

UK OFFICE

November 2018 REPORT

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UK Director

World Travel Market

We met with the following tour operators during the show.

- **American Holidays** – We met with Dee Burdock, Product Manager who advised that Florida overall was looking strong for both 2018 and 2019 travel. St. Pete/Clearwater is pacing slightly behind which has been due to close outs for one of their lead in properties. Shearon Sand Key and the Sirata remain their top selling hotels. Orlando is tracking at +12% versus last year for 2018, and it is slightly ahead for 2019 compared to last year. That said, customers are concerned about 2019 despite a good economy. Red tide during 2018 hasn't impacted their Florida bookings, but has had more of an effect on their Mexico bookings. Miami is doing well largely driven by the new Aer Lingus flight and their cruise business. Dee will follow up with a marketing proposal for future activity.
- **USAirtours** – We had a meeting with Linda Dixey, Product Manager, who mentioned that they are currently working on their new brochure which focusses more on the experience and will launch in December. She is currently looking for condo properties so we have send her some recommendations since our meeting. They have now confirmed their partnership with Norwegian so we will work with them to support the new route into Tampa. Overall business into Florida is doing well, particularly for 2019 where they are seeing an 18 to 24-month lead time. Linda will follow up with a proposal for marketing activity. We will also work on confirming various training sessions for the year.
- **Norwegian** – We met with Mitchell Hawes to discuss how the Tampa route is performing. Mitchell advised that forward bookings are doing well, whereas Fort Lauderdale has struggled. Their premium class provides a good offering to their customers and has been very competitively priced. They are already working with key UK operators as they don't have the platform to offer packaged holidays, and this partnership is working effectively. Approximately 80% of their business is direct, with the majority booked for the leisure market. They are keen to work with us on agent trainings and events, and we will follow up on possible seats for our annual fam trip with SeaWorld.
- **Trailfinders** – We had a meeting with Melloney Styles, Product Manager, who advised that our destination is pacing flat for 2018 travel, but up significantly for 2019. Orlando is also flat for 2018 along with the other areas in Florida. They have been working with Visit Florida this year to provide trainings and to push the beach destinations. 2019 is generally doing very well for them as they have had some very competitive airfares for Miami and Orlando. In our area, the Sandpearl, Marriott Suites, Sheraton Sand Key and Holiday Inn Clearwater continue to perform well for them. The Sirata is not brochured,

but is doing well, along with Don Cesar and Postcard Inn. Melloney showed us their new direct mailer which has a USA focus in February. She will follow up with the details.

- **Ocean Holidays** – We had a meeting with Lisa Airey and Muna Abanour who said that they have had a really strong September booking month despite a decreased consumer confidence for this year. Overall 2018 was a lot better than 2017 and 2019 is looking very strong. St. Pete/Clearwater remains their top selling Florida beach destination as they are expecting it to end the year as flat compared to last year. Self-catering properties are selling well including Sunset Vistas, Guy Harvey and Sirata Beach, and Marriott Suites and Sheraton Sand Key remain popular choices for their customers. Fort Lauderdale is doing well due to their recent Fam trip to the destination. They have now finalised their flight deals with British Airways and Travel 2 for the coming year. We will await a proposal for marketing activity and will work on confirming training sessions for next year and possible in-house fam trip.
- **Tour America** – We met with Kathleen Maher and Liz Wright who said that 2018 had been a good year for them and 2019 was also looking good. They saw a dip in bookings made during the summer due to the hot weather, but September was particularly good. We will await a proposal from Kathleen to include activity in February and September in partnership with Kissimmee. We will also work with Liz to get trainings confirmed for the year.
- **Bookabed** – We met with Bev Fly, Director. Business to Florida is good and they are seeing good levels of success with our area with average length of stay increasing to 5.4 nights. Agreed to do a destination of the month campaign early in the new year and currently awaiting information.
- **Kenwood Travel** – We had a meeting with Nicola Hollihead who mentioned that their new website is due to launch in December. Once launched she will work on updating the content and will be in touch then for our assets. The new website will allow them to feature our destination on one page, but then filter on neighbourhoods. Nicola will let us know if they are planning a Florida Fam trip for their sales agents.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We met with Emma Hook and Fiona Lewry who said that our destination was performing well, tracking up compared to last year for both 2018 and 2019. Sirata has now been added to their programme which is helping them grow their business for next year. Overall, they are seeing strong growth for Florida beaches and Florida in general is pacing at +5% for 2018. They are finalising their peaks campaign which will support Virgin Atlantic and will be the largest spend they have made on marketing. In the coming year, they will be expanding their retail stores, which account for 60% of their Florida business. At their head office, they now have approx. 20 Florida destination experts which will allow for more focused training and fam trip opportunities. Emma also mentioned that they now have a joint venture with Air France and KLM which will open up further USA routes for them and to support with ground arrangements for their customers. Emma will ask marketing to follow up with their marketing team for a proposal and opportunities for retail store sponsorship.
- **Funway Holidays** – We had a meeting with Nick Talbot and Malcolm Davies who advised that the USA was doing really well for them for travel in 2018, and is tracking at +12% compared to last year. They have had some really strong airfares with Virgin

Atlantic allowing them to offer a 7-night holiday to Orlando at £299pp (flights and accommodation). 2019 is looking strong, +12.4% for Florida, with St. Pete/Clearwater continues to be their top selling Florida beach destination. Nick presented some new initiatives that they are working on and will follow up with a marketing proposal.

- **Thomas Cook, UK** – We met with Andrew Pickering, Partnerships Manager, who said that the initial results from the Visit Florida campaign we have in market is performing well. He will follow up with final results in due course. He will also send through a proposal for the spring activity which we have confirmed. This will be with us by the end of the year. 2019 travel overall is looking good for them as introducing a 0% deposit scheme has assisted their bookings. 2020 will be on sale by December this year and they will be encouraging the early bookings. Andrew will advise if they are planning a Fam trip to our area for their sales and retail staff.
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – We had a meeting with Bjorn Hallinder and Hanna Ekelund who advised that generally business is down due to the hot weather in the summer and currency exchange, however it has picked up. Despite trading down for them, Florida is up compared to last year. The Caribbean and Far East has sold well for them due to very competitive airfares and hotel offers. 85% of their business is booked online. Bjorn will follow up with a marketing proposal and final results for the recent campaign.
- **News International** – We had a meeting with Tom Scott, Sales Manager, who gave a presentation on opportunities with the Sunday Times and The Sun. The Sunday Times has 1 million subscribers and targeted editorial would also be promoted through their social channels. The Sun is the largest paper with 28 million subscribers a month. 60% of their audience is ABC1 with a high proportion of female readers. Tom mentioned about opportunities with Unruly, a video platform which would allow us to be very targeted with a 30 second video. He also spoke about Storyful, which would allow us to create a video using user generated content. Tom will follow up with some examples and further details.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We met with Harriet Moon who mentioned that the recent marketing we participated in with Visit Florida started off slowly however it has picked up. She will follow up with the final results in due course. Florida overall for 2018 is pacing flat compared to last year, however Orlando is +10%. They are already seeing demand for 2020 with 1000 room nights booked for Florida. She is currently organising a Fam trip, 5 agents to visit the west coast of Florida and 5 to visit the east coast and meet up at the end to share their experiences. Harriet will advise on how we can assist the trip who will be visiting St. Pete/Clearwater. Harriet will also follow up on a proposal for retail activity.
- **Travelzoo** – We met with Kyle McAleavey, Senior Sales Manager to discuss the proposal we had previously received. We are looking to launch the campaign in September which will run for 6 weeks and include sponsored content, links to our website and a CTA with 4 Tour Operators.
- **If Only** – We had a meeting with Gordon McCreadie, Sales and Marketing Director, who said that the business was doing really well for them, +46% and the USA programme which was introduced last year was proving a success. 60% of their bookings are twin

centres. They will be looking at product range for the next brochure, so we will follow up with recommendations and content.

- **Expedia** – We met with Derek Price who mentioned that they are working with Visit Florida with a crisis programme, which will allow them to find availability a lot easier during hurricane season. Overall arrivals from Europe to the US are down, but customers are staying longer. He mentioned that the reliance on travel agents has changed and the younger generation are very confident about booking online. They understand the importance of booking multi-centres online, however this won't be in the short-term future. We will follow up with details of our consumer campaign.
- **Barrhead Travel** – Jade advised that they had seen good growth for the US in 2018 despite a weak summer due to the hot weather. They have booked approx. 11k room nights into Florida for 2018. Jade mentioned that they are currently working with Visit Florida on a campaign which launches now and will run in January and February too.
- **British Airways Holidays / British Airways** – We had a meeting with Keri Mulqueen and George Beguinot. Keri advised that 2018 had been a challenge due to some of their key properties having limited inventory during renovations as well as reduced offers this year compared to previous years. The beginning of the year was strong; however, it has dropped off and they are tracking behind for our area. It has been tough for Florida overall this year. George advised that the Tampa route was looking positive for forward bookings, +8% versus last year, whilst Orlando was +15%. Next year will be their 100-year anniversary so their marketing will focus on this, however they will be working with Visit Florida on a campaign and will share the proposal by the end of the year.
- **Visit Florida** – We had a meeting with the team who advised that they are working on the winter campaign and would like to invite partners to participate. The activity is likely to include; influencer in resort, social, PR, Shuffle London event, press and out of home on the London underground and a Manchester shopping mall. The activity will launch in January and run for 12 weeks in London, Manchester, Dublin and Glasgow. They have already confirmed their partnership with Expedia who will be their CTA, and Disney have been confirmed as one of their 5 partners. Ashley will follow up with the details.
- **Travel Matters** – We provided Andrea Pellicci with a destination update including new hotels and the new Norwegian route. We have followed up with new content for her to use in the future.
- **Swanson's** – Magnus requested some brochures for their office and customers. We have followed up and have also sent the link to our online brochure for him to share.

Scandinavian Sales Mission

- **Profil Rejser** – We met with Charlotte Lindholm, Product Manager, who advised that Florida and California remain their most popular destination, with bookings looking very strong for February and summer. They are working with Norwegian, however the connections are not always the best compared to other airlines. She hadn't received any queries on red tide, however we provided an update. We also had the opportunity to train

their 4 agents and provide them with brochures and maps. Since our meeting, we have sent Charlotte videos to use on their website.

- **My Planet** – We visited their office in Copenhagen and provided training to their agents in that office as well as in Aarhus and Gothenburg who dialed in to listen to the presentation. We provided each office with brochures and maps to distribute to their sales team. Anne Knudsen, Contract Manager advised that their business was up double digits compared to last year with Florida and California as their top selling destinations. Their business is predominantly fly drive itineraries and all contracting is done through their UK office for the whole portfolio of brands.
- **USA Tours** – We visited their office in Copenhagen and provided training to 9 of their sales agents. Some of the agents had been to the destination, so we provided an overview as well as new hotels, renovations and attractions.
- **Discover America Denmark** – We attended their Thanksgiving event in Copenhagen which consisted of networking with key contacts in Denmark.
- **Icelandair, Denmark** – We met with John Rasmussen, who advised that the Tampa route was struggling for Q1 in 2019, so they are going to implement special airfares in the coming weeks to stimulate bookings. He has now taken on a new role which focuses more on the commercials of the route network.
- **AOB Travel** – We provided training to their 6 sales agents in their office located in Sweden. We also distributed brochures and maps and answered their queries. We also met with Sarah Magnusson who said that 80% of their business is booked online and is available in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Their business consists mainly of cruise and tailor-made, with 80% of their business made for the USA. 2018 had been a good year with 2019 looking positive with customers booking up to a year in advance.
- **Big Travel** – We visited their office in Malmo and provided training to 4 of their sales agents. The presentations were well received and they asked many questions. We also provided each agent with a brochure and map.
- **Discover America Norway** – We visited their office to provide a small training session to some of their key contacts, which included; Natalia Chantalene from Airticket, Nora Kvamme from Reisebazaar, Kari Mette Høstvik from 4 Travel, Marthe Spro from Nordic Attraction Tickets and Rebecca Tarnstrøm from Berg-Hansen RB Oslo. We also distributed brochures and maps.
- **Norwegian, Oslo** – We have a meeting with Havard Sveen, Sales Manager who said that 2018 bookings have not been as good as expected due to the good weather and poor exchange rates. He mentioned that the Norwegians will still travel but they will reduce the number of nights. Typically, they are seeing their customers travel via other Scandinavian gateways as well as Gatwick, but not so much through the rest of Europe. The Gatwick/Tampa route is doing ok but they do need more business on this route. They aren't concerned as it is a new route. Of the Orlando flight from Oslo in 2018, 55% are from Oslo, 12% from Europe, 6% from Sweden and 23% from US. A large proportion of the 2019 bookings to Orlando are originating from Charles de Galle due to good connections. The Fort Lauderdale route always performs well due to the cruise business

and they are just about to launch a new Gatwick to Miami flight. 80% of their overall business is direct, however they are seeing growth from the trade for 2019 long-haul which accounts for 25-28% of their business. They are also seeing growth in their premium business. With regards to marketing activity, they currently have their TV adverts shown in each market, but they also send newsletters to the trade and consumer, work with online newspapers and host training and events for the trade. Since our meeting, we have arranged for some brochures and maps to be sent to their office to use for their future sales meetings with travel agencies.

- **USA Specialisten** – We visited their new offices located just outside Oslo city centre to meet with June Lundebj and provide her with a destination update. She advised that they recently merged with Expert Rejser, but will be keeping each brand. USA Specialisten will continue focusing on the USA in the Norwegian market, whilst Expert Rejser will sell the holidays worldwide specifically for groups, business travel and sports travel. She said that business was ok with 2019 looking good. Exchange rate still affects business, but she felt that customers were getting used to the rate now. They are receiving more quote requests than last year which are complex including multi-centres. Florida and California remain their top selling destinations. They are working closely with Expedia as their accommodation provider, and most of their flights are booked with SAS and United.
- **Discover America Norway** – We attended their 20th Anniversary Gala event and were a sponsor alongside; Visit Orlando, SeaWorld Parks, Icelandair, Hertz, and Royal Caribbean. The event consisted of networking and a formal meal, and received 55 attendees from key travel agencies. We gave a small presentation to the guests and contributed to a Florida prize of Norwegian flights, accommodation in Orlando and St. Pete/Clearwater courtesy of JC Resorts, and Orlando park tickets.

Tour Operators

- **Virgin Holidays** – We had a meeting with Fiona Lewry, Destination executive and James Libor, Partnerships Manager, to discuss marketing opportunities for the coming year. We provided James with the key messages we want to portray within the activity and he will revert with a proposal next month for our consideration.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Visit USA, UK** – We attended their meeting which also included presentations from Aer Lingus and Virgin Holidays. During the meeting, we were advised that spending from the UK customers in the US had increased by 6% in 2017 compared to the previous year. Preliminary 2018 arrivals (Jan – Apr) indicate that the UK is tracking at +2.8% versus 2017. Despite poor exchange rates, disposable income has increased and approx. 30% of visitors will book at least 6 months in advance. 77.8% of visitors to the US will visit just one state during their trip. Orlando sits in the top cities visited at 22.5% of the visitors to the US, however this is trending down. Angus Bond (Virgin Holidays) said that they are seeing low consumer confidence due to the uncertainty of Brexit, exchange rates and general inflation in the UK. However, there is additional capacity into the US for 2019 and their customers are booking earlier than previous years. They are also seeing an increase in the demand for personal experience.

- **Virgin Holidays** - We attended their Florida training day, held at Virgin Atlantic Base in Crawley. We were joined by; Visit Florida, Visit Orlando, Kissimmee, Florida Keys, Fort Lauderdale, Sky Resorts and Daytona Beach. The day consisted of timed training sessions so we were able to provide detailed training to 37 of their retail sales staff as well as their head office destination sales agents. We also distributed brochures, map and giveaways, and were able to answer any questions they had.
- **Virgin Holidays** – Attended their Thanksgiving Event for US suppliers in London

TRADE LIAISON

- **UK Consumer Campaign**
 - Proposal has been received from Media Agency Group for the digital media buy and has now been signed off by Brand USA. The campaign will run from 1st – 31st January 2019
 - Artwork specs have been sent to BVK and awaiting first look at creative
 - CTA on the campaign will be Expedia and their media buy is currently being finalised
- **Visit Florida Campaign**
 - The details have now been finalised and this will run for 3 months from 1st January. The campaign will include Out of Home, digital, PR, social media and an Expedia campaign. The specs have now been and first artwork has been submitted.
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – We have now received the final results for the campaign we ran in August and September in partnership with Icelandair;
 - Digital banners – 129,035 impressions, 1038 clicks, 0.8% CTR
 - Facebook – Total for 2 posts 258 likes, 8 shares, 23 comments
 - Dedicated E-newsletters
 - First email - Distributed to 43,450, 35.9% open rate, 19.5% CTR
 - Second email – Distributed to 5003, 29% open rate, 16.3% CTR
 - General newsletter
 - First email - Distributed to 106,337, 49,287 opened, 46% open rate, 0.5% CTR
 - Second email – Distributed to 122,203, 28,783 opened, 23% open rate, 0.5% CTR
 - 71 room nights booked during the campaign, and 326 booked year to date.
- **Expedia, Scandinavia** – We have begun discussions with Linda Zimmerman to launch a campaign in Sweden, Norway and Denmark during Q1 of 2019. This will include banner placements across Hotels.com and their Expedia Brands Portfolio. We are working with Linda to finalise the plan.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We have confirmed our participation in their ‘Treats Trolley’ in January which will allow us to offer cakes to their sales agents and provide a destination update. We have also confirmed a date in December to drop of giveaways to their agents and have confirmed dedicated training in April.

- **Ocean Florida** – We have now received the proof for their 2019 brochure, which has been approved.
- **Bookabed** – We have received the joint campaign proposal from Bev Fly at Bookabed for a co-op campaign in partnership with Experience Kissimmee and the campaign will include website activity including banner ads, destination pages and an e-newsletter to their consumer and trade database. The campaign will run from 1st January 2019 for a period of one month.
- **Tour America/Experience Kissimmee** – Kathleen Maher has now provided us with a joint co-op marketing proposal in partnership with Experience Kissimmee, that has been approved by us and which is now with Brand USA for their sign off. The campaign will run for a 2-week period from the 4th February 2019. The campaign will include out of home activity on the Luas Tram system in Dublin, radio and press advertising, website takeover, social media activity, an e-newsletter to their consumer database and a completion to win a 2-week holiday for four to Kissimmee and St. Pete/Clearwater. We have also agreed a separate stand-alone campaign later in 2019 which will include press advertising, website takeover, social media takeover, a dedicated e-zine and a digital display/remarketing campaign.
- **Ocean Holidays** – Discussions are taking place with Muna Abanour regarding the joint co-op marketing proposal we are currently waiting for as well as also discussing the possibility of visiting their offices in December to see their sales team to hand out literature, branded giveaways and some Christmas treats ahead of the peak January booking period.
- **Funway Holidays** – Discussions have taken place and we have arranged to visit their sales team in Bromley and to drop off literature, branded giveaways and Christmas treats. These will also be handed to their homeworkers when they visit their head office for their monthly sales meeting.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – Discussions have taken place with Linda Dixey and Anne Wylie to request a stand-alone co-op marketing campaign proposal after we were advised Experience Kissimmee have at this stage declined to partner on this campaign with us due to prior commitments with the operator. We have also secured a visit to their offices in Loughton, Essex to see their sales team and to drop off branded giveaways and Christmas treats next month. We have a meeting with the product and marketing teams at both brands at this time also.
- **Nordic Travel Marketing** – Widar Jensen, General Manager, contacted us to advise that he is looking for some accommodation for his groups, so we have asked Michelle to send out a solicitation to our hotel partners to contact him direct.
- **Visit Florida** – We provided Visit Florida with our training information and key selling points sheets as per their request as they will be training the sales team at British Airways Holidays based in Newcastle this month. Visit Florida will be providing the agents with an overview of our area.

- **Discover America Denmark** - We have sent Monika Grinschgl, Partnership Manager, information on the restaurant scene in St. Pete/Clearwater for possible inclusion in their next newsletter.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – We have sent Tony Lane details on the restaurant scene in our area for possible inclusion in their next E-zine which focuses on this theme.
- **Visit USA, UK** – We have provided content on culinary options and craft breweries available in St. Pete/Clearwater for inclusion on their website, social channels and newsletters.
- **Discover America, Scandinavia** – We have sent an update to Denmark, Sweden and Norway for inclusion on their website, social channels and newsletters.
- **Holiday Genie** – We have provided brochures, maps and giveaways to their sales agents in their Blackpool office.
- **Barrhead Travel** – Asia Thomson contacted us to advise that they now have virtual reality headsets in their retail stores. We have provided her with the necessary assets.
- **USA Tours, Denmark** – Maria Gronvold, sales agent, contacted us to advise that she is looking to visit St. Pete/Clearwater next year and was looking for some recommendations which we have been able to assist with.
- **American Adventures, Norway** – Katherine Schjetne contacted us to ask for images for use on their website. We have provided her with our assets.
- **USAirtours** – Approved and signed off the double page spread for the new USAirtours brochure that is being launched in December to their trade agencies.
- **Travelopia** – There have been some changes we have been advised about at Travelopia. Suzanne Harvey has now left the company, Isla King has moved over to work on the Asia Product and Jessica Jackson, Regional Destination Manager USA is now our main contact.
- **Funway Holidays** – We have been advised that Amy Shine, Product Manager has left the company and a replacement has yet to be announced.
- **Trailfinders** – Since our meeting at WTM we have asked Melloney to send through a proposal for their direct marketing activity which is due to launch in February and focuses on the USA. We will consider participating as joint activity with Kissimmee.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – Emily Underhill contacted us to advise that they are planning a fam trip to Florida next year and would like to include St. Pete/Clearwater. We have contacted Michelle to send a solicitation to our partners for accommodation for the group.
- **Homeaway** – We were contacted by Darren Hughes, Advertising Sales Manager, who was keen on some marketing activity to promote our area. We are keen to learn more

about how we can work together in the future and have arranged to discuss this further in the new year.

- **Tour America** – We have confirmed training with their sales agent alongside Kissimmee for February which will be during the launch of our joint campaign.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

1 November 2018, Source TravelMole

Gatwick staff to stage three 48-hour strikes

Gatwick Airport staff employed to look after passengers who need special assistance have voted to strike for six days over the next two months. More than 250 workers, who are members of the Unite union, are in a row with their employer, logistics company Wilson James, over a 'massive inequality' in pay. Unite warned that thousands of passengers who need assistance will be affected during the three 48-hour stoppages. It estimated the workers look after 670,000 passengers annually, many with disabilities. The strike will take place from 05.00 on 20 November, ending at 05.00 on 22 November, and then repeated at the same times on 26/28 November and on 21/23 December. It said the workers voted by 98% for strike action. The dispute centres on a demand for a £1 an hour pay rise for the year, starting April 1 2018, to 'bridge the gap with those airport staff pushing luggage trollies who earn significantly more'. Unite said those assisting disabled passengers are paid just £8.27 per hour. Unite regional officer Jamie Major said: "The last thing our members want is to cause inconvenience and distress to those passengers who rely on their services during their time at Gatwick Airport - but they feel they have been forced into a corner by a tight-fisted management who refuse to address the pay inequality issue. "There is no rhyme nor reason why pushing luggage is valued more than helping people - perhaps, it's because airlines can charge more for heavy luggage to increase profits. "It remains a mystery to our members. Gatwick Airport needs to get its priorities right, otherwise it will suffer huge reputational damage in the run-up to the Christmas holiday season." A spokeswoman for Wilson James said it was disappointed by the ballot decision but remains committed to continuing the dialog with Unite. "In the meantime we are preparing contingency plans to minimise passenger disruption during the periods identified for industrial action," she said. A Gatwick spokesman added: "We encourage both sides to continue discussions and to work for an outcome to resolve the dispute. The welfare of our passengers remains our top priority, however, and we remain confident that services at the airport will not be disrupted as Wilsom James has a range of mitigation measures ready to put into place should strike action take place."

2 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Aer Lingus owner IAG confident on profit growth

Group is sticking to a target to post an operating profit margin of 12-15% for 2019-2023. Aer Lingus owner IAG said most of its financial goals for 2019-2023 were the same as those

made in a long-term plan last year, sticking to a target to post an operating profit margin of between 12 and 15 per cent. The group, which also owns Iberia, British Airways and Vueling, issued a confident outlook on Friday despite a sharp rise in the oil price this year, as it continues to outshine rival European airlines Lufthansa and Air France-KLM. IAG, whose shares opened up 3 per cent, gave guidance that average earnings per share would grow more than 12 per cent per year from 2019-2023, in line with what it said last year. It raised its outlook for core annual earnings (EBITAR) to an average forecast of around €7.2 billion (\$8.23 billion) from €6.5 billion. IAG chief executive Willie Walsh and other senior management will present the outlook to investors in London later on Friday. On 2018, IAG said last week that annual profit would increase by €200 million (\$228 million). That compared to Lufthansa's outlook for adjusted earnings (EBIT) this year to show a slight fall from 2017's record. Air France-KLM has spent the year struggling with costly strikes before it finally agreed a pay deal with unions in October. It has faced tough competition from low-cost carriers and from IAG and Lufthansa but has been unable to overhaul costs and services the way others have. In its outlook, IAG raised its forecast for capital expenditure to €2.6 billion a year from €2.1 billion a year, and said it would grow available seat kilometres, a measure of capacity, by 6 per cent a year, up from 5 per cent previously. It gave no further details on the capacity growth, which will include its fast-growing low-cost long-haul carrier Level and Level's new short-haul operation based at Vienna. IAG did not provide an update on its plans with regard to Norwegian, the carrier which rejected two IAG takeover approaches this year.

2 November 2018, Source TravelMole

Brits plan to travel abroad more, but spend less

More Brits plan to travel abroad next year next year, but they intend to curb their spending. The 11th Holiday Confidence Index report from First Rate Exchange Services shows there have been year-on-year falls across the three indices that measure different types of planned holiday expenditure. Most worrying, said the report, is a two-point fall in the Cost of Booking Index, which reports on the cost of booking travel and accommodation. This year's lower Cost of Booking Index score of 39 indicates a 'real resistance' to paying more for a holiday package or individual components, it said. This is reflected in a significant 3% decline in the numbers who intend to pay more when booking their holiday and a 1% rise in those who want to pay less than previously. The report said heavy discounting after a sluggish booking period before and during the 2018 World Cup may partly account for this, but warned that the expectation of discounting in the year ahead may prove unfounded. It said instead holidaymakers might have to sacrifice standards of accommodation to curb costs. The index, based on a survey of 5,114 consumers, found the number of people who intend to take an overseas holiday has risen to 55% - up 1 percentage point on last year - with a corresponding fall to 27% in those who do not plan to travel abroad. As a result, the Holiday Intention Index - the most important of six indices that contribute to the overall score - has risen one point to 67, the second highest recorded in the last five years. In more positive news for the travel industry, a higher proportion of those planning trips - 46% compared with 44% a year ago - have already booked their first holiday. Liam Hodge, First Rate Exchange Services head of insight, said: "The latest Holiday Confidence Index results provide good reason for the travel industry to feel optimistic that consumer demand will remain buoyant in challenging times ahead. The number of people who have already booked trips abroad is a reassuring confirmation that this type of holiday is a part of their lifestyle they are not willing to forgo."

2 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Aer Lingus expands its Leisure Sales Team

Aer Lingus has appointed Liza Hammond to the position of Business Development Manager within the Leisure sales team. Starting on 12th November, Liza will work alongside Ivan Beacom to manage strategic trade partners across the UK and Ireland, reporting to Andrea Hunter (Manager Leisure Sales). Andrea Hunter commented: "Liza brings with her a wealth of aviation account management skills having worked with both BMI and Etihad for many years. I'm delighted to welcome Liza to the newly-formed leisure team and know she will hit the ground running. Jenny Rafter (Head of Global Leisure Sales) said: "Aer Lingus' ambition to be the leading carrier across the Atlantic will be enforced by a proficient dynamic sales team, we recognise the requirement to have a global approach and are delighted to be in a position to invest in our people. I am delighted to welcome Liza who joins our experienced team with excellent knowledge and a clear enthusiasm for the success."

3 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Aer Lingus aiming to combat transatlantic low-cost rivals with 'transformative' expansion

AER Lingus thinks it can almost double its transatlantic fleet from 17 to 30 aircraft over next five years, as it's positioned to be the number one 'value' airline linking Europe and North America. The plan was unveiled at an investor day for Aer Lingus' parent IAG, which also owns British Airways, Iberia and the low-cost long-haul brand Level. For Aer Lingus, the plan means new direct and connecting travel options centred on Dublin. The Irish airline currently has a transatlantic seat capacity of 2.8 million per year. The increase in aircraft would see this grow to 4.7 million seats. The company said it would be "transformative" for the airline, and have a hugely positive impact on Irish inbound tourism. The move means Aer Lingus is being positioned by IAG, led by Willie Walsh, to take on Norwegian Air and Wotif in the long-haul, low-cost market.

3 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Norwegian to sell five planes to ease debt

Norwegian Air has agreed to sell five Airbus 320neo aircraft, as a part of its plan to ease capital commitments and strengthen its balance sheet. The aircraft, which will be delivered in the fourth quarter of 2018, are currently leased out and not operated by Norwegian Air, the company said. "Sale proceeds will be used to repay debt and to increase the company's liquidity," Norwegian Air said. Liquidity is expected to increase by \$62m (€54.5m), after the repayment of debt, it said. Norwegian Air has committed to buying 210 new aircraft from Boeing and Airbus, by 2020, and has said as many as 140 planes could be sold over time, as a part of the renewal of its fleet and to reduce debt. Norwegian Air said, last week, it is in advanced talks with an unnamed partner on a fleet joint venture and hopes to give more information before the end of the year. Europe's third-largest budget carrier, by passenger numbers, has grown rapidly, but fast growth has left it under pressure to control costs and shore up its balance sheet. Meanwhile, Willie Walsh, chief executive at IAG, which owns Aer Lingus and British Airways, said there was nothing new to say, when asked about the possibility of a further bid for low-cost carrier Norwegian, adding that its short-haul network continued to look attractive. Norwegian rejected two approaches from IAG earlier this year. IAG owns a stake of just under 5% in Norwegian. "I've nothing new to report. We continue to watch, we continue to have an interest, but, as I've said before, the interest wanes over time and we'll wait and see," Mr Walsh told investors.

5 November 2018, Source Travel Weekly

January peaks warning if no Brexit deal is secured

British holidaymakers appear oblivious to Brexit concerns but that could all change if no EU exit deal is secured in time for the January peak booking period, new research reveals today. Advance airline bookings for summer 2019 to EU destinations were up by 5.7% year-on-year by early October. Bookings to destinations outside the EU were 28.5% ahead compared with growth of just 4.3% at the same time last year. The figures from ForwardKeys, which analyses more than 17 million booking transactions a day, have been specially commissioned for the opening of World Travel Market in London. The firm's insights vice president Olivier Ponti said: "When we interrogate the flight booking data, looking at trends in the UK outbound market, the best description is 'business as usual' or if anything, the future looks brighter. "For the 2018 summer holiday season, 28% of trips by British travellers to the EU were booked more than six months in advance, 32% were booked during the first quarter of the year, and 40% were booked during the season itself. "Therefore, whilst it is too early in the booking cycle to predict reliably how good the holiday season will be, the initial indications are positive." Ponti added: "We do not see anything much in the data to confirm a 'Brexit effect' on people's booking behaviour for EU destinations currently. "However, January is traditionally a very important month for holiday bookings, so if there is still no Brexit deal by then and consumers start panicking, the outlook could rapidly start to look very different." Ponti said: "The aviation industry started its 2018-19 winter season last week and total available seats on the scheduled flights between the UK and the EU increased by 3.4%, compared to the previous winter season. "This appears to be a vote of confidence in the market – particularly when, by contrast, capacity over the summer was 0.5% less than summer 2017. "As for next summer, seat capacity provides no clear picture yet, because at least two main airlines operating between the UK and the EU are currently hesitant to share their schedules with the industry." A WTM spokesman said: "Although consumer confidence appears to be undented, many of our exhibitors have seen Brexit as a massive cloud on the horizon for more than two years and time is running out fast. "The warning from ForwardKeys about the crucial January booking period should urge politicians to seal a deal as soon as possible, to ensure that consumer confidence is maintained and that travellers can continue to cross the borders between the UK and Europe seamlessly."

6 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Cheapest times to travel from US to UK

To figure out the cheapest times to fly back to the UK, we spoke to travel experts who shared some tips for getting the best deals. Considering the winter weather is as miserable in the UK as it is on the East Coast, not many people are travelling to check out the sights during winter. That's good news for expats, as it means flights are cheap. According to Expedia, which analysed flight data from 2017, January and February were the least expensive months to travel to the UK. "Travellers found the lowest average ticket prices (ATPs) and average daily rates (ADRs) during the first two months of the year compared to the rest," the travel site told The Independent. Flight data from CheapAir also found January and February offer the cheapest flights back to the UK, followed by September and October. While homesickness may make you think that splurging on a last-minute flight is a good idea, in reality you'll likely regret it for the price alone. According to Skyscanner, the best time to book a transatlantic flight is nine weeks in advance, based on two years of flight-booking data. There are certain tricks travellers can use to ensure the cheapest possible ticket prices – such as

booking on specific days of the week. Flight data from Expedia found that flights are typically the least expensive on Sunday. And for premium fares: "Saturdays and Sundays are the best days to book cheap tickets." Booking a flight on major sale days such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday can also help secure the cheapest ticket, as even flight websites get in on the deals. According to CheapAir, however, "airlines typically publish their sales on Tuesdays, so if you're hoping to grab a very good price, that's when you want to be searching for the best deals". Stopovers, while annoying, are also typically cheaper – so consider the option when planning your trip home. While there is no optimal flight booking date, says Skyscanner, finding cheap flights to the UK is just about knowing when to book.

6 November 2018, Source TravelMole

Icelandair to buy rival Wow air

Icelandair Group has announced its intention to buy rival WOW air. The deal, subject to approval, will see both airlines continue to operate under separate brands. Their combined market share on the transatlantic market is around 3.8%. A statement to the financial markets said the acquisition 'creates opportunity for both companies to become even better prepared to provide international carriers with strong competition in the international airline market'. Bogi Nils Bogason, interim president & CEO Icelandair Group, said: "WOW air has in recent years built a strong brand and enjoyed great success in the company's markets to and from Iceland and across the Atlantic. "There are many opportunities for synergies with the two companies but they will continue to operate under their own brands and operating approvals. The tourism industry is one of the cornerstones of the Icelandic economy and it is important that flights to and from Iceland will remain frequent." Skuli Mogensen, CEO and founder of WOW air, said: "I am very proud of the success and development that we at WOW air have enjoyed in the past few years and I am thankful for the response we have received since our very first flight. "We have created a strong team that has reached remarkable success and has been a pioneer in low cost flights across the North-Atlantic. A new chapter now starts where WOW air gets an opportunity to grow and prosper with a strong backer like Icelandair Group that will strengthen the foundations of the company and strengthen its international competitiveness even further." Icelandair Group is to hold a shareholders' meeting where shareholders will cast their vote on the acquisition.

6 November 2018, Source TravelMole

No-deal Brexit would mean five million drop in outbound trips from the UK

A no-deal Brexit would trigger a drop of five million outbound departures from the UK in 2022, according to a report out today by Euromonitor International. It says leaving the EU without a deal next March would lead to a fall in outbound demand from the UK in 2019 and cause a 'ripple effect' across many destinations. It would mean five million fewer outbound departures in 2022 than would have been the case with a delayed Free Trade Agreement, according to the market research company. Head of travel Caroline Bremner said Spain would be the biggest loser."In Spain, where UK travellers account for 21% of inbound revenues in 2018, Brexit could reduce 2019 receipts by US\$747 million, compared to a delayed free trade agreement, with the UK accounting for over half of that," she explained. But while outbound departures would suffer, Britain's inbound tourism industry would benefit said the report. "With the UK economy in a state of flux, and a decline in the value of sterling, departures would stagnate over 2018-2020," explained Bremner. "A 'no-deal' scenario would see the pound fall by about 10%, on top of a decline in 2018, making the UK more attractive to overseas visitors."

7 November 2018, Source TTG

Virgin Holidays to double size of Next concession network next year

Virgin Holidays will double the size of its network of Next concession stores next year, the group has revealed. Having already committed to opening 20 concessions by the end of this year, Virgin will add a further 20 during 2019, a spokesperson confirmed to TTG. This commitment, which will grow the group's retail network to 40 locations, comes after Virgin was forced earlier this year to reconsider its concession strategy due to the contraction of partner House of Fraser. Virgin has also previously partnered with Tesco and Debenhams to grow its network of concession stores but has since settled on Next, with whom it is now proposing to considerably increase its high street presence. The news comes after Virgin Holidays this week opened its 13th v-room agency, the first complete with a fully operational spa. The new store in Milton Keynes has 10 members of staff and aims to offer customers a "totally immersive holiday booking experience". V-rooms bring many features of the Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse experience to high street locations. Customers can get a manicure or hand massage, sample the sights, sounds and tastes of their dream holiday locations, try out features of Virgin Atlantic's various cabins, and have a drink. Lee Haslett, Virgin Holidays vice-president sales and product, said: "We've been revolutionising the way our customers book their holidays for several years and our latest v-room in Milton Keynes is the next step on that journey. "We know that our customers are looking for something extra than just a standard holiday and our v-rooms are the first step on that journey - whether that's the in-store bar, children's play area or rollercoaster simulation."

14 November 2018, Source TravelMole

Pound rises after breakthrough in Brexit talks

The pound has surged against both the euro and the dollar due to optimism the UK is close to reaching a Brexit deal. Sterling reached €1.1542, almost its highest point for seven months. At the same time it rose 1.4% to trade at €1.3036 against the dollar. The shift occurred after the government announced a significant breakthrough in talks with the EU and produced a draft text of a Brexit deal. However, analysts warned the BBC that the pound could fall again if Cabinet ministers and Parliament don't agree to the deal. "With the UK Cabinet and Parliament yet to agree to the plans, we are clearly not out of the woods yet," said Capital Economics economist Ruth Gregory. She said she would not be surprised if a deal wasn't secured until 'well into next year', with the pound likely to 'pull back' again by the end of the year. Neil Mellor, currency strategist at BNY Mellon, said Prime Minister Theresa May still had to convince party members as well as the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which props up her minority government. "Ms May's proposals are tasked with healing an increasingly divided Conservative party while also keeping the party's DUP allies onside," he said. Sterling is still 10% lower against both the dollar and the euro since before the EU referendum in June 2016.

14 November 2018, Source Travolution

Hotelbeds warns of Brexit impact but confirms importance of UK market

Leading accommodation wholesaler Hotelbeds expects to see a Brexit impact during the turn of year peaks in the UK market which it confirmed as its largest source market last week. The Palma-based B2B supplier said it has seen a downturn in growth in the market which it believes is down to the uncertainty caused by Brexit. Speaking to Travolution at last week's

World Travel Market trade show in London Sam Turner, wholesale sales and sourcing director, said: “We do feel there is a bit of a growth slowdown in the UK compared to what we are used to. I think the uncertainty around Brexit is still there so the more the clarity we get about that the sooner the better. “I think in the UK market travel is one of the things that people take off their shopping list last and we have seen that resilience in the market when there have been downturns in the economy in the past. “Certainty will come and we expect to see a flurry of activity with regards to bookings when it does, but January is a key booking period for the UK and we will probably see a less than normally buoyant market in that period.” Booking data from the company’s bedbank platforms released during WTM confirmed that the UK remained for the second year running, since Tourico Holidays and GTA joined Hotelbeds, the main source market worldwide for the company during the full year 2017-2018 period. The booking data also revealed the top destinations for British travellers during the past year whose bookings were made via the Hotelbeds’ platform. The UK domestic market was the most reserved country destination. Analysis of destination trends shows that Florida’s Orlando is the top international destination for UK holidaymakers followed by Mallorca – moving up by one position compared to last year – and then Tenerife, the Algarve and New York. Meanwhile Rome leads as the top city destination, followed by Paris, with both experiencing strong growth in room nights during the last year. Turner added: “We are very satisfied to confirm that the very important UK market remains our number one source market globally, for the second year running since Tourico Holidays and GTA joined our company last year. Where UK travellers go, other source markets follow, and we place a huge significance on remaining the leading bedbank in the UK market. “One of the keys to our success is our ability to offer a very wide selection globally of directly contracted, unique hotel accommodation and ancillary services such as theme parks and transfers, often at exclusive rates, to our travel buying customers. Whether they be tour operators, bricks-and-mortar travel agents, online travel agents, airlines or points redemption schemes, they can benefit from our team of nearly 1,000 contractors across the globe sourcing the best deals at the best prices, allowing us to now offer over 170,000 hotels.”

18 November 2018, Source Travelbiz

Virgin Trains USA to start running through Florida

Sir Richard Branson is extending his rail empire across the Atlantic. Virgin Group has announced that it will take a minority share in Brightline, a start-up train operator in Florida. Brightline launched express services earlier this year from Miami via Fort Lauderdale to West Palm Beach, with an extension to Orlando under construction and plans for a line to Tampa. It also intends to build a link between Las Vegas and southern California. The train operator is to be renamed Virgin Trains USA this month, with rebranding taking place in 2019. In his blog, Sir Richard wrote: “We have a long history of creating innovative businesses that shake up markets and establish loyal followings. “We transformed domestic air travel with Virgin America and have spent more than a decade looking for a similar opportunity to change the face of American railways. “Rail is a sector close to my heart after 21 years of running Virgin Trains in the UK.” The Brightline routes, both current and planned, fit well with Virgin Atlantic’s flight network – which includes Miami, Orlando, Las Vegas and Los Angeles. The train operator said: “The partnership will allow Brightline to leverage Virgin's industry-leading expertise and customer experience.” Brightline’s launch was delayed, and its first three months were marred by tragedy – with four people killed by trains when they tried to cross the tracks illegally. The train currently runs hourly, taking about half-an-hour between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, and another 45 minutes to reach

West Palm Beach – close to President Trump’s “Florida White House,” his Mar-a-Lago property.

27 November 2018, Source TTG

Summer bookings looking promising, says Abta

Summer 2019 bookings are up 12%, new data from Abta reveals, with package holidays the favourite for cost-conscious travellers. Abta’s Travel Trends 2019 report shows forward sales of packages and accommodation looking healthy and a resurgence of the trusted travel expert, with 45% of 2,000 consumers interviewed saying they felt more confident in booking with a travel professional. The weak pound prompted 60% to say they booked a package this year because it was the best option for the price. Another key trend is that more than a third – 36% - said they would opt for one travel business over another if its environmental record was better. This compares with 23% saying this in 2014. The report tips 12 destinations to watch in 2019. Victoria Bacon, Abta director of brand and business development, said the destinations were all readily accessible from the UK and all represented value for money. They include Bulgaria, whose ancient city of Plovdiv is a European Capital of Culture next year; Durban, which will be linked with a new British Airways flight and Jordan, which has new easyJet and Ryanair services to its Red Sea region. “Holidaymakers are increasingly looking to make their money go further and many of the destinations we’ve highlighted do just that, whether it is the abundance of flight routes or favourable exchange rate,” she said.

28 November 2018, Source TTG

Norwegian shakes up routes

Norwegian is pulling its flights to Oakland and Fort Lauderdale and replacing them with San Francisco and Miami respectively. The routes will be altered as of March 31 next year with prices leading in at £174.90 one way. Flights to Miami will be offered on a daily basis as opposed to the four-weekly service to Fort Lauderdale while San Francisco flights will be available five times a week. The airline said the change in airports has come about thanks to a combination of customer demand and increased cargo capabilities at both the east and west coast facilities. The change means the airline will also continue to offer 13 long-haul routes from the UK with Brazil also making its debut appearance with flights launching to Rio de Janeiro, also on March 31. However, some frequencies are also being cut for next summer with the Los Angeles route will reducing to a daily service while the Chicago route will reduce to four flights per week. Matthew Wood, senior vice president commercial at Norwegian said: “We are delighted to meet the strong demand for our transatlantic flights by announcing that Miami and San Francisco will join Rio de Janeiro as part of our summer 2019 flight schedule. "By also increasing frequency on popular routes next summer, we will provide customers with more choice, smoother connections and exceptional value at affordable fares across Europe, the USA and South America.” Gatwick airport head of airline relations Stephen King said: “These new Miami and San Francisco routes will fly passengers straight into the heart of two of America’s most iconic city destinations. "In all, Norwegian will fly to 11 US destinations from Gatwick next summer, which gives passengers both tremendous choice and exceptional value as the airline offers some of the most competitive long-haul airfares around.”

29 November 2018, Source TravelMole

Thomas Cook reveals huge net loss

Thomas Cook has announced a £163 million loss after tax for the 12 months to the end of September, which chief executive Peter Fankhauser described as 'a disappointing year'. The announcement to the London Stock Exchange this morning came two days after the company issued its second profit warning in two months, blaming this summer's heat wave for its worsened performance. As a result of the loss, the Group's net debt has rocketed from £40 million last year to £389 million. The group's earnings for 2018 were £250 million, down 76% on last year. Operating profit from the tour operating side of the business was down £88 million, which Thomas Cook blamed on discounting in the lates market. The UK was particularly disappointing it said, adding that it needed to 'address performance' in its UK tour operating business. However, its airline saw a strong profit growth of £35 million, despite suffering more disrupted flights. The Group's pre-tax earnings were £97 million, down 130% year-on-year. It announced on Tuesday that it had suspended its dividend for 2018, reflecting the overall net loss after tax. Going forward, the Group said it is developing new opportunities for growth and efficiencies, including sales of holidays to its own-brand hotels, which are up 15% and it is planning to add at least 20 new ones next year. Also, it said innovative ancillary services are driving growth of 4%. Priorities for 2019 include better capacity management and improved operational flexibility, increased focus on cash and cost discipline across the group, and improved selling of higher-margin own-brand hotels and differentiated holidays. Fankhasuer added: "2018 was a disappointing year for Thomas Cook, despite achieving some important milestones in our strategy for transforming the business. "After a good start to the year, we experienced a larger-than-anticipated decline in gross margin following the prolonged period of hot weather in our key summer trading period. "Profit in our tour operating business fell £88 million as the sustained heatwave restricted our ability to achieve the planned margins in the last quarter. The UK was particularly hard hit with very high levels of promotional activity coming on top of an already competitive market for holidays to Spain. "Despite the impact of the hot summer, our Northern European tour operator achieved a near record performance, albeit lower than that expected at the end of May. "Meanwhile, our Group airline delivered strong growth in customers and profit, up £35 million, benefitting from increasing capacity in a turbulent European aviation sector. "We remain committed to our strategy for profitable growth and we've made some good progress during the year. Within our own-brand hotels business we have established our hotel investment fund, opening 11 new hotels last summer, including an innovative new concept in Cook's Club. This positions us well for 2019 as we build on our position as one of the top five sun & beach hotel companies in Europe with at least 20 new hotel openings planned. "Meanwhile, the launch of our alliance with Expedia, now in five of our markets, offers customers a much wider choice of city and domestic hotels at lower cost to the business. Taken together, these developments are transforming our opportunities for growth. "Looking ahead, we must learn the lessons from 2018 and go into the new year focused on where we can make a difference to customers in our core holiday offering. We will put particular attention on addressing the performance in our UK tour operator where the challenges of transformation in a competitive environment remain significant. "Across the Group, we will continue to streamline our cost base and manage our capacity to give us greater operational flexibility and financial discipline, while focusing the team on delivering performance improvements and giving customers more reasons to holiday with Thomas Cook." The Group intends to announce a first quarter trading update on 7 February 2019.

29 November 2018, Source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

Icelandair NOT to buy WOW

The acquisition of Icelandair Group of Wow air, based on a purchase agreement signed on November 5th, has been cancelled. Both parties agree on this outcome. Icelandair a stock exchange release last Monday, November 26th, stating that the company estimated that it would be unlikely that all of the conditions in the share purchase agreement would be fulfilled by the shareholders' meeting on November 30th. That situation remains unchanged. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Board of Directors of Icelandair Group can recommend to the shareholders that they agree to the purchase agreement. Furthermore, the Board does not intend to submit to the shareholders' meeting a proposal to postpone decision-making on the purchase agreement. Due to this this situation, both parties agree to abandon the aforementioned purchase agreement. Icelandair Group will hold its shareholders' meeting on Friday, November 30, as previously announced. An authorisation proposal for the Board to increase the share capital of Icelandair Group is on the agenda of the shareholders' meeting. Bogi Nils Bogason, Interim President & CEO of Icelandair Group: "The planned acquisition of Icelandair Group of Wow air will not go through. The Board of Directors and management of both companies have worked on this project in earnest. This conclusion is certainly disappointing. We want to thank WOW air's management for a good cooperation in the project during recent weeks . All our best wishes go out to the owners and staff of the Wow air. " Skúli Mogensen, CEO and Founder of Wow air: "It was clear at the outset that it was an ambitious task to complete all the conditions of the share purchase agreement in this short period. We thank the Icelandair Group's management team for this challenging project, and also wish the management and staff of Icelandair Group all the best."

29 November 2018, Source TTG

UK-US deal guarantees post-Brexit flights

A new agreement between the UK and the US will mean hassle-free flights between the two countries following Brexit. The Department for Transport (DfT) said the agreement will replace the current US-EU open skies treaty once Britain leaves the union on March 29. It is one of nine bilateral air services arrangements secured by the government to replace it with the others being for Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Montenegro, Morocco and Switzerland. The DfT added the political declaration between the UK and EU also provides for a comprehensive air transport agreement to ensure connectivity for passenger and cargo flights through market access for UK and EU airlines. However, the agreement is yet to be ratified by Parliament where many MPs have vowed not to back the deal. Transport secretary Chris Grayling said: "The UK and US have a special relationship which has helped shape the modern world and there is no better example of this than in aviation. "Our transatlantic flights have helped to bring our countries even closer together, strengthening our ties and boosting our economies. "This new arrangement and those concluded with 8 other countries around the world are proof that the UK will continue to be a major player on the world stage after we leave the EU." The move has won backing by airlines in the UK. IAG chief executive Willie Walsh said: "It's critical that Britain maintains full access to international aviation markets so it can continue to develop its global trading links. This agreement is a significant positive development which we welcome. "The agreement, which closely follows the Model US Open Skies Agreement, facilitates strong competition and is clearly pro-consumer. "The US is a major destination for British businesses and tourists while the UK welcomes many American visitors to its shores". Virgin Atlantic chief executive Craig Kreeger added: "We are thrilled that UK and US governments have reached an agreement which will enable our customers to continue travelling as normal between the UK and US post Brexit. "We would like to thank the Department for Transport, Department of Transportation and Department of State for

their diligence and hard work in finalising this agreement far in advance of the March 2019 deadline which will provide much needed reassurance for both business and leisure travellers. "We will continue to work with governments and stakeholders across our network to ensure our customers can continue to travel seamlessly."