

UK Office November 2019 TDC Report

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UK Director

Tour Operators

- **British Airways Holidays** – We had a meeting with Kate Bigger, Destination Manager and Kara Widdows, Destination Executive for Florida to discuss the Florida market in general and to request a bespoke co-op marketing proposal for our destination. We were advised that our area in general was down 10% YOY as of the end of October 2019 but that 2020 is +54% YOY. We also discussed the possibility of training their call centre staff when they next have a Florida training day and Kara will get back to us in due course to confirm dates for spring 2020. We also discussed the possibility of a staff incentive to coincide with our possible co-op marketing.
- **Funway Holidays** – A meeting was held with Malcolm Davies to discuss our partnership moving forward into 2020. We advised Malcolm that we are keen to be part of their next Florida Beaches campaign but were advised we will not be receiving a proposal until post Florida Huddle. Malcolm advised that we were as of the end of October flat YOY in terms of sales. We discussed possible training for their call centre staff and were advised to contact them in the New Year to discuss a suitable date to visit.
- **Ocean Holidays** – We met with Muna Abanour to discuss the Florida market and also to request a co-op marketing proposal for our next fiscal budget. Muna advised that Florida is selling well but that beach destinations are suffering slightly as Universal and Disney are offering so much in resort that customers are staying on site for the duration of their holiday. Muna advised that the best-selling months for our destination are March, May, June and August and as such will look to run our campaign during these periods. The average length of stay in our area average 4 nights and the resorts that do well are the Sirata Beach Resort, TradeWinds Resorts and the Sheraton Sand Key. We have discussed meeting again before the end of 2020 and this has been scheduled for December.
- **Trailfinders** – A general catch up meeting was held with Melloney Styles, Senior Destination Manager for Florida. We were told that Clearwater Beach has had a good 2019 (+3.7%) although 2020 is very slow, and the opposite goes for St. Pete Beach which is down YOY in 2019 versus the same period last year (-17%). We were told that there is definite market share loss to Orlando and other Gulf Coast destinations and in particular The Keys but Melloney had advised that VSPC is being added to internal bulletins that will be updated during January peaks. Melloney advised that she has added the Opal Sands Resort to their 2020 brochure and that the Sandpearl Resort is still their number 1 selling hotel in our area. We discussed attractions and local area tours that they have on sale and Melloney will be coming back to us with a list to see if they are missing anything that will be a benefit to their customer experience.
- **Virgin Holidays** – A meeting was held with Emma Hook and Fiona Lewry to discuss a joint co-op marketing campaign in 2020 as well as having a general market catch up. Emma advised that our area is up YOY overall (+ 2% for Clearwater Beach and +4.2%

for St. Pete Beach) and that the average length of stay is 6 nights. They advised that there will be an increase in capacity to MCO from Manchester and London in 2020 as part of their Delta Air lines code share. Their top selling hotels are Marriott Suites on Sand Key and The Sunset Vistas Beachfront Suites. We also discussed possible training for their call centre staff as well as staff incentives and discussions will be ongoing moving forward in terms of these initiatives.

- **Gold Medal & Travel2** – We had a meeting with Ross Sinclair, senior product manager, who advised us that new websites for Travel2 and Gold Medal are currently under construction and are slated to be live by the end of April 2020. There is also going to be a new ‘Pure Luxury’ website (Gold Medal’s luxury brand) due to go live at the end of this month. Gold Medal and Travel2 were hit hard by the Thomas Cook collapse and it took up a lot of time across the businesses in various departments to get everything sorted out. Gold Medal have moved from their office in Preston to a brand-new building in Leyland and this has been received positively by both staff and suppliers who have visited. Ross also advised of changes across the marketing teams for both brands – there will now be one director now overseeing both Travel2 and Gold Medal which he believes is a positive step and will ensure greater communication across the two. Ross will be strategizing for 2020 in December and the Gold Medal Florida ‘preview’ brochure is due to be issued in April. Florida (both brands combined) will finish approximately -3% on revenue and room nights will be -12% on room nights vs 2018. FWD bookings for 2020 are currently flat YoY for revenue and -7% on room nights.
- **If Only** – We had a meeting with Rachel McAneny (Product Manager) and Caroline Waters (Product Executive). If Only launched its USA programme in December 2017 with their first arrivals in 2018. The brand is 100% B2B and started as an Indian Ocean & Africa specialist focusing on high-end market share, e.g. competing with Gold Medal’s Pure Luxury and Travel2’s Simply Luxury brands. The Caribbean and Mexico were introduced in June 2018 and Canada was launched in June 2019. If Only specialise in multi-centre itineraries and their biggest airline partners are BA and Virgin. The Americas have grown significantly since being added to their portfolio and now account for 30% of their total business. They have a relatively small sales team (8 full-time sellers covering the USA, Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico), however, they are all experienced destination experts who joined If Only from other tailor-made travel operations. There is no cross-over with other areas of the business. Florida is part of their main USA brochure and St Pete Clearwater is featured as a suggested twin-centre with Orlando and within a 2-week self-drive itinerary, there are also individual hotel features for Don CeSar, Sandpearl and Opal Sands. Key supplier partners are Bonotel, Bookabed, Ocean Beds, ATI and Mark Intl. In March 2019 they launched a Cruise & Stay programme and will be looking to capitalise on the new departures in 2021 from Tampa with Holland America and Celebrity. We are hoping to secure a training session for late Q1/early Q2 2020
- **Kenwood Travel** – We had a sales meeting Oliver O’Boyle, Product Executive who advised Kenwood will be launching a new look and feel website by the end of January. The new design will be ‘less functional and more user-friendly’ with customers being able to book multi-centre itineraries (the current site is limited to point-to-point). It will also hold more blog, video and user content. Kenwood Travel had a very strong Sep/Oct and definitely saw an uptake after the failure of Thomas Cook resulting in their October business being +40% YoY. Hotelbeds and Bonotel are Kenwood’s preferred receptive operators and they one direct contract which is with the Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach.

Oliver requested updated imagery during the meeting which we have since sent along with the YouTube link to subscribe to the VSPC channel.

- **Barrhead Travel** – We had a meeting with Kimberley Ainslie (business development executive) and Catherine McGarvey (product executive). They provided us with an update on the investments being made across the business including the planned openings of 100 new shops throughout the UK including the south-west and cities like Liverpool and Rugby. The product and business development/marketing teams are now working much more closely with each other and this has been felt as a positive move and is allowing them to coordinate campaigns and product much more fluidly. They have featured St Pete/Clearwater in their ‘Discover’ magazine which is produced quarterly – St Pete/Clearwater is one of four Florida beach destinations and they have used Postcard Inn as the lead-in property. Overall their sales to the USA have been good this year and their Florida business in 2019 has been strong. They have seen a boost to sales following the collapse of Thomas Cook and their 2020 forward numbers are positive. They will keep us informed of opportunities for training in 2020 and also for any consumer events they might be organizing. Lastly, they see big opportunities for cruise & stay from 2021 because of the increase in departures from/to Tampa – their Cruise Direct brand will focus on this and we will be working closely with them to develop the product.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Visit USA (WTM update)** – The Visit USA travel planner distribution has increased to 65k printed copies comprised of 14k Selling Travel, 30k The Telegraph Ultra Travel Magazine, 10k via key UK locations, 2k at the Destinations Travel Show and 8k for website fulfilment. Website statistics increased YOY: Member Profile views +16%, VUSA blog +97%, online brochures +72%, digital travel planner views +181%. Advice to members to maximise opportunities by ensuring profiles are up-to-date, regularly review and upload content, contribute to VUSA blog and get involved in events. 2018 visitor arrivals from the UK were +3.9% at 4.66 million, still the largest overseas market after Canada and Mexico. Predicted and actual reduced China growth means the UK to stay #1 international market.
- **Glen Travel** – We conducted training to six members of staff and handed out VSPC guides and maps. Most of those trained had not visited St Pete Clearwater before and were extremely engaged during the session.
- **Kenwood Travel** – We conducted training to five members of staff specializing in the US/Florida. Please Note: we are currently working with head office on a FAM request for two of the team (the request form was sent in October). The purpose of the FAM will be to increase sales outside of Orlando, Miami and Fort Lauderdale which are Kenwood’s biggest selling destinations in the state. We had very good engagement during the sessions with lots of questions and interest.
- **Rooster PR** – Meeting to discuss fiscal year plan and to talk about possible experiential ideas. Ideas have been feedback to the US and currently awaiting input.

TRADE LIAISON

- **UK Consumer Advertising Campaign** – Digital and video creative has been finalised and signed off by Brand USA. Currently working on assets for the social media element for the campaign which will launch 26th December.
- **Expedia** – All creative and landing page have now been signed off ready for launch on 26th December. Expedia will act as the call to action on our consumer advertising campaign. Currently awaiting their feedback on which value adds they can offer as part of this campaign.
- **Expedia Nordics** – We have confirmed and signed off creative for campaigns which will run in Sweden, Denmark and Norway in January/February 2020.
- **Visit Florida Consumer Campaign** – Confirmed our participation at Tier 1 level in the Visit Florida campaign which launches early January to end of March. Campaign includes out of home, digital, social and PR elements with Virgin Holidays as the call to action.
- **Brand USA Winter Campaign** – Ongoing sign off of elements for this campaign launching January 2020.
- **VSPC/Experience Kissimmee/British Airways Product Manager Fam** – 8 Product Managers from various tour operators in the UK and Ireland were hosted on the joint fam with Kissimmee and were in both destinations from the 12th – 18th November. The itinerary included hotel site inspections, time on Fort De Soto, visits to Dunedin and Downtown St. Pete and a visit to Busch Gardens Christmas Time Festival. We have received emails from all our attendees and the FAM was very well received.
- **Virgin Holidays store, Braehead** – We visited the shop to meet with staff and say thank you for the business. We also handed out sweets/chocolates as part of the thank you.
- **Big Travel, Sweden** – Linda Bodin from Big Travel Sweden contacted us to say she will be travelling to the destination in 2020 as a result of her meeting with us at Discover America Sweden in Malmo in September. Linda requested suggestions for places to stay, things to do, etc. We sent Linda a detailed email on the 27th November which she was extremely grateful for. We have asked Linda to keep us informed of her plans and to let us know if she requires any more information or assistance.
- **Researrangorerna, Sweden** – We have received great feedback from the trip suggestions we provided last month. Annelie Wahlgren (Marketing Manager for the brand) has confirmed she will be visiting St Pete/Clearwater in February 2020, staying at the St Pete Beach Inn & Suites. We have sent a request to head office for possible comp passes/attraction tickets for Annelie and her family to enjoy during their visit.
- **Visit USA website** – We added a news piece to the Visit USA (UK) website with details of the Christmas Lights Maze in St. Petersburg. The news will be displayed on the site until 28th December.

- **Virgin Holidays Peak Launch** – Finalised working on the forthcoming partner sponsorship for the Virgin Holidays Peak Launch that will be taking place at Centre Parks in Woburn, United Kingdom from 4th – 6th December 2019. We have arranged to have the corn hole game and virtual reality headsets incorporated into our training for 200 sales staff.
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – We have requested a final campaign analysis from Thomas Cook Sweden from our joint campaign that ended in early November and have been advised this will be with us in the next few weeks.
- **Simpleview Training** – Staff from the UK office had Simpleview one on one training with Ray Presley.
- **Gold Medal Travel/Visit Florida**– The Gold Medal and Visit Florida Agent and Consumer Marketing campaign that was taking place from 01 September – 30 November 2019 has now ended. We will be requesting the final campaign report in the next 4 – 6 weeks and will report back once this has been received.
- **VSPC/Experience Kissimmee/SeaWorld Parks & Visit Tampa** – Discussions are taking place to select dates for our joint 2020 UK training mission. Dates provisionally held are the week commencing 27th April 2020 and the training mission will incorporate 4 days of trainings as well as a London event for key tour operator partners.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We were contacted by Linda Dixey to see if we would like to provide area giveaways for them to use with their travel agent Facebook competitions that will be taking place in December and advised we would be more than happy to provide giveaways. As such we have sent a selection of branded items for them to use for this purpose.
- **Bookabed, Ireland** – We have requested the final campaign report from Bookabed for the Destination of the Month Campaign that we had partnered on with them and that ran back in September. We have been advised that results will be with us next month to allow for any additional bookings that may have been made to be added into the report.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We have now requested the final campaign report for the joint campaign we ran with USAirtours/TravelPlanners. We have been advised the report will be with us next month.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE

1 November 2019, source: Travel Newsgram

More control, less waiting – top priorities for passengers, IATA

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced the results of its 2019 Global Passenger Survey showing that passengers are looking to technology to improve their travel experience. The survey acts as the voice of the passenger, providing objective and in-depth insights into the preferences and behaviors of air travelers around the world, helping to guide industry initiatives. The focus of the survey was on processes and technology in the travel experience, not airline or airport service levels. Top passenger priorities identified include: Having more personal control over their journey via their smart phone; able to use biometric identification to speed up travel processes; to be able to track their baggage; maximum wait times of 10 minutes for baggage collection and immigration/customs; access to Wi-Fi on board at 34,000ft; more control. Passengers want to use their personal device to control more aspects of their travel journey from booking to arrival. An airline app was the preferred method of booking for passengers from one of the world's largest aviation markets, with 24% of travelers from North Asia preferring this method. It was also the second most popular choice among passengers in the Middle East, favored by 14% of travelers. Booking through an airline website, although less popular than in 2018, remains the method of choice for most travelers globally (39%). Using a smartphone was also identified by more than half of passengers (51%) as their preferred method of check-in. This was a 4% increase over 2018. Most passengers (72%) also wanted to be kept informed throughout their journey via travel notifications sent to their personal device. SMS remains the preferred notification option for 39% of passengers, but this trend has been decreasing since 2016. Conversely, preference for receiving information via a smartphone app has increased by 10% since 2016 and is now the method of choice for one third of passengers. The survey found that 83% of passengers want to receive information on the status of their flight and 45% would like information on their baggage. Passengers also asking for information to help them plan their passage through the airport with 45% wanting to know wait times at security and border control and 37% wanting to know wait times at customs. Biometric technology to speed up airport processes. The survey found that 70% of passengers are willing to share additional personal information including their biometric identifiers to speed up processes at the airport. This increases in correlation with the number of flights taken per year. The highest support for this (76%) is among fliers who travel for business, more than 10 times per year. In addition, 46% of passengers would prefer to use biometric identification instead of a paper passport for their journey and 30% would opt to use a biometric token to board the plane. These findings lend strong support to IATA's One ID project which aims to create a paperless airport experience for passengers where they can move from curb to gate using a single biometric travel token such as a face, fingerprint or iris scan. "Passengers are willing to share more personal information if it removes hassle from their travel experience. But it's clear that concerns over data privacy remain. While the majority of passengers want to use biometric identification instead of a paper passport, 53% of those that did not, said they were concerned about the security of their data. Passengers need to be confident that their data is safe," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

1 November 2019, source: TTG

Brexit provisions 'worth shouting from the rooftops' - ABTA

Speaking at the European Tourism Association's (Etoa) Brexit Seminar on Thursday (31 October) when, until last Monday (28 October), the UK had been due to leave the EU, Abta's head of public affairs Luke Petherbridge said the sector should take comfort in the fact much would remain the same next year irrespective of how, when – and if – the UK leaves the EU.

“Consumer confidence should remain, even if there is a no-deal Brexit,” he said. “We know throughout 2020, everything is going to stay as it is. That’s great news and something we need to shout from the rooftops.” An agreement allowing UK-EU flights to continue until 24 October 2020 could be extended if the prospect of a no-deal Brexit remained come the end of next year, said Petherbridge. “That contingency could be replicated,” he said. “It looks like there would be a buffer period, which is hugely important for consumer confidence.” Petherbridge stressed it was unlikely the union would require Brits to obtain visas to visit EU countries, unless the UK government imposed its own visa requirements on EU citizens. He added Abta was still raising a number of issues with the UK government such as coach travel through the EU to a non-EU destination, transit visas and rules about “posted workers” such as holiday reps and tour guides, which Petherbridge said remained the “biggest risk” to the travel industry. In an update to members, also issued on Thursday, Abta chief executive Mark Tanzer said with Brexit again on hold, and with politicians’ attentions turning instead to a snap general election on 12 December, Abta’s focus would revert to highlighting the travel sector’s contribution to UK GDP and employment, and maintaining consumer confidence. He added growth over the past year in the number of people taking holidays and the average number of holidays taken per person, and the popularity of package holidays, there were “positive signs” pointing towards a brighter future, despite the “inevitable upheaval” of the coming weeks. John Sullivan, head of commercial, Advantage Travel Partnership told TTG members were becoming accustomed to operating in a “state of suspension”. “There comes a point when people just get on with things,” he said. “It’s not helpful, and it’s certainly a distraction, but it has to be business as usual.”

1 November 2019, source: TTG

BA appoints new trade sales lead

Mark Muren, who had been appointed BA’s new head of global sales, will join the carrier later this year from United Airlines, where he held the role of managing director global accounts. He will report to BA chief commercial officer Andrew Brem. Muren is a former captain, who flew regional jets for United Express and SkyWest Airlines. “[BA] has built a reputation for being a valued partner to the trade,” said Muren. “But I know there is work to do to strengthen these relationships, build new ones and increase the value for customers, our trade partners and British Airways. This will be an important focus in my role.” Brem added: “Mark is a thoughtful planner and an innovative problem-solver, and he’s a passionate advocate for his customers and his colleagues. Mark will be a brilliant addition to the commercial team, an asset to British Airways, and an invaluable partner to our trade customers.”

1 November 2019, source: TTG

Air France-KLM hit by strong dollar and A380 costs

Net income fell year on year by €420 million to €366 million, due in part to a €100 million write down on the early disposal of 10 A380s from the Air France fleet. The group’s operating result, at €900 million, fell by €165 million compared with the third-quarter 2018, with revenues up 2% and fuel expenses increasing by €135 million. Passenger numbers rose 2.1% to 29 million, with total numbers for the nine-month period reaching 79.5 million, up 3.4%. Group chief executive Benjamin Smith said: “Air France-KLM Group’s performance in the third quarter showed resilience amid geopolitical uncertainties and softening macro-

economic environment.” He said long-haul forward bookings were “on average ahead of last year” but that the 2019 fuel bill would increase by €600 million to €5.5 billion.

1 November 2019, source: Travel Weekly

Barrhead Travel reveals locations for seven new shops

New branches will open in Liverpool, Widnes, Wallasey, Burnley, Isle of Wight, Northwich and Warrington before January, the independent agency chain announced on Thursday (31 October). All seven teams are made up of former Thomas Cook employees from each area and are currently undergoing intensive training at Barrhead Travel’s Glasgow Training Academy. Barrhead is yet to reveal the exact locations of the seven new premises. “The natural first step was to find the right teams – after that, the exact store location would fall into place,” Jaqueline Dobson, president of Barrhead Travel, said. Dobson stressed that training with HR was being prioritised for the new starters. “Each manager and their team boast years of travel experience between them and are well-integrated into their local communities,” she added. “The areas where we are launching are new to the Barrhead Travel brand so we’re also working closely with the teams and local businesses to introduce ourselves to the locality and align our values and offering with local initiatives.” Barrhead Travel’s expansion is backed by parent, Travel Leaders Group, which acquired the Scottish firm in 2018. The first phase of new store openings is estimated to be completed by December. Barrhead is currently recruiting across the UK for roles.

4 November 2019, source: TTG

Gold Medal and Travel2 to launch charter flying programme

Former Thomas Cook Airlines’ digital, UK and international sales director Henry Sunley has been appointed director of air supply at the group, to lead the operation. He will also support growth plans across dnata’s B2B and B2C arms in the UK. Sunley’s responsibilities will include procuring short- and medium-haul capacity, which once sourced, will be “revenue managed and distributed via the multiple dnata Travel Group sales channels and brands”, which include Gold Medal, Travel 2, Travel Republic, Netflights and Travelbag. Responsibility for long-haul will remain with director of air product, Simon Woodford. Sunley will report directly to dnata Travel Group chief executive, John Bevan, and be based at the company’s new offices in Leyland, Lancashire. Sunley said: “Several million airline seats are sold each year across the group’s brands, so it’s vitally important that those are being secured at the right price and sold to our millions of customers properly. I’m particularly excited by the opportunity to build a charter proposition for the group, using my expertise in this area to maximise what we see as being a market with considerable potential.” Bevan added: “We boast an unrivalled variety and scale across our brands, so controlling a proportion of the flight capacity out there is a logical step for us to take as we pursue our growth strategy, and will provide even more choice and value for partners in the trade and our leisure customers. In Henry I know we have the right person for this exciting new market for us. He is a great addition to our senior leadership team and will mean we can significantly accelerate the effectiveness and ambition of our air capacity planning and procurement across our whole group, and our range of product. I’m delighted to welcome such a well-respected and well-connected individual to the dnata family.” Sunley joins a number of other ex-Cook staff who have joined dnata Travel Group in a variety of sales, operations, service and back office roles in recent weeks. He spent 24 years at Cook, 17 working in a variety of

commercial roles for the tour operation before moving to Thomas Cook Airlines in 2012, where his focus was to grow the seat-only element of the business. From 2017 he led a team of 70 people in the UK, Germany and Spain.

5 November 2019, source: TTG

MPs call for urgent reform in wake of Thomas Cook collapse

Members of the parliamentary Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have written a letter to the secretary of state for the area, Andrea Leadsom, with a list of findings and recommendations that arose from the Cook inquiry. These include stronger mechanisms to “claw back” large director bonuses; binding agreements from lenders to support people made unemployed through a company’s insolvency; and greater diversity of a company’s board members. The report also criticised the current use of goodwill and potential conflicts of interests in the financial auditing process. Chair of the committee, Rachel Reeves, lamented that the upcoming December general election has cut short the inquiry process. “It is a matter of some regret that given the expected dissolution of Parliament on 6 November, we are unable to report in full the extent and depth of failures in corporate finance, in audit, and in government support – in particular for former employees of Thomas Cook,” Reeves wrote. She concluded: “Urgent steps need to be taken, not least the introduction of long overdue legislation to empower regulators, in order to mitigate against the worst impact of corporate failures on employees, consumers, suppliers and taxpayers.” Cook collapsed in September this year, leaving thousands of people unemployed.

5 November 2019, source: TTG

Tui flying to new Florida airport from 2022

The operator will be flying a new route to Orlando Melbourne International airport (MLB), using long-haul Boeing 787 Dreamliner, in just more than three years’ time. It will also be partnering with the airport to extend a terminal, which will include new passenger amenities, family-friendly entertainment and a welcome from international ambassadors with a glass of Florida orange juice. The airport will be investing millions of dollars in the terminal enhancements.

5 November 2019, source: TTG

Bill Munro ‘hoping to resume chairmanship of Barrhead’ after launching claim

Munro left Barrhead in November last year, nine months after selling the company to US travel brand Travel Leaders Group. His lawyer, Stephen Miller of Clyde & Co, confirmed to *TTG* Munro is suing the company for unfair dismissal and unpaid wages. An employment tribunal hearing on the case expected to take place later this month. Miller said: “Bill is hoping that the employment tribunal decides to reinstate him to his position.” *TTG* has approached Barrhead Travel for comment.

5 November 2019, source: TTG

Florida spends on enticing visitors from British Isles

Florida will spend marketing budget in Scotland for the first time this year, as part of record investment into the English, Irish and Scottish markets. Visit Florida is to spend \$1 million in these source markets by the end of June 2020. “Winter is a key period for us and you’ll see lots of exciting activity including train station advertising, TV advertising and digital promotions,” said Dana Young, president and CEO of the organisation. Giving UK holidaymakers reasons to revisit Florida for a second or third time was key to boosting numbers, she added. “The UK might think they’ve seen Florida, but if you’ve only seen Miami and Orlando then there is so much more depth and diversity still to discover in the state,” she said. Travel agents in the UK play a key role in encouraging their clients to come back to Florida and explore something new, she added. Around 1.5 million travellers from the UK and Ireland visited Florida last year, making it the state’s top long-haul international source market. Overall, Florida received 127 million domestic and international arrivals last year, marking eight years of record growth. “In the first six months of this year we’ve already welcomed 70 million visitors, so if we stay on track, it’s going to be a very, very positive result,” she said. Visit Florida launched a raft of new digital tools at WTM London, including accessible travel and sustainable travel hubs on its website, a day trip and craft beverage trail “finder”, and virtual reality content. Young added that while the demise of Thomas Cook had been very sad, she was pleased to see other tour operators already filling the gaps in terms of capacity. “One of the positive things to come out of it is travellers realising the importance of booking with a tour operator and of buying good travel insurance well ahead of your trip,” she added.

6 November 2019, source: TTG

‘Human Misery’ of Cook collapse laid bare in new research

More than 90% of those questioned in an online survey by union Unite have not been able to find new jobs with another airline, with just 10% of impacted workers securing full-time permanent employment of any form. The study revealed 42% of the 300 workers quizzed had secured interviews in the airline sector but had not been successful in securing a role. Unite said the findings tallied with feedback it had been receiving from members in the airline sector. The union hitting out at airlines for offering recruitment opportunities but only taking very small numbers of recruits, claiming some recruitment events as “little more than PR opportunities”. Diana Holland, Unite assistant general secretary, said its research “demonstrates the human misery” caused by Cook’s collapse. “Highly skilled and dedicated workers, who lost their jobs through no fault of their own and without warning, are finding it incredibly difficult to return to employment,” she said. “The struggle of workers to return to employment further highlights both the government’s failure to understand the nature of the Thomas Cook business and a complete absence of political will. The airline was extremely profitable and there were already potential buyers interested in the business.” Holland added that the survey highlighted the need for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to complete its inquiry into Cook’s failure and for the government to implement the recommendations from the Airline Insolvency Review and the Insolvency and Corporate Governance Review “at the earliest possible opportunity”. “We must take the steps needed to prevent the shocking reality of a viable, profitable airline being forced into compulsory insolvency with the terrible loss of jobs and the major cost of repatriating passengers,” she said.

7 November 2019, source: TTG

Virgin adds capacity at Manchester and grows retail network

Virgin Atlantic has increased flights from Manchester, while Virgin Holidays has announced the opening of five new stores. In September, the airline announced it would be adding 30,000 seats from the north-west for winter 2019. Yet the expanded summer schedule from Manchester to Orlando, Barbados and Las Vegas, increases capacity on these routes by 11% compared to Summer 2019 – a total of 43,000 extra seats. Expansion to the Virgin Atlantic flying programme will include flights to Barbados from Manchester increasing from two times a week to three times a week for the whole of the summer season, offering an additional 10,000 seats. There will also be two extra weekly flights for the peak season to Las Vegas and an extra 10,000 seats. There will be up to two extra weekly flights to Orlando, offering up to 14 flights a week in the peak summer season and 23,000 extra seats. Virgin Atlantic has also announced two extra flights a week from Gatwick to Orlando. Flights will go on sale from Saturday (9 November). Together with Virgin Connect (formerly Flybe) and Delta Air Lines, Virgin Atlantic now offers almost 800,000 long-haul seats to popular destinations for summer 2020. Meanwhile Virgin Holidays will be investing in five new retail stores, creating 28 jobs. The stores, which are all scheduled to open this year, will be in Birmingham, Derby, Peterborough, Romford and Stoke-on-Trent. The five new stores are in addition to seven already-scheduled openings in Canterbury, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and St Albans, all of which are on track to open before the end of the December. Juha Jarvinen, EVP commercial at Virgin Atlantic, said: “Today’s announcement outlines the latest phase in our growth strategy at Manchester, our home in the north. In September we committed to 30,000 additional seats from Manchester for winter 2019 and today, we are expanding on that with an extra 43,000 seats to key leisure destinations for summer 2020, which is a clear sign of our ambition to offer increased choice to our customers travelling from the north west. With a greater number of flights to some of our most popular destinations, alongside a brand-new iconic Clubhouse scheduled to open next spring, we’re confident our customers will be delighted by the Virgin Atlantic experience in Manchester.”

8 November 2019, source: TTG

Hay Travel defends recruitment drive for former Cook stores

Hays Travel chair Irene Hays has rebutted criticism levelled at the company for recruiting staff from other agencies to fill its Thomas Cook stores. The UK’s largest independent agency chain has brought onboard 2,329 ex-Cook agents since taking on the defunct brand’s 555-store retail estate on 9 October. But just under a fortnight ago, Hays Travel began to recruit from outside the Cook pool – with 206 additional staff employed as of 7 November – “about 75% of which are retail staff”, according to Hays. Several agency bosses contacted *TTG* claiming Hays Travel had appealed to their staff – including recently recruited ex-Cook employees – to make the switch. Hays told *TTG* Hays Travel had been recruiting exclusively from former Cook workers up until 30 October but could not rely on filling its vacancies in the same manner with 451 former Cook branches now trading. “We feel we’ve been very fair in how we’ve gone about things, but we can’t afford to be caught short, and need to make sure our shops aren’t understaffed when we come into January,” said Hays. “There has been a lot of publicity around our Thomas Cook work, and we do have a strong presence on social media when it comes to recruitment, so we’ve had a lot of people applying. We’ve only been taking applications more widely for just over a week and it has

already been a very successful drive for us.” Hays said she had “not received a single email” from disgruntled agency owners, and instead had had messages of “nothing but joy” from the industry. She added 198 new jobs would also be created at head office, which will need to move to accommodate the influx. Hays was speaking ahead of Hays Travel’s expanded managers’ conference next week, which will see 775 delegates head to Antalya, Turkey from 12-16 November.

8 November 2019, source: TTG

No UK region off the table for Barrhead Travel expansion

No UK region is off the table for Barrhead Travel after the Scottish independent accelerated its ambitious expansion plans following the failure of Thomas Cook. Ninan Chacko, chief executive of Barrhead’s US parent Travel Leaders Group, told *TTG* Barrhead would target a “big chunk” of the extant travel demand across the UK left by Cook’s failure by more than doubling the agency’s retail footprint. Chacko confirmed Barrhead was party to discussions over the future of Cook’s retail network before all 555 Cook stores were sold to Hays Travel, and said the decision – even if it came as something of a blow to Barrhead – was a “powerful expression of optimism, faith and confidence in the UK travel market and the high street”. He stressed, though, that there had been an expansion plan in place for Barrhead following Travel Leaders’ acquisition of the business last February. “We were delighted someone stepped up to the plate and was able to preserve a lot of those jobs,” said Chacko. “For us, what’s always been in mind is a prudent approach towards expansion. That’s more in keeping with the bandwidth we have, the resources we can allocate, and where we see the opportunities. This has probably been a much more ideal approach with respect to how we take advantage of Thomas Cook exiting the market and leaving in place travel demand that is yet to be fulfilled. I think the Cook opportunity has really allowed us to accelerate and become more ambitious. I’m not sure we had a defined goal in mind with respect to expansion pre-Cook, but it certainly wouldn’t have been to the scale of 100 stores.” Barrhead president Jacqueline Dobson said the business had, to date, taken on and trained more than 100 former Cook staff, who will be deployed across both its existing store network and in new stores. She said the expansion would be UK wide, with the business exploring opportunities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Barrhead recently announced its first seven proposed new store locations, with a further three to follow shortly. Dobson also confirmed it remained Barrhead’s ambition to open 10 new stores by the end of the year, with the next 10 “following quickly in the New Year”. The new stores, she said, would replicate Barrhead’s existing model, while Chacko added some aspects would be refined, stressing there would be a focus on regionality and ensuring each new store was equipped to take best advantage of its nearest airport. “UK hubs have opened up, so we have more airlines at our local airports,” said Dobson. “Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle all have flights servicing Dubai, the Far East, and the US. The world is more open; long-haul travel has become a lot more affordable. This trend will continue with the development of new aircraft. People want to go further afield they want new experiences.” Chacko added long-haul travel would be a key focus for Barrhead, along with a renewed push to develop river and ocean cruise sales. He added the business’s strengths on foreign exchange and dynamic packaging would continue.

11 November 2019, source: TTG

Dnata’s new charter will focus on regional airports

The new charter programme launched by the parent company of Gold Medal and Travel 2 will focus on regional airports across the country, with flights set to be on sale before Christmas, dnata Travel Europe's chief executive has revealed. John Bevan said the new operation would "definitely not be a London-centric proposition". The move will see the group creating short and medium-haul capacity which will be used across dnata's B2B and B2C portfolio, the latter of which includes Travel Republic, Netflights and Travelbag. Dnata has appointed former Thomas Cook Airlines' digital, UK and international sales director Henry Sunley as director of air supply at the group, to lead the operation. He said he was "particularly excited by the opportunity to build a charter proposition for the group, using my expertise in this area to maximise what we see as being a market with considerable potential." Speaking to *TTG*, Bevan said: "We're more interested in doing regional departures across the UK. Gatwick is quite a busy airport so there's less opportunity to add capacity there. We're interested in working with Manchester and other airports in the north and maybe some other regions. We're absolutely focused on regional airports – we're talking to all sorts at the moment and we're looking at all options," he added. Bevan remained tight-lipped on which destinations the charter programme would fly to, confirming only that dnata was "looking at developing a charter programme to suppliers to fill some of the gap left by Thomas Cook's departure which focuses on the destinations that work best for our businesses." He added the aim was to have some of the routes on sale before Christmas with flights then beginning in spring 2020. Bevan said he had received "a lot" of interest from travel agents since *TTG* broke news of the charter programme last week. "It's been great to see the interest from the trade. We will be speaking to lots of trade partners and working with them to gauge their interest and help shape what should be done to support the trade with more flying and more options."

11 November 2019, source: *TTG*

New UK government should remember actions speak louder than words

From Tunisia to Jamaica discussions largely centred on how countries have been picking up the myriad pieces from the travel giant's demise. Perhaps most impressive of all, though, was the response of the Spanish government, which has enacted a royal decree to protect local businesses – and crucially their staff – from the fallout of Cook's liquidation. Provisions include €15 million for the Canary Islands, €8 million for the Balearic Islands and €200 million for credit loans. The purpose of this, Spain's secretary of state for tourism told *TTG*, is to prevent hotels from closing or laying off staff due to cash loss. The move is in stark contrast to the (lack of) action by the UK government. Spain was one of the destinations worst hit by Cook's collapse (the country welcomed 1.3 million Cook customers from the UK alone in 2018), but the UK was home not just to the headquarters of Cook, but also to 9,000 of its staff. Last week the Unite union published research showing the "human misery" caused by Cook's collapse (ttgmedia.com). Because while the Hays deal might have rescued all 555 Cook stores and led to the recruitment of at least 2,329 high street staff so far, there are still almost 70% of ex-Thomas Cook Airlines employees who remain without jobs. The UK government should be praised for its speedy review into Cook's collapse, but the "urgent steps" business committee chair Rachel Reeves insisted "need to be taken" seem an increasingly long way off, especially with a general election now in the mix. The next government should remember actions speak far louder than words.

12 November 2019, source: TTG

Carbon offsetting branded ‘get out of jail card’ for aviation sector

Carriers were accused of failing to face up to these vital challenges in BBC *Panorama* expose on Monday night (11 November) which asked: “Can flying go green?”. Ahead of the show, the BBC called out British Airways for its practice of “fuel tankering” – operating aircraft with excess fuel to avoid filling up at destination airports. The primary benefit of fuel tankering is to save money, but it comes at the expense of increasing carbon emissions owing to aircraft having to carry additional weight. BA, though, said tankering was not exclusive to BA and was a sector-wide practice, employed to mitigate fluctuations and disparities in fuel costs in different countries and at different airports, and for operational reasons such as where turnaround times are too tight to adequately refuel upon arrival. The show assessed a number of developments within aviation that could make flying greener such as new fuels, electric aircraft, and more stringent enforcement of preventative climate change action set out in international agreements. However, despite investment by the likes of IAG and Virgin Atlantic in alternative fuel technology and production – particularly bio-fuels, and initiatives like easyJet’s partnership with Wright Electric to develop a battery-powered aircraft or Pipistrel’s electric aircraft, which featured in the show – many of the solutions are yet to become scalable or cost-effective. Carbon offset programmes, meanwhile, have grown in popularity in recent years, with some efforts already being levied by the likes of Ryanair on air fares, albeit optionally. IAG last month pledged to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and has vowed to offset all emissions from BA’s domestic flying programme next year by investing in carbon offsetting projects around the world. Activist travel company Responsible Travel branded the move “the worst case of greenwashing”. Qantas on Monday announced it was immediately doubling the number of flights it would offset, while offsetting all emissions arising from Project Sunrise, its effort to put non-stop flights from Australia’s east coast to London and New York on a commercial footing. Professor David Lee from Manchester Metropolitan University, who has written extensively on aviation and climate change with a particular focus on fuel and emissions, told *Panorama* it would be decades rather than years before a reliable supply of renewable fuel would become available for deployment throughout commercial aviation. Andrew Murphy, aviation manager at environmental NGO Transport and Environment, branded carbon offsetting “the most flawed climate tool”. “We have 20 years’ experience globally of trying to make offsetting work,” said Murphy. “We’ve had windfarms that we were going to build anyway [and] trees that ended up being burned down. It’s not working as a climate tool. But at the same time, the aviation industry is increasingly seeing offsetting as its get out of jail card for climate policy.” The International Civil Aviation Organization, however, said offsetting was just one of numerous measures states and the industry were pursuing to limit emissions.

12 November 2019, source: TTG

Boeing targets January return for 737 Max

The 737 Max has been grounded worldwide since mid-March following two fatal crashes involving the aircraft in just five months. Lion Air flight 610 came down in the Java Sea shortly after taking off from Jakarta in October 2018. All 189 people onboard were killed. Then in March, Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 crashed en route to Nairobi from Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people onboard. Initial investigations into both incidents found the same deep-seated flight control system to have been active when the two aircraft crashed. Boeing continues to work on a software update, which it said on Monday (11 November) it hopes to

have certified by the US Federal Aviation Administration during the fourth quarter. “Boeing’s priority remains the safe return to service of the Max and supporting our airline customers through this challenging time,” said the company in a statement. “We are working closely with the FAA and other regulatory authorities towards certification and safe return to commercial service, and we are taking the time to answer all of their questions. With the rigorous scrutiny being applied, we are confident the Max will be one of the safest airplanes ever to fly.” Boeing said it “continued to target” FAA certification of its Max flight control software update “during this quarter”. “Based on this schedule, it is possible the resumption of Max deliveries to airline customers could begin in December, after certification, when the FAA issues an airworthiness directive rescinding the grounding order,” said Boeing. “In parallel, we are working towards final validation of updated training requirements, which must occur before the Max returns to commercial service, and which we now expect to begin in January.” Boeing said it has completed the first of five “key milestones” it must achieve with the FAA before the Max can return to service – a multi-day simulator test assessing the effects of the new update. Other steps will include evaluating pilot workloads; conducting certification flights using the new software; submitting final details to the FAA for certification; and then a second rigorous multi-day simulator test to assess any training requirements. A number of European airlines will be hoping to return their 737 Max aircraft to service in the New Year, most notably Tui and Norwegian. Ryanair, meanwhile, has been forced to scale back its summer 2020 expansion plans while it awaits the first of the 135 Max’s it has on order. Boss Michael O’Leary has however, stressed Ryanair remains fully committed to its Max fleet. British Airways owner IAG has also signed a letter of intent with regards to an order of some 200 Max aircraft. Elsewhere, a number of US carriers have variously scheduled the Max for a return to scheduled service in March. Around of a third of the world’s Max’s were deployed on routes within North America when the Max was grounded.

13 November 2019, source: TTG

Travel sector ‘reaping billions’ from captive dolphin attractions

Some of the world’s largest travel companies are “reaping billions in profits” from the sale of “cruel” captive dolphin attractions, a new report claims. World Animal Protection’s recent Behind the Smile report says millions of tourists are unwittingly supporting the routine and systematic abuse of dolphins. “Our report shows how animal lovers are fooled into thinking dolphin shows are sold as cruelty-free, educational and good for conservation efforts,” says WAP. “But this could not be further from the truth – the industry is profiting billions of dollars from the cruel captivity of dolphins kept for entertainment.” WAP explicitly singles out Expedia Group and its brands as one company not only offering for sale most of the top 10 dolphin facilities worldwide, “but also many more”. “Thirty-two dolphin facilities across many countries were offered by one or multiple companies belonging to Expedia Group,” the report reads. “Therefore, Expedia Group’s ticket sales to these facilities alone is enough to support the keeping of more than 500 dolphins in inhumane conditions. They are a significant driver of the dolphin industry.” The title of the report refers to the distinctive “smile” associated with dolphins owing to the shape of their jaw, which WAP says contrasts with the “inherent suffering” dolphins experience at every stage of their life in captivity. According to WAP, dolphins tend to inhabit around 100 square kilometres of ocean freely in their natural habitat but are typically housed, in captivity, in concrete tanks 200,000 times smaller where they can swim only a few metres. The organisation claims captive dolphins are routinely

exposed to infection and chemicals and are drugged to cope; they are reportedly used as “live surfboards” and are forced to endure large crowds, loud music and cheering day in, day out. The report identifies 336 public facilities worldwide which account, collectively, for around 3,000 captive dolphins. Of these, 60% are kept across just five countries – China, Japan, the US, Mexico and Russia. WAP, meanwhile, estimates all captive dolphins in the tourism sector generate between \$1.1 billion and \$5.5 billion a year. Nick Stewart, WAP global head of dolphins campaign, said: “Dolphin entertainment is animal cruelty masquerading as wholesome family fun. Whether bred in captivity or captured from the wild by being torn from their mother’s side, these sociable, intelligent animals are imprisoned for life and are reduced to begging clowns performing circus-tricks in exchange for food. For a wild animal like dolphins, a life spent in a concrete box is not a life, it is a life sentence – we need to make this the last generation of dolphins in captivity.” WAP’s report praises 11 of the world’s largest travel companies for not selling any of the top 10 dolphin facilities, including Virgin Holidays and British Airways Holidays. “A few of these companies have developed progressive policies that avoid all – or at least the worst – captive wildlife activities,” read the report. “Recent additions to the list of progressive travel companies are Booking.com, Virgin Holidays and British Airways Holidays who, in 2019, all announced policies of not selling or promoting captive dolphin and whale attractions.” An Expedia Group spokesperson told *TTG*: “Expedia Group brands can play an integral role in educating travellers about wildlife tourism, so they can make informed decisions on how they travel and interact with the animals on our planet. Over the past few years, we have taken steps to remove certain wildlife activities from our sites, not only in reaction to questionable and unsafe practices but in reaction to direct feedback from our travellers. For all animal-related activities we not only review them carefully but also work with global, industry-leading wildlife and animal protection groups to help inform our decision-making. Our efforts are ongoing and in light of the World Animal Protection Group’s report, we will continue to examine our policies, particularly as they relate to partners who may not have the certification of various animal welfare and accreditation programmes.”

14 November 2019, source: *TTG*

No-Deal Brexit to cause sharp fall in UK overseas holidays

The number of overseas holidays taken by UK residents could be 7% lower next year if there is a no-deal Brexit, according to a new report. The latest quarterly report by the European Travel Commission (ETC) has found that outbound UK travel would be affected by both “economic and non-economic factors” if the current deal with the EU fails to be approved by the new UK parliament after 12 December’s general election. ETC added that the impact of a no-deal Brexit would continue in 2021 with overseas trips by UK residents expected to be 8% lower than previously forecast. “A no-deal Brexit is expected to have an immediate and sharp downward impact on UK outbound travel, with a decline in outbound travel in 2020. While a return to positive growth is expected in 2021, the pace of growth is well below baseline expectations,” said the ETC report. The commission added that this projected fall in outbound holidays by UK consumers would not be “experienced uniformly” across Europe, with Spain set to be worst affected with an estimated 1.3 million fewer UK tourists visiting the country in 2021. While Ireland would be hardest hit on a percentage basis with a forecast 5% fall in UK visitors during 2021. The report also found that Europe has been continuing to see growth in tourist arrivals in 2019 with a rise of 3.4% year-on-year, although the pace of increase has slowed compared with previous years. Turkey has been one of the star performers this year with international arrivals rising by 14.7% during the first eight months

of the year. The European destination with the highest rise in arrivals was Montenegro with an 18% year-on-year increase. But Iceland has been hit by a 14.3% decline in international visitors so far in 2019, which ETC said was down to a strong local currency and the collapse of Wow Air. Eduardo Santander, ETC's executive director said: "Travel demand in Europe is in a good place, with steady increases in tourism numbers across the board. Despite very real challenges, such as the looming threat of a 'no deal' Brexit, and the collapse of several airlines, European destinations continue to post healthy rates of arrivals, which of course is to be welcomed. Meanwhile, European tourism needs to focus on developing long-term sustainable management solutions to enable tourism to flourish, rather than just merely grow."

14 November 2019, source: TTG

John Hays outlines faith in brand's future

Hays Travel bought the entire retail portfolio of Thomas Cook, doubling its workforce and trebling its shop numbers. Hays welcomed almost 700 suppliers and managers to the 30th and largest Hays Travel Conference in its history. Retail and training director Jane Schumm kicked things off by telling delegates: "This is the last time we will refer to anyone as 'ex-Thomas Cook'; from now on we are all part of the Hays Travel family." Hays shared his vision for 2020 and paid tribute to the Thomas Cook brand and colleagues, and also explained why he thought Hays Travel could succeed. "We have absolute confidence and trust in the skills and commitment of our colleagues to use all channels to develop strong connections with customers, so that they always book the right holiday for the right client," he said. "They have the freedom to communicate unscripted to our clients and can use their talent to the full to sell the unlimited range of holidays we can provide as the UK's largest independent agent – and they tell me this is an important part of their job satisfaction." In the last four weeks as more than 475 new shops have opened, more than 2,000 people have taken permanent contracts with Hays Travel. Managers across the UK are continuing to recruit to fill posts in their branches. Developments announced included the ability for managers to manage their own branch Facebook pages. The message was 'know your customers, understand what they're looking for and connect with them in the best way for them', whether online, in-store or both. Hays said there would be further updates as the conference continues.

15 November 2019, source: TTG

Gold Medal and Travel2 honour agents and gear up for 'biggest ever' peaks

Speaking to partners at the trade-only brands' annual Agent Recognition Awards, McAuley, managing director tour operations B2B at Dnata Travel Europe, thanked agents for their support during "a year of incredible change" across the travel sector. Beginning with a record sales performance for Gold Medal and Travel 2 in January, McAuley charted a challenging year to date with the industry facing a number of high profile hurdles – including the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka in April, the failure of Super Break in August and the demise of Thomas Cook a month later. She said "the travel landscape changed for ever" with Cook's collapse on the morning of 23 September, describing the ensuing week dealing with the aftermath as "the most difficult of my 32-year travel career". "The support you [agents] gave us during that time was unbelievable and I will be eternally grateful," McAuley added. Despite hurdles in the marketplace, Gold Medal and Travel 2 saw passenger numbers rise 6%

and 7% in 2019, with Gold Medal's turnover up 4.7% and Travel 2's rising by 5.2%. Gold Medal's five top-selling destinations were Florida, Dubai, New York, Maldives and Las Vegas, while Florida, Dubai, Singapore, New York and Sydney were those of its sister brand. Across its specialist brands, Gold Medal's Pure Luxury sales were up 22.5%, cruise revenue grew by 16.3% and groups saw a 15% increase. The event, held at Jacobean mansion, Crewe Hall, welcomed more than 90 agents contesting 39 categories. Among the regional winners was Moorelands Travel, named the top agency in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man, while in the North East, Andrew Earles Holidays took home the silverware. The Travel Village Group claimed top agency in the North West and Cannon Travel beat off competition in East Anglia to scoop its regions prize. Central England Agency of the Year was won by Guru, Secret Escapes was named London's top agency and La Vida took home Wales and South West Agency of the Year. In the nationwide categories, Bryton Travel was named Travel 2 High Street Agency of the Year, while La Vida claimed its second win of the evening after scooping Gold Medal High Street Agency of the Year. Travel 2 Agency Group of the Year went to Clubworld Travel and Cannon Travel also bagged its second gong with Gold Medal Agency Group of the Year. Both Travel 2 and Gold Medal's Large Agency of the Year awards went to Welsh-based miniples and were scooped by Tailor Made Travel and Polka Dot Travel. Not Just Travel was named Travel 2's Homeworking Agency of the Year, while Gold Medal's award went to Midcounties Cooperative Travel. Among the homeworking agencies nominated was the now-defunct Freedom PTA group. Paying tribute to the efforts of former Freedom members and staff – several of which were in attendance now in new roles – Nick Hughes, Gold Medal and Travel 2 sales director, said it “just would not feel right” not to celebrate the work of Freedom agents. Homeworker of the Year went to We Do Travel. Secret Escapes claimed its second award of the night after taking home Gold Medal's Online Travel Agency of the Year, with Cruise2 scooping Travel 2's equivalent accolade. The Travel Network Group was named Travel 2's Partner of the Year and Midcounties Cooperative claimed Gold Medal's Partner of the Year gong.

15 November 2019, source: TTG

“If airlines won't clean up their act, governments must step in”

"The climate crisis doesn't afford us the luxury of time – it demands a coordinated response." Quite. But lack of effective scale aside, seedlings are not mighty, carbon-guzzling oaks. They take decades to mature. This is time we don't have. Yet as public pressure intensifies around the climate crisis, airlines are keenly paying increased lip service to “greening” the sector. And offsets – appeasing both passengers and regulators yet costing airlines very little – have become a key buzzword. Except they don't work. A 2017 study from the European Commission found 85% of offset projects under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism – some of the most highly regarded offset schemes in the world – failed to reduce emissions. If aviation were a country, it would be the world's seventh-largest emitter of CO₂. As expansion continues unabated, the International Civil Aviation Organisation predicts its emissions will rise by at least 300% by 2050. Offsets embolden growth we can't afford. Moreover, they remove any incentive for aviation to reduce emissions and channel serious investment into urgently needed cleaner technology. They're a distraction, and dangerous for it. We need significant carbon reduction and a limit on growth. A Green Flying Duty can help. It's our term for an increased Air Passenger Duty (APD) but, crucially, with its revenue ring-fenced for research and development into cleaner aviation technology. This should include a higher rate for domestic flights, and another for business and first class to account for their weightier and more polluting load. It'll reduce demand, increase investment in

necessary technologies, and it's quick to apply. If we fail to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, climate change will become uncontrollable. This is a health, environmental and human survival emergency. If we are to achieve necessary the emissions cuts, aviation cannot rely on others to carry its burden. Airlines won't clean up their own act; they won't go far enough, or fast enough. Revelations of "fuel tankering", carrying extra fuel onboard to avoid higher costs in destination countries (which is a highly polluting and completely unnecessary process that saves just pennies), make clear the sector's true priorities. And we can't feign surprise. Urgent and significant carbon reduction is our only solution, and that necessitates a limit on growth – and enforced government regulation. Aviation fuel is, astonishingly, still exempt from tax and VAT. Even after APD, these are tax breaks to the tune of billions, which keep the cost of flying artificially low. The "polluter pays" principle must be applied, with revenue raised being channelled into urgent research and development. The climate crisis doesn't afford us the luxury of time – it demands a coordinated response. We in the travel sector know what needs to happen, so let's step up and get on with it together.

19 November 2019, source: Travel Newsgram

Brand USA and United Airlines sign global sponsorship agreement; 3-year deal linked to promote US travel together

Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, and United Airlines announced a multi-year, global sponsorship agreement to promote international travel across the United States. The agreement makes United Airlines an official Global Airline Sponsor of Brand USA and the exclusive airline sponsor of Brand USA's next IMAX film, "Into America's Wild", which premieres in February 2020. The film takes international audiences on a journey across the United States through its scenic byways, ancient homelands, little known trails, and hidden gems that form the country's natural tapestry. "Into America's Wild" features the country's greatest outdoor experiences from kayaking Oregon's stunning coast, to traversing majestic canyons in the Southwest, exploring the wilds of Alaska, walking the Appalachian Trail and more. "Our sponsorship with United Airlines grew out of our mutual passion for sharing America's treasures with the international travel community. Together, we are determined to find creative solutions that impact global travel to the United States," said Christopher Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA. "Travel decisions are increasingly influenced by entertaining content and compelling stories. With no shortage of narratives, Brand USA and United Airlines have the right resources and marketing innovation to elevate the position of the U.S. in the worldwide travel sector." United Airlines and United Express operate nearly 5,000 daily flights to more than 350 destinations in the U.S. and around the world. In the last two years, United has announced 26 new international routes, including nonstop service between the United States and Prague, Czech Republic; Cape Town, South Africa; Nice, France; Tahiti, French Polynesia; Naples, Italy; Palermo, Italy; Porto, Portugal; and Reykjavik, Iceland. "At United Airlines we continue to grow our industry leading international network by adding more international capacity than any other U.S. carrier in 2019," said Mark Krolick, United's vice president of Marketing. "We look forward to collaborating with Brand USA to showcase the United States to travelers around the world."

20 November 2019, source: TTG

First Heathrow expansion work set to be approved

The CAA's board is expected to approve plans for the preliminary work, with prime minister Boris Johnson having apparently changed his stance on the airport's expansion. Johnson had previously said he would lie down in front of the bulldozers to oppose a third runway but has since hinted he has changed his views. Heathrow must still receive full planning approval for its proposals and faces a lengthy court battle with objectors. One group, Heathrow Hub, argues that an existing runway could be extended for take-off and landing and is demanding a full review of the cost. Heathrow Hub director Jock Lowe said: "It is absurd that Heathrow Airport Ltd is considering spending £3 billion on pre-application costs when it has not said what the full cost will be, still has no final scheme design and cannot say how it will build its new runway over the M25, right next to the M4 junction, without years of traffic chaos."

21 November 2019, source: TTG Technology

Virgin Atlantic bolsters TCS partnership to further enhance customer experience

Customer service solutions born from the partnership, which first began in 2004, include self-service baggage drop facilities at Heathrow and Gatwick and an online chatbot. Innovations Virgin Atlantic is keen to develop include real-time data analysis, automated refuelling and voice-enabled bookings. Ash Jokhoo, chief information officer, Virgin Atlantic, commented: "Through our strategic technology partnership with TCS, we've been able to transform the modern-day flight experience and make it easier to travel. We're always striving for innovation and are looking forward to reaching the next step in our continuous journey to become the most loved travel company." Arun Pradeep, business head – travel, transportation and Hospitality, Europe at TCS, said: "Customer experience is at the heart of digital transformation, and at TCS we have the contextual knowledge and digital expertise to ensure success. We've made astounding progress in our 15-year partnership with Virgin Atlantic, and we're honoured to support its industry-leading digital transformations to make travel delightful for their customers."

22 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

Virgin, Delta, Air France-KLM joint venture gets US approval

The mega joint venture of Air France- KLM, Virgin Atlantic and Delta Air Lines has received official antitrust immunity in the US. The US Department of Transportation has given the green light for the extended JV, which replaces two separate agreements between Delta and Air France-KLM and Delta and Virgin Atlantic. With immunity the carriers can coordinate their pricing, scheduling and share revenue on flights operated on US-Europe routes. The US DOT had already adopted safeguards to 'protect competition, promote public benefits such as additional flights, and increased seat availability'. "This is the final regulatory step for the airlines to begin to work together to offer customers the best streamlined travel experience across the Atlantic," Delta said. JetBlue, which is planning to start its own transatlantic services, argued that the multi-carrier tie-up didn't show enough customer benefits to merit antitrust immunity.

25 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

Florida tourism growth rate slows

Florida tourist arrivals continue to grow but the pace of growth is slowing. The July to September quarter saw the lowest rise since 2010, up just 1.1% on the corresponding period in 2018. Since then the average quarterly gain had been 6.2%. Visit Florida reported 31.6 million people visited the Sunshine State in the third quarter. Domestic and Canadian arrivals were slightly up, but international visitation continues to lag. The figures are worrying for tourism leaders concerned over reduced funding for the state tourism marketing agency, and even the long-term future of Visit Florida itself. Marketing to international visitors is more important than ever, they say. Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations executive director Robert Skrob said: "The brand of Florida will carry the big destinations but it's not going to get visitors to all the other parts of the state that still rely on visitors to pay for taxes to support the businesses that are in the industry."

26 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

New links bolster Gatwick's long-haul growth

Gatwick has revealed interim results showing new direct routes to Brazil and Argentina have contributed to a 2.3% - or 107,340 passengers - year-on-year uplift for long-haul flying. Norwegian's new service to Rio de Janeiro and an increase in flights to Buenos Aires has led to 101,100 more passengers travelling to South America from Gatwick than the previous year. Overall, in the six months ended September 30 2019, 26.6 million passengers travelled through Gatwick, an increase of 0.2% - or an extra 56,803 passengers - compared to the same period last year. Revenue was up 5.6% to £541.3m, resulting in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) up 7.9% to £350.6m and a profit after tax of £137m. Around one in five of Gatwick's passengers is now travelling to a long-haul destination, with the airport offering more than 60 long-haul routes worldwide. As well as strong growth to South America, the airport has welcomed new direct routes to Miami, San Francisco, Kuwait City and Mexico this year. The most recent new long-haul route - to Shanghai with Air China - launched in early November. Combined with China Eastern flights, Gatwick now offers 11 weekly services to the city. Gatwick CEO Stewart Wingate said: "As the UK enters an important new chapter on the global stage, new links created to key markets such as South America will play a crucial role in the country's economy and national identity. While we were saddened by the recent collapse of Thomas Cook, we are confident in our future prospects and look forward to easyJet and other airlines using these slots going forward. A growing Gatwick means a thriving region and as the airport continues to be transformed under its new ownership - from new global connections, to improved transport links, new jobs and business opportunities - the ripple effect will be felt across all corners of our region."

27 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

Consumers demanding 'slow travel' and improved digital service

Travel agents are rising to customers' demands for a digital service, while 'slow' travel and personal service is becoming more important to people - and both will be top trends for 2020, according to ABTA's latest research. ABTA's Travel Trends 2020 report, which comes out today, is based on market information and consumer insights. In addition to revealing five key travel trends expected to shape holiday choices in 2020, the report also reveals ABTA's 12 destinations to watch. A key trend seen by ABTA is that holidaymakers are seeking a

variety of ways to get support during the online booking process. Many travel companies, including TUI, Hays Travel and Travel Counsellors are adopting a multi-channel approach to personalise their service for customers in response to this demand. This approach includes building specialist social media customer service teams, announcing multi-million-pound technology upgrades and speaking directly to them via messenger apps, ABTA says. An emerging trend of 'slow travel', meanwhile, is seeing holidaymakers choosing to slow down the tempo and experience destinations on a deeper level - making more genuine connections with local people and cultures along the way. The ABTA report says: "Slow travel is as much about enjoying the journey as it is the destination, and a less packed itinerary takes the pressure off having to visit all the usual tourist hotspots. With more time in one destination, it can potentially reduce the journey footprint and provide travellers with the chance to support more locally run businesses - resulting in a positive impact on the local economy and community." After a strong year in 2019, the package holiday looks set to maintain its appeal in 2020, mainly because of its value for money, ABTA said. The research shows travel is a spending priority for the year ahead, with over a quarter of people (27%) planning to spend more on their holiday, up from 25% who said the same last year. Europe still tops the list of places people intend to travel to in the next 12 months, with almost two-thirds of people (57%) planning to visit. Following a record-breaking number of overnight trips from January to July 2019, domestic holidays are expected to perform well once more in the year ahead. Among the other key trends outlined in the report is an increased focus on the specific impacts of tourism, with consumers becoming increasingly aware of the environmental and social impact of their holidays. Personalised tourism is also set to become a trend, with travel companies developing new types of flexible and immersive touring products. More focus on electric aviation is the fifth trend ABTA has identified, saying: "The future for electric aircraft looks bright, both for leisure and business travel." Less crowded, less visited countries have made it into ABTA's 12 destinations for 2020, tying in with the trend for 'slow travel' identified in ABTA's Travel Trends report. The destinations that have made the list are: Basilicata, a 'more relaxed version of the Amalfi coast'; Chicago and Lake Michigan; the European country of Georgia; Grenada in the Caribbean; Madrid and neighbouring cities; Morocco; Namibia; Singapore; South Korea; the Netherlands; Uruguay and Vienna. ABTA chief executive Mark Tanzer said: "With so many political uncertainties ahead, such as the shape of the new government and the outcome of the Brexit process, it is difficult to predict with certainty what 2020 will bring, however, we do know that travel is still a spending priority for the year ahead. In last year's report, we also predicted that 2019 would be the year that sustainability issues would go mainstream and that has proved to be the case, with a spotlight thrown on climate change in particular."

27 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

One in four to take more holidays next year

Almost a quarter of AITO customers will book more holidays over the next three years, according to research. When asked: "Thinking about your holidays over the next three years, do you think you will be taking more, less or the same amount of holidays?", 67% said they would take the same amount, 22% said they'd take more, while only 11% said they expected to take fewer holidays. The majority of respondents have not been affected by ongoing uncertainty around Brexit as far as holiday choices, with 80% saying Brexit uncertainty has not influenced the holidays they have taken so far this year, compared to 16% who said Brexit had impacted their decision. Looking ahead to next year, 66% said Brexit uncertainty would have no influence on the holidays they planned to take, while 22% said Brexit would

have an impact. The research, revealed at the AITO conference, also showed the failure of Thomas Cook has had no negative effect on bookings, while 34% of respondents said they are yet to plan their next holiday. Knowledge and expertise were given as the number-one reason customers choose an AITO member, closely followed by the fact the member is a specialist in a particular holiday. Previous good experience was cited as the third reason to book with an AITO member. Value for money and personal service came fourth and fifth on the list.

27 November 2019, source: Travel Mole

eDreams reveals top destinations for 2020

Tokyo has topped the chart as the most favoured city amongst European travellers in 2020, with a year-on-year increase in bookings of 90%, according to eDreams ODIGEO. Japan has steadily been growing as a holiday destination amongst Europeans in the last year, with travellers from the UK in particular creating a booking bounce of 101% year-on-year in October and November 2019 due to The Rugby World Cup. Meanwhile, flight bookings from the competing nations within the Rugby World Cup as a whole grew by 38%. With overseas residents able to purchase tickets for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games via the official ticket website from Spring next year, sporting events are set to continue to be a key driver for visitors to the Japanese capital in 2020. UK visitors to Tokyo are expected to increase three-fold next year, with UK holiday makers currently recording the highest increase in bookings to visit the Japanese city in 2020. The news follows the Japan Tourism Organisation (JNTO)'s commitment to attract 40 million inbound tourists annually by 2020 and 60 million by 2030. The second, third and fourth most popular destinations for European visitors in 2020 are exotic beach destinations in the Caribbean and Thailand, while Porto in Portugal is fifth. Pablo Caspers, chief travel officer at eDreams ODIGEO, said: "The incredible 90% increase in European tourists visiting Tokyo will be music to the JNTO's ears as the country has invested heavily in driving tourism here. It is interesting to see how sporting events continue to be a key attraction for holidaymakers, with the 2019 Rugby World Cup acting as a key case study this year on the impact an iconic sporting competition can have on tourism figures. We can no doubt expect to see a similar booking bounce in spring 2020 when overseas consumers can start booking tickets for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games via the official ticket website. Tourists from the UK are currently recording the highest increase in bookings to visit Tokyo next year. This is despite the Japanese yen being among a number of Far Eastern currencies against which sterling has fallen significantly. Furthermore, it is promising to see that consumers from the UK will continue their appetite for long-haul destinations next year, despite Brexit uncertainty." The report has been collated using flight booking data from eDreams, Opodo, Go Voyages and Travellink, across major European markets are Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and the UK.

28 November 2019, source: TTG

If Only... acquired by Elegant Resorts parent company

The deal will see founders Brendan and Mary Maguire step back immediately from the business after 18 years. Chief executive Andy Freeth and his senior team; Gordon McCreadie, product and distribution director; Tracy Docherty, sales director; and David Irving, operations director, will be staying with the company "to drive their continued

expansion plans with the support of their new investor". If Only joins Portman Travel Group's portfolio of travel brands including Elegant Resorts and Clarity, which were acquired in 2014, and Ian Allan Travel, which was acquired in May 2019 by Clarity. In the last 18 months If Only has significantly grown its turnover, moved to new offices, invested in telephony and technology and expanded its portfolio into the US, Caribbean and luxury cruise. In the coming weeks its new Far East brochure will feature Japan and China for the first time in the company's history. Brendan Maguire said: "When I recruited Andy, he was tasked with finding an investor with a similar culture, integrity, ethos and a fit that would allow the business to thrive and grow in the future. While Mary and I are sad to leave a business we've worked so hard on; we see this investment as a really exciting opportunity for the brand and the team. If Only is a long established and respected trade business and this is a brilliant move for our partners and customers. The acquisition will allow Andy and his team to continue the phenomenal growth delivered. I would personally like to thank all of the team at If Only, our suppliers and our travel agent partners for their support over the last 18 years and look forward to retirement." Freeth added: "Having an innovative, supportive and financially solid investor for If Only unlocks great benefits for the team, our partners and our customers. We'll gain access to a wider portfolio of luxury holiday products and will have access to capital to invest in technology. We'll be sharing our exciting plans over the coming months". Redmond Walsh, chief executive of Portman Travel Group added: "The acquisition fulfils Portman Travel Group's strategy of buying complementary and sector-leading businesses. Portman Travel Group has owned Elegant Resorts, the highly respected luxury specialist, since 2014, and I look forward to seeing the trade sales teams from both If Only and Elegant Resorts, continuing to flourish in the B2B space."