

UK Office July 2019 TDC Report

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander
UK Director

Tour Operators

- **Thomas Cook** – We met with Andrew Pickering who advised that there have been some internal changes, however he will still be our main contact going forward. The strategy is to have yield, product, commercial working closer together for efficiency. They have closed 20 stores however they are still driving customers into the stores to make bookings and seek information. St. Pete/Clearwater is tracking at flat for 2019 travel which is fairly in line with other Florida beach destinations. Orlando and the family market have had a tough year, whilst Miami is doing ok for them. 2020 bookings to our area are tracking behind, whereas Orlando is performing better, but this is due to Orlando being put on sale earlier than other Florida destinations. Vegas has struggled this year due to competition and resort fees, but California and New York are doing well. The family market overall is pacing down as customers are cautious about spending money on a holiday with the uncertainty of Brexit. For Europe, Turkey and Tunisia are doing very well due to the exchange rate, whilst Spain, Greece and Cyprus are not performing as well compared to previous years. Thailand, Mauritius and Caribbean, specifically Mexico, are other areas which are doing well for them for 2019 travel. They are currently working on a September marketing campaign to drive bookings for 2020 summer travel. Andy is also in the process of organising a Florida training day, so he will update us once they have some dates.
- **Jetset Holidays** – We had a meeting with Adrian Smyth, Sales Manager, who provide an update on the company. Jetset is an Independent company who have been operating for 50 years, and work directly with the trade. Their staff based in Alrincham focus on tailormade, high end bookings, whilst the team in Enfield will predominantly sell package holidays and simpler twin centre itineraries. At the Enfield office, they have 18 sales agents who book 20% of the overall business. Overall Jetset book approx. 140k passengers a year, with 30% of their business travelling to the US. They work with various bed banks including; ATI, Hotelbeds, Stuba, Bonotel and Expedia. Content for their booking site is pulled from Expedia to provide consistency for the agent. For 2019 travel, the US business is tracking at +40%, whereas Europe has struggled due to Brexit. He demonstrated their booking engine which provides partners the opportunity to promote their destinations/products to their database of approx. 3.5 k agents, and we will consider this for the future.
- **Travelopia** - We met with Charlotte Goodchild, Product Executive, to get an update on business. Overall the USA has struggled for this year largely driven by competitive pricing from TUI and Virgin Holidays. She advised that bookings to Florida are fairly low due to the TUI retail stores pushing their own brands. They are focusing on the complex itineraries such as multi-centres and touring, which is typically targeted at the couples market and older demographic. Miami and the Keys do ok, but other Florida beach areas including St. Pete/Clearwater could do better. They are seeing demand for 2020 travel, however as they work solely with bed banks not all of the hotels rates are

available for the whole year so is restricting their business. They can however offer advance registrations to their customers. They are in the process of reviewing all of their product and in the future, they hope to be able to connect directly to the chain hotels. They are working on a new website so we have provided relevant content. Charlotte will advise if/when they will have an opportunity for training their sales agents. In the past they have had a dedicated Florida training day, so would be looking to reinstate this as it's always been well received by their staff. We discussed Fam trips, but they are currently not arranging their own in-house trips, but happy to participate in tourist board trips.

- **Lotus** – We had a meeting with Sarah Wilson, Hotel Product Director, who advised that their business to St. Pete/Clearwater was fairly small. The majority of the Florida business is booked for Orlando and Miami; however she was keen to see how we can increase the room nights. Overall the USA is performing well and they are ahead of last year. Vegas is down compared to last year as this is typically a 2nd holiday for many of their customers which they are cutting out this year. They predominantly focus on the multi-centre and more complex itineraries which generate the higher spend. Customers are still wanting to travel to the US, despite the exchange rate. We provided a destination update and she was keen on focusing more on the activities such as food and drink, and art and culture for their customers. They do work with Norwegian, but their customers tend to book British Airways as they choose to travel in premium economy and Business class.
- **British Airways** – We spoke with Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive, who advised that despite Florida being up for them overall, Gulf Coast destination were down, and specifically for St. Pete/Clearwater -3% vly. Orlando and Miami are up compared to last year. The Florida campaign didn't perform as well as they had hoped, which was largely driven by the launch date. During March there was a lot of uncertainty surrounding Brexit, Easter wasn't in range whereas previous campaigns have launched in May and so Easter would have been on sale, the campaign was more inspirational rather than to drive bookings, there were no tactical airfare by the airline and the campaign was shorted than previous years. With that in mind during the campaign we were pacing at -48% vly. 2020 is looking more positive with room nights +84% vly. They are seeing an increase in multi-centre bookings which include St. Pete/Clearwater, however guests are staying a smaller number of nights in our area as including other Florida beach destinations. Keri recently visited St. Pete/Clearwater and met with key contacts to build relationships and these hotels are now performing better. They are currently working on marketing activity for the rest of the year which will focus on 2020 travel.
- **Kenwood Travel** – We spoke with Nicola Holliehead, USA Product Manager, who advised that this year has been slower than last year, but they are seeing a strong demand for late bookings. Overall, they are seeing passenger numbers and bookings good, but revenue is down indicating that customers still want to travel but maybe they are downgrading their hotel or staying less nights. 2020 travel is looking very good for them and they are working on activity for September to drive bookings for next year. They have now got multi-centres bookable online, which includes Orlando and Kissimmee and St. Pete/Clearwater. They haven't promoted this as yet as they are still rolling out the programme, but they have seen more enquiries since it went live. They still need to implement more combinations of destinations, 2+ destination itineraries, Amtrak and

transfers etc. which will be an ongoing development. Nicola mentioned that she is hoping to visit in November with 2 of the sales team, so will be in touch for recommendations.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **BA Lounge Heathrow Terminal 5** – The Summer event at Heathrow has now launched and will be running until the end of September. We have already visited the lounge twice this month to ensure all of the creatives were positioned correctly and that the consumer was engaging with our brand, particularly with entry to our holiday competition. We were also joined by a videographer on one occasion to capture the customer interacting with the various components within the lounge. We will continue to visit during the coming months whilst the campaign is live. We have received the video footage and have provided this to our US office.
- **USA Ball** – We attended the Visit USA annual event which was held at Hilton Bankside, London. The event provided an opportunity to meet and speak with many key contacts including; Tour Operators and Travel Agencies, PR, Destination and hotel partners, and ancillary products. The event is always very well attended and greatly received.
- **Jetset Holidays** – We visited their office in Enfield to provide dedicated training to their sales agents. The agents based in this office will work with the trade and make package and multi-centre itineraries. We gave a detailed overview of the destination and distributed brochures, maps and giveaways.
- **BA Holidays** – We visited their office in Newcastle to provide training to their sales agents as part of their Florida Training event. The day consisted of an informal drop in sessions, where agents were encouraged to visit each supplier and learn more. During our visit we met with about 40 agents where we provided a destination overview and distributed brochures, maps and giveaways.
- **Norwegian** – We had a meeting with Craig Bevan, Airport Negotiator and Dominic Tucker, Head of Sales to get an update on business and to discuss marketing opportunities. They advised that their overall strategy is to continue bringing down costs to help grow profits. They are trying to work closer with the trade as currently trade accounts for approx. 25% of the business but they see this as an opportunity for growth. Their top performers include; Travel2, Gold Medal, Expedia, Ocean Holidays and USAirtours. Q1 2019 saw Norwegian gain a 33% market share despite no promotion of the Tampa route. A good product and a strong price point helped to drive this. Summer 2019 early indications show strong performance, but could do a bit more. However, they are not concerned based on their forecasting for the route given it's the first year of service. For Summer 19 they have approx. 27% of the market share, whereas BA is a lot stronger due to their increased frequency on the Tampa route. For Winter 2019 they have extra capacity over the Christmas period (one additional flight). Summer 2020 is on sale but only up to July. They may consider additional flights for Easter and peak summer but this is dependent on how the additional winter seats sell. This season is looking good so far. Overall Florida is doing well for them. They are seeing reduced length of stay though, but customers are still booking. We discussed marketing opportunities and they are keen to partner with us. We will wait for them to follow up in due course. We have scheduled a

follow up meeting to get an update on marketing and also opportunities for joint roadshows and Fam trips to assist the growth with trade sales.

- **Norwegian** – We had a follow up meeting with Dominic Tucker and Mitchell Hawes to focus on ways to work together to support marketing efforts. We discussed possible events at the end of November to target the trade in Sussex, Surrey and Kent, which would allow networking, food and drink and quiz. Norwegian would be able to offer a flight as an incentive if VSPC and Tampa could provide ground arrangements. We also discussed a possible joint sales agent Fam trip for next May for up to 8 agents and 2 hosts. We will arrange a follow up meeting in September to start planning the end of year events and Fam trip.

TRADE LIAISON

- **Virgin Holidays** – We have now received the final results for the Florida campaign and the May activity we participated in.

Florida campaign

- Metro Print – Readership 3.7m (all adults) and 1.3m (adults with children in household). Impacts – 5m (all adults) and 1.7m (adults with children).
During the campaign there were two 4-page features (20th May and 17th June)
- Metro Digital – Readership 2.3m (all adults) and 1.6 (adults with children).
Impacts 6.3m (all adults) and 6.3 (adults with children).
 - Visit St. Pete/Clearwater CPM activity generated 161,439 impressions, 3283 clicks and 2.03% CTR (average is 1.12%).
 - Native activity – 12,978-page views +68% compared to planned views, 1.22m dwell time, 13 shares and 4 comments. 16,486 impressions, 21 clicks, 0.13% CTR.
- Pre-roll video – 1,856,164 completed views, 70.31% completion rate (average is 63% completion rate).
- OOH - Large format digital screens located within high footfall regional shopping malls generating 1,983,220 impressions.
- Social (Facebook and Instagram) – 4,993,353 impressions, 566,989 engagement, 8,696 link clicks, 0.17% CTR, 3,401 post reactions.
- Affiliates (Top Cashback) – 45m page impressions per month, 8.2m registered members, £100m approx. retail sales per month, 960 transactions for hour.
- Room nights booked during the campaign – +9.9% vly

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater activity

- Email – 20.5k audience, 6.6k opens with 32% open rate, 840 clicks with 4.1% click rate. VSPC pod received 84 clicks.
- Plasma screens – 30s video was shown in over 70 retail stores across the UK.
- Social
 - Twitter – 8,912 impressions, 156 total engagements
 - Facebook – 51,167 impressions, 542 reactions
 - Instagram (3 posts) – 63,855 impressions, 41,871 reach, 1995 reactions
- Newsletter – 227k audience, 25% open rate, 2.1% click rate. VSPC pod received 1k clicks.

- Room nights booked during the campaign +5.4% vly
- **British Airways Holidays** – We have now received the final results from the Florida campaign we participated in. The campaign was live in March and ran for 2 weeks.
 - Print – One half page feature promoted in the travel supplement of the Telegraph newspaper.
 - Digital online articles – 3 articles were produced for the Telegraph partnership which has 12,400 unique users. The Ultimate day out and Beyond the sun, sea and sand articles performed particularly well.
 - Ultimate day – 5676 unique users, 6219 page views, 1,27s dwell time
 - Beyond the sun – 5025 unique users, 5364 page views, 1m28s dwell time
 - Summer events – 595 unique users, 671 page views, 45s dwell time
 - Social – Targeted Instagram post which received 2.2k engagements and 1.77% CTR
 - Results – The telegraph conducted a research study and concluded that customers were +31% more likely to St. Pete/Clearwater for their holiday post activity period.

BA Holidays - St. Pete/Clearwater had quite a challenging campaign period with performance tracking at -48% compared to last year during the campaign and also compared to pre campaign period. Of the investing partners our post campaign performance was however positive. It was suggested that this is due to the inspirational pieces that they would not expect to see an immediate uplift in bookings. Multi centre business including St. Pete/Clearwater showed an increase of +21% vly during the campaign period, and represented 58% of the passengers travelling. During May sale room nights were +48% vly for 2019/2020 travel.
- **British Airways Summer Beach Event** –
 - We have received the flyer which will be handed to customers upon arrival into the lounge. It contains details of the event as well as the holiday competition. This has been approved.
 - Brand Ambassadors – We have now received their full schedule for dates that our brand ambassador will be at the lounge representing St. Pete/Clearwater.
 - Initial results from the first 10 days – the competition has been well received with approx. 300 entries already. Since then we have received an update from BA and the entries are closer to 1000.
- **FY Sales Plans** – Ongoing conversations with Tim Ramsberger with regards new FY sales plans and processes moving forward.
- **Travelzoo** – We have received the proof for the dedicated landing page for the campaign which launches in September. We have received the email and landing page which has been approved, and will await the remaining creatives for our sign off.
- **Brand USA/Visit Florida** - We have received the 15 second teaser video which has been approved.

- **Brand USA Fall Campaign** – We have received the proof for the print article which forms part of the multi-channel fall campaign. We have provided amends and will await the revised version for our approval.
- **British Airways and Norwegian meetings, London** – Ahead of the meetings which will be attended by Tampa Airport, Tampa and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater, we have provided Katie Bridges some example creatives for key campaigns and initiatives that have been launched in the UK market in the past 12 months.
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – Ahead of the launch of our forthcoming campaign in partnership with Icelandair, we have provided Thomas Cook with assets so that they can work on the creatives. We have received the landing page and website banner which have been approved. The remaining activity will be sent to us at the beginning of August for our approval.
- **Virgin Holidays, Braehead** – We have secured and are starting to work on the Shopping Centre 2-day event at the Braehead Shopping Centre, in-store client event and staff training which is all taking place the weekend of the 14th & 15th September. We are in discussions with Virgin Holidays and the Braehead store staff to arrange all of the above. We will have a promotional area outside one of the main department stores jointly with Virgin Holidays to promote our destination and consumers will also have the chance to enter a competition to win a holiday for 4 people to St. Pete/Clearwater. Also in contact with Braehead Mall with further opportunities around this event including social and digital elements in the Mall. Activity is on-going.
- **Icelandair** – We spoke with Christian Haggstrom, Sales Manager, who advised that Icelandair were no longer operating the Tampa route for travel September onwards. This is driven by all of the issues with the 737 max aircrafts, and they have also had to cancel a couple of other US routes. He mentioned that they were hoping to increase the frequency into Orlando and make this year-round, however this is still to be confirmed.
- **USAirtours** – We have received the web banners, several emails, poster and social activity, which form part of our campaign. These have all been approved.
- **Travelbiz.ie** – We have secured our double page spread in the 2020 Travelbiz directory which is produced for trade in Ireland and all assets have been sent for copy updates to be amended and images to be changed. The publication will be produced and distributed in November this year.
- **Thomas Cook** – We have requested final results from the recent staff incentive based on winning Love to Shop vouchers or runners up prizes of branded goody bags from Ella and expect to receive these in the next few weeks as the competition has now ended.
- **VSPC/BA/Experience Kissimmee Product Manager FAM** – Work continues on the proposed Product Managers FAM. Experience Kissimmee and ourselves have agreed a list of Product Managers we would like to invite and have had this list finalised by British Airways. Work has started on drafting an invitation to be sent out.

- **Funway Holidays** – Prize winners have been sent their goody bags as part of the Florida's Beaches July Campaign.
- **Jetset Holidays** – Adrian Smyth, Sales Manager contacted us to advise that they are working on a Fam trip for their sales agents and if we would be able to support. The Fam trip will be visiting St. Pete/Clearwater in September and Jetset will run an incentive for the top bookers to receive a place on the trip. There will be 6 sales agents and 2 hosts. Rose has confirmed that they will work on an itinerary for the group, whilst Jetset will work with KLM/AF to secure flights and will also source accommodation and car hire from their partners. We will work with Michelle on the itinerary in the coming weeks and complete the necessary paperwork.
Jetset also featured the Don Cesar on some banners featured on their booking system as Adrian had been liaising directly with the hotel.
- **VSPC/SeaWorld Mega Fam** – We have been working with Rose and Michelle to put together the itinerary for the Fam trip visiting in October. We should have a more finalised itinerary next month so we can work with SeaWorld on their brochure. We have nearly filled all of the places on the Fam trip, but will continue to get this finalised and to obtain the necessary agents' details.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We have received the waivers from all participants on this Fam trip and shared with Michelle for their records. We will await their feedback upon their return.
- **Tour America** – Provided Tour America with creative and assets to start working on our September Consumer Campaign in partnership with Brand USA.
- **Visit USA, UK** – We included details on their website for the new exhibits which will be featured at the Dali Museum.
- **Gold Medal** - We have now received the results from the recent Destination Awareness Campaign with Gold Medal Independent agents and were advised the following:
 - March was when the campaign launched and Gold Medal saw a good start to the campaign but April and May have not performed well. This is in line with all of Florida and Orlando too so whilst the activity did not see such a strong performance this was not against trend.
 - Statistics for the 150 stores top selling Florida stores they targeted saw a positive increase.
 - The Oh So Orlando campaign is currently running so they are confident that by the end of June and through July we will see things turn around further.
 - A total of 244 room nights were booked during the campaign period
- **Gold Medal** – Harriet Hudders advised that as of the 8th July the company will be relocating their Preston office to Leyland, Lancashire.

- Visit USA, Ireland – We have received their Q3 marketing results;
 - New website launched 8th July 2019 and designed to make travel planning easier and to showcase their members. It also works better for SEO.
 - Website sessions – 3472
 - Page views – 8872 +14% vly
 - Users – 3007
 - Average sessions duration – 1m24s
 - Social
 - Facebook – 3688 page likes +11% vly
 - Twitter – 717 +2% vly
 - Instagram – 335 followers
 - LinkedIn – 47 followers
 - Email – 22% open rate and 2.2% CTR

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

3 July 2019, Source TravelMole

TUI opens new-look store inside fashion retailer

TUI has opened a 'state of the art' holiday store inside a Next store, its first agency concession. Until now, only Virgin Holidays has partnered with Next and announced plans last year for 20 concessions across the UK. The TUI holiday store in The Moor, Sheffield development is a relocation from Sheffield Pinstone Street. The new store has a 'fresh, modern look' with booth-style seating so customers can see their holiday plans on the big screen. There is also a Travel Money desk and Welcome Bar where advisors greet guests as they walk into the store. Last month saw the launch of the new TUI Airways Dreamliner flights from Doncaster Sheffield airport to Orlando Sanford in Florida. TUI has also recently introduced Cancun to its programme for summer 2020 from Doncaster Sheffield Airport. Stephen Bracegirdle, head of retail for TUI, said: "With the launch of this new store and a wide range of holidays, including the family favourite of Florida now available from Doncaster Sheffield Airport, this is a really exciting time for the region." Chris Harcombe, Aviation Development Director at Doncaster Sheffield Airport said: "This new investment by TUI in a state-of-the-art store is real testament to the demand to fly locally, with the airport now just 25 minutes from Sheffield City centre."

4 July 2019, Source Travel Weekly

US operators offering low deposits to tempt bookers

Operators are using low deposits to boost forward sales to the US, despite a high level of enquiries. The trade reported buoyant enquiry levels for the US but admitted there was "nervousness" about booking due to challenges in the market, including negative headlines in the media about job cuts. Deposits are traditionally reduced in January and February but

many operators, including USAirtours, Newmarket Holidays and Funway, are offering £99 per person deposits in the current late sales period. Funway's July 'deals' brochure also has savings of 65% for bookings made this month. USAirtours chief executive Guy Novik said: "People are being much more cautious, ringing around and doing a lot more price-checking. "Job security should be high but negative news about people losing jobs is making people nervous. "Traditionally, the industry offers reduced deposits in January and February, [but now] we are seeing these deposits being kept low to tempt people to book in a soft market. "The weak pound doesn't help; that's pushed up the price of the ground element."

USAirtours reported its overall sales to the US to be about 5% down despite its Florida villas business running 7% up. Gold Medal's product manager for the Americas and the Caribbean, Ross Sinclair, said the operator was performing well in a challenging market environment. "Our numbers are fairly good considering the market," he said. "Gold Medal is holding its own, while some are feeling the pinch in a challenging late period." The operator, which offers deposits of £99 year-round, said year-on-year bookings were up by 4% to Florida and 15% for the Deep South. UK visitor numbers to the US rose by 4% to 4.7 million in 2018, following a 2% dip in 2017. The US National Travel and Tourism Office forecasts UK arrivals to rise by 2% this year and 4% in 2020, with the five-million figure to be hit in 2021. Deep South and California outpace other parts of US. The trade has reported mixed fortunes for US destinations, with New England, southern states and California outperforming Florida and eastern seaboard cities. Tom Waite, Kuoni's US product manager, said the operator saw US sales rise 10% in 2018, and the south and New England are selling well in 2019, but Florida is flat. "Self-drive itineraries and multi-centre holidays are definitely on the increase with customers wanting to explore more," he added. US operators claim the wide range of holidays in the country makes it a resilient market despite some Britons' concerns about Brexit. Sarah Lax, purchasing manager at Virgin Holidays and chair of the Visit USA Association, said: "Demand for and interest in the US is still significant. The Great American West attracts affluent UK travellers who are resilient in their holiday plans, no matter what the economic or political climate." Richard Forde, Newmarket Holidays' head of trade sales, noted a "strong bounce-back in sales" since 2018, which was affected by a Trump backlash and Brexit. However, the operator's eastern city tours haven't recovered as well as other destinations and bookings remain on par with 2018.

4 July 2019, Source Travel Weekly

Kuoni gears up for self-drive focus in the US

Kuoni is promoting self-drive itineraries in the US, as the operator capitalises on increased demand in this sector. Tom Waite, US product manager, said: "Our new look Discover USA brochure is coming out at the end of August with a focus on self-drive holidays, and making the experience of the destination at the heart of the brochure. "Self-drive itineraries and multicentre holidays are definitely on the increase with customers wanting to explore more of the US." New additions to the brochure will be two New England itineraries and an Oregon tour. "The new England itineraries reflect increased demand for the destination and the big anniversary next year, marking 400 years since the Mayflower pioneering voyage," added Waite. "To support the launch of our new product range, we are hosting a dedicated US training day [in July] with the support of tourist boards, including Brand USA. "This is a first for Kuoni with about 40 travel experts attending the workshop at Kuoni HQ." The self-drive theme is being promoted at major outdoor consumer events this year, where Kuoni is partnering with US tourist boards to market 'The Great American Road Trip'.

5 July 2019, Source Travelbiz

Summer holidays a 'lates' market as Irish leave bookings to last minute

Despite the patchy summer weather, holiday bargains can be found... if you know where to look. If 2018 was the summer of sweltering staycations, 2019 is the summer of 'lates', according to Irish travel agents. "You couldn't give away a sun holiday in June 2018," says Paul Hackett, CEO of ClickAndGo.com, referring to last year's scorcher. By contrast, 2019 is a "lates" market, he believes. "The trend this year seems to be more to book at the last minute. People may have been expecting to have a second summer of good weather... but we live in Ireland!" June bookings shot up 84pc at ClickAndGo.com compared to the same month last year, Hackett says - while average prices are down by €40pp, or €160 per family of four, in destinations like Spain, Portugal and the Canary Islands. Increased airline capacity and a Brexit-inspired dip in British travel are also contributing to lower prices and late booking trends, agents say. "There is an over-capacity situation with the airlines at the moment," adds Pat Dawson, CEO of the Irish Travel Agents' Association. "Surprisingly, there are still very good airfares available in July and August, which over the past two or three years, wasn't the case." This week, for example, Ryanair is offering last-minute August getaways to destinations like Carcassonne and Lisbon from €24.99 each-way, while Aer Lingus has a July 4 sale offering €50 off return flights on its North American network. Tanya Airey of Sunway tips the Algarve, Lanzarote, Salou and Turkey as "great value" this summer, with Turkey in particular worth a look due to its low cost of living. "A four-star hotel holiday package is approximately the same price as a three-star in other destinations," she says. "A three-course meal in a mid-range restaurant might cost €15 for two, while a cappuccino costs around €1.55." Meanwhile, though we may be leaving things late, a new survey from Laya Healthcare says over three quarters of Irish adults will eventually take holidays this summer, spending billions on flights, accommodation, food, drink and entertainment. Spain is our favourite sun holiday destination, the survey suggests - chosen by over 22pc of Irish adults taking summer trips - followed by the USA, Portugal, Italy and France, results broadly in line with CSO statistics.

5 July 2019, Source TravelMole

Google reveals top travel search trends for summer 2019

Summer 2019 is all about getting back to nature - appreciating it, wallowing in it, exploring it and perhaps saving it, says Becky Power, director of travel for Google UK. Here, she takes a look at what holidaymakers are searching for this summer. Ecotourism often conjures up hiking trips through rainforests or staying under canvas on the veldt but consumers are taking the sustainable message even more to heart this year and questioning their travel footprints. Many are reviving the mini-break, travelling shorter distances to go on weekend holidays (up 85% in the UK) or wellness weekends (up 60% in Germany). Premium camping is up a staggering 450% in Germany while Forest Holidays and Nature Reserves see a modest increase of 55% and 40% respectively. These trends would suggest that consumers are trying to make the most of their available leisure time. They are keen to wring every possible experience (Theme park visits are up 205%) from their time off, and maximise the amount of money they have to do it. As a result, searching for detailed holiday information and particularly searching via mobile continues to rise. Google found that over two-thirds of holiday destination research takes place on a mobile, indicating that users are taking every opportunity to explore their options when they're away from their desks. And, as schools start to prepare for the long break in mid-July, those searches spike, although it's worth noting that people looking for cheaper deals by being the early bird is also rising - searches for 'Early Booking' are up 115% on last year. Potential travel customers are getting wise to holiday companies' tactics for ancillary revenues. There has been a 55% increase in searches for

Luggage Cost while travellers looking for information on Baggage Policy is up 115%. But, travel companies that put their best deals front and centre are most likely to capture browsing holidaymakers, as searches for Cheap Flights have risen by 140% and Travel Deals 45%. Even when budgets are tightening, travellers are open to new ideas and taking time out - as long as the price is right. Tap into the trend for environmentally sensitive travel, micro-trips and entertainment and travel companies will have found the right mix to attract 2019's prospective holidaymakers.

5 July 2019, Source Travolution

On The Beach poised for long-haul expansion as airlines are integrated

Manchester-based OTA On The Beach will continue to roll out long-haul destinations as it completes integrations with more scheduled airlines. The firm is already actively marketing Dubai and popular beach destinations, like Phuket in Thailand, made accessible through the middle eastern hub having integrated Emirates. That went live last October and the OTA says volumes are above target and conversion rates are now surpassing what it sees for its traditional short-haul beach product. British Airways has been partly integrated although On The Beach says work continues to complete that tie-up, and it expects Virgin Atlantic to go live this month. The next two carriers it plans to offer are Etihad and Turkish Airlines, giving the online agent's customers access to many of the most popular long-haul beach destinations. Rob Turner, director of supply at On The Beach, said airlines are looking for direct integrations to rather than through GDSs and are the catalyst for the firm's expansion into long-haul. "When we launched Dubai conversion rates were well below our average. But every month since October they have climbed and climbed without much effort on our part. "People are just adjusting to the fact that we now offer long-haul. Three or four weeks ago conversion rates for Dubai went beyond our site average, so that adjustment is happening." Turner said On The Beach will be offering a mix of third party supplied hotels and directly contracted properties in the long-haul destinations it is targeting. He said the firm has done a lot of research into the destinations to identify what is popular and it will offer a limited range of the hotels it knows will sell. In Orlando, for instance, it will offer just 50 or 60 hotels having removed a lot from third-party feeds it does not consider relevant for its audience. "We are taking more of a tour operator approach, trying to be really directional and only sell properties in the right locations and which have been health and safety audited," Turner said. He added On The Beach hopes for its long-haul business to hit six figures in revenues in two or three years. "Not only are we seeing organic traffic picking up, but as we integrate more airlines we can start making a bit of a noise about it as well," Turner said. On The Beach has sold some long-haul destinations in the past like Cancun due to its relationships with charter carriers and could see there was demand from its customers. It has been getting over one million searches a year for Mexico on its site. "We knew the opportunity was big just because consumers were coming to us and looking and then coming back to brand," Turner said. Jo Lowery, long-haul senior contracts manager, said there is no lack of long-haul partners looking to work with On The Beach to access its beach holiday clients. She said average durations in Dubai have proved to be higher than major rivals see, underlining that On The Beach is opening up these destinations to a new and valuable audience of holidaymakers. "People want to work with us because we are able to tap into that market of customers who want that traditional beach holiday. Everyone wants to work with us. They see it as a great opportunity." Lowery said contracting accommodation in long-haul destinations is more complex due to the sheer number of room and board types and offers in those markets. "There are more players and the market is much more aggressive in long-haul," she said.

“That’s why we are being a bit more cautious around it. Everyone wants to throw contracts at us.”

8 July 2019, Source Travelbiz

Norwegian Air shares soar despite IAG denying bid

Shares in carrier Norwegian Air climbed after the Aer Lingus and British Airways owner IAG denied a Spanish media report it was preparing another offer for the airline. The shares surged almost 6.5% in Oslo after rising as much as 12% at the opening of trading. “We have said that we are no longer interested in Norwegian several times in the last few months. Nothing has changed,” an IAG spokeswoman said. Spanish news website OKdiario had reported that IAG would make an offer for Norwegian within a fortnight, citing anonymous sources. IAG also owns Iberia and Vueling airlines. IAG said in January that it would not bid for Norwegian and planned to sell its stake of around 3.9% in the company. Norwegian subsequently raised 3bn Norwegian crowns (€311m) to shore up its finances. Norwegian has shaken up rivals by offering cut-price transatlantic fares, but its rapid expansion has left it with hefty losses and high debts. In Ireland, Norwegian had initially big plans to take on Aer Lingus and British Airways in transatlantic flights from Cork and Shannon. But it was also hit hard by the ban on flights of the Boeing 737 Max, an aircraft Norwegian used extensively, and which led it to cancelling many flights out of Ireland this summer. “We do not think that in Norwegian’s current state the debt-ridden airline can hope for a white knight - it will have to try and survive on its own,” broker Bernstein said in a note to clients, which also noted IAG’s denial of an offer. Shares in Norwegian Air have slumped almost 69% in the past year to value the company at €578m, while IAG shares have fallen 22% in the past year to value it around €10bn.

11 July 2019, Source Skift

New Numbers Hint at Tough 2020 for U.S. Tourism Industry

It’s hard to imagine that a revitalized Brand USA will be able to counter the effects of an expensive dollar and the ramifications of President Trump’s various trade war spats. The U.S. travel sector could be in for a tough 2020. You’ll get different answers depending on who you ask about a Trump Slump in travel to the U.S. Demand for flights remain high, but destinations and hotels outside top destinations have noted a slight decline in business. Evidence is mounting, though, that the U.S. travel sector could suffer in 2020. While both tourism and business travel continue to grow, the rate of growth is expected to decline sharply according to new research from the U.S. Travel Association. Demand has slowed over the last year, and the prospect of a flat 2020 is certainly a possibility. The group’s data show that the end of the year may prove tough for the industry, with year-over-year growth becoming essentially flat in November which is expected to boast just 2 percent growth. What’s most worrisome is a decline in expectations for international inbound travel, which reflect the potential for little to no year-over-year growth for the remainder of the year. “Headwinds like the strong dollar and lingering trade tensions indicate sluggish growth for international inbound travel, but the much-needed work of the Brand USA destination marketing organization has prevented a further constriction,” said David Huether, U.S. Travel’s senior vice president for research, in a statement. “Political leaders would be wise to act on policies that can help us thrive in spite of these challenging circumstances, such as Brand USA’s long-term reauthorization and the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.” Business travel growth continues to be weighed down by the trade war between the U.S. and China as well as Brexit. Weather disruptions impacted business travel earlier in the year but

things seem to have gotten back on track. There's also the potential for reduced trade tensions as the U.S. approaches the 2020 elections as a potential buoy to future travel demand. "Soft global economic activity, prolonged and expanding trade tensions, and uncertainty surrounding the Trump administration remain major risks to international traveler sentiment," states the report. "Ongoing U.S.-China, U.S.-Mexico-Canada, and U.K.-Eurozone trade discussions, if resolved, may ease these downside risks." Strong leisure travel across the U.S. is helping prop up the industry as it feels a reduction in international visitors. How long this will last is anyone's guess.

11 July 2019, Source TTG

Norwegian boss Bjorn Kjos stands down after 17 years

Norwegian boss Bjorn Kjos has stood down as chief executive of the budget carrier with immediate effect (July 11) after 17 years at the helm. Kjos will take up a new role as advisor to Norwegian chairman Niels Smedegaard, who in turn will take a more active role in the airline's management. Chief financial officer Geir Karlsen, who joined the airline in April last year, has been appointed interim chief executive. Smedegaard said the search for a new permanent chief executive was already under way. "I am very pleased Bjorn will remain at the company as an advisor to the board and the chair," he said. "As Norwegian moves from growth to profitability, it will be an advantage for the company to benefit from Bjorn's extensive network, in-depth knowledge of and experience with global aviation." Law graduate turned fighter pilot Kjos, 72, is one of Norwegian's founding partners. He has been chief executive since October 2002 and chaired the airline's board between 1993 and 1996. During his 17-year tenure, Kjos has overseen Norwegian's growth from a small, domestic carrier with 130 staff and four aircraft to a global low-cost carrier employing more than 11,000 and operating in excess of 160 aircraft. "I am confident the board will find the best qualified successor to lead the next chapters of the Norwegian story together with the top management team," said Kjos. "Leaving the exciting future tasks to a new chief executive and taking on a new challenge as an advisor is a setup I am very happy with. I look forward to spending more time working on specific strategic projects crucial to the future success of Norwegian." Smedegaard added: "Bjorn has played an unprecedented role in Norwegian's success. His vision of offering affordable fares for all, combined with his enthusiasm and innovating spirit, has revolutionised the way people travel for pleasure and for business, not least between the continents. Bjorn is definitely one of the most influential European entrepreneurs of our time." Last year, amid what Norwegian admits was a "period of financial and operational challenges", the airline has pivoted from a growth strategy to one of pursuing profitability, which has seen it consolidate its route network and aircraft order book and attempt to shore up its balance sheet. "We have to ensure Norwegian is well prepared and positioned to handle volatile markets and unexpected events," Smedegaard added. "It is crucial we continue to deliver on our cost reduction initiatives and constantly ensure we have a route portfolio that yields profit. It is also important the new chief executive develops an organisation that embraces continued improvement and operational excellence."

15 July 2019, source Travel Newsgram

DOMESTIC, INTERNATIONAL DEMAND IN USA EXPECTED TO DRAG OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS

Travel to and within the U.S. grew 3.2% year-over-year in May, according to the U.S. Travel Association's latest Travel Trends Index (TTI)—marking the industry's 113th straight month of overall expansion. While this is up slightly from April's 3.0% overall growth, the Leading

Travel Index (LTI) predicts travel growth will soften through November 2019 as all travel segments experience softer growth. International travel grew only 1.2% in May, following three months of wide fluctuations due to the timing of Easter, which has historically been a peak travel time for visitors to the U.S. Over the next six months, the LTI predicts international travel growth will slow to just 0.4%. “Headwinds like the strong dollar and lingering trade tensions indicate sluggish growth for international inbound travel, but the much-needed work of the Brand USA destination marketing organization has prevented a further constriction,” said U.S. Travel Senior Vice President for Research David Huether. “Political leaders would be wise to act on policies that can help us thrive in spite of these challenging circumstances, such as Brand USA’s long-term reauthorization and the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.” The outlook is brighter on the domestic travel side: domestic travel demand increased 3.6% in May, buoyed by growth in both the business travel and leisure travel segments. However, weakening consumer spending and business investment is projected to hamstring domestic travel growth over the next six months. The LTI predicts domestic travel growth will expand only 2.0% through November, with leisure travel outpacing business travel growth. Vacation intentions from January-April 2019 registered above 2018 levels over the same period, and forward-looking bookings and searches support predictions of continued, albeit moderate, growth. “Domestic leisure travel has been a source of solid demand for the travel industry over the past several years,” said Huether. “This has been especially important given the impediments to international inbound travel growth.”

18 July 2019, Source Irish Trade Travel News

Orlando Announces Record 75 Million Visitors

Tourism officials in Orlando have announced a historic milestone for the US travel industry as Orlando released news of a record-setting 75 million annual visitors in 2018. The increase of 4.2% over the prior year once again solidifies Orlando’s lead position as the USA’s most-visited destination. Visit Orlando, the region’s official destination tourism and marketing organisation, shared the news as part of National Travel & Tourism Week to a gathering of more than 1,000 tourism and community leaders. “It was another record-breaking year for Orlando with both domestic and international visitation,” said George Aguel, President and Chief Executive, Visit Orlando. “We saw strong gains from all of our core countries, particularly from Latin America. This success is a testament to the special appeal of our destination that continues to grow and evolve, as well as our strong commitment to strategic marketing initiatives.” All of Orlando’s key international markets experienced growth in 2018, including the UK with 1,039,000 visitors, an increase of 1.9%.

Orlando reached a host of new milestones in 2018 including:

Record number of US visitors: 68.55 million (+4.1%)

Record number of international visitors: 6.48 million (+5.4%)

Record airline arrivals: Orlando International Airport (OIA) maintained its position as the busiest airport in Florida, with 47.7 million passengers (+6.9%)

19 July 2019, Source Travelbiz

Best and worst package holiday firms revealed by Which?: Thomas Cook flops while Trailfinders and Jet2 top the ranking

Travellers said Thomas Cook reps were 'often unhelpful, or simply non-existent'. Jet2 Holidays comes second with an overall score of 87 per cent. One holidaymaker said: 'Jet2 is well-managed and consistently excellent'. Thomas Cook has come bottom of Which?'s annual

package holiday provider rankings, scoring just two out of five in the 'holiday rep' category and three stars in all but one of the others. Its overall score of 69 per cent is far below the top-rated firm – Trailfinders, which scores 91 per cent. Jet2 Holidays comes second with an overall score of 87 per cent and Riviera Travel third, with 86 per cent. Thomas Cook, a package holiday specialist, gets four stars in the 'description matching reality' category, but three for 'accommodation', 'customer service', 'organisation of holiday' and 'value for money'. The survey quizzed more than 4,000 holidaymakers, with one in four Thomas Cook customers telling Which? that they had encountered a problem on holiday, the most common issues relating to the reps, travel delays and poor customer service. Travellers complained that the reps were 'often unhelpful, or simply non-existent'. One customer said: 'We never saw a rep the whole time we were there... all there was, was a number on a noticeboard.' Another said the company's customer services operation on the ground 'seemed to be in disarray' as reps failed to show up at the airport or hotel to assist travellers. Tui and First Choice finish second and third from last respectively, receiving three and four-star ratings across the board and overall customer scores of 74 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. But both firms still finish behind eight other providers in the rankings. Which? Travel said: 'Some Tui customers complained about poor customer service, unprofessional holiday reps and disappointing accommodation facilities. A number of customers were also far from impressed when they paid extra for a better hotel view that never transpired.' One customer told the consumer rights group: 'The rep service advertised did not materialise, resulting in a lot of difficulties getting the necessary information.' No1-ranked Trailfinders, a specialist in bespoke trips to exotic destinations, is the only provider with five-star ratings for any category - a feat it achieves for both customer service and holiday organisation. One satisfied Trailfinders customer said: 'Everything ran smoothly. I was able to personalise my holiday to my taste, and the hotel was stunning.' Trailfinders also receives four-star ratings for value for money, accommodation and consistently meeting customer expectations. Jet2 Holidays, now Britain's second-biggest travel operator, has four-star ratings across all categories after impressing holidaymakers with excellent customer service and a policy offering a free 22kg luggage allowance for passengers. One holidaymaker said: 'Jet2 is well-managed and consistently excellent on all fronts. Which? Travel added: 'While the gap between the best and worst package travel providers may not be huge, the survey sends a clear message that the big players must up their game if they are to compete with rivals doing a better job of giving customers what they want.' A Thomas Cook spokeswoman said: 'Many millions of loyal customers come back to Thomas Cook year after year. It seems they are not represented by the sample of fewer than 300 of our customers which was used for this Which? report.

'We take the views of our customers very seriously. Our own customer satisfaction scores – which incorporate the feedback of tens of thousands of customers – are significantly higher than those reported by Which? and this year, satisfaction is up in all areas, including our rep service and quality of hotels. This weekend is set to be the busiest for travel as the schools break up and our 600-strong team of reps in destinations across the world are ready to make sure all our customers have an incredible holiday.'

19 July 2019, Source TravelMole

Gatwick plans to use standby runway to add flights

Gatwick has unveiled plans to use its standby runway for additional departures from the mid 2020s. Revealing its final master plan and a report on its 12-week public consultation, it claims it has strong support for airport development with two thirds of respondents saying they support Gatwick 'making best use of its existing runways' in line with Government

policy. It is to prepare a planning application to bring the standby runway into routine use. It is no longer actively pursuing plans for an additional runway, but said the Government will safeguard land previously earmarked for it. London Gatwick CEO Stewart Wingate said: "We are grateful to the thousands of people that responded to our draft master plan consultation and whose views will continue to help shape our plans. We are encouraged that public consultation has shown strong support for Gatwick and the local area's ambitions. The plans would deliver additional capacity for Gatwick, which will provide choices for the future - including incrementally growing our airport to meet demand and continuing to provide solid operational performance for passengers and airlines. "This would be the biggest private investment for the region in the coming years, which would result in significant local economic benefits, including new jobs for the area. "Gatwick's global connections are needed more than ever but as we take our plans forward, we must do so in the most sustainable and responsible way and in full partnership with our local councils, communities, passengers and partners. But campaign group, Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions, said the plans would create 'a second runway by stealth' and 'flies in the face' of the Government's pledge for 'net zero' CO2 emissions by 2050.

22 July 2019, Source TTG

Ministers ponder automatic 'carbon charge' on all ticketed travel

An automatic "carbon charge" could be levied on all air tickets, cruise fares and package holidays as part of a government initiative to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Transport secretary Chris Grayling has launched a call for evidence, which will explore how carbon emissions produced by transport could be offset. The Department for Transport (DfT) is seeking feedback on proposals requiring companies selling travel tickets to offer additional carbon offsets at point of sale. While the charges would be voluntary, the DfT has suggested they could be implemented on an opt-out rather than opt-in basis. Ministers hope the proposals will raise awareness of the effect of transport on the environment, with the cash generated used to fund projects ranging from planting trees to installing solar panels. In principle, the scheme would seek to pay for the equivalent level of emissions arising from a particular journey or form of transport to be reduced or removed elsewhere. According to the DfT, transport accounted for one third of all UK carbon emissions in 2018. The government has committed to reducing carbon emissions to a net zero by 2050. Travel types to be considered in the call for evidence include air, rail, bus, coach, ferry and road transport, as well as "cruise" and "package holidays". "The government wants consumers to have the opportunity to mitigate the climate change impact of their journeys while the deployment of zero-emission technologies ramps up," reads the call for evidence. "This could include ensuring they are provided a sufficient level of information to make decisions as to their preferred travel choice, and providing consumers the option to take action and offset the carbon emissions from their travel." The DfT says there are "various points in the consumer decision-making process" where offsetting could be offered, including obliging travel operators and ticket sellers to offer consumers voluntary offsets at point of sale. "One way to increase uptake could be to follow an opt-out rather than opt-in model under which the cost of offsetting carbon emissions would be automatically included for consumers unless they selected not to pay to offset their emissions," it adds. Other key objectives include addressing concerns the travelling public may not trust their payments going to "worthwhile, quality projects"; raising awareness of carbon offsetting schemes that are already available; and how to stimulate a "stronger, more attractive" market for domestic carbon offsetting to encourage more businesses to support the initiative.

23 July 2019, Source TTG

Thomas Cook rolls out summer ad campaign

Thomas Cook has launched a multi-million pound advertising push across TV, radio, print, online and out-of-home platforms. Featuring the strapline, “This Is Thomas Cook”, the new campaign will see a four-week run on TV, which kicked off last night (22 July) with 30-second adverts on ITV, Sky and Channel 4. Six weeks of radio advertising will also run across Heart, Magic, DAX and Spotify as well as print ads in national newspapers. A “large investment” from Cook in out-of-home advertising will also feature at roadside locations, shopping centres and railway stations in UK cities, including London tube stations and buses in zones one and two. The campaign is aimed at appealing to consumers still looking for a last-minute getaway this summer and early-bookers for summer 2020. Cook is currently in “advanced discussions” with Chinese conglomerate Fosun Tourism Group and financial partners over a £750 million rescue deal. The deal would, in effect, break Cook up, with Fosun taking a controlling stake in the company’s group tour operator and minority interest in its group airline. Phil Gardner, sales, e-commerce and marketing director at Thomas Cook UK, said: “There’s no denying it’s been a tough 12 months for the travel industry from last summer’s prolonged heatwave to Brexit uncertainty and clearly Thomas Cook has been making headlines quite a bit recently. “Our new campaign aims to remind the great British public that Thomas Cook is here to help make memories that will last a lifetime. “As always our own-brand hotels sit at the heart of what we offer to our customers and show that we have our finger on the pulse to curate holidays that best suit our customers’ needs – today and in the future.”

24 July 2019, Source TTG

Abta urges Boris Johnson to ensure 'managed exit' from EU

Abta has urged new prime minister in waiting Boris Johnson to take “every effort to ensure a managed exit from the EU”. Johnson was elected Conservative party leader on Tuesday (23 July), securing about 66% of the vote by party members. Theresa May will formally step down as prime minister on Wednesday (24 July) and hand over to Johnson, who will then set out his vision for his premiership, likely to be dominated and defined by Brexit, in an address to the nation. Abta wrote both to Johnson and fellow leadership hopeful Jeremy Hunt last week, detailing the association’s key priorities for the government to safeguard the travel sector in the UK, before addressing Johnson directly on Tuesday. “As soon as Boris Johnson takes office as prime minister, Abta will be writing to urge he takes every effort to ensure a managed exit from the EU,” said an Abta spokesperson. “In particular, we’ll stress the need for contingency arrangements to be extended, and the importance of continued transport links, visa-free travel, and the ability for travel companies to post critical support staff in temporary roles throughout the EU. “In addition, we will also engage with all newly appointed ministers across our main government departments to ensure the industry’s full range of policy priorities, including those beyond Brexit, are fully understood.” UKInbound chief executive Joss Croft echoed Abta’s stance on avoiding a no-deal exit, adding the group was looking forward to working with the new government and industry partners to develop and implement a new tourism sector strategy for the UK. “The next few months are a critical time for the UK and we urge the new prime minister to secure a consensus in parliament and with the EU to avoid a no-deal scenario, which could be very damaging for the tourism industry.”

29 July 2019, Source Travelbiz

Top ten most popular package holiday hotspots this summer revealed - and drop in demand means prices have fallen by up to 38%

Tenerife is the most popular package holiday destination for families. Turkey, Majorca and the Algarve also rank highly. However, expensive locations like Ibiza, Orlando and Dubai prove less popular. British holidaymakers are counting the pennies and shunning expensive destinations for those where they can squeeze as much value from their sterling, new data has revealed. In the race to be named the most popular family package holiday destination, Tenerife has come out on top for the second year running, according to data from TravelSupermarket. The largest Canary Island is a firm favourite thanks to its pretty beaches, almost guaranteed sunshine and affordable family accommodation. It comes as the price of package holidays has dived this year, thanks to delays in booking trips.

Tenerife is the most popular package holiday location +6. It's also not surprising Britons are trying to save money wherever possible, as the pound is now the worst it has been against the euro since the single currency's launch in 1999. Meanwhile, it's 50 years since the pound was worth less than the 1.24 US dollars you could get last night. Emma Coulthurst, from the comparison website, said: 'There have been price drops on package holidays of as much as 38 per cent this year, compared with if you'd been booking a package holiday for last summer. 'Brexit has raised concerns and seen people delay booking. As a result, demand has dropped and prices have followed.' Turkey, Majorca and the Algarve also rank highly with holidaymakers who receive bang for their buck with a huge number of resorts for families that have a variety of budgets. To ascertain the most popular package holidays, TravelSupermarket compared searches made by British holidaymakers for hundreds of thousands of holidays across more than 25 different package holiday providers. The searches were made on the site between 1 January 2019 to 18 July 2019 for holidays departing between 1 May 2019 and 30 September 2019 compared to the same dates last year. It found that Spain is a clear favourite as the Costa Dorada saw the biggest increase in interest, rising from sixteenth place last year to eighth this summer. Nearby Portugal is also of interest with the sunny Algarve jumping from fourth place last summer to third place this year. Turkish resorts in the area of Antalya, including Kalkan, Lara and Alanya have risen from seventh place last year to fourth place which is unsurprising given the strength of the lira against the pound. Emma adds: 'Britons get a lot of lira in Turkey and it offer some of the largest range of and best value all-inclusive holidays on the market. 'With currency volatility with the euro on Britons' minds, choosing to holiday in these countries enables you to avoid that and not spend a fortune.' Meanwhile, Britons are shunning more expensive locations including Menorca, Ibiza, Dubai and Orlando.

31 July 2019, Source Travelbiz

British Airways: Michelin-starred chef Tom Kerridge unveils new gourmet airline menu

BRITISH AIRWAYS flights in August will benefit from top quality food as Michelin-starred British chef Tom Kerridge unveils his new gourmet menus for the airline. The new plane food will be available in every cabin on all long-haul flights. The Michelin-starred British chef has teamed up BA to design special menus as part of the airline's centenary celebrations. With August marking British Airways' birthday month, Kerridge's food will boast British flavours. BA passengers will be able to enjoy a dish designed by Tom Kerridge for each

course thanks to the new menus. According to British Airways, the airline's chefs and Kerridge have worked closely to ensure the dishes not only showcase culinary expertise, but also work well at altitude. The menu includes a variety of fresh seasonal ingredients with a focus on British provenance. Kerridge said of the partnership: "I'm so proud to be asked by British Airways, one of the most renowned and iconic British companies, to curate exciting onboard menus for the month of August to celebrate their centenary. "The dishes reflect not only my vision and what I do at my restaurants but most importantly, they represent the best of British food to the world." Chef James Martin launched a new menu on Thomas Cook airlines earlier this year and revealed the key to making in-flight food taste good. "First, you have the challenges around taste as food served at 36,000 feet within a pressurised cabin doesn't taste like it does on the ground," he said. "We experiment with 'umami' rich ingredients (the recently discovered fifth taste). "You then have the issue of storage, with the steam produced by reheating affecting taste and texture. "We do a lot of testing and constantly evolve dishes to get them right."

31 July 2019, Source TTG

Tui yet to turn page on printed brochures

Tui has ditched plans to scrap printed brochures by 2020 after revealing customer research still considered them "an important part of the customer journey". The travel giant announced in 2016 its vision to phase out traditional brochures by next year in favour of digital alternatives and in-store technology. Then-UK & Ireland managing director Nick Longman said the company hoped "to provide a digital experience at every customer touch point" and explained how it would be "investing in more personalised content for customers". In June 2018, Tui also revealed it had cut brochure production by two-thirds during the previous five years, phasing out brochures and replacing them "with improved digital infrastructure". However, a change of heart came this week following customer research carried out last year. "At Tui we are still committed to reducing our brochure line-up and will continue to provide lifestyle-led content to inspire customers and assist in the holiday selection and booking process, this includes some printed materials in store," Tui said after announcing its decision. "We know our customers still want to see inspirational imagery and expert advice so changes have already been implemented to support this." As a result of the research's findings, Tui said it was now describing its previous "brochure reduction strategy" as a "brochure evolution strategy". All Tui brochure titles are now available in digital format with the company also reducing the number of titles from 56 in 2016 to 39 in 2019 and carbon-balancing production since 2017. "We will continue to adapt and work with our customers at the heart of our decisions," Tui added.

31 July 2019, Source Skift

Travel Advisors Act to Protect Clients From Resort Fee Surprises

Not only are resort fees an annoyance for hotel guests, but they put the onus on travel advisors to make sure clients are aware of what their stay will actually cost. Some advisors are fighting back by steering clients toward properties that don't charge the fees. As more hotels, including those far removed from resort locations, slap resort fees on everything from fitness center access to housekeeping service, many travel advisors are taking on a new duty: ensuring that clients don't go into sticker shock at the front desk. "I break down every charge for my clients beforehand, letting them know that hotels are now doing what the airlines do when they charge for seat assignments or checked luggage," said Diane Bean, owner of Off On Vacation Travel in Bangor, Maine. "I don't want any unwanted surprises for them."

Observing that “resort fees are unfortunately another reality of today’s travel booking landscape,” Jennifer Wilson-Buttigieg, co-owner of Valerie Wilson Travel in New York, also emphasized the importance of briefing clients about any unforeseen charges they may find on their hotel tab. “Transparency and clarity for the client is crucial so they fully understand what they are paying for and why,” she said. There has been a lot of pushback against resort fees lately. The District of Columbia sued Marriott International over resort fees, Booking Holdings in July vowed to begin charging hotels commissions for the first time for resort fees, and Expedia Group intends to downgrade the listings of properties that charge such fees. While resigned to resort fees, Bean sees them as a growing problem that is unlikely to go away, despite the District of Columbia accusing Marriott of deceptively charging the fees to guests. “The fees started out at resorts, but now they’re at many urban hotels — those in New York and Las Vegas have gotten particularly aggressive,” she said. “Lawsuits aren’t going to make any difference. The hotels have figured out a new way to make money, just like the airlines did.” Similarly, Shawn van der Patten, travel consultant with Exquisite Travel Group in Seattle, said resort fees are taking up more of her time these days, whether it’s researching what various properties charge, making sure that the fees are outlined in the client’s paperwork, and, in some cases, searching for hotels that don’t charge them. Despite her best efforts, resort fees still create headaches. “It is frustrating because there are times when the fees are not clearly spelled out, and we end up with unhappy clients due to the shock of having to shell out more money at the hotel or resort when they thought the bill was paid in full,” van der Patten said. “Local hotel taxes are a similar problem, especially in Europe, where they vary greatly. We just had a family in Amsterdam who were hit with a huge tax charge that no one, not even our supplier, knew about.” All-inclusive resorts are another alternative for clients who don’t want to feel nicked and dimed by extra charges, Bean said. “Resort fees may be one reason why all-inclusive resorts are growing in popularity,” she said. “We’re seeing all-inclusive resorts spreading to more destinations, including in the U.S.” At Largay Travel in Waterbury, Connecticut, President Amanda Klimack said resort fees are one reason travel advisors are increasingly acting as “personal shoppers” for clients. “When we’re quoting rates for clients, we try to advise them of the total potential cost, including fees and taxes,” she said. “If you don’t, they are in for a huge shock when they get to the resort. So often the initial rates, especially those advertised online, are nowhere near what you will actually be paying. The fees can add up to hundreds of dollars.” Klimack added that it’s important to explain to clients what various resort fees actually cover. “A lot of people don’t realize that fees for housekeeping and portage mean that you’re already paying a gratuity for these services,” she said. “So when they tip, they’re actually paying twice.”