to look at this in further detail.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We visited their office to participate in their ‘Treats Trolley’. It was the last day of their January sale so the office was busy with everyone giving the last push to hit their targets. We handed out cakes and branded items to everyone in the office to promote our destination, which was very well received.

### Meetings/Training/Events

- **British Airways** - We met with Charlotte Treanor to visit the BA lounges at Terminal 5, having received the proposal for a sponsorship opportunity for their Summer Beach event. During the visit, we were able to see the First-Class lounge terrace where the activation will take place, which offers a great space for our branding. We discussed various options for branding including; imagery, collateral, giveaways, competition, photo opportunities, floor vinyl, video etc. The lounge is offered to Gold Executive Club members and First Class ticket holders with 1500 tier points. Typically, the lounge sees 117k visits per month with average time spent of 1 hour 23 mins. We have followed up

since our meeting to clarify the inclusions and to gain some further information on additional opportunities.

- **Discover America Sweden** – We attended their annual training workshop in Stockholm which consisted of timed workshops and networking. We provided dedicated training to 130 agents including a destination overview as well as distributing brochures, maps and giveaways.
- **Florida Beaches/Matka** – For the first time in many years, we attended the annual Matka travel show which was held in Helsinki, Finland. The event took place over 4 days, with one day dedicated to trade and travel professionals and the remaining days open for the consumer. The trade day was fairly quiet, largely driven by the weather, however we met with various people who were keen to learn more about the destinations. The feedback we received from the consumers was mixed. Some were looking for inspiration for the future whereas others had booked their flights travelling within a few months and were looking for some recommendations for hotels and things to do. As an exhibitor, we had the opportunity to participate in their ‘Hidden Treasures’ competition. Consumers were encouraged to visit a selected number of stands at the show and draw the specific image displayed on the stand, which would allow them to enter a competition to win a holiday provided by Matka. This allowed us to maximise the number of people we spoke with.
- **Discover America Finland** – We attended their event which consisted of a drinks and food reception as well as an opportunity to network with other members.
- **Icelandair, Finland** – We met with Natalia Henriksson, Sales Supervisor, who advised that overall the Florida routes were doing ok for 2019 travel, however the Tampa route definitely needed some more support. They are currently looking at the rates and pushing it with their travel agency partners to improve the forward bookings.
- **Visit Florida** – We had a meeting with Gill Standeven from the Visit Florida UK office and discussed amongst other things trainings with USAirtours/TravelPlanners, Gold Medal Travel, Thomas Cook and Trailfinders, their proposed summer event which if proceeds will go ahead at the end of May 2019 as well as other initiatives including the possible Visit Florida co-op marketing promotion with Virgin Holidays that they are waiting for a proposal on. Gill advised that Florida is faring well in 2019 as per her conversations with Florida Tour Operators during the month of January and at Florida Huddle in Daytona earlier this month. We provided Gill with a general update on all that is new in the area of St. Pete/Clearwater.
- **Experience Kissimmee** – A meeting was held with Jo Piani from the Experience Kissimmee UK office to discuss our forthcoming joint promotion with Tour America in Ireland, a proposed joint Product Managers FAM in partnership with British Airways and the joint co-op marketing campaign that is scheduled with Virgin Holidays.

## **TRADE LIAISON**

- **Thomas Cook** – We have now received the final results for the campaign we ran in partnership with Visit Florida. The activity launched in October and ran until November;

- Thomas Cook Website Online display – 230,005 impressions, 99 clicks, CTR 0.04%
  - Digital display – 518,636 impressions, 231 clicks, CTR 0.04%
  - In store video (15s) for 1 week – Featured within 200 Thomas Cook stores. 1,918,509 viewers, 672,354 attentive viewers (watch for over 5 seconds), 12.9s average attention time, 22.6s dwell time, 6896 cumulative viewing time, 7,403,799 impressions converting 25.91% into viewers.
  - Direct Email – 25,023 recipients, 5,316 unique opens, 392 unique clicks
  - 164 room nights booked during the campaign +200% vly.
- **Visit Florida**
    - Received the final creatives for the London underground activity from Visit Florida. These have now been approved ahead of the launch of the campaign.
    - Received the final video element from our US office which will be used in the Trafford Centre, Manchester. This has been approved and sent to Visit Florida ahead of the launch of this activity.
- **Brand USA Winter Campaign** – We have received the final copy for the dedicated article and the Facebook post, which have both been approved.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We have received the proposal for activity focusing on Florida which will launch in March and run for 2 weeks. The campaign includes; out of home activity, digital content, press, social in partnership with the Telegraph. We have confirmed our participation and provided BA Holidays with the briefing document and our assets. We have also provided Brand USA with the proposal for their approval. We will await the creatives for our approval.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We have received a proposal for their USA Multi Destination campaign, which includes; retail activity, radio, digital, social, regional outdoor activity and press. We have confirmed our participation and have sent assets so that they can work on the creatives.
- **British Airways Summer Beach Event** – We have received a proposal for sponsorship at their summer event being held at Heathrow Terminal 5. The event will take place from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September in their dedicated lounge and offers a space for the main sponsor as well as the option for multiple brands to participate in the beach hut pop up activations. Each takeover is themed to create a multi-brand experience for passengers to explore and engage with. The key sponsorship package includes; brand and logo placed on all collateral, a welcome message printed and placed on the glass divide to the Terrace, and social media. We have arranged a meeting with the team at British Airways to discuss branding requirements and to see the activation space.
- **Funway Holidays/My America Holiday** – We have received the proposal for the forthcoming annual Florida Beaches campaign with Funway Holidays and My America Holiday. The proposal is currently being perused.
- **Norwegian** – Following on from our recent meeting we have chased Nicole Roberts for information on our queries surrounding their booking patterns for travel to Florida and

also some an update on a proposed joint marketing campaign with Tampa. We will continue to work on getting a proposal finalised.

- **Trailfinders** – Melloney Styles contacted us to advise that she would be staying in our area for 2 nights after Huddle. She is staying at Don Cesar and Sandpearl. We provided her with recommendations on what to do during her short stay.
- **Norwegian** – We have been discussing our joint Fam trip with SeaWorld with Mitchell Hawes to see if they can help support with flights seats for the trip. We will continue the discussions next month.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have now confirmed our joint national retail in-store campaign with Gold Medal Travel and the promotion will run from the 1<sup>st</sup> March for a period of 2 months. Activity as part of this campaign includes agent incentives and retail takeovers, dual branded merchandise, travel agency printed activity, e-shot inclusion and an A4 dedicated newsletter, social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, point of sale including in-store posters and stand up desk cards as well as a Gold Medal call centre staff incentive. We have provided Gold Medal with imagery, copy, logos and key selling points.
- **Tour America/Experience Kissimmee** – Work has finalised on the joint campaign with Tour America in partnership with Experience Kissimmee and will commence on the 4<sup>th</sup> February and last for a period of 2 weeks. We have signed off all creative (as have Brand USA). The campaign includes out of home activity on the Luas Tram Network, radio advertising, website takeovers, social media activity, a competition to win a holiday to Kissimmee & St. Pete/Clearwater (accommodation partner is The Tradewinds Resorts) as well as press advertising.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We received a campaign proposal from Linda Dixey which has now been agreed and confirmed by ourselves and Brand USA. The campaign agreed will run a promotion with USAirtours in March and TravelPlanners in May 2019. Each brand's campaign will run for a period of one month and will include online activity B2B and direct consumer B2C. We have asked Linda to advise what she needs from us to start working on the campaign creative.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have been working with Oliver Kugler to secure accommodation for the group at Sunset Vistas. We have provided Michelle with key details regarding their approx. arrival and departure times and transport information so we can begin planning their itinerary.
- **America as you like it** – Following on from the meeting at Huddle, we provided Philippa Westwood with images, copy and video for use on their website.
- **IPW** – Provided Rosemarie Payne with hotel requirements for IPW and flights are also being confirmed.
- **First Coast Travel** – We reached out to Frank Levene following his meeting with our team at Huddle, to offer our assistance. He has asked for support for a journalist/influencer trip in partnership with Norwegian so we have asked Rooster to liaise directly with him.

- **Ocean Florida** – Discussions are on-going with Ocean Florida regarding our joint co-op marketing activity. Ocean Florida have provided us with a co-op marketing proposal which we have perused and asked to be altered slightly. We are currently waiting on the revised proposal to be sent. In the meantime, we are also discussing the possibility of training their call center staff in advance of the campaign and dates are being finalised as well as the possibility of us offering a staff incentive for their in-house sales team.
- **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – Discussions are on-going regarding the annual VIP event in partnership with SeaWorld.
- **Bookabed Ireland** – The joint campaign in partnership with Experience Kissimmee has now taken place (1 – 31 January) and results will follow in the next 6-8 weeks.
- **British Airways** – Discussions on going with George Beguinot with regards to the postponed Product Managers FAM. We have provided suggested dates and are currently awaiting a response.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – We have confirmed our attendance at their next quarterly meeting in Dublin, which takes place in February.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – We have been offered the opportunity to display our brochures on the Visit USA stand at Holiday World Dublin, which takes place at the end of January. This is complimentary as we are a member.
- **DNATA** – Jonathan Couch contacted us as he is looking to extend their product range. We have provided him with contact details for Hyatt Regency Clearwater and Hilton Clearwater as requested.
- **AC Tours** – We reached out to Lee Florence, who was interested in making new contacts having recently taken a new role at the company. We have offered our assistance going forward and will wait for his response.
- **Bookabed Ireland** – We provided Colleen Butler at Bookabed with condominium recommendations suitable for a family holiday.
- **TravelPlanners** – Signed off creative for TravelPlanners as they had included a twin centre offer with Daytona Beach in their January Visit Florida campaign.
- **Elegant Resorts** – Caroline Beckett contacted us to advise that whilst they hadn't booked a huge amount to our destination, they are really focusing on their Tailor Made Touring product. They now have a whole host of new staff who have joined during the last 6 months which have strengthened their sales team however they are keen to grow the knowledge of our area. She has asked we consider their sales agents for future Fam trips.
- **Tour America** – We have been advised that Veronica Flood, Marketing Manager is now back from maternity leave and assuming her previous role. We have also been advised that Kathleen Maher who was covering Veronica whilst she was on maternity leave has been promoted to the position of Digital Marketing Manager.

## **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

54

## **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

2 January 2019, Source Travolution

### **Customer loyalty in travel being lost through failure to address frustrations**

Older and more affluent UK travel consumers are the least loyal to a particular brand according to new research released by brand technology agency Great State. The study revealed more than half (52%) of UK holidaymakers are not loyal to any one provider. This lack of customer loyalty in the sector was found to vary based on geography, income and age with over 55s the least trusting, with 15% saying they wouldn't trust any provider. Over two thirds (66%) of Welsh consumers revealed they never book with the same provider, while those in the North East appear to be the most loyal, with 25% saying they always book with the same provider. Other findings in the Great State survey included: Location is the most common first consideration when it comes to booking a holiday (43%), followed by cost (31%), for all income groups. A third of consumers visit a comparison website first when booking; a third first visit a travel agent brand; and a third either go to an airline or accommodation site first. Women are almost twice as likely to use online aggregator (KAYAK/Skyscanner) as men. Over a third (33%) of consumers expect to use a digital service from a travel company in the research and planning stage of the holiday process. 13% of people wouldn't expect to use a digital service from a travel company at all. Almost three quarters of consumers earning over £65,000 said they never book with the same provider. Key traveller frustrations about the travel experience were found to be delays and cancellations (53%), queues and congestion (36%) and unexpected or hidden costs (35%). Great State surveyed over 1000 UK consumers about their attitudes towards leisure travel and travel brands. The research was commissioned to uncover how the UK's holiday makers are booking holidays now, their habits and what this means for travel brands. A strong correlation was found between brands trusted to deliver end-to-end experiences and those who have achieved the most customer loyalty. The most trusted brands came out as Thomas Cook, Tui, Booking.com and Expedia, the four brands that were also found to have earned the most loyalty amongst customers. Great State said the top three traveller frustrations – delays and cancellations, queues and congestion, and unexpected or hidden extra costs – explain why brands that rely on hidden ancillary add-ons to boost their bottom line don't feature in the list of those most trusted by consumers. The firm said: "Additionally, when examined alongside the fact that most commonly expected digital feature of travel brands, is live information – 53% of consumers said this – it's clear that customers want more timely information to help make more informed decisions about their journey, particularly when problems arise." Matt Boffey, co-founder and director of consulting at Great State, said: "It's clear from our research that holidaymakers are more demanding than ever. "And given how many things still go wrong when people are travelling – like delays, lost baggage and missed connections – that means it's all too easy to disappoint consumers and lose them to an ever-expanding set of rivals. "In this context, brands' first priority must be to develop a great end-to-end customer experience, where common pain points are anticipated, and potential

disappointment is transformed into delight. It's the only path to winning a greater share of consumer attention, data and spend."

2 January 2019, Source Travolution

### **Travel Republic turn-of-year campaign is OTA's biggest ever**

The new TV advertisement from online travel agency Travel Republic is narrated by children, talking about mermaids, sea monsters and candyfloss clouds. Making its debut on Boxing Day, the advert hears from Gemma Chan – star of the TV series *Humans* – asking: "How do you make a holiday Travel Republic perfect?" The reply features 'perfect holiday moments' from a child's imagination including "sky full of fluffy pink candyfloss" and going "somewhere I can make new bestest friends". Filmed in Playa de Palma, Majorca, the advert features the agency's strapline "Yours for the making", promising a wide choice of hotels, flights, attractions and transfers. Christian Poole, Travel Republic marketing director, said: "We decided to have children narrate the TV advert as they are able to express the feelings of awe and excitement for those moments that make a perfect holiday. "Children have the ability to find fun and adventure wherever they look, which juxtapose with what the viewer will see on screen." The advert will be broadcast from December 26 to February 17 as part of a major national marketing campaign, which will also feature radio, digital advertising and a social media campaign. The marketing supports the launch of a sale which will be live until February 5, offering thousands of holidays at "a surprisingly low price". Frank Rejwan, Travel Republic managing director, said: "This is our biggest ever marketing campaign, and comes off the back of months of negotiations with thousands of suppliers, using our group purchasing power to deliver some really fantastic deals worldwide for our customers. "With our breadth of choice, our customers can create the holiday that is right for them no matter what they are after, even if it is watching a sunset with a sky of fluffy pink candy floss." Travel Republic's homepage has been revamped and features a menu of destinations and large inspirational images to encourage customers "to think beyond their usual go-to destinations".

3 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **'Sunshine Saturday' set to kick-off holiday bookings for people in Northern Ireland**

One in 10 Northern Ireland people will banish the post-festive blues by organising a summer vacation this month, new research suggests. Holiday protection scheme ATOL said January 5, which has been dubbed 'Sunshine Saturday', will see the beginning of a month-long booking frenzy, with around 180,000 consumers set to turn their thoughts towards a summer break. The Costa Dorada, Costa del Sol and Mallorca in Spain are the three top sunshine destinations with local travellers, with the Canary Islands - Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura - also proving popular. Tailor-made holidays are on the increase, especially cruise holidays, which continue to flourish, and there is also a noticeable increase in people wanting more luxurious cruise trips further afield. Ski trips also continue to do well with people in Northern Ireland and a couple of tour operators are now offering trips to Bulgaria and Romania. ABTA spokeswoman for Northern Ireland, Heather Fielding, managing director of Gallagher Travel in Londonderry, said traditionally there is a spike in bookings in the first month of the year. "Our staff don't take holidays in January because it's always our busiest month when it comes to booking holidays," she said. "People from Northern Ireland look for different things when they're going away and we find that they consider a variety of factors beyond price, such as a high standard of accommodation." She added: "But you can always get a bargain in January. Andy Cohen, head of ATOL, said a lot

of people will decide on this year's summer holiday destination in two days' time. "January traditionally sees holidaymakers rushing to book their summer holiday, with Sunshine Saturday still expected to be one of the busiest booking days of the year," he said. "With consumers in Northern Ireland taking advantage of holiday bargains and booking quickly, however, many are missing out on financial protection. "If you are booking a package holiday, make sure you check for the ATOL logo to ensure you are protected." ABTA said that Mauritius has also proven popular over the past 12 months with people from Northern Ireland, while trips to the US and South Africa have both picked up over the past few years and are expected to continue to do well. People are also generally booking their summer holidays earlier to make the most of good offers and best value for their trips.

3 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Agents hail positive start to peaks**

Agents are optimistic of a strong peak booking period, with early demand appearing to outweigh consumer uncertainty in the lead-up to Brexit. Richard Dixon, director of Holidaysplease, revealed the homeworking agency had seen a 119% year-on-year surge in sales between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve – building on a “strong December” which saw bookings up 33% compared with 2017. “Sales have been coming in thick and fast,” he told TTG. Matt Harding, interim head of Freedom Travel Group, said the consortium had also seen encouraging turn-of-year trading with “an unheard of amount” of its Personal Travel Advisors opting to work on New Year's Day to cope with the demand fuelled by “competitive pricing”. “There are so many offers out there helping to create interest,” he said. “It was just a handful of PTAs working on New Year's Day last year – this time it was about a third.” Harding and Dixon said they had not seen consumer confidence being dented by Brexit ahead of the UK's exit from the EU on March 29. Tony Mann, director of Bradford's Idle Travel, had the same confidence, saying he was hopeful of a strong January following an all-time record month last year. He said despite an influx of customers asking for clarity on travel post-Brexit, he was “confident bookings will still come through”. Mann also appeared on BBC Radio Leeds on New Year's Eve to discuss Brexit and advise listeners. “We've seen people choosing to come in-store rather than just book online because they want to discuss it with us,” he said. Deben Travel boss Lee Hunt was also buoyant about peaks in the run-up to Brexit, explaining how the Suffolk agency had booked more long-haul in December than usual. “Brexit doesn't seem to be putting people off, but we haven't done that much European winter sun. Is that because of Brexit? It could be,” he said. “There's also a lot of value for money at the moment further afield and we've based our peaks campaign around long-haul so the bookings are definitely still coming in.” Harding agreed: “In the winter lates market long-haul is doing very well, which could be an impact of Brexit if people are perhaps trying to avoid Europe.” According to agents across the board, long-haul has been performing well, with the US, Middle East and Japan – which will host the Rugby World Cup in autumn – proving most popular. “The US is doing well for us,” added Dixon. “It was our number one destination in 2018 too.” Sally Wallis, director of Beaver Travel in Radlett, Hertfordshire, said the agency had also enjoyed a rise in cruise sales, a trend echoed by Harding, who revealed December had been “one of our strongest months ever for cruise”.

4 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Holiday prices slashed by more than a third as Sunshine Saturday approaches**

Tour operators are slashing 2019 summer package prices by as much as 36% to attract early bookers, according to price comparison site TravelSupermarket. As the industry gets ready

for Sunshine Saturday tomorrow - expected to be the busiest day of the year for holiday bookings - TravelSupermarket looked at package holidays prices across 25 operators. Comparing searches on its site between December 17 and January 2 this year and last, for departures May 1 to October 21, it found massive drops in prices. The median price of a seven-night summer package booked this time last year to the Algarve was £50.80 per person per night. A search this year for the same type of holiday found a price of £32.62, a drop of 36%. The price has also dropped 28% to the Costa Brava, 31% to Zante/Zakynthos, 13% to Majorca and 17% to the Costa del Sol, said the price comparison site. "After last year's prolonged heatwave, tour operators will not want to be left with lots of stock in the summer so are appealing to those late deal hunters to snap up these bargains early," said Emma Coulthurst, TravelSupermarket travel commentator. "These holidays have been priced to ensure that they are within as many people's reach as possible. The prices are to appeal to those people who holidayed at home last summer and may have spent more than they expected to. The outbound travel industry will also be hoping for a cooler summer this year!" "This weekend is about Sunshine Sunday for us. For holiday price comparison on our site, the first Sunday of January, so this coming Sunday 6th January, tends to be the busiest day of the year on our site. "The number of people comparing holiday prices on our site started to rise as the Queen's Speech started on Christmas Day, has continued to rise for a fortnight and we expect it to peak this Sunday as the back-to-work blues really hit home. The rest of January will also be busy as holidaymakers continue to compare prices and try and snap up holidays, which they then have to time to save for and look forward to." She urged consumers not to be concerned about Brexit.

5 January 2019, Source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

### **Largest Scandinavia travel show**

When Herning opens its doors to Scandinavia's largest holiday fair, Danish Travel Show, 22-24. February, it will be an inspiring break from the gray and cold Danish winter. Here, windows open to the big world and a host of exciting travel destinations for both trade and consumers. At the more than 1,000 exhibitors spread over 65,000 square meters, visitors can seek inspiration for all holiday needs, whether the dream is safari in Africa, new caravan, city break in New York, a bathing hotel in Denmark, diving holiday in Bali, driving-self-holiday to an Italian campsite or a golf trip to Thailand. All the major Danish charter agencies are present at the Holiday for All and are ready to guide and guide the guests. "Every year, more than 60,000 visitors make their way past show. We are grateful for the confidence it expresses and we do our best to make Holiday for All 2019 worth the trip and time. While guests seek inspiration for the next vacation experience, they can experience a wealth of music, entertainment, tasting, diving and much more activities. The goal is for the fair to be an experience in itself," says Anders Ladefoged Mortensen, project manager for Danish Travel Show. The Danes are increasingly looking for the exotic when choosing a holiday. Therefore, it is also very good that this year's partner 2019 is the Caribbean. It means extra focus on the islands between North and South America, which are known for sun, beach, delicious rhythms, colorful culture and exotic food. And there will be tastings on the whole in the form of dance, cigar rolls, room tasting, various activities, music and a genuine. And of course, good advice and inspiration from the approximately 30 travel agencies offering travel to the Caribbean – everything from beach holidays to tours and cruises. One of the travel agencies is Bravo Tours, which organizes trips to Cuba and the Dominican Republic. "In the Caribbean you find what many associate with an exotic destination: chalk-white beaches, blue water, palm trees and a wide range of holiday opportunities. You can choose the wonderful holiday, or you can go for a holiday with lots of experiences with culture and

history. For example, Cuba offers an exciting population, a colorful culture, an exotic nature with mountainous areas and a peek into the various historical eras that have characterized the country. In the Dominican Republic you will find all the exotic you can dream of and a capital rich in experiences, says Peder Hornshøj, director of Bravo Tours.

7 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Norwegian Air passenger growth slows, fuel losses increase**

Budget carrier Norwegian Air posted smaller than expected passenger growth in December and recorded additional losses from fuel hedging positions, its monthly traffic report showed on Monday. The airline, which has been courted by Aer Lingus owner IAG, has rapidly expanded its transatlantic business in recent years, but has struggled to turn a profit amid tough competition. While the airline's capacity grew by 34pc year-on-year in December, revenue-generating passenger kilometres increased by only 24pc, lagging a forecast of 32.9pc in a Reuters poll of analysts. Meanwhile for the October-December quarter, Norwegian Air estimated an unrealised loss from fuel hedging amounting to NOK1.99bn (€202m), an increase from the preliminary October-November loss reported last month of NOK1.46bn (€194m). The airline said it has implemented a series of cost-reduction measures to boost its financials in 2019. The company carried 37.34 million passengers in 2018, an increase of 13pc compared to the previous year. The full-year load factor was 85.8pc, down from 87.5pc in 2017. "The 2018 traffic figures demonstrate that our international footprint continues to grow stronger, in line with the Norwegian's strategy. The company has made considerable investments this year and will now enter a period of slower growth," Norwegian CEO Bjørn Kjos said. "Continued tough competition, high oil prices and operational challenges in 2018 combined with the issues with Rolls Royce engines, which have particularly affected our long-haul operations, have had an impact on our financial results in the latter half of 2018." "We have launched a series of cost-reduction measures to boost our financials in 2019 which will have an immediate and continued positive influence throughout the year" Mr Kjos added. During 2018, Norwegian took delivery of 25 brand new aircraft and launched 35 new routes, primarily between Europe and the US.

8 January 2019, Source Skift

### **New Visit Florida CEO Comes Straight From Political Arena**

Visit Florida's recent history has been rocky. Will a former Republican lawmaker have success making the case to her old colleagues for increased funding? Visit Florida has its newest president and CEO: Dana Young, a former state senator who narrowly lost her 2018 re-election bid. On Monday, the tourism marketing corporation's board of directors voted unanimously in favor of the Tampa Republican, who also served for six years in the Florida House of Representatives. Governor-elect Ron DeSantis, who will be sworn in Tuesday, nominated Young late last week. Young, who starts Wednesday, will be the first woman to serve as head of Visit Florida and the first former state elected official in the role. She will be paid \$175,000 a year, the same as her predecessor. Board members cited Young's history of support for the tourism industry over her eight years in the Florida Legislature as well as her political know-how as they praised her nomination during a call Monday afternoon. "On many, many occasions we have been in her office asking her support on tourism issues," said Carol Dover, chair of public affairs for the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association. "She has a stellar voting record with us, 100 percent all the time on tourism." Lino Maldonado, the board's chair and a regional vice president for Wyndham Vacation Rentals North America, said Young would "no doubt help us maneuver" the upcoming legislative session that will

determine Visit Florida's funding level. "It's a really good choice," said Danny Gaekwad, an entrepreneur, hotel owner, and treasurer of the board. "She will be very helpful in the upcoming session, I mean extraordinary." Visit Florida has been locked in budget battles over the past couple of years, though ultimately funding has remained stable at \$76 million. The organization was rocked by scandal in 2016 over transparency concerns surrounding a \$1 million marketing contract with the rapper Pitbull. In the fallout, Visit Florida's CEO, chief financial officer, and chief marketing officer all resigned. Ken Lawson was named the new CEO in early 2017; a former federal prosecutor, he had been serving as secretary of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. DeSantis tapped Lawson to lead the state's Department of Economic Opportunity in December. His last day at Visit Florida is Tuesday. Young takes over an organization responsible for driving tourism to one of the country's most-visited states. In 2017, nearly 119 million tourists came to Florida, an increase of nearly 6 percent from the previous year. The 2018 total is expected to increase as well, with visitation through the third quarter up 6.7 percent year-over-year. After working as a lawyer, Young was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2010, then won a seat in the Florida Senate in 2016. The 2018 election that she lost was so close it went to a manual recount. After the board's vote, Young joined the conference call Monday to thank the group. "I can't tell you how honored I am to have your trust and your support," she said. "I am absolutely thrilled with this opportunity and I promise you I will not let you down." She vowed to set meetings with the members "immediately — as soon as I find my office."

8 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Norwegian claims industry first with free wi-fi on long-haul flights**

Norwegian is claiming to be the first low-cost airline to introduce free wi-fi on intercontinental flights, including services to the US, South America and Asia. It will also offer a faster, paid-for connection for passengers who want to stream movies. The airline said more than 50% of its Dreamliner 787 fleet will offer free wi-fi by 2020. Norwegian became the first airline to offer free wi-fi on all European routes in 2011, and the first to offer live TV in 2015. Its wi-fi service is now being extended to flights between Europe and the US, South America and Asia on its 787-9 Dreamliners and 737 MAX aircraft. The first 787 offering wi-fi was delivered in mid-December and the roll-out on Norwegian's 737 MAX aircraft will begin in mid-January. Norwegian economy and Premium customers on the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and 737 MAX will have the choice of two inflight wi-fi package: basic, offering free internet access with a speed fast enough to surf the web, use social media and send and receive emails and instant messages using their own devices, and premium, which is fast enough to stream music, movies and TV shows. The high-speed option costs from €12.95 for three hours. Vice president business development Boris Bubresko: "We're continuously improving the inflight customer experience and we're delighted to be the first airline offering free Wi-Fi for the full duration of long-haul flights. "Millions of Norwegian customers have already enjoyed free Wi-Fi over the skies of Europe and now long-haul passengers can continue to rely on free and high-speed internet connectivity that will enhance and personalise their journeys. "From being the first European airline to launch free wi-fi on all short-haul flights followed by free live television, Norwegian's roll-out of high-quality inflight broadband services will offer business and leisure travellers even greater value at affordable fares." Norwegian is using the wireless inflight connectivity platform, CabinConnect by Collins Aerospace, which uses the Inmarsat Global Aviation (GX) satellite network. LeAnn Ridgeway, vice president of information management services at Collins Aerospace said: "We are collaborating with Norwegian to achieve their vision of optimising their aircraft and enterprise operations to address both cabin and flight deck requirements, as

well as adding new capabilities for the future." Inflight Wi-Fi works via an antenna fitted to each aircraft fuselage which communicates with Inmarsat's GX satellite network. In the UK, Norwegian currently operates 15 nonstop long-haul routes from London Gatwick to Austin, Boston, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami (from March 31), New York, Orlando, Rio de Janeiro (from March 31), San Francisco (from April 1) Seattle, Singapore and Tampa. In 2019, Norwegian will take delivery of five brand new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners and 19 737 MAX aircraft. Norwegian currently operates 24 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners as part of its overall Dreamliner fleet of 32 aircraft.

9 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Flights resume at Heathrow after drone disruption**

Flights were suspended for just over an hour yesterday. Incident came just weeks after chaos at Gatwick Airport after drone sighting. Flights 'operating normally' this morning. Heathrow has resumed flights after departures were disrupted for an hour on Tuesday following reports of a drone sighting, a spokeswoman for Europe's biggest airport said. Flights from London's Heathrow airport were halted for about an hour on Tuesday after a drone was sighted near Europe's busiest air hub, raising fears that the chaos that affected rival Gatwick last month could be repeated on an even larger scale. "We are responding to a drone sighting at Heathrow," the airport said. "As a precautionary measure, we have stopped departures while we investigate. We apologise to passengers for any inconvenience this may cause." London's Metropolitan Police said they had received reports of a drone near the airport at about 1705 GMT on Tuesday, which they were investigating with airport authorities. It said police officers were among those who reported seeing a drone and it had launched a full criminal investigation. The airport confirmed about an hour later that take-offs had resumed. Flight tracker websites showed flights departing from 1811 GMT. A Reuters witness in a plane on the runway at Heathrow said multiple aircraft were waiting for permission to take off before being later told that things were starting to move. London's second busiest airport, Gatwick, was severely disrupted when drones were sighted on three consecutive days in December, resulting in about 1,000 flights being cancelled or diverted and affecting 140,000 passengers. Gatwick's drone nightmare - the most disruptive yet at a major airport - exposed a new vulnerability that will be scrutinised by security forces, airlines and airport operators across the world. The British army was forced to deploy military technology to guard the area around Gatwick, reassuring the airport that it was safe enough to fly. Police said they were carrying out extensive searches around the Heathrow area to identify any people who may be responsible for the operation of the drone. "We are deploying significant resources - both in terms of officers and equipment - to monitor the airspace around Heathrow and to quickly detect and disrupt any illegal drone activity; some of which are as a result of learning from the incidents at Gatwick," police commander Stuart Cundy said in a statement. He said military assistance has been implemented after the sighting but he would not give any further details as it could undermine the effectiveness of the measures. British Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said he had been in contact with Heathrow Airport concerning the drone sighting. "I have already spoken to both the Home Secretary and Defence Secretary and the military are preparing to deploy the equipment used at Gatwick at Heathrow quickly should it prove necessary," he said. Both airports responded to the Gatwick incident by ordering military-grade anti-drone technology. Heathrow said it was working closely with authorities including the police and looking at relevant technology to combat the threat of drones. The airport handled 78 million passengers in 2017 and is the main hub for British Airways. Its busiest routes in terms of passenger numbers are to Dubai and New York-JFK.

8 January 2019, Source TravelMole

## **Queues grow at US airports as government shutdown leads to security fears**

Security queues are getting longer at US airports due to the ongoing partial government shutdown, with passengers at busy gateways such as New York LaGuardia reporting long delays. With the threat of no pay cheque in January, security staff have been calling in sick, leading to a shortage of personnel and therefore it's taking more time to screen passengers.

The Airports Council International-North America said it is getting anxious over the impact on security if the number of officers calling in sick increases. "We're concerned that a prolonged government shutdown could potentially impact security and wait times at airports," the organisation's senior vice president for security, Christopher Bidwell said. The partial government shutdown is now in its third week and has been promoted by President Donald Trump's demand for more than \$5 billion to build a wall on the Mexico border and the Democrats refusal to grant him the funding. It has led to hundreds of thousands of government workers being forced to work without pay or being told to stay home until funding is re-established. The shutdown has led to fears by TSA agents that they won't get paid this month, leading them to take time off work. At the Dallas Fort Worth airport, for instance, 5.5% of TSA security agents called in sick last Friday, compared to the 3.5% more than on a typical day, TSA assistant administrator for public affairs Michael Bilello wrote on Twitter. In New York City's LaGuardia International Airport, meanwhile, the number of TSA agents calling in sick led to long queues snaking around the terminals on Sunday. Bidwell said airports are in talks with their local TSA managers to help boost security screener numbers and maintain efficiency. However, personnel not verified by the TSA, such as other airport and airline workers, are not allowed to screen bags and people. "It's certainly not built into their budgets right now, but if it came down to it they may look to find the resources to support that sort of thing on a voluntary and temporary basis," Bidwell said. There is no accurate data on how many TSA officers have called in sick since the shutdown began, but the TSA has acknowledged that it's higher than average. So far the disruption has been kept to a minimum with just a few airports experiencing longer than average screening delays, but that could change later this week. "If we go past Friday without a pay cheque, that will be the first missed pay cheque (since the shutdown began). Now we're talking about a completely different environment," said TSA spokesman Michael Bilello. There is speculation a missed pay cheque will result in much heavier mass absences among employees. The new chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee also voiced concern. "I am concerned if wait times and public pressure increase, some TSA managers may try to manage the effects of the shutdown in ways that are detrimental to security," said representative Bennie Thompson. Pilots have urged politicians in Washington to end the shutdown, saying their concerned about passenger safety. "At the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) there are fewer safety inspectors than are needed in order to ensure the air traffic control infrastructure is performing at its peak levels of performance," said Captain Joe DePete, the president of the Air Line Pilots Association. "There are also airline and aircraft manufacturing oversight activities that either stop or are significantly reduced. These safety and oversight inspections will potentially allow for the introduction of safety issues that put passengers and airline crews at risk." Meanwhile, US air traffic controllers are warning the shutdown could have a knock-on effect for months or even years. "We are already in a critically staffed situation, and with the shutdown, the training pipeline has been cut short and there is no relief in sight," Andrew LeBovidge, the leader of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, told CNN. "Training has stopped ... and we will feel the ripple effects of the lack of personnel for months if not years to come".

9 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Shadow over 'Sunshine Saturday' amid Brexit warning for agents?**

The traditionally much heralded annual "Sunshine Saturday" appeared to fall rather flat this year, according to a number of travel companies. The national media has previously predicted booming holiday bookings for the second Saturday of the year, but this year TTG noticed a lack of celebratory operator press releases. It follows advice from auditing firm KPMG to agents to offer "better deals" to offset Brexit concerns. Tui insisted it had seen "a really strong weekend", and specified that Sunday had seen bookings up 2% year-on-year, making it the second busiest online day ever for bookings. Travel Counsellors, which saw a 17% rise in forward booking pre-Christmas, said sales "remained steady" over the weekend, with a "significant pick up" on Monday as sales topped £3 million. But Alan Bowen, advisor to the Association of Atol Companies, said despite "a lot of hype" in advance of Sunshine Saturday "no one I have spoken to is jumping for joy". Thomas Cook would not give specific details, citing it was in a closed period. It came as KPMG released details of a survey of more than 4,000 UK consumers, revealing 58% of respondents expected travel between the EU and UK to be "difficult" post March 29 [the UK's official exit date] and 55% anticipated flight delays and cancellations in the event of a no deal. Will Hawkey, global head of leisure and hospitality at KPMG in the UK, said: "Many customers will now be valuing reassurance as much as fun and excitement in their booking criteria. "In practice, this means agents offering better deals to more locations, giving practical advice on bookings and ensuring they are available when holidaymakers have questions." Some agents were not impressed with the "deals" remark, with Travel Designers boss Nick Harding-McKay responding: "Surely an accountancy firm should understand we need to make a profit to stay in business." Bowen said the "real test" for the market would come after the vote on Theresa May's Brexit deal next week. "If, as seems likely, the vote will be against accepting the Brexit plan and we face a no-deal exit, all bets are off," he said. "If the mainstream press go into meltdown, then I think there is a real danger of consumer confidence falling, as may the value of the pound."

10 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Passengers to pick up costs of US preclearance at airports**

Airline passengers could be hit with increased charges from the expansion of US preclearance facilities in Dublin and Shannon airports. The Cabinet signed off on a memo paving the way to vastly increase the size of facilities at the two airports. It will mean an expansion of operations and the introduction of more US border officials. The cost will be borne by airlines, but the Government expects this will be passed on to passengers. A Department of Transport spokesperson said: "The amount charged to airlines arising from these costs will be a matter for the airports. "For Dublin Airport, the extra cost when spread over the 1.4 million passengers who used the preclearance facilities in 2017 does not equate to a substantial extra charge per passenger." A source said the increased charges will be "cents rather than euros".

10 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Consumer spending growth at lowest level since 2016**

Consumer spending grew 1.8% year-on-year in December, the lowest rate since March 2016, according to statistics compiled by Barclaycard. With inflation at 2.3%, the figure equates to a contraction in real terms. However, consumer spending through travel companies last

month grew by 13% year-on-year and the number of air transactions was up 8.5%. But Barclaycard warns caution among consumer spending looks set to continue as half of UK adults believe there will be a decline in the state of the UK economy in 2019. Essential spending growth dipped to just 0.6% - the lowest figure recorded since July 2016 - caused by a contraction in supermarket spending of 1.1%. Overall, non-essential expenditure rose by a modest 2%, boosted by strong growth in pubs and restaurants over the festive period. Many people remain concerned about their spending power, with one in two consumers (49%) expecting to cut back in January to cover the cost of Christmas, while 48% say they feel less confident about their personal finances in the coming year than they have done for many years. In terms of the wider picture, 50% of UK adults are concerned that there may be a decline in the UK economy - up from 43% last year. Many shoppers are anticipating price increases over the next three months, particularly around the cost of fuel (65%), household utilities (66%) and groceries (72%). However, over half of Brits (52%) said they wanted to support their local high street. Barclaycard director Esme Harwood said: "Growth in consumer spending dropped to its lowest level since 2016 and represents a decline in real terms. Many Brits were more modest in their approach to Christmas spending compared to 2017, cutting back on the essentials to balance the costs of the festive season. "Brits expect to cut back in January and remain cautious amidst ongoing economic uncertainty."

10 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Airfares set to rise, says global business travel agency**

Air fares from the UK and Europe are expected to rise between 1% and 3% this year, according to a survey by American Express Global Business Travel (GBT). It said the greatest increase of 3% would be on flights to Asia, while there will be no rise in the cost of airfares to the Middle East, where overcapacity will lead to a 1% fall in the cost of business class fares. The Air Monitor 2019 report by GBT found that growing competition from low-cost carriers was stabilising fares on long-haul routes, despite carriers facing increased costs, including high fuel charges. However, it's forecasting a small increase in fares from the UK and Europe due to the fact that demand is outpacing capacity and airlines have chosen to focus on renewing planes to improve efficiency rather than expanding their fleets. Growing demand for premium seats in the US is forecast to outstrip capacity growth, which could also lead to significant price rises on fares within the States and on flights to Europe, it said. To generate the forecast, GBT scanned its database to examine five years of flight transaction data, which it combined with variables including oil prices, economic projections and airline strategies to forecast price changes on key business travel routes around the world. "While current global political and economic uncertainties create a challenging environment for price forecasting, it's important for buyers to access the information and insights that help them drive better value in their air programmes," said Joakim Johansson, GBT vice president of business development. "For the Air Monitor 2019, we have developed a robust, scientific methodology that combines GBT's own historical flight transaction data with a wide range of critical metrics that drive supply and demand, shaping pricing conditions."

11 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Flybe rescued by new Virgin Atlantic and Stobart-led group**

Struggling Flybe is to be rescued by a new company called Connect Airways comprising Virgin Atlantic, Stobart Group and Cyrus Capital, it has been confirmed. It has made a cash offer for the airline, following which Connect Airways will acquire the entire issued, and to be issued, share capital of Flybe. Stobart Group will contribute Stobart Air and Propius,

Stobart's aircraft leasing business. Cyrus, Stobart Group and Virgin Atlantic have committed to make available a £20 million bridge loan facility to support Flybe's ongoing working capital and operational requirements. Following completion of the acquisition, Cyrus, Stobart Group and Virgin Atlantic are intending to provide up to £80 million of further funding to the combined group to invest in its business and support its growth, as well as a contribution of Stobart Air. It will be business as usual for Flybe, the consortium said, but in due course Flybe will be rebranded to Virgin Atlantic. That said the group intends for Flybe to continue as an independent operating carrier with a separate UK air operator certificate (AOC) under the Virgin Atlantic brand. Stobart Air is intended to continue under a separate Irish AOC. The group will operate independently to Virgin Atlantic under one management team, owned 40% by Cyrus, 30% by Stobart Aviation, a wholly owned subsidiary of Stobart Group, and 30% by Virgin Atlantic, the holding company of Virgin Atlantic Airways and Virgin Holidays. Shai Weiss, new chief executive of Virgin Atlantic said: "The Virgin Atlantic brand is built on the foundation of putting customers at the heart of everything we do, providing them with the choice they deserve and a travel experience they love. "We are pleased to have this opportunity to partner with Stobart Group and Cyrus Capital to bring Virgin Atlantic service excellence to Flybe's customers. Together, we can provide greater connectivity to our extensive long-haul network and that of our joint venture partners Delta Air Lines, at Manchester airport and London Heathrow. In the near future, this will only increase, through our expanded joint venture partnership with Air France-KLM." Christine Ourmieres-Widener, Flybe's chief executive said: "Flybe plays a vital role in the UK's transport infrastructure with a UK regional network which uniquely positions it to benefit from growing demands from long haul carriers for passenger feeder traffic. "We have successfully implemented a clear strategy in recent years focused on tighter fleet management, improving revenue per seat and increasing load factors. The pursuit of operational excellence has reduced maintenance times and increased efficiencies and customer satisfaction. "However, the industry is suffering from higher fuel costs, currency fluctuations and significant uncertainties presented by Brexit. "We have been affected by all of these factors which has put pressure on short-term financial performance. At the same time, Flybe suffered from a number of legacy issues that are being addressed but are still adversely affecting cashflows. "By combining to form a larger, stronger, group, we will be better placed to withstand these pressures. We aim to provide an even better service to our customers and secure the future for our people."

11 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Agency celebrates peaks boom as sales soar nearly 50%**

The sun shone on so-called Sunshine Saturday for Premier Travel, which enjoyed its biggest January sales weekend ever. The East Anglian agency chain recorded a 46% year-on-year sales spike across its 18 branches last Saturday (January 5). A number of Premier branches, meanwhile, saw around a 50% year-on-year boost during the first full week of the year (December 31 to January 6). Director Paul Waters said it was the company's most successful start to the new year ever, despite expectations of a slow January due to the economic environment, and hailed the resurgence of the high street travel agent. "All of our branches have been incredibly busy, with double the number of holiday bookings and enquiries on the first Saturday of the new year," he said. "This day is always generally the busiest of the year, but this year it has exceeded all expectations. It seems people still want to book early and grab a bargain, despite all the uncertainty at the moment. "Over the last few months we've seen more and more people coming back to their high street travel agent, claiming that there is too much information online and they don't always trust what they read or feel secure

booking. They also want to ensure they are financially protected if their airline or travel operator goes out of business. “We’ve seen an increase in customers booking experienced-based holidays for 2019, alongside traditional beach breaks.” Premier Travel’s 18 branches are spread across Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex.

12 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **The Sunshine State looks to the future**

New Visit Florida CEO Dana Young was at Florida Huddle in Daytona Beach, this week, where she caught up with TravelMole managing director Graham McKenzie. Two years ago, the bottom fell out of the Visit Florida world when in a whirl of resignations, dismissals, political shenanigans and general chaos, the very existence of the state tourism board was threatened. Funding was reduced severely and, at the same time, many of the organisation's key destination partners decided they would no longer work with the tourism body. Times have changed and, while a week is a long time in politics, two years in tourism is an age. The Sunshine State starts 2019 on a positive footing, recording 95.8 million visitors arrivals between January and September 2018. For the whole of 2017, Florida welcomed 118.8 million visitors, who spent \$112 billion and supported 1.4 million jobs. The overall international market share remained strong with more than 25% of international visitors to the U.S. landing in Florida. The start of 2019 does see more change with the appointment of a new CEO Dana Young. The state's first-ever female head of tourism, she brings with her an environmental legal background, which will be well suited to the challenges ahead as the state struggles with issues of water quality and the challenges of the red tide and algae - both of which affected adversely many resorts especially those in the southern part of the Gulf Coast last summer. Speaking exclusively to TravelMole, Ms Young said the environment is one of her top priorities and that, working closely with the new Governor, Ron de Santis, she was excited at the prospect of achieving progress. Water quality is not, however, the only short-term goal. Persuading destination partners, such as Miami, Orlando and Kissimmee, lost two years ago, to come back into the fold is also high on the to-do list. One of the first things she did was to call all those partners personally to arrange meetings to see if reunification is possible. Young is also delighted with the news that Sir Richard Branson is now the new partner and shareholder of the much-anticipated and long-vaunted Brightline train, which runs services between Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Now called Virgin Trains USA, the plans are to extend the line to Orlando and eventually to Tampa. It's a new facility for both residents and visitors that will only serve to enhance the environmental feel good factor over the next era of tourism in Florida.

14 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Brits 'binning Brexit' and splashing out on holidays**

A new poll suggests Brits are 'binning Brexit' and getting ready to splash nearly £2 billion extra on their getaways in 2019. The survey, from comparison site Netflights, reveals two-thirds of respondents stated that 'people are worrying too much' about Brexit, and around 40% think 'it will all be fine'. Although the poll revealed that Brexit is 'on the mind' of around half of those thinking about their 2019 holiday plans, on average they still plan to spend £630 each more on their holidays compared to last year - a Brexit-busting estimated windfall of nearly £2 billion for the travel industry. More than three-quarters of respondents to the poll are sceptical of reports that planes would be grounded if no deal is made. A weaker pound was given as the primary reason for increasing their travel budget by 40% of those questioned, with 26% also admitting that sterling's current softness against other currencies

has fuelled a change of heart about where they plan to go. One in five stated they are no longer planning to go to Europe this year, and a quarter plan to book but are 'holding off deciding where to see what happens'.

15 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Dollar set to lose ground this year**

The dollar remains at high levels against a broad range of currencies. After losing ground in 2017 and early 2018, the dollar has recovered strongly since last spring. The currency was aided by robust US economic data last year, at a time when other economies were slowing. Widening interest rate differentials and bond spreads also helped the currency as the Federal Reserve continued to steadily increase interest rates. Rising risk aversion in financial markets was also supportive of the highly liquid US currency. Escalating tensions over global trade, difficulties in emerging markets and geopolitical concerns all sparked flights-to-quality into safe-haven currencies like the dollar. It also benefitted from a big jump in the repatriation of funds by US companies last year to take advantage of cuts in US corporate taxes. However, the US currency has found it difficult to make further gains since the autumn. It is now at quite elevated levels against a range of currencies, which may be limiting further upside potential. The US economy is also expected to slow in the coming year, causing the Fed to adopt a cautious approach to further rate increases, and its next move could be a rate cut. Nonetheless, the relative strength of the US economy, volatile financial markets, wide interest rate differentials and geopolitical uncertainties all remain supportive of the US currency. Meanwhile, political uncertainty in the EU, a general rise in euro-scepticism, the slowdown in the eurozone economy and continuing very low ECB interest rates are all headwinds for the single currency. However, there has been strong support for the euro against the dollar at the \$1.13 level in recent months. Indeed, it has risen to around \$1.15 in the past week on the view that we are near the peak in US rates. Overall, we think the dollar may lose some ground this year, while still remaining at a relatively high level. The marked jump in the repatriation of funds, following the cuts in US corporate taxes earlier last year, is likely to abate. A US-China trade deal could be agreed in the spring, which should improve risk appetite in markets. Meanwhile, there should be potential for the euro to rise over the medium term as the ECB begins to hike interest rates. However, while the euro has made some modest ground against the dollar in the past week, large gains seem unlikely in the near-term.

15 January 2019, Source Travel Newsgram

### **TRAVEL TRENDS INDEX: INTERNATIONAL INBOUND TRAVEL TO USA GROWTH PROJECTED TO FIZZLE IN FIRST HALF OF 2019**

Travel to and within the U.S. grew 3.0 percent year-over-year in November, according to the U.S. Travel Association's latest Travel Trends Index (TTI)—marking the industry's 107th straight month of overall expansion. But the growth of both international and domestic travel are projected to decelerate in the first few months of 2019, owing to a number of worrying trends. Though international inbound travel grew 3.8 percent year-over-year in November—higher than the sluggish 2.4 percent figure for October—the Leading Travel Index (LTI) projects growth in that segment to slow to around 1.0 percent growth through May 2019. “A number of factors—notably rising trade tensions, softening global growth and the increase in the value of the dollar against other currencies throughout 2018—have the potential to dampen international inbound travel in the near-term,” said U.S. Travel Senior Vice President for Research David Huether. The decelerated rate of international inbound travel growth will

impede U.S. efforts to increase its share of the global international travel market. Domestic travel grew 3.0 percent year-over-year in November, with both business and leisure travel registering gains thanks to historically high levels of consumer confidence. At the moment, that segment's year-over-year growth is expected to slow to 2.4 percent through May 2019, with the business segment outpacing leisure travel. However, U.S. Travel economists caution that the road ahead for domestic business travel could become rocky as well, as recent volatility in the markets could dampen what has been a strong investment trend.

15 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Holidaymakers shunning high street despite demand for 'personalised' booking experience**

Just one in five holidaymakers will book their next trip with their local high street travel agency despite a growing trend towards "personalised" experiences, a new survey has found. Research by Monetate found just 20% of prospective holidaymakers it surveyed would use their local agency, yet 85% said they would be open to a travel company personalising suggestions. Moreover, more than a quarter (26%) of the 1,500 respondents said they needed "all the help they can get" when choosing a holiday, despite vowing to shun high street agencies. Some 47% of respondents said they wanted a clear "tailored and personalised booking experience", with more than half (53%) of those surveyed adding they would actually pay more for a personalised booking experience. However, the most important consideration for respondents remained price, with 55% highlighting discounting as their foremost concern. Simon Farthing, director global strategy and insights at Monetate, said: "One thing is clear; consumers will expect personalisation when booking a holiday this year. Consumers are in the market to book and can be encouraged to purchase when recommendations are tailored. "These findings show if travel companies use targeted and personalised content, for example based on consumers' location or previous product purchases, the opportunity for them to make big sales beyond the traditional January booking craze is huge."

18 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **British Airways rolls out huge premium economy changes as part of a £6.5BILLION investment plan, including new menus, amenity kits, quilts and pillows**

New menus for world traveller plus will roll out from February 1. These menus will be totally unique to premium economy for the first time. From spring BA will introduce new quilts, pillows and amenity kits. Life in the British Airways premium economy cabin is about to get even better – because the airline is rolling out 'exciting new improvements' to it. The changes in the cabin, which BA calls 'world traveller plus', are part of a £6.5billion investment plan. Changes to the cabin, which will be introduced over the coming months, will include new furnishings, an enhanced service and an improved dining experience, the airline said. The first change passengers will notice will be the food – new menus will be available from February 1, with every course unique to premium economy. At the moment the starters and desserts for world traveller plus and world traveller are the same. BA said that they will feature 'a third main meal option and a more substantial hot second meal later in the flight'. At present the second meal is sometimes a pre-packed sandwich, depending on the time of the flight. The upgrade will also see 'real' glass and china used for the second meal, and not just the main meal. BA said: 'Launch menus will include braised British beef with roast new potatoes, onion soubise and bourguignon sauce, roasted guinea fowl with braised red

cabbage, green beans, roast potato and mustard and chive jus and rigatoni pasta in a creamy garlic and herb sauce with leek, pumpkin and baby spinach.' New amenity kits, quilts and pillows will appear from spring. Last year British Airways unveiled a new world traveller plus seat at Gatwick. The seat features a 50 per cent larger entertainment screen, as well as a six-way adjustable leg, foot and headrest to suit customers of all heights. The seat will feature on the airline's A350 aircraft, when it arrives later this year. Carolina Martinoli, British Airways' Director of Brand and Customer Experience, said: 'This latest tranche of our £6.5bn investment is set to improve world traveller plus and customers will see a real change to the cabin. 'In February the new menus will launch, followed in the spring by the introduction of new amenity kits, quilts and pillows for added comfort and a touch of luxury.' However, according to one travel expert, BA's premium economy offering, even with these changes, still lags behind Virgin Atlantic's. Commenting on the new BA premium economy offering Rob Burgess, from the headforpoints frequent flyer website, said: 'It is good to see British Airways continuing to make service improvements in what is meant to be, by square foot, its most profitable cabin. 'BA's premium economy offering will still be lagging in other areas, however. Virgin Atlantic offers dedicated check-in desks, fast track security, free seat selection and priority baggage handling to its premium passengers - BA doesn't offer any of this. 'Norwegian's premium cabin offers a noticeably bigger seat than both BA and Virgin, although the removal of lounge access for premium passengers from last month has removed one of their USPs.' London-based travel expert Gilbert Ott, who runs the God Save The Points tips blog, said: 'Premium Economy is the cabin to watch from all airlines in 2019 as airlines bridge the gap between increasingly tight economy and expensive business class. It's nice to see British Airways adding soft touches that bring them closer to the best out there. 'Singapore, JAL, ANA and Cathay Pacific tend to dominate the premium economy accolades, but this move is a step in the right direction toward bringing BA into the conversation. At the right price, it's a gem. And as long as you can continue to upgrade any BA premium economy fare to business class using points, I'm a fan.'

18 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Aer Lingus reveals first brand refresh for 20 years**

Aer Lingus today unveiled a refreshed brand with updated logo and new aircraft livery, which the airline said reflected its position as 'a modern and contemporary Irish brand that competes on the international stage'. The airline said the new brand identity supported its ambition to become the leading value carrier across the North Atlantic. Last September, the Aer Lingus announced two new transatlantic routes; Minneapolis St. Paul in the US and Montreal in Canada, bringing the total number of North American destinations it serves to 15. The first Airbus A330 to sport the new logo will take to the skies on Friday, January 18. Flight EI105 will be met by a reception at New York's JFK Airport. The first new liveried aircraft to appear in the UK will fly to Heathrow on Monday. The new logo retains the iconic shamrock, but a tilt has been added 'to symbolise dynamism and speed' said the airline, and the leaves have become more heart-shaped 'to reflect the warmth and hospitality of the brand'. The Aer Lingus logo font has changed to 'diodrum' and the dominant colour is teal. The body of the new look Aer Lingus aircraft will be white with a teal-coloured tail and engines. The teal undercarriage means that Aer Lingus will be instantly recognisable from the ground, said the airline. The brand refresh is being rolled out across all brand platforms, with a new website design and new app design. The refresh is part of the airline's ambitious growth plan, which includes expanding its transatlantic fleet from 17 to 30 aircraft by 2023. Overall, Aer Lingus plans to grow its A330 fleet to 16 aircraft (from 13 in 2017) and invest in 14 new A321LRs. CEO Sean Doyle said: "Aer Lingus is a modern Irish international success story,

built on hard work, enterprise and the commitment of our people. We're delighted to unveil our brand refresh today, which comes more than 20 years after Aer Lingus last invested in new brand livery, and reflects our position as a modern, contemporary airline. "Aer Lingus has had exceptional success in recent years: adding new routes, new aircraft, new jobs and new opportunities for colleagues and guests alike. "The refreshed brand reflects an airline that connects those living in Montreal to Marseille; in Berlin to Boston; as well as those living in Cork to Croatia. The benefit for Ireland of being at the fulcrum of such connections is considerable and we in Aer Lingus are determined to realise this potential for Ireland. "We have ambitious plans for our future and the years ahead, yet we are aware of challenges facing the modern industry and thus investment in our new brand identity and livery; our new uniforms which will be unveiled later this year; and our fleet expansion are considered investments in the future of Aer Lingus to enable us realise our ambition to be the leading value carrier across the North Atlantic." Chief operating officer Mike Rutterer said: "We conducted extensive guest research across Ireland, Europe & North America to inform every key stage of the process to ensure that the brand revealed today is reflective of our value carrier positioning. This research confirmed the importance of our shamrock - the Irish emblem has been at the heart of the Aer Lingus brand for more than 80 years, and we made the shamrock 'hearts' more pronounced to reflect our hospitality and service. "The new look Aer Lingus livery consolidates our position as a modern, contemporary Irish airline on the international stage, but also allows guests who have always loved our brand to maintain a positive affiliation."

20 January 2019, Source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

### **Where Finns will travel**

The holiday travel forecast commissioned by the Matka Nordic Travel Fair discloses Finns travel plans for 2019. In 2019, Finns plan to travel in Finland and to nearby destinations in Europe. City holidays abroad retain their popularity, and more and more people plan their trips around a specific theme. Domestic tourism continues to be popular, and almost every Finn intends to do some holidaying in Finland in 2019. Most of these trips will involve visiting relatives or friends, while car travel and nature destinations also remain popular. When travelling abroad, Finns gravitate in particular to European city destinations and the Baltic countries, with beach resorts and Baltic Sea cruises also featuring in Finns' travel plans. Snowy slopes attract Finns to take to their skis, and there is more interest than in previous years in ski trips abroad. Almost every other Finn travelling abroad is planning a city holiday, which has been the most popular holiday type since 2013. Beach holidays continue to feature in people's holiday plans, and there is a growing interest in spa holidays abroad. If Finns were able to travel without any constraints, they dream of visiting, for example, well-known cities with pleasant climates in North America. They also dream of faraway destinations such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Canada and familiar European destinations also loom in the Finns' dreams. A small portion of Finns (6%) are not planning to travel abroad in 2019. Travellers favour city destinations and prioritise culture and history. Themed trips are growing in popularity year by year, and more and more people have taken a themed trip or plan to do so. Popular themed trips among Finns include ones that focus on history, nature and culture. Almost one third of the respondents are planning a cultural trip (29% of the respondents) or a nature trip (29% of the respondents) in 2019. One quarter, in turn, are planning a history-themed trip (26% of the respondents), and more and more Finns are also becoming interested in sports holidays, even of the extreme kind (26% of the respondents). When going ahead with themed trips, people, more than before, use the expertise and knowledge of travel agencies. "In 2019, Finns are planning to travel more than

in the previous year. It is likely that people will go ahead with their travel plans, as more than three out of four (86%) estimated that they would spend more or the same amount of money on travel than in the previous year. In particular, those between the ages of 35 and 65, and those who have travelled a lot in previous years are planning to spend more money on travel", says Anne Lahtinen, research manager at Kantar TNS. When booking a holiday trip, Finns increasingly rely on travel service providers and travel agencies. Some 66% book their holiday trips through the websites of airlines, ship companies, railway companies and bus companies, while 43% use the websites of travel agencies for booking their trips. Most accommodation, however, is booked through comparison shopping websites for hotels and other travel services, or directly from hotel websites. "The vast majority of services related to Finns' holiday travel are still booked through travel service providers or travel agencies. In particular, it is great to see travellers of all ages using the services of travel agencies to book their trips. In the realisation of themed trips, people trust the help of travel agencies even more than before, and this also holds true among the youngest age group interviewed", says Heli Mäki-Fränti, managing director at the Association of Finnish Travel Agents, AFTA. The holiday travel forecast also asked people about trips realised last year. Some 57% of the respondents said they had made one or two trips in 2018, while, on average, Finns made slightly fewer than three trips abroad during the year. The number of trips is mostly influenced by people's eagerness and desire to travel, rather than their age or gender.

21 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **'IAG won't get into bidding war for Norwegian Air' - Willie Walsh**

IAG won't get into a bidding war for Scandinavian airline Norwegian, chief executive Willie Walsh has insisted this evening in Dublin. IAG, which owns Aer Lingus, British Airways, Iberia, Vueling and Level, acquired a 4.6pc stake in Norwegian last year and said it was interested in buying it outright. Speaking at a dinner hosted by The Aviation Club UK, Mr Walsh said that he remains interested in Norwegian. "I like Norwegian. I like the brand. I like what Bjorn (CEO Bjorn Kjos) had done," said Mr Walsh. But he noted that Norwegian's share price has been declining and that there had been some rumour that another potential bidder could emerge. "I'm not getting into a bidding war," said Mr Walsh, adding that he believed Norwegian's decision to populate its fleet with Boeing 787s was the wrong one. Mr Walsh also said IAG "is not interested in third terminal at Dublin Airport". Mr Walsh, a former Aer Lingus pilot and once the CEO of the airline, said BA should have done a deal to tie up with KLM years ago. "Had KLM and BA got together it would have been a fantastic development," he said. Mr Walsh said he's confident there will be a "comprehensive agreement" between the UK and the EU for post-Brexit aviation.

21 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Parents face being slapped with £1,000 fine if they take their children out of school for cheap holidays during term-time**

Parents at a Lancashire primary school were warned of a £1,000 fine per child. The Conservative-controlled county council could hike the penalty from £120. Holidays were not 'exceptional circumstances' that allow leave, the school said. Parents at a Lancashire primary school were warned of a £1,000 fine per child. The Conservative-controlled county council could hike the penalty from £120. Holidays were not 'exceptional circumstances' that allow leave, the school said. The letter said: 'Lancashire County Council are currently trialling a new system for dealing with unauthorised holidays and breaks during term time. This involves an increase in the financial penalty to parents of up to £1000 per parent per child

rather than the current fixed penalty notice of £120 per parent per child. 'This system is still at the pilot stage but please be aware this may come in to effect at some stage.' Holidays were not 'exceptional circumstances' which would allow leave to be granted, the letter said. The council's cabinet member for schools said the local authority was 'considering any possible action to reduce unauthorised absences'. The UK government website warns that councils can fine parents £60 for unauthorised absence, rising to £120 if it is not paid after 21 days. Last year it was reported that almost four million school days had been lost in one academic year to unauthorised holidays. In 2017 a father lost a long-running court battle after challenging a £120 fine for taking his seven-year-old daughter to Disney World in Florida. Jon Platt said at the time: 'He said at the time: 'You're the child's parents. You should be able to make that decision without the state coming along and saying you're wrong about that.' The High Court ruled that he was not acting unlawfully because his daughter had a good overall attendance record of more than 90 per cent. But the Supreme Court later overturned that ruling, saying 'regular' attendance meant 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'. The ruling means mothers and fathers should not take their child out of lessons at any point without the headteacher's approval.

21 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Blue Monday holiday bookings boom expected**

Today – Blue Monday – is expected to be one of the busiest days for holiday bookings, according to the Civil Aviation Authority. Research by the regulator's Atol protection scheme found that 5.2 million people are expected to book a holiday this month. Cost remains the top factor determining booking holidays, but seven out of ten (69%) of those surveyed admit to not always seeking financial protection, putting themselves at risk of being out of pocket if their airline or travel company goes out of business. Head of Atol Andy Cohen said: "With the gloom surrounding Blue Monday, it's no surprise that many UK holidaymakers are rushing to book summer travels to lift their spirits. "If you are booking a package holiday today, look beyond the price and ensure your peace of mind by checking that the holiday is financially protected."

22 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **British Airways to give plane 1960s-era makeover to celebrate centenary**

The BOAC livery will remain on the Boeing 747 until the aircraft is taken out of service in 2023. British Airways is to paint four of its aircraft in retro livery to celebrate its centenary. The first to be given the makeover will be a Boeing 747, which will get a British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) design. This livery was originally used between 1964 and 1974. It will arrive at Heathrow airport on February 18 and will enter service the following day. The details of three more planes to be painted in retro liveries have yet to be disclosed. British Airways chief executive Alex Cruz said: "So many British Airways customers and colleagues have fond memories of our previous liveries, regularly sharing their photos from across the globe, so it's incredibly exciting to be re-introducing this classic BOAC design. "Our history has shaped who we are today, so our centenary is the perfect moment to revisit our heritage and the UK's aviation landscape through this iconic livery." The BOAC livery will remain on the Boeing 747 until the aircraft is taken out of service in 2023. BA is celebrating its centenary this year as its forerunner company, Aircraft Transport and Travel Limited, launched the world's first daily international scheduled flight between London and Paris. The firm was incorporated into several airlines – including BOAC – until it became British Airways in 1974.

23 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Airline meals are being stockpiled over fears a no-deal Brexit could leave flights without food for passengers**

Gate Gourmet provides catering from 20 UK airlines including BA and EasyJet. It has been increasing its UK stock of frozen foods which it imports from the EU. This is due to fears a no-deal Brexit could affect supplies coming into the UK. Airline meals are being stockpiled by the world's biggest caterer to the aviation industry over fears a no-deal Brexit could leave flights without food. Gate Gourmet provides in-flight catering for 20 airlines in the UK, including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and easyJet. But as its frozen foods are brought into Britain from Europe, there are concerns that border disruption in the event of a no-deal Brexit could affect supplies to airlines. And the Zurich-based firm's managing director for Western Europe, Stephen Corr, has said Gate Gourmet has been increasing its stock in the UK due to the uncertainty. In an interview with Bloomberg, he said: 'Companies could be in difficulty if they haven't prepared themselves and ensured a continuity of supply. 'We've been gradually increasing inventory levels of products from the European Union to ensure that any initial disruption at the UK border can be covered.' It is believed that frozen pizzas, entrees and desserts are among the items being stockpiled at a warehouse in Peterborough. The stock includes enough food to cover seven to 10 days of disruption. The food is taken from the warehouse and cooked at Gate Gourmet kitchens around the UK at airports before it is loaded on to aircraft. Fresh food is prepared in-house. Other items being stockpiled for flights also include snack boxes, toilet paper and plastic cutlery. It comes after warning yesterday that up to five million plane tickets could be cancelled if there is a no-deal Brexit - as airlines were accused of failing to warn passengers. Consumer watchdog Which? suggested the industry is 'unwilling to give any information' about the consequences of crashing out of the EU, and should be 'more up front'. The intervention comes after the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said up to five million bookings were 'at risk' this year if there is no deal. The EU has said the number of flights to destinations on the continent will be kept at last year's levels, but the number of tickets issued has been expanded dramatically since then. There are also concerns that UK travellers will need to have at least six months left on their passports. The threat of no deal has been rising as Theresa May struggles to find a way through deadlock in Parliament. Her blueprint was resoundingly rejected by MPs in an historic vote last week.

23 January 2019, Source TTG

### **Govt shutdown 'not affecting US bookings'**

Agents and operators alike have reported strong US sales, despite the ongoing government shutdown. The shutdown – now the longest in US history – has entered its fifth week as president Donald Trump continues to reject any spending bills that don't include \$5.7 billion to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. The impasse has left thousands of government workers without pay including airport security staff and caused major attractions to close, including museums and national parks. But agents and operators have reported strong US sales. Andrew Earle, managing director of Andrew Earle's Holidays, said the shutdown was not having any impact on bookings to the US, with New York and multi-centres combining Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles proving popular, helped by cheap flights across the Atlantic. He added: "Our numbers to the US are holding up, with the majority of bookings for travel beyond June. We're not seeing much in terms of lates, but that's not

entirely unusual. “We’ve not seen as much touring come in during January as normal, so it may be that the 60-plus market is a bit more anxious and holding back. We are already being asked for 2020.” But Earle said that the US shutdown was “starting to create questions from customers”. “If it’s still going on in another 12 weeks with Easter coming up then it will become more of an issue,” he added. “People paying their balances who are travelling in April to national parks are asking questions.” Richard Dixon, director of Holidaysplease, said: “The US continues to be strong for us – we’re seeing some great prices to New York with really attractive deals. Cheap airline seats in the market are encouraging people to go out there.” Dixon agreed that because of the time of year, the shutdown was not having an effect on bookings so far. “If it continues into spring and then summer, then it could cause a major problem for people going to the national parks,” he added. Premier Holidays said the US had been “selling exceptionally well” compared to this time last year, and is currently 30% up year-on-year for travel in 2019. Similarly, Travel 2 has seen a 25% increase in sales to the US over the past three months, with Florida leading the way.

24 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Brits happy to fly at inconvenient times to save money**

British travellers are happy to fly at inhospitable hours to cut the cost of their holiday, according to the latest travel trends report from Travelzoo. Its survey of 1,600 UK travellers found half would actively try to save money by sacrificing convenient travel times. More than half (54%) said they would try to save money on whether they receive in-flight meals, while (70%) said they would try to save money on baggage costs. The survey also showed that 55% plan to take an all-inclusive trip this year, slightly down on 59% who booked an all-inclusive trip in the last few years. The number of those who plan to book flight and accommodation separately across all types of trip dropped from 72% last year to 60% this year, supporting research by ABTA that package holidays are on the rise.

25 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Irish to splash €750,000 on holidays during weekend travel show**

With January bookings on the rise, this is an 'exciting time' to be a travel agent, reports Pól Ó Conghaile. One says sales are up 17pc. Another is already taking bookings for Lapland in December. And more than 1,000 travel professionals are headed for Holiday World today. Could the death of the travel agent have been exaggerated? "This is a very exciting time in the industry," says John Spollen of Cassidy Travel, reporting a 5pc rise in bookings compared to January of last year. "Sentiment is very high, along with customer confidence," he adds, with Spain and Portugal the most popular bookings for families this month, and Florida, the Caribbean and Canada seeing the benefit of a boom in transatlantic air routes. "Overall bookings are up 17pc," reports Paul Hackett of ClickAndGo.com. The rise is driven by the company's €1 holiday deposit offer, he says, along with a "buoyant market" and extra air capacity, among other factors. January is traditionally a busy month for holiday bookings, as consumers look past the post-Christmas gloom and travel agents kick-start sales for the year. But even so, 2019 appears to be off to a flying start. Half of all travel agents expect turnover to increase by up to 20pc this year, according to a new quarterly survey by the Irish Travel Agents' Association (ITAA). And this weekend's Holiday World Show - a bellwether for the state of Ireland's travel industry - brings a record number of US exhibitors and its biggest ever Home Holiday Pavilion to Dublin's RDS Simmonscourt. Some 55 countries are represented at the show's 29th edition, with organisers expecting over €750,000 worth of holidays to sell in just three days. Ireland's bookings boom comes despite broader concerns

about Brexit, a global economic slowdown and rising VAT rates in the hospitality industry. Consumer confidence also flies in the face of some turbulence in aviation - including a new profit warning from Ryanair, which shuttered its 'Ryanair Holidays' division this month. So how are Irish travel agents proving so resilient? "There is great value to be had from travel agents," says Paula Coughlan of Dawson Travel, one of the exhibitors at the Cork International Travel Fair - another travel show taking place at the Cork International Hotel from February 2-3. "We have excellent buying power and work with airlines, tour operators and hotels to get the best deals on all travel products." Irish Independent readers also singled out an "Irish, personal and reliable" business in voting Sunway Ireland's Favourite Travel Agent in our Reader Travel Awards. Sunway's sales are up 12pc this January, it says, driven by early booking discounts and a low deposit offer of €50, among other factors. Other travel agents reporting a rise in bookings include Killarney Travel (+8-10pc), GoHop.ie (+8pc) and SunSearch (+5pc), with others reporting sales "on a par" with January of 2018, according to the ITAA. "The indications are that we will see a further splurge when people get paid after Christmas," adds Martin Skelly of Navan Travel. Despite the January tailwinds, travel agents will not be breaking out the bubbly just yet. For many, resilience has been forged over years of boom-and-bust cycles - and the effect of 2018's heatwave on last-minute bookings is fresh in the mind.

25 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **BA website crashes in rush to book cheap tickets**

British Airways has come under fire from customers who failed to buy seats in the final day of a special centenary sale because the airline's website crashed. Others said they got to the very final stages of booking the £100 long-haul flights yesterday only to get an error message. Many took to social media to air their frustrations. BA customer services staff responded to a number of complaints, insisting its IT department was prepared for a rush of bookings and was ready to deal with any common faults. But they admitted to customers: "Not all website faults can be foreseen unfortunately, and it's very disappointing this affected you today. "I know it's frustrating but the influx of customers trying to get on take advantage, can sometimes result in the site being overloaded." The sale, marking the airline's 100th anniversary, offered long-haul flights for £100 each-way as part of a return trip. The offer ran across four days this week, with 100 seats up for grabs each day. Customers were invited to visit the site at 12pm on each day to reveal the two destinations on offer on a first-come, first-served basis. Customers said they had got to the very last stages of booking £100 flights to Rio or Barbados when the website went down. TravelMole has approached BA for a comment.

25 January 2019, Source TTG

### **IAG to sell Norwegian shares**

British Airways owner IAG has again said it no longer has any interest in acquiring Norwegian or even keeping a stake in it. The group originally bought a 4.61% stake in the low-cost airline last April but then had two bids turned down in May, having apparently undervalued the company. In August last year, IAG boss Willie Walsh said the airline would divest itself of the shares as the airline was not an investor. Now the group has again put out a statement reiterating its previous comments. The statement said: "International Airlines Group confirms that it does not intend to make an offer for Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA and that, in due course, it will be selling its 3.93% shareholding in Norwegian." Norwegian's shares have fallen 20% today following the announcement.

29 January 2019, Source Travelbiz

### **Norwegian hits rock bottom after raising €308m in share sale**

Shares fall as low as 30% in early trading in Oslo after airlines says it is open to takeover. Norwegian Air Shuttle tumbled the most ever after raising 3 billion kroner (€308 million) through a share sale to avoid breaching financial covenants. The company said it's open to new takeover approaches after Aer Lingus parent IAG abandoned an eight-month pursuit. The fully underwritten rights issue is required to increase financial flexibility and create headroom to covenants on outstanding bonds, the discount airline, based at Fornebu, outside Oslo, said in a statement Tuesday, sending the stock down as much as 30 per cent. Norwegian invited further bids after the termination of British Airways parent IAG's interest led the stock to lose a fifth of its value last Thursday. The airline said it will "continue to be willing to engage in consolidation discussions that can develop shareholder value," adding that there aren't any further talks right now. Chief executive Bjorn Kjos, who rejected two previous offers from IAG, has been struggling to weather a cash crunch as a European fare war depresses revenue at a time when his company is awash with capacity after one of the fastest growth spurts in aviation history. Norwegian reiterated in its statement that the focus now will be more on profitability than expansion. "This issuance gives Norwegian flexibility, while it looks to deliver much needed improvement of its operational and commercial performance," said Davy in a note to investors. The carrier's bonds recovered losses recorded last week after IAG pulled out. Its €250 million of notes due December gained 13 cents on the euro to 96 cents, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. IAG's decision to walk away from a bid had spurred concerns about Norwegian's finances, with analysts widely predicting that a capital increase was likely, though the rights issue is bigger than many had forecast. About 2.4 billion kroner of the total will be provided by DNB Bank, Danske Bank and billionaire shipping magnate John Fredriksen. The company must have a book equity value higher than 1.5 billion kroner and more than 500 million kroner of liquidity to comply with bond covenants, according to a previous presentation. Norwegian said it aims to reduce the level of spending through aircraft sales and the postponement of some plane deliveries and clawing back money from Rolls-Royce Holdings as compensation for having to scrap some flights due to engine issues. The carrier has already announced base and route cuts this year, signaling the extent of its profitability issues, something that may have deterred IAG. Deutsche Lufthansa also indicated at one point that it was mulling an offer. Bidders may also be put off by a profit warning at Ryanair Holdings, Europe's biggest airline, and uncertainty about how Brexit will affect flights and market developments as the UK, a major market for Norwegian. Existing shareholders including Mr Kjos and chairman Bjorn Halvor Kise will contribute to the rights offer. Mr Fredriksen, who last year pulled off the painful restructuring of his offshore drilling company Seadrill, is getting involved after saying he's looking for new opportunities as he continues to diversify his wealth estimated at \$7.9 billion.

30 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Virgin Hols reshuffle sees Lee Haslett move to airline**

Virgin Holidays has reshuffled its product and distribution team, including moving vice president of product and distribution Lee Haslett to Virgin Atlantic to take on the role of vice president, sales. Haslett will move to the airline in June. Some of his direct reports have been given new roles with immediate effect. Head of USA product Angus Bond has taken up the role of head of e-commerce and hotel sourcing, where he will oversee digital overhaul as part

of the businesses growth strategy. His role has temporarily been replaced by James Killick who has been promoted to interim head of USA product. Head of e-commerce Rach Wilton moves to head of retail, replacing Dan Buckingham, who becomes head of clubhouses at Virgin Atlantic, where he will oversee the operation of nine Clubhouses and all third-party lounges worldwide. A search is currently underway for candidates to fill the vacant positions. Virgin Holidays managing director Joe Thompson said: "We're committed to developing the best talent within the travel industry - and to do that, you need to provide new opportunities that add breadth and depth to our team's skills and experience. We're looking forward to seeing what the team can achieve as we enter our next phase of ambitious growth."

31 January 2019, Source Travel Newsgam

## **INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS REACH 1.4 BILLION TWO YEARS AHEAD OF FORECASTS**

International tourist arrivals grew 6% in 2018, totaling 1.4 billion according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. UNWTO's long term forecast issued in 2010 indicated the 1.4 billion mark would be reached in 2020, yet the remarkable growth of international arrivals in recent years has brought it two years ahead. UNWTO estimates that worldwide international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) increased 6% to 1.4 billion in 2018, clearly above the 3.7% growth registered in the global economy. In relative terms, the Middle East (+10%), Africa (+7%), Asia and the Pacific and Europe (both at +6%) led growth in 2018. Arrivals to the Americas were below the world average (+3%). "The growth of tourism in recent years confirms that the sector is today one of the most powerful drivers of economic growth and development. It is our responsibility to manage it in a sustainable manner and translate this expansion into real benefits for all countries, and particularly, to all local communities, creating opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship and leaving no one behind" said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. "This is why UNWTO is focusing 2019 on education, skills and job creation.", he added. UNWTO's long-term forecast published in 2010 predicted the 1.4 billion mark of international tourist arrivals for 2020. Yet stronger economic growth, more affordable air travel, technological changes, new business models and greater visa facilitation around the world have accelerated growth in recent years. The Americas (+3%) welcomed 217 million international arrivals in 2018, with mixed results across destinations. Growth was led by North America (+4%), and followed by South America (+3%), while Central America and the Caribbean (both -2%) reached very mixed results, the latter reflecting the impact of the September 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria. Growth expected to return to historical trends in 2019. Based on current trends, economic prospects and the UNWTO Confidence Index, UNWTO forecasts international arrivals to grow 3% to 4% next year, more in line with historic growth trends. As a general backdrop, the stability of fuel prices tends to translate into affordable air travel while air connectivity continues to improve in many destinations, facilitating the diversification of source markets. At the same time, the global economic slowdown, the uncertainty related to the Brexit, as well as geopolitical and trade tensions may prompt a "wait and see" attitude among investors and travellers. Overall, 2019 is expected to see the consolidation among consumers of emerging trends such as the quest for 'travel to change and to show', 'the pursuit of healthy options' such as walking, wellness and sports tourism, 'multigenerational travel' as a result of demographic changes and more responsible travel. "Digitalisation, new business models, more affordable travel and societal changes are expected to continue shaping our sector, so both destination and companies need to adapt if they want to remain competitive", added Pololikashvili.

31 January 2019, Source TravelMole

### **Thomas Cook and TUI losing share to new entrants**

Thomas Cook and TUI are losing market share to newer entrants, according to research by financial giant Morgan Stanley. Its fourth annual survey of UK holidaymakers, taken during the new year booking period, found Thomas Cook still has the highest market share, but it has dropped 'significantly' since last year. Morgan Stanley said 36% of its survey respondents said they have or were likely to book with Thomas Cook, compared to 43% from last year. For TUI, 35% said they have or were likely to book with TUI, compared to 38% from last year. "This is the first drop for both companies in four years, and is likely due to newer entrants (On the Beach, Jet2), and slower capacity growth than the competition," said Morgan Stanley's report. "Including subsidiary brands, TUI and First Choice combined have lost more market share (54% vs. 63% last year) than Thomas Cook and Airtours (45% vs. 50% last year)." Meanwhile, On the Beach has made big gains, with 16% respondents either booking or looking to book with the company. Looking at the health of the sector as a whole, Morgan Stanley said its survey findings were surprisingly positive. It found 73% of respondents intend to travel abroad in the next 12 months, up from the 68% in last year's survey. Of these, 61% expect to take a package, slightly more than the 59% last year. Only 2% of respondents mention Brexit as the main reason for not holidaying overseas. "The traditional package holiday seems remarkably resilient given economic/political uncertainty, competition, and last year's heatwave, which could prompt later booking and/or more staycations," said the report. "Respondents cite the benefit of a package's ATOL consumer protection and all-inclusive nature. Contrary to popular belief, younger people are more likely to take a package holiday than older people. The main survey negative is that Thomas Cook and TUI seem to be losing market share, with Jet2 and On The Beach gaining." But it said recent data looks less supportive. "Our channel checks suggest January, the peak booking period for the key summer season, has been soft in both the UK and Germany. "UK booking volumes fell 3% in the first week of the month, according to GFK, with anecdotal evidence of heightened promotional activity, though the summer season is still up 5% in terms of cumulative bookings."