

UK Office March 2019 TDC Report

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander
UK Director

Tour Operators

- **British Airways Holidays** – We met with Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive, to get an update on business. She advised that they had changed the structure of the team, so there was now a new Senior Destination Manager in the USA team who would report into the Commercial Manager. There would however be no change to our day to day contact. We updated her on destination information, such as the TripAdvisor award, changes at Guy Harvey and also new properties opened/due to open in our area. She mentioned that generally she had been able to negotiate hotel offers for our area for their upcoming campaign. Since our meeting, business had improved for selected properties that they work with, however a few are still struggling. January was a good booking month overall for BA Holidays, (Orlando, Miami and St. Pete/Clearwater tracking up for 2019 travel) however it has slowed down since their January sale ended. Red Tide did affect early bookings for them for Gulf Coast destinations, but she was confident that the campaign would help to improve pace. Short haul has been a little slow due to Brexit uncertainty. We also discussed our plans to participate in the BA event at Heathrow during the summer and would like to include them in the activity. Since our meeting, we have provided Keri with the final details of the campaign and have asked if they can support with the holiday prize. She will follow up in due course.
- **Funway Holidays** – We had a meeting with Malcolm Davies to discuss the forthcoming joint Florida Beaches campaign that is due to start in April. Provided Malcolm with all the information he needed and advised all that is new and what needs to be updated as part of this campaign, including the recent TripAdvisor accolades. We also had the chance to drop off Easter goodies for the reservations team, we got time to chat to them individually about our area updates in advance of the campaign.
- **Platinum Travel** – We met with Ciara Foley for a general catch up on our area. Ciara advised sales to the US in 2018 were up year on year versus 2017 and that 2019 sales have had a great start to the year from their clients in Ireland with Florida being a main focus. We provided area updates including hotel properties that have recently opened and advised if they need anything from us in the future to please do let us know. Since our meeting, Platinum Travel have been in contact with specific area information they needed from us and we duly supplied all of the relevant information they had requested.
- **Bookabed** - We held a meeting with Bev Hart at Bookabed in Ireland and discussed sales, training and provided updates on the new area hotels amongst other things. Bev confirmed they have some direct contracts with hotel groups in our area (IHG, Best Western etc.) but that they otherwise use over 30 other bedbanks to secure their accommodation. They had a good year in 2018 and have also had a good start to 2019 with sales in Ireland up 1% year on year and sales in the UK up 26% year on year which they think is due to the on the road sales team they have promoting the organisation (albeit on a lower base). Provided full updates and advised them we would be happy to

conduct training for their team if needed and Bev said to let us know when we are next in Ireland and we can get this arranged.

- **Tour America** – We met with Liz Wright, Florida Product Manager for a meeting to discuss the recent campaign in partnership with Experience Kissimmee and also to discuss area updates. Liz advised that the USA after a slow first week in January, picked up and sales to the USA are 9% up year on year and 19% up year on year for Florida bookings (January – March 2019). Liz is very happy with the product offering they have but requested the contact of the Sales Director at the Postcard Inn on the Beach, which we have provided. We updated Liz on the changes that have been made at the Guy Harvey as well as providing her with an area update and overview.
- **American Holidays** – Met with Dee Burdock and discussed area updates including the Guy Harvey brand change and details on all other area hotels and attractions. Dee confirmed that Florida sales were down year on year at the start of 2019 versus 2018 (by 10%) but that they will be pushing the destination over the coming months to hopefully improve sales. Dee is keen to look at a co-op marketing campaign and we advised that we will be able to review this at the start of our new fiscal in October as this year's budget has now been allocated. Dee said that US city breaks are up by 40% year on year, that sales to Mexico including a twin-centre with a US destination is up by 78% and escorted touring holidays are up 90% year on year (on a much lower base).

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Visit USA, UK** – We attended their quarterly meeting held in London. Tracey Spuyman provided an update on upcoming events including; the roadshow scheduled for 1st-3rd October which visits Glasgow, Leeds and London, USA Ball, and Brand USA travel week. They are currently reviewing and updating their website which will be more user friendly and will ensure content remains fresh. Phoebe Wynne presented their latest research highlighting the latest trends in the UK regarding customer intentions and influences for 2019. She mentioned that the economy, safety concerns and Brexit are all impacting booking trends, however it was expected that visitors to the USA in 2019 would increase by 2%. Review site and recommendations from friends and family influence the destination choice, but 41% of customers still use brochures in the planning stage. From the research conducted, the barriers for UK customers choosing the USA where it was more expensive than other destinations and politics.
- **Swansons Travel Show, Sweden** – In partnership with Fort Lauderdale we had a stand at the annual Swansons Travel show in Osby, Sweden. Swanson's was very well attended this year with higher numbers than 2018, which was hit badly by the 'Beast from the East'. Preliminary figures suggest that approximately 1,300 consumers made the trip to the venue to learn about USA destinations including St. Pete/Clearwater and Greater Fort Lauderdale. A good number of collateral was sent with nearly all brochures being distributed. Any that were left over were left with Swanson's who were grateful to keep them. The stand was well located between Miami and Tampa, favouring both destinations as the line flowed easily on from Tampa to St. Pete/Clearwater to Fort Lauderdale, then onto Miami in terms of geography for a road trip/multi-centre.

- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners/Visit Florida** – We attended the recent training event held by Visit Florida with USAirtours/TravelPlanners staff at Top Golf. Each partner had a booth and we were able to provide a dedicated 10-minute training session to over 30 staff members. We then hosted food, drinks and participated in golf games. The evening was a great success.
- **FDM Travel show, Denmark** – We had a stand with Fort Lauderdale at FDM, which was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. FDM Travel Show was also extremely well attended this year, with preliminary figures suggesting approximately 3,000 consumers attended (this is flat on last year). The stand was always busy and consumers at this show had more questions on both destinations and were more interested in being 'sold' the destination and why they were better places to visit than a) other areas in Florida and b) other areas in the USA. Nearly all collateral was distributed. The banner backdrop with pictures of the destinations were very well received and sparked lots of questions.
- **London Shuffleboard** – We had a call with Rooster PR to discuss the upcoming joint event. In the coming weeks, we will work with them to finalise branding opportunities within the space, food and drinks, items for goodie bags and also, we will get invitations sent to our guests. We have also approached Norwegian to see if they may be able to support with a prize.

TRADE LIAISON

- **Brand USA Multi Channel Fall campaign** – We have now received the final results for the campaign we ran in partnership with Brand USA, which was live from September to November 2018;
 - Telegraph print insert – 400,000 copies
 - Google display (banner adverts) – 482,115 impressions, 4220 clicks, 0.88% CTR.
 - Facebook carousel – 1,120,443 impressions, 33,750 engagement, 1% CTR.
 - Expedia impressions – 589, 598
 - 1029 room nights booked during the campaign (10th September – 19th November 2018)
 - Total impressions during campaign – 2,592,156
 - Brand USA – 10,941,000 impressions were added as part of the up weigh, which consisted of banner adverts directing traffic to the dedicated Brand USA/Expedia landing page.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We have now received the final proofs for the Telegraph activity which includes print and online. These have now been approved ahead of the launch of the campaign this month. We have also arranged for some cakes to be sent to their Florida team in Newcastle along with some brochures and maps to show our appreciation and to encourage bookings to our destination.
- **Virgin Holidays** – As part of the March campaign, we have now received social, email and video elements which have been approved. We have now received a proposal for the remaining money we have allocated to Virgin Holidays for this fiscal year. The activity includes inclusion in their Visit Florida campaign; Metro print and digital content, OOH

activity in selected shopping malls in the UK, social and affiliates, which will launch in April. We will also have some standalone activity which includes; Florida brochure launch email, website banner, social posts and Florida newsletter, which will run alongside the Visit Florida campaign. We have agreed our participation and have sent the proposal to Brand USA for their approval. The brochure launch email proof has been received and approved, and we will await the remaining activity.

- **VSPC/SeaWorld Mega Fam** – We have been working with Simon Parry, SeaWorld Head of Sales in the UK & Ireland, to secure seats with Virgin Atlantic for our mega fam in October. We will be inviting top sales agents from our UK and Irish travel agencies to participate who have not visited the destination previously. We have asked Michelle to reach out to our resort partners to secure rooms for the group who will be visiting for 3 nights.
- **British Airways Summer Beach Activation** – We had a call with Chris Perry, BA Media, to discuss some of the details regarding the event. Chris advised that we can select the type of brand ambassador we would like to work with for the duration of the event which will assist us in training them on the destination and our needs for consumer interaction. He recommended we consider providing some kids giveaways such as colouring books as typically during the summer they see an increased number of families using the lounges. Since our call, we have provided Chris with a brief of key attributes for the brand ambassador so they can work with the dedicated agency. We have put him in touch with Rooster so they can liaise directly on PR opportunities. Chris has also provided us with additional opportunities, such as screens in the Club South lounge, cinema glass wrap, first lounge glass wrap, email and Highlife examples for consideration. We had a follow up call to speak about the creatives. The artwork will be produced by their agency so we have provided the necessary assets so that they can work on some design mock ups.
- **Boardmasters** – Call held with VSPC US to discuss activation at Boardmasters Surf & Music Festival in August 2019. This is being driven by the US activations team and we will await further updates.
- **Thomas Cook Holidays** – We have sent Ella Brighty the necessary assets for the campaign and will await the creatives for our approval. The campaign is due to launch mid-April.
- **Funway Holidays** – We continue to work on providing all assets needed by the Funway marketing team and are currently waiting on the campaign creative to be sent for approval.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have completed the approval process with all creative and branded merchandise for this joint retail campaign with Gold Medal. The promotion has now started and will run from the 1st March for a period of 2 months.
- **Virgin Retail** – Discussions continue to be had on the Virgin Retail Store Sponsorship opportunity with both our head office and Brand USA. We are currently waiting on information from Brand USA with a view to securing sponsorship of the Braehead Virgin Retail store.

- **Visit Florida Sailing Regatta** – We have confirmed our attendance at this event along with 5 other Florida suppliers. Each supplier will host tour operator product managers for the day for a sailing experience in May.
- **Tour America/Experience Kissimmee/VSPC** – Results have now been received for the joint campaign with Tour America and Experience Kissimmee which ran in February. The below statistics are the summary figures of our February campaign. The campaign was a huge success with the Facebook campaign reaching over 981,854 people in one week. The competition performed very strongly, as did all content – boosted content and also conversational content:
 - Social Media Campaign Results had a total of 699,837 impressions, total engagements were 14,610 and total video views were 54,353
 - Social Media Holiday Giveaway overall results had a total of 282,017 impressions and 19,513 engagements
 - Combined Social Media Campaign Results (campaign & competition) had 981,854 impressions and 34,123 engagements
 - YouTube Pre-Roll Campaign Overall Results had 226,078 impressions and a total of 23,396 video views
 - The Tour America Homepage Takeover Results (4th – 18th February) had 15,185 users, 20,158 sessions and total other pages had a total of 930
 - Digital Display/Remarketing Campaign Results had a total of 282,019 impressions with a total CTR of 1,498
 - Email Marketing (Ezine Results) had a total open rate of 19.04% with a total CTR of 1.32%
 - A total of 414 room nights were booked to our area during the campaign
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We have received the artwork for the Facebook post and supporting agent poster which have been approved. We have also confirmed a staff incentive to run during both months of the campaign to both reservations sales teams for USAirtours and TravelPlanners. They will have a chance to win Love to Shop vouchers based on sales made during the campaign period. We also provided Clare Harvey with small giveaways for a trade Facebook competition to win branded merchandise and received 110 answers and which outperformed almost all of their other trade posts that week.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have now received the final itinerary for the group who will be arriving this month. We have sent this to Emily Underhill to share with the participants ahead of their arrival. We have also provided Michelle with all of the participants' waivers.
- **Ocean Florida** – We provided all assets needed by Ocean Florida to start working on the campaign creative and as such have now finalised sign off of all of the creative. The 2-month campaign will run in both April & July 2019. We also conducted in-house sales training in time for the start of the campaign. We have also confirmed an in-house staff incentive to run at the same time and will be sales driven with a chance to win one of 3 prizes of love To Shop vouchers.

- **UK, Ireland & Scandinavian Trade Partners** – We sent an e-mailer out to our trade partners to advise of the new TripAdvisor awards and the fact that Clearwater Beach came in at the top spot for 2 years in a row and St. Pete Beach ranking at number 4 in the US for 2019. We received lots of encouraging feedback and some partners advised that they had shared this information through either their retail channels or via social media platforms.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – To assist the team whilst they update their website, we have provided them with images, copy, logos, video, and contact details.
- **Risskov** – Following on from her request, Trine Vennekilde, Product Manager, has now booked a room at Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Clearwater Beach for her colleague who will be visiting our area next month. We have offered her some recommendations for when she visits.
- **Travelbag** – Suzanne Harvey has recently started at the company, taking up the role of Head of Product. We have arranged to meet with her next month to discuss opportunities and ways to increase their business to our destination.
- **Travel Counsellors** – Samantha Spencer contacted us to advise that she has taken a new role at the company and our main contact going forward will be Carrie Mosley. We have introduced ourselves and offered our assistance in the future.
- **Bookabed** – We again provided Colleen and Bev with an update on the name change at Guy Harvey so they can update their records and also re-sent the press release we had received.
- **Ocean Florida** – We provided Colleen Creevy and 3 additional members of staff with tickets to the Chihuly Collection and the Clearwater Marine Aquarium when they were visiting our area on a personal FAM.
- **Malmö, Sweden** – We have confirmed our participation at the Malmö show that will be held in Sweden on the 19th September. The trade show that attracts around 60 – 80 travel trade professionals in Scandinavia and which has a timed workshop to provide dedicated training and then followed by dinner and drinks to be able to network further.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

27

MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

1 March 2019, Source TTG

IAG orders 18 new long-haul aircraft for British Airways

IAG has ordered 18 new long-haul aircraft for British Airways. The Boeing 777-9 aircraft will replace BA's 14 Boeing 747-400s and four Boeing 777-200s. Each aircraft will be fitted with 325 seats and will feature four cabins. BA will take delivery of the new aircraft between

2022 and 2025. Willie Walsh, IAG chief executive, said: "The new B777-9 is the world's most fuel efficient long-haul aircraft and will bring many benefits to British Airways' fleet. "It's the ideal replacement for the Boeing 747 and its size and range will be an excellent fit for the airline's existing network. "This aircraft will provide further cost efficiencies and environmental benefits with fuel cost per seat improvements of 30% compared with the Boeing 747. It also provides an enhanced passenger experience." BA's long-haul fleet currently stands at 135 aircraft. Each 777-9 has a list price of approximately \$442.2 million (£330 million), pricing the total order at just shy of \$8 billion (£6 billion). IAG, however, says it has negotiated a "substantial discount" on the list price.

1 March 2019, Source TTG

British Airways owner IAG expects profits to flatline in 2019

British Airways owner IAG has posted full-year operating profits up 9.5% to €3.23 billion – but expects its 2019 results to fall “broadly in line” with last year’s takings. Boss Willie Walsh hailed the group’s strong performance in the face of spiraling fuel costs, last summer’s air traffic control disruption and substantial foreign exchange impact. “Yet again, we’ve improved our operating profit this year, and our adjusted earnings per share grew by 15.1%,” he said. “This was a very good performance despite three significant challenges: fuel prices increasing 30%, considerable air traffic control disruption and adverse foreign exchange impact of €129 million. "At constant currency, passenger unit revenue improved 2.4% while non-fuel unit costs decreased 0.8% on capacity growth of 6.1%.” Pre-tax profits, meanwhile, grew 9.8% in the year to December 31, 2018, to €3 billion. However, IAG said it expects 2019 operating profit before exception items to be “broadly in line” with 2018. “Passenger unit revenue is expected to improve at constant currency and non-fuel unit cost is expected to be flat at constant currency,” said the group. Group-wide passenger numbers, inclusive of BA, Iberia, Vueling, Level and Aer Lingus, increased 7.7% year-on-year to nearly 113 million on record load factor for IAG of 83.3%, up 0.7 percentage points – 1.4 points higher than the Iata average. Overall network capacity increased 6.1%, including growth in all markets save for Asia-Pacific where capacity growth was flat. IAG said the growth reflected new BA, Iberia and Aer Lingus long-haul routes, as well as Level’s short-haul operations at Vienna and additional frequency on certain Iberia and Vueling routes in Europe. Walsh added the group would return €1.3 billion to shareholders for 2018, €615 million via ordinary dividends and a “special dividend” of about €700 million – a total increase of about €260 million compared to last year.

5 March 2019, Source TTG

New Virgin Atlantic codeshare opens up 58 transatlantic routes from UK

Virgin Atlantic has teamed up with Air France and KLM to piggyback on more than 50 additional transatlantic routes via Paris and Amsterdam. Its new codeshare agreement with the two European carriers is a precursor to a broader joint venture involving Delta Air Lines due later this year. New routes available to Virgin Atlantic passengers include Edinburgh-Toronto via Amsterdam and Heathrow-Chicago via Paris. In total, Virgin will gain access to 58 new routes from 18 UK airports through the codeshare, the first involving all four carriers. Announcing the deal on Monday evening (March 4), the airlines hailed the partnership a “significant milestone” towards an “expanded joint venture between Delta, Air France, KLM and Virgin Atlantic”. “The partnership makes it easier for customers to build their ideal trip across the Atlantic by combining flights operated by Air France, KLM, Virgin Atlantic and Delta,” said the airlines. “Customers booking on a codeshare benefit from seamless

connections, and a single booking reference. "Customers travelling on codeshare flights will also be able to earn miles, and redeem them via their own airline loyalty scheme." Virgin says the deal would bring the UK's regions "closer to North America". It comes after Virgin Atlantic-led consortium Connect Airways concluded its takeover of Flybe on Monday. The regional carrier will shortly be rebranded Virgin Atlantic and is expected to provide greater connectivity to Virgin's long-haul hubs such as Heathrow and Manchester. In return, Air France and KLM passengers will gain access to 24 Virgin Atlantic and Delta routes departing the UK, such as Amsterdam-Miami via Heathrow and Paris-New York JFK via Manchester. The airlines' \$13 billion transatlantic joint venture, subject to regulatory approval, will offer more than 300 transatlantic flights daily and 108 non-stop routes spanning more than 340 destinations.

6 March 2019, Source TravelMole

Brits would rather sacrifice dining out than going on holiday

British on a budget would sooner cut back on eating out, clothing and electronic gadgets rather than skimping on their holiday. According to research unveiled today by ABTA, 13% of Brits said they would cut back on trips to save money, compared to 25% who said they'd cut back on eating out, 18% on clothing and 17% on gadgets. Of the age groups surveyed, 18-24 year olds are the most tied to their holidays. Nearly a third (31%) said they would curb how often they eat out, compared to only 6% who would cut back on a holiday. Similarly, nearly a third (31%) of people with children in their household said they are most likely to moderate their spending on eating out, compared to just 13% who would cut back on the amount they spend travelling.

6 March 2019, Source TravelMole

USA is uncool in the eyes of young travellers

The so-called Trump effect is making the US uncool in the eyes of young travellers, according to youth travel specialist STA Travel. In its inaugural travel trends report, out this week, the agency said flight sales to the US were down by 23% in January, a slight improvement on the trend witnessed for most of 2018. Key flight destinations are New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orlando and Boston. "While it's expected that flight sales to the USA will improve, it's not clear to what extent given it's seen as an expensive destination in comparison to alternatives, such as Asia," said the report. "There is also a general consensus coming from STA Travel's branches that the USA is not a 'cool' destination for young travellers at the moment, partly thought to be due to the 'Trump effect', backing up research findings that today's youth are highly conscious and socially aware travellers." However, land bookings for the US are holding strong, achieving 8% growth year on year in January 2019. Instead, flight sales to Australia and New Zealand continue to show growth for 2019, up 5% and 6% respectively in January. Other flight destinations seeing growth in early 2019 include Japan (up 31% year-on-year) and Sri Lanka (up 9% year-on-year). Land sales for STA Travel's touring product in Sri Lanka were up 45% in January, while bookings for Japan's land product were up 55%. The Philippines also continues to grow (up 19% in January year-on-year), reflecting the trend of its rise in popularity for a number of years now. This year, STA Travel hopes to tap into the demand from today's younger travellers for travel with meaning and the opportunity to give something back. Its research found young travellers feel most passionate about mental wellbeing, closely followed by human rights, climate change, animal welfare and gender equality.

6 March 2019, Source TravelMole

Hotelbeds increases portfolio

Hotelbeds has added 10,000 more properties to its portfolio over the last year. The bedbank's new additions are mainly located in the North American and Asia-Pacific markets and bring the total number of unique hotels in the portfolio to 180,000. This growth has been driven by the renewed focus of Hotelbeds in providing its hotel partners with complementary bookings via its network of 60,000 travel buyers from both non-domestic source markets and B2B buyers - including tour operators, retail travel agents, airline websites and loyalty and reward points schemes. In particular there has been an increase in signing strategic partnerships with key hotel chains globally and preferred agreements with channel managers worldwide. This has in part been supported by the expansion of the contracting workforce to over 1,100 contractors based around the world in popular local destinations. In early February Hotelbeds announced that, following the acquisitions of Tourico Holidays and GTA into its business, now 90% of its hotel partners have access to all of the over 60,000 travel buying intermediaries that use the Hotelbeds platform. Such channels attract guests who book further in advance, cancel less, stay longer, spend more in-destination, and re-book more frequently. As part of this change Hotelbeds' hotel partners are now unified under the same terms and conditions, whilst also having access to a simplified and unified billing and account management service.

7 March 2019, Source Travel Weekly

Industry records best trading week of 2019

The outbound market saw its best year-on-year week of 2019 to date, with sales for this summer up 12% by Saturday on the comparable week in 2018. The surge followed five consecutive weeks of 8%-10% declines in summer bookings year on year. But the increase came in comparison with the week in February 2018 when 'the Beast from the East' hit Britain and heavy snow left bookings down 8% year on year. However, GfK senior client insight director David Hope hailed it as "a sign of positivity". "Bookings were better than expected," he said. "[Comparison with] the 'Beast from the East' made last week very strong, but bookings would still have been 3% to 4% up." The week left season-to-date bookings for summer 2019 up 2% year on year and the average selling price up a little under 2%. Winter 2018-19 bookings in the week to March 2 were up 15% on the comparable week, which in turn was 9% down on the comparison week in 2017. That left season-to-date bookings for the current winter up 4% and the average selling price about level with last year. Hope said: "Winter bookings seem to be holding up better than summer." He reported EU destinations performing "a lot better than previously" in the most-recent week, noting "prices to EU destinations have been cut". GfK reported a £20 reduction per person in the average selling price to the Balearics on last year. All-inclusive holidays continue to outperform the market, with season-to-date sales for this summer up 8%. Hope said the demand for all-inclusive "suggests people are looking for value".

7 March 2019, Source Travelbiz

British Airways flights from Gatwick could be left without food and water due to a strike by catering staff

Drivers at Alpha Flight, BA's sole food supplier at Gatwick, have voted to strike. The workers will initially start an overtime ban between March 18 and March 22. They will then

walk out from 3am on March 27 until 11.59pm on March 28. British Airways flights leaving Gatwick could be left without food and water later this month due to a strike by catering staff. Drivers at Alpha Flight, the sole supplier of food to the airline at Gatwick, have voted for industrial action in a dispute over pay. And there are fears that the strike, will leave the firm unable to transport food from its warehouses to the BA aircraft. The Unite union, which represents 55 of the drivers, said they voted 98 per cent in favour of the walkout with a turnout of 90 per cent. The workers will initially begin an overtime ban from 3am on Monday, March 18 until 11.59pm on Friday, March 22. This will then be followed by a walkout from 3am on Wednesday, March 27 until 11.59pm on Thursday, March 28. Unite regional officer Jamie Major said: 'British Airways passengers who find that their flights are lacking food and water have to understand that their comfort has been compromised directly by the penny pinching of Alpha Flight. 'Even at this late stage Alpha Flight can still ensure that industrial action is avoided by coming forward with a reasonable pay offer, which meets the expectations of our members.' However, Richard Wood from Alpha LSG, which owns Alpha Flight, told The Sun that the company will be meeting for talks with the Unite union and that they don't believe there is a dispute that warrants strike action. A spokesperson for British Airways said it was working to ensure there will be no disruption if the strike goes ahead. They explained: 'We are working with our supplier to ensure our customers continue to enjoy all services onboard their flights.'

7 March 2019, Source Travelbiz

Britons set to DESERT Europe as a holiday destination after Brexit

BRITONS are shying away from holidays in Europe as Brexit negotiations reach their peak, with the trend set to continue post March 29. New statistics released today showed more than half of people surveyed would shun a mini break in EU member states, with many citing the negative impact of the UK's separation from the EU as a factor. Brexit may not yet have transpired, yet the impact of the separation of the UK from the EU is already playing a part in driving down Britons' holidays. The UK will legally leave the political-geographic state on March 29, 2019. Ahead of that, Prime Minister Theresa May will hold a meaningful vote on her Brexit divorce deal in the House of Commons. Yet while the political deal, no deal and second referendum options all remain, travellers worried about the potential impact of a post-Brexit scenario are switching up their holiday habits, in a trend set to continue. In a survey of 2,000 Britons by comparison site Finder.com, published on its website, more than half - a total of 56 per cent - told how they would ditch short haul city breaks to Europe amid the uncertainty. Four in 10 went on to confess an increase in flight costs, which is a potential consequence of Brexit, would also dissuade them from making such trips. A total of 19 per cent were concerned about a change in mobile phone roaming charges, with the potential changes in a no deal Brexit scenario reported by Express.co.uk. Meanwhile, a slump in the pound to euro exchange rate was enough to put 33 per cent of those surveyed off a trip to Europe. Jon Ostler, CEO (UK) of finder.com, said: "Finder's research has shown that the stability of GBP is a big concern for many Brits and a major factor when booking holidays. "We advise British holidaymakers to keep an eye on the exchange rate before planning going on holiday in order to plan their spending appropriately." He added: "It's understandable that higher costs may influence people to opt for more staycations, but it's surprising that roaming charges, health insurance and passport queues have such a bearing on the choice of destination." The Office for National Statistics today published provisional overseas travel and tourism statistics for October 2018, which revealed the shock findings. They showed a two per cent drop in the number of people visiting Europe compared to the same time last year. The potential threat of a no deal – where the UK could cut ties with the geographical-

political area – remains, and has sparked concern over the validity of thousands of UK passports.

11 March 2019, Source TTG

Norwegian capacity growth slows amid 2019 profit drive

Norwegian has cut capacity growth 20% this February in line with its plans to return the airline to profitability. It comes after the budget carrier last year set out wide-ranging plans to shift its strategic focus away from expansion and growth. Carryings increased 8% year-on-year this February to 2.517 million passengers (+187,329) on a load factor of 81.5% – down 2.8%. However, capacity growth increased by just 15%, down from 35% this time last year. “Growth is now slowing down considerably, in line with the strategy of returning to profitability,” said the airline in a statement. Chief executive Bjorn Kjos added: “We are very pleased with the continued passenger growth in February, a month traditionally characterised by less demand. “Norwegian has been through a period with significant growth, but now the company will change its strategic focus from expansion and growth to profitability. “With a stronger financial position and lower cost going forward, we are well positioned to continue to attract new customers, not least in the long-haul market.”

13 March 2019, Source Travelbiz

US to expand pre-clearance facilities at Dublin, Shannon airports

The United States is to expand its pre-clearance facilities in Dublin and Shannon airport, its customs and border protection agency has announced. At a ceremony in Washington on Tuesday an agreement was signed by Irish Ambassador to the United States Dan Mulhall and Todd Owen, the agency’s executive assistant commissioner. “We see the agreement as an excellent vehicle to help our two countries meet the demands of increased travel across the Atlantic,” said Reece Smyth, Charge d’Affaires of the US Embassy in Dublin. The amended arrangement was originally agreed in January. It must go to the Dáil for approval before coming into force. The agreement paves the way for extended service hours, additional staff and other measures at the pre-clearance facilities in Dublin and Shannon. Ireland is one of the few countries in the world where passengers travelling to the US can clear immigration at the point of departure rather than when they arrive in the country – a move that saves millions of travellers time each year. Some 1.9 million passengers availed of the service last year. Minister for Transport Shane Ross welcomed the news, noting that the cost would not be a burden on the Exchequer. “US preclearance is a valuable asset for Ireland and has been an enormous success,” he said. “The ease of doing business, the scale of air connectivity and the on-going availability of preclearance, are significant trade, tourism and cultural facilitators between two countries which have a long and unique relationship.”

13 March 2019, Source TravelMole

Thomas Cook launches 'sleeper seat' on long-haul flights

Thomas Cook Airlines has become the first leisure carrier to launch a 'sleeper seat' on long-haul flights. On sale from today for flights from May 13, the seat costs from £200 one-way, on top of the cost of a standard economy fare. A roll-out mattress, fitted sheet and pillow are placed on top of a row of three seats, turning them into a narrow bed. Suitable for passengers up to 5'11" tall and over the age of 12, there will be up to four sleeper seats at the back of the aircraft, said the airline. They will be available on A330 long-haul routes including New York and San Francisco. Commercial director Henry Sunley said: "We always look for ways

to innovate for our customers and Sleeper Seat is a UK first that we are really proud of. It is a fantastic way to transform your flying experience and enjoy some extra comfort when flying in Economy." Sleeper seats can be booked online as an ancillary, said a spokeswoman.

13 March 2019, Source TravelMole

TUI and Norwegian among airlines hit by MAX 8 ban

The Civil Aviation Authority has followed other flight safety regulators around the world in grounding the Boeing 737 MAX 8 jet following the Ethiopian Airlines crash on Sunday. It was the second fatal crash involving the Boeing jet in five months. Britain follows Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, South Africa and China in grounding the model following Sunday's crash in Addis Ababa, in which all 157 people on board died. A CAA spokesperson said: "As we do not currently have sufficient information from the flight data recorder we have, as a precautionary measure, issued instructions to stop any commercial passenger flights from any operator arriving, departing or overflying UK airspace. "The UK Civil Aviation Authority's safety directive will be in place until further notice. "We remain in close contact with the European Aviation Safety Agency and industry regulators globally." During the ban, no Boeing 737 MAX 8 flights will be allowed to take off or land in the UK. Airlines operating the jet will also not be allowed to fly in UK airspace. TUI has five of the aircraft, mainly based in Manchester for use on longer European and North Africa flights. In a statement it said: "Any customers due to fly home today on a 737 MAX 8 from their holiday will be flown back on another aircraft. "Customers due to travel in the coming days will also travel on holiday as planned on other aircraft." Norwegian, which flies to and from the UK, has 18 MAX 8s. Tomas Hesthammer, acting chief operating officer, said: "In response to the temporary suspension of Boeing 737 MAX operations by multiple aviation authorities we have taken the decision to not operate flights using this aircraft type, until advised otherwise by the relevant aviation authorities. We would like to apologize to customers for any inconveniences caused, however, safety will always remain our top priority." The airline said it has more than 110 Boeing 737-800s that are not affected by the ban. Other airlines which use the Boeing aircraft to fly to and from the UK include Turkish Airlines on flights between Istanbul and Birmingham. Ryanair's first MAX 8 aircraft are due to start flying from Stansted on May 14. Which? is warning that even though the MAX 8 has been temporarily banned from flying in the UK, passengers could still end up on one of the aircraft if they're booked on a connecting flight in another country. "Given the level of publicity about this issue, UK airlines who have sold tickets with codeshare partners operating these planes should consider informing passengers who might be affected in advance and giving them the option to switch to another route with a different aircraft for free," it said in a statement.

13 March 2019, Source Travel Weekly

Summer bookings up for second week

Industry analyst GfK reported a second successive week of positive trading as MPs prepared to vote on a revised Brexit 'deal' on Tuesday. Summer 2019 bookings were up 1% year on year in the week to March 9. All-inclusive bookings in the week were up 8% year on year. David Hope, senior client insight director at GfK, said: "The market has definitely picked up." Season-to-date bookings for the summer remain 2% up year on year and winter 2018-19 bookings up 4%. The pick-up in bookings came amid hopes MPs would end the immediate uncertainty around Brexit. Abta chief executive Mark Tanzer told Travel Weekly: "An abrupt departure and no deal would be bad for the industry and customers. "This week may remove

that possibility. If no deal is taken off the table, we'll be in a better place." Parliament appeared set to reject prime minister May's Brexit deal for a second time, in which case the government promised MPs a vote on a no-deal Brexit on Wednesday. Previous votes suggest MPs would rule out no deal. They would then vote on whether they want a "limited extension to Article 50" to delay Britain's exit from the EU.

18 March 2019, Source Travel Weekly

Abta launches Brexit radio ads telling public it can 'book with confidence'

Abta is to launch an advertising campaign reassuring the public it can book holidays with confidence whatever the outcome over Brexit. The association will run ads on Heart and Classic radio stations and on Facebook for ten days from yesterday (Sunday). The European Parliament last week voted in support of UK airlines still being able to fly to and from the UK to EU countries in the event of a no-deal Brexit. They will also be able to make stops in European Union countries and fly over EU airspace. MPs voted last Thursday to ask the EU to push the date of Brexit back from March 29 to June 30 if the Commons approves a deal by Wednesday. Industry analyst GfK reported a second successive week of positive trading ahead of the vote. Abta said it is continuing to work "very closely" with the government to highlight issues that still need to be addressed. Last week it met with the Department of Transport and coach operators and next week the association said it would be speaking to officials in Brussels. A new toolkit from the Foreign Office has been included in Abta's Brexit guidance section. In his latest blog post, Abta chief executive Mark Tanzer wrote: "There still isn't any certainty as to what will happen with Brexit, so travel businesses need to continue to prepare for any eventuality – including a no-deal scenario. "It's also important we all continue to make customers aware of any actions they may need to take such as renewing passports and applying for international driving permits, if relevant. Abta has advice and materials to help members do this, including information on passports, which we know is a common question from customers."

18 March 2019, Source TTG

British Airways reveals new business class seat ahead of A350 arrival

British Airways has unveiled its latest business class "Club Suite" seat, which will feature onboard its new A350 aircraft, the first of which it will receive in July. Club Suite will offer direct-aisle access, a suite door for greater privacy and flat-bed seats in a one-two-one configuration, with 40% more storage, a vanity unit and mirror. All Club Suite seats come with Wi-Fi, a 17 to 18.5-inch in-flight entertainment system with high definition "gate-to-gate" programming and both PC and USB power. Its A350 aircraft, meanwhile, will be quieter, with higher ceilings and new ambient lighting, better air circulation and humidity control and cabin pressure equivalent to that of 6,000 feet. The three-cabin A350s will feature a 56-seat Club World cabin and a new 56-seat World Traveller Plus cabin with new furnishings and bedding, and improvements to service and dining. The remaining 219 seats will comprise BA's World Traveller economy cabin, complete with Wi-Fi. The new aircraft will be rolled out to minimise disruption to customers, says BA. Phase one will see BA's first A350 operate short-haul between London and Madrid to allow crew to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements. Phase two, starting October 1, 2019, see the A350 begin long-haul flying, whereby another three A350 will join the BA fleet. Two of its 777s will be retrofitted with the new Club Suite cabin. Phase three will begin in 2020 with the rollout of Club Suite to more of its long-haul aircraft.

19 March 2019, Source Travelbiz

BA's new "perfect alliance" focused on kids

BA has announced a new partnership with British children's company, My 1st Years, a company focused on providing babies with personalised gift items – they say it's for the baby but I don't think new-borns could care less about monogrammed security blankets – to introduce 'My 1st Years Kids Zones' to seven British Airways lounges at Heathrow and Gatwick. The new infant dedicated areas will provide the young passengers with musical instruments, mini kitchens and mini aeroplane rides to what BA says will "make sure its youngest travellers get off to a flying start". This, in reality, translates to 'tire the little buggers out'. This partnership extends in the airline's eStore where customers purchasing My 1st Years will be able to earn Avios points. Head of ground product at British Airways, Jude Winstanley, said: "Offering a quality customer experience is important no matter what your age and by partnering with My 1st Years we hope our youngest travellers have an unforgettable journey with us. "In this, our centenary year, we're working with some of the best British designers and manufacturers and as part of our GBP 6.5bn investment programme, we've introduced a completely new design concept in our lounges across the globe. Following recent re-designs in Rome and Aberdeen; we are now focusing on San Francisco and Geneva." Daniel Price, co-founder of My 1st Years, said: "British Airways is the iconic brand to partner with. I've been flying with them for years and it's an honour to collaborate with them for their 100th birthday. Their 'Made by Britain' campaign makes it even more special given that we are a British born and bred brand. "Importantly we have a lot of shared values between us – exceptional customer service, unrivalled attention to detail and creating unforgettable memories for families so it's the perfect alliance. We look forward to adding that extra special moment for children in the lounges so they can start their trip with relaxed fun, and laughter."

21 March 2019, Source Travelbiz

Norwegian vulnerable to Boeing Max 8 grounding

Norwegian Air Shuttle's reliance on the fuel-saving 737 Max jet to underpin its ultra-low-cost transatlantic strategy has exposed the loss-making carrier as the most vulnerable in Europe to the worldwide grounding of the plane. The Scandinavian carrier took delivery of its first Max 8 jet from Boeing in June 2017, and has since deployed them on routes, including those between Ireland and the United States, as it sought to capture a bigger share of the transatlantic market. But with Max 8 aircraft having been grounded in the wake of the crash last week of one of the jets flying with Ethiopian Airlines, Norwegian has been forced to use larger jets which are more expensive to operate, to plug the gaps in its fleet as its Max 8s sit on the tarmac. It has deployed a Boeing 787 Dreamliner to service its daily service from Dublin to Stewart International in New York. Passengers for its Dublin-Providence, Rhode Island service are on the same flight, and being taken by bus to Providence from Stewart. Norwegian was among the earliest adopters of the new narrow-body Max jet, using its extra range to launch services on Europe-US routes traditionally dominated by twin-aisle planes. The 737 crisis has hit Norwegian at a time when it can least afford disruption. The carrier is already grappling with a cash squeeze from splurging on planes and was forced to raise fresh funds in a rights issue this month. The move came after Aer Lingus parent IAG dropped a takeover approach, helping to send Norwegian's stock south. The shares dropped as much as 4.8pc yesterday, taking losses to 46pc since the start of the year. Industry observers are pessimistic Norwegian can weather an already harsh storm.

21 March 2019, Source TravelMole

Fewer than one in seven booked last holiday in a travel agency

Half of Brits (47%) have not visited a travel agent in the past 10 years, while two in 10 have never visited an agency and less than one in seven booked their last holiday in one, according to new research. The study, conducted by travel search engine Kayak.co.uk, found 20% of adults say they have never been inside a travel agent branch. Amongst under 35s, the figure rises to 33% and increases to a 70% for under 25s. The average Brit last visited a travel agency six and a half years ago. Nearly three quarters (73%) say they booked their last holiday online, 4% of which booked it on their phone, rising to 7% for under 35s. The research reveals that less than one in seven holidaymakers (14%) booked their last holiday in a travel agent branch. For under 35s, the figure falls to one in 10 (11%) and for under 25s, the figure is just six per cent. Half of those surveyed who booked online said they did so because it was easier. A third (31%) said they could find everything a travel agent has online, while 22% said they thought travel agents were more expensive. Just 18% of Brits have been into a travel agent in the past year - either to book or to simply get advice. Of these, 38% said they talk to someone in person, while 25% feel more 'reassured' if someone else books it for them. However, 15% admitted they just liked the experience and 13% went as far as to say they simply like the attention they get from those who work there.

22 March 2019, Source TTG

Thomas Cook to further trim retail network with additional 21 store closures

Thomas Cook has announced it is planning to close a further 21 stores, placing 320 retail roles at risk. More than 100 customer-facing roles will be made redundant, with Cook proposing to remove another 218 store-based roles. A consultation process with affected staff and union representatives is under way. In total, 102 roles will be made redundant - 3.5% of Cook's retail workforce - rising to 8% with the addition of the other 218 jobs. Will Waggott, Cook chief of tour operating, said: "Today's announcement reflects the wider challenges seen on the high street, with more and more customers choosing to book online. "These measures will help us to drive greater efficiencies across Thomas Cook so that we relentlessly focus our resources in those areas that give us the greatest opportunity to make a difference to customers in our core holiday offering. "Looking ahead, we will be working to ensure that Thomas Cook is fit for the future, putting a rigorous focus on costs in a competitive environment while giving customers more reasons to holiday with the strongest brand in travel." The move is part of Cook's ongoing review of its entire UK business, which includes addressing the performance of its UK tour operation. It also sits alongside a review of its group-airline, comprising Thomas Cook Airlines in the UK and Condor in Germany, as well as its Belgian and Scandinavian divisions. Cook said "streamlining" its UK retail network, which once comprised more than 1,200 stores, would allow it to drive greater efficiencies across the business amid changing customer behaviour. Some 64% of all Cook bookings in the UK last year were made online, now the business's fastest growing sales channel - up 30% last year. The latest closures will cut Cook's retail network to 566 shops. A Cook spokesperson confirmed the majority of the affected stores were approaching the end of their lease. Cook has now disposed of more than 200 stores in the past two years alone. It follows announcements confirming the closure of 17 stores in April 2017 and another 27 in March 2018.

22 March 2019, Source TravelMole

Term-time holiday fines almost double

The number of penalties issued for term-time absences mushroomed by 93% to almost 223,000 in 2017/18 compared to the previous year. 'Unauthorised family holiday absence' was the most common reason for attendance fines, according to the Department for Education. A total of 85.4% of all penalty notices were issued for this reason in 2017/16, up from 77.5% in 2016/17. The rise in fines comes after dad Jon Platt lost a Supreme Court case in April 2017. He initially won his court case against Isle of Wight council, which led many parents to conclude they could take term-time breaks without facing action. However, Platt's loss at the Supreme Court gave councils clarity on the matter. He told the BBC he felt 'partly responsible' for the rise. Of the 222,904 notices issued for unauthorised holidays in 2017/18, five areas have been identified as issuing the most. They are Lancashire, Bradford, Hampshire, Essex and Derbyshire. Figures show 75% of penalty notices issued in 2017/18 were paid within 28 days, 10% were withdrawn, 7% led to prosecutions and 8% were unresolved.