

UK Office October 2019 TDC Report

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UK Director

Tour Operators

- **USAirtours/Travel Planners** – We had a sales catch-up meeting with Linda Dixey (Product Marketing Manager) for USAirtours (B2B) and TravelPlanners (B2C). We were advised that TravelPlanners now accounts for 40% of the combined business. Both brands saw a huge boost in trading the week following Thomas Cook's collapse. As a business they had prepared as much as possible for the closure and had taken steps to protect their customers onto alternative flights/packages. Business to Florida remains very strong but they have big concerns over the affordability of the destination: a 7-night stay in Clearwater Beach was lost recently to Cancun, Mexico. It was cheaper to do 7 nights Orlando + 7 nights in Mexico all inclusive (with connecting flight) than it was to stay in Clearwater. Linda and Charlotte (Product/Purchasing Senior Buyer) also raised concerns about the hotels' revenue strategies in terms of dynamic rates and rate increases. Room nights are currently slightly down on 2018 which finished Top selling properties are: Tradewinds Island Grand, RumFish at Tradewinds, Sunset Vista and Sirata. Beach Resort They are receiving greater demand for condos and homes (2-beds ++). They will be hosting a Visit Florida day in Apr/May 2020, exact date TBC. We have shown our interest in attending and asked them to provide details as soon as they have finalised the details.
- **Dnata** – General update from the group's Head of Purchasing for the Americas, Tom Dale. Dnata operates in multiple markets but the UK is still its biggest volume driver. Their bedbank brand Yalago is the biggest growth opportunity – it will be expanding across the UK and Ireland and will be/has already been establishing commercial agreements with the large consortias and independent operators. Travel Republic business is definitely on the rebound after a difficult 2018 however, the brand lacks a clear strategy when it comes to the USA and its core destinations are still within Europe. They are always keen to do co-op marketing but the approach (from their side) can be lacking. All Gold Medal operations have moved to brand new office in Leyland – office is also home to Netflights and a Travelbag call centre. Gold Medal/Travel 2 meeting is taking place at WTM.
- **Travelbag** – A meeting was held with Suzanne Harvey, Head of Product and Betsie Barr, Partnership Manager to go over their new rebranding of their B2C product. Suzanne went through a presentation that showed how Travelbag will be re-positioning themselves in the UK market in the coming months. Travelbag currently send 60,000 passengers to the USA with a total of 6,000 into Florida. The currently promote Orlando and Miami online with anyone looking for holidays to the Gulf Coast would be directed to call their reservations team or visit one of their 8 retail shops in and around the UK. Their customer demographic is mainly families with older children (teenagers) and couples (aged 45 and above). Their website is currently being updated and will be completed by the end of 2020. We had recently sent content including images, copy and area videos

that Suzanne has sent on to their creative team and Suzanne confirmed she will be back in touch if they require anything else from us moving forward.

TRADE LIAISON

- **2020 Consumer Campaign** – Proposal from Media Agency Group has now been received and approved. The campaign will launch 26th December and will run for 1 month. It will include Pay Per Click, YouTube, Programmatic Advertising, Spotify, Social Media and Targeted Video on Demand.
- **Expedia UK** – Expedia will again be the call to action on the consumer campaign. Their proposal has been received and signed off and creative is being worked on. Campaign will launch 26th December and run for 3 months.
- **Tour America, Ireland** – We have now received the final campaign statistics from our joint activity with Tour America that took place in September are as follows:
 - The social media campaign overall results received 303,414 total impressions, 1,832 total engagements, 16,645 total video views and 1,026 click throughs
 - The email marketing (Ezine) results had a total open rate of 17.77% and click through rate of 1.39%
 - The Tour America homepage takeover results showed a total of 14,482 users with 11,634 total unique users
 - The digital display/remarketing campaign results had a total of 123,234 impressions with 2,317 click throughs
 - The September campaign generated an additional 274 room nights booked during the 2-week period
- **Virgin Retail/Virgin Holidays/VSPC Braehead Promotion** – We have now received the prize winners' details from the recent promotion at the Braehead Shopping Mall from Virgin Holidays and an email has been duly sent to advise they have won the holiday for four people to St. Pete/Clearwater.
- **Virgin Holidays Peak Launch** – Started 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. 200 top sellers from the Virgin Retail Network and their sales office will be in attendance and we will have the opportunity to network and train these team members as well as attending their awards dinner and hosted breakfasts and lunch events over the 2-day period. We are also in discussions with the team to see if we are able to possibly sponsor the drinks stand during the training seminar.
- **Co-op Marketing Plan** – We have requested co-op marketing proposals from Funway Holidays, USAirtours/TravelPlanners and Tour America now that we are in our new fiscal budget year.
- **Travelzoo** – We have received results of the recent Travelzoo campaign which are as follows:

- **Total Campaign Clicks** = 35,420
 - **Microsite page views** = 25,374
 - **Solus open rate** = 71%
 - **Traffic split** = 69% Mobile / 31% Desktop
 - **Dwell Time** = 2 mins 07 secs
 - **Total Viewing hrs** = 3,701
 - **Social Media reach** = 31,939
 - **Online search up lift** = searches for SPC were up 91.3% PoP and 633.3% YoY showing a massive positive halo effect in searches due to the campaign
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – The joint campaign with Thomas Cook Sweden has now ended and results will be requested and reported back as soon as possible.
 - **Virgin Holidays** – The staff incentive we ran last month has now concluded and prize winners have been notified that they have won the Virgin VUE vouchers that were on offer. A total of 763 room nights were booked to St. Pete/Clearwater during the incentive period which ran from the 1st – 30th September.
 - **VSPC/SeaWorld Mega Fam** – 26 agents from our top selling tour operators were in destination in early October. The itinerary included hotel site visits, time in downtown St Pete and Fort DeSoto. Feedback from the group has been excellent and SeaWorld have expressed their interest in continuing this partnership next year.
 - **Gold Medal Travel** – Additional creative has been received and approved as part of the Gold Medal and Visit Florida Agent and Consumer Marketing campaign that is taking place from 01 September – 30 November 2019.
 - **Bookabed, Ireland** – The Destination of the Month Campaign that we had confirmed and partnered on with Bookabed in Ireland that ran in September has now ended. Results will be requested in November and reported back as soon as possible.
 - **VSPC/Experience Kissimmee/British Airways Product Manager FAM** – Work continues on the Product Manager FAM we are hosting from the 12th - 18th November in conjunction with BA and Experience Kissimmee. The attendees list has been finalised and we will be hosting Tour Operator Product Managers from American Holidays (Ireland), Bookabed (Ireland) Gold Medal/DNATA, USAirtours/TravelPlanners, Travelopia, THG Holidays and Platinum Travel (Ireland). We have been working closely with the team in resort regarding the itinerary and this has now been finalised.
 - **BA Lounge Heathrow Terminal 5** – We have now organised for collection of all promotional/display items as well as the competition entry forms from Team Spirits with our UK mailing house BH&P. British Airways are notifying and liaising the winner of the prize draw.
 - **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – The last of the joint campaign creative that had been received and approved last month was put on hold due to the demise of Thomas Cook and is now scheduled to be sent this month instead. The campaign results will be received later than expected.

- **Scott Dunn** – Nicola Hollihead has been in contact to advise that she is the new Product Executive for North America at Scott Dunn and will be our main point of contact. We will be in touch with Nicola in the coming weeks to discuss their current product portfolio.
- **Virgin Retail, Braehead** – We have finalised details regarding the booking of the Virgin Retail Braehead staff Christmas party on the 15th December. This will be taking place at The Crowne Plaza Hotel in Glasgow.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We have been advised that Kerianne Mulqueen, Product Executive for Florida is leaving BA Holidays and that Kara Widdows will be stepping into her role as of the 11th October.
- **ITC Travel Group** – We assisted David Pointer with a contact for The Don CeSar who wanted to request a site tour of the property when he will be in our area in November.
- **Business Traveller Ireland** – We were contacted by Gerry Benson (Ex Travelbiz) to ask if he could be added to our PR mailing list and his request was duly sent to Rooster PR.
- **Leisure Video** – We have received the new leisure video that has been updated with the relevant logo to utilise in the UK for our training presentations.
- **LA Travel, Sweden** – contacted by Roger Johansson. LA Travel is a sports travel specialist working with large corporate brands and sports teams in Sweden. They have a group travelling in Q1 2020 with tickets to a Tampa Bay Lightning match. Roger wanted suggestions on where to stay, what to do, transportation, etc. Tim advised it wasn't necessary to send to (head office) Sports & Events team so detailed email with all required suggestions was sent to Roger.
- **Researrangorerna, Sweden** – request from their marketing manager for personal holiday recommendations on where to stay, what to do with family. Provided on email and advised to contact again when a reservation has been made.
- **Kenwood Travel** – FAM request received and sent to Michelle and Rose. Sales training to take place on 12th November.
- **Visit USA Ireland** – committed to the 2020 roadshow taking place in Cork and Dublin in April. Attendees will be senior managers, product developers and owner-operators.
- **Visit USA, UK** – attending the WTM update on 5th November and Thanksgiving Dinner event on 23rd November.
- **Tour America, Ocean Florida, Funway, Virgin and USAirtours** – thank you goodies sent/given to each office. BA Holidays will be sent in November.

ENQUIRIES:

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

1 October 2019, source: TTG

Secret Escapes acquires Laterooms assets

Secret Escapes has acquired part of Malvern Group's failed LateRooms business. LateRooms parent Malvern, which also owned operator Super Break, collapsed on 1 August. A spokesperson for administrator KPMG on Monday (30 September) confirmed to *TTG* reports members-only luxury hotel and holiday discount Secret Escapes had acquired assets arising from the group's failure. These amount to "intellectual property rights, business information and social media accounts" according to a new report by Malvern's administrators. According to the report, Secret Escapes parted with £750,000 for the various assets. It is unclear what Secret Escapes plans to do with the IP acquired from LateRooms. *TTG* has approached Secret Escapes for comment. Malvern Group collapsed after Cox & Kings (India), which owned 49% of the business, withdrew funding. This was despite efforts by the group to find a buyer, which involved instructing KPMG to fast-track a sale, resulting in the demise of Super Break, LateRooms.com and Malvern Travel Technology Limited. Cox & Kings (India) is a wholly separate business to Cox & Kings (UK).

1 October 2019, source: TTG

Business Secretary 'didn't speak to Thomas Cook' before collapse

Documents, seen and cited by *The Guardian*, show Leadsom and ministers and officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) had "little to no discussion" with Cook before the company entered liquidation. This was despite records of phone calls and meetings indicating ministers were aware of Cook's financial plight. Speaking to ITV News, Leadsom said the Department for Transport led on matters pertaining to Cook. "I picked up the phone to [transport secretary] Grant Shapps, who picked up the phone to Thomas Cook," said Leadsom. "You don't want to have mixed messages, or too many cooks spoiling the broth." Following Cook's collapse, Leadsom and BEIS were among the most vocal, pledging to get to the bottom of what happened to Britain's oldest travel company. Leadsom has convened a cross-government taskforce, and vowed to instruct the Insolvency Service to fast-track its investigation into the collapse of Cook and the conduct of its directors. The TSSA union, which represented Thomas Cook's retail staff, accused Leadsom and BEIS of "sitting on their hands" while 9,000 jobs were on the line. "Government ministers should not have been passing the buck but rather, acting in concert to save a cornerstone of the British high street," said general secretary Manuel Cortes. A BEIS spokesperson told *The Guardian* UK government officials "meet with a range of businesses on a regular basis".

2 October 2019, source: TTG

Former Thomas Cook workers to march on UK parliament

Ex-staff will gather in Westminster from 11am today (Wednesday 2nd October) before handing over two petitions signed by more than 60,000 people. The first, with more than 50,000 signatures, is addressed to Downing Street and calls for a full inquiry into Cook's

collapse and demands the company's directors pay back their bonuses. The second, signed by more than 10,000 people, will be delivered to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy calling on business secretary Andrea Leadsom to personally intervene and ensure workers receive their unpaid wages in full. According to the Unite union, which is supporting the day of action, many workers did not receive their monthly pay on Monday (30 September) leaving them unable to pay rent, mortgage payments and in some cases, even afford food. Abta LifeLine is offering Cook staff emergency supermarket vouchers to tide them over.

3 October 2019, source: TTG

Virgin Atlantic faces strike threat over union representation

The airline has been in negotiation with the British Airline Pilots Association (Balpa), which is thought to represent about 60% of its pilots, over allowances and expenses paid to pilots as part of their job. The move has angered representatives of the Professional Pilots Union (PPU), who claim to represent as many as 280 of the airline's 900 pilots but have been left out of the talks. Now, the PPU is conducting a ballot of members, which could see a strike in a month's time at the earliest, although a spokesperson added they have been heartened by an apparent change of heart by Virgin. He added: "Despite the PPU representing a significant number of Virgin Atlantic pilots, the airline refuses to recognise it in any negotiations over its members' pay and conditions. "Our issue is not about money, simply the right to be represented by a chosen union. It represents zero cost to the company. "Within 24 hours of informing the company of our intention to ballot our members on industrial action, we have suddenly been offered last-ditch talks on Friday to avert strike action. We are encouraged by this offer and hope that genuine progress can be made." A Virgin spokesperson said: "Currently, we have no active industrial dispute with our pilots. "We're aware of reports that the PPU, which represents a minority of our pilot workforce, may be considering a ballot for industrial action over union recognition. We value our pilot workforce enormously and have an ongoing and constructive relationship with our recognised union, Balpa. We've also been encouraged by the discussions that started earlier this year between Balpa and the PPU, in an attempt to identify a framework for working together. We would like to reassure customers that all Virgin Atlantic flights continue to operate as normal."

7 October 2019, source: TTG

Trailfinders boss calls for changes to 'misguided' ATOL scheme

Trailfinders founder Mike Gooley has called for new rules to be implemented requiring "pipeline" money to be ringfenced in the wake of Thomas Cook's demise. Gooley has described the current Atol consumer protection scheme as "misguided since its inception" in a letter to CAA chief executive Richard Moriarty, according to a report in The Mail on Sunday. The entrepreneur, who set up Trailfinders in 1970, attacked current rules allowing firms to use money from customers' bookings to "meet general and current running costs". "The pipeline funds generated by innocent travellers are not in any way ringfenced," said Gooley in his letter to Moriarty. "All other similar transactions in society are rigidly controlled and regulated while travel has always been allowed to misappropriate these future funds and use them to meet general and current running costs. Embezzlement is not too harsh a description of this common practice which, without regulation, fuels both the frequency and extent of the misery caused by undercapitalised operators when their business plan fails." Gooley argued that ringfencing pipeline money from customer bookings, which is owed to airlines, hotels and other travel suppliers, would lead to fewer firms running into financial

difficulty. He added a rule change would also protect consumers' holidays, as their trips would still have been paid for, even if the company taking their booking collapses. This would also save taxpayers having to pay for the costs of repatriation and refunds following a failure.

7 October 2019, source: TTG

CAA wraps up Thomas Cook repatriation programme

More than 140,000 Thomas Cook passengers, stranded overseas after the iconic operator collapsed last month, have been successfully repatriated in just a fortnight. The CAA's final repatriation flight under Operation Matterhorn, the UK's largest peacetime repatriation effort, was due to land in Manchester on Monday morning (7 October) bringing home nearly 400 Cook passengers from Orlando, Florida. During the two-week flying programme, the CAA was able to call on 150 aircraft sourced from 50 partners around the world, operating a total of 746 flights returning passengers to 10 UK airports. According to the CAA, 94% of Cook passengers were flown home the same day as their scheduled return flight. The CAA had initially planned to operate around 1,000 flights but resorted to combining several scheduled flights into single repatriation flights to ensure the programme was wrapped up in two weeks. It will now embark on the largest refund process in the history of the Atol scheme after Cook failed with around 360,000 Atol-protected forward bookings concerning 800,000 passengers.

7 October 2019, source: TTG

Extinction Rebellion targeting London City Airport shutdown

Ten thousand people are signed up to attend Extinction Rebellion's International Rebellion, which starts today and is set to last for two weeks. The campaigners plan to stage various peaceful protests around London, including blocking roads around Westminster, Trafalgar Square, and Lambeth Bridge. On Thursday, 10 October, the activists will stage a mass sit-in at London City airport in an attempt to overwhelm the site for as long as possible. The group's website stressed it will not be using drones to ground planes. Zion Lights, of Extinction Rebellion UK, said: "We are in a moment – the most important moment that humanity has ever seen – where what we choose to do next will be remembered, or it will mean the certain death of even more species and the deaths of billions of people. "The society in which we have grown up forgot who we were, but we are now remembering that we are, and were always, part of nature. "We are out of time, business as usual is over, and the space of truth-telling and acting has begun." Demonstrations are planned in more than 60 cities around the world for the International Rebellion, the schedule for which was announced during the UN's New York Climate Emergency Summit last month.

8 October 2019, source: TTG

ABTA finds half of customers 'look for green credentials'

Half of consumers in the UK say they look for a company's green credentials before they buy a holiday, according to new research released today (8 October) at the Travel Convention in Tokyo. The Abta Holiday Habits Report 2019 found the biggest concerns for holidaymakers were pollution and the treatment of animals in destinations – with 66% saying they are worried about how animals are treated in destinations, and the same number concerned about waste and plastics. The report says 110 travel companies have registered their support for Abta's 2019 Make Holidays Greener campaign, which encourages both tourists and businesses to 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'. Initiatives already taken include reducing food

waste in hotels, holiday clothes swaps and providing customers with water bottles to reduce the need for single use plastic bottles. “Companies are considering the environmental and social impacts of their tourism products – including developing excursions which support local communities and working with local authorities to manage tourist flows in destination – to put them at the heart of their planning and decision-making,” says the report. “More and more hotels are also joining Travelife – an accreditation scheme for accommodation providers who are committed to sustainability.” Abta’s partner The Nursery spoke to a nationally representative sample of 2,043 consumers for the study, which related to the 12 months to July 2019.

8 October 2019, source: TTG

ABTA finds, younger generations drive travel trade sales

Younger people are driving growth in package holidays, the resilience of travel agents and the increase in cruising, according to the latest Abta Holiday Habits report unveiled at the Travel Convention in Tokyo today (8 October). More than half of people (51%) took an overseas package holiday this year, up 2% on last year – but the increase rose to 13% among 18- to 24-year-olds, with 53% of them booking this type of trip in 2018. And, among customers using retail travel agents, 18- to 24-year-olds are now the age range most likely to book travel in-store – showing an 8% increase since 2018 (22% vs 14%). Overall in-store bookings slipped from 15% to 12%. Victoria Bacon, director of brand and business development at Abta, said: “It’s exciting to see the generation of ‘digital natives’ increasingly realising the benefits of using the experience and expertise of travel professionals and booking their holidays with them. “Increasingly, Abta member travel companies are responding to the changing needs of customers by providing support through web chat and social media, so whether they’re booking online, over the phone or in-store, they get the support of a travel professional.” The Abta research found that more than a quarter (28%) of 18- to 34-year-olds have now taken a cruise, up 6% on last year – compared to growth of only 2% among over 65s.

8 October 2019, source: TTG

‘Industry is slowing down as new Brexit date nears’, says ABTA CEO

“The Thomas Cook story has been the focus of attention over the past two weeks. But the other October story hasn’t gone away, and its drama continues to unfold, and gather pace,” said Mark Tanzer at the Travel Convention in Tokyo. The UK is due to leave the EU on 31 October. “If ever there was a case where the narrative has been at the extremes, it is the politics and media coverage of Brexit,” said Tanzer. “It’s either a brave new world of its own, where glory and riches await, or a post-industrial wasteland of ruined businesses and ruined lives. We know it divides the country, and divides opinion within our industry, in fact within this audience. But we need to find our way back to the middle ground, because that is the place where consumer confidence is built, and the place where our future prosperity lies.” Tanzer added Abta had been “studiously neutral” as to Brexit: good or bad. “What we have been vocal about, to government, is the need to avoid a no-deal Brexit, with the uncertainty and disruption that will surely follow. As we stand here today, a no-deal Brexit is still one of the possibilities just days away, and we are having to tell members, and members of the public, to prepare for it. Not only is the threat of a no-deal exit costly in terms of preparation, but it is also very damaging to consumer confidence. In the run-up to the March deadline, we saw an industry slowdown, and the same pattern is repeating itself as we approach another cliff edge.” Tanzer concluded: “I have no idea what the political outcome of Brexit will be...

but I do know that afterwards we need to return to a new normal, where the tried-and-trusted processes and procedures of parliament are restored, and not subject to constant legal and media challenge.” It came as delegates were warned a general election was becoming increasingly likely as the government moves towards a potential Brexit extension. Peter Foster, Europe editor at *The Telegraph*, said if an extension was agreed a general election would probably be “inevitable”. If so, he said to be aware that winter elections tend to be “unpredictable”. Foster also cautioned it would likely be “one of the nastiest and most divisive elections of modern times. And if Boris Johnson was to win a majority – and the polls suggest he will – what will he do with that? Would he have any choice but to go through with a no-deal Brexit?” Foster added. Despite this, he said the real outcome of a general election would most likely be a hung parliament. Yes, the numbers [currently] look great [for the Conservatives] but they haven’t factored in the constant pressure to deliver Brexit, do or die. “What no one knows is how much that disappointment will turbo charge the Brexit vote. We’ve seen how volatile the opinion polls are – if I had to bet, my money would be on there being a hung parliament.” In terms of what this would mean for travel, Foster insisted “the sky will not fall – people will still travel. But the pound in their pocket may not be worth as much as they would like.”

8 October 2019, source: TTG

London Stansted plans rebrand with eye for more long-haul flights

Chief commercial officer Aboudy Nasser said the airport, which has typically served low-cost carriers, is looking at offering a more premium service as it seeks more long-haul legacy services. While it is currently spending £125 million on improving facilities, including completing eight new stands and opening a new car park, he added a new marketing campaign will ensure the public knows it. Nasser said: “We have got between £400 million and £500 million to expand and position ourselves as a premium airport dedicated to premium service. “A full-service carrier will have a much more premium experience. Once we launch our new brand, we will make sure everyone is aware of it.” Nasser added the new premium service would feature separate check-in and security areas as well as airside lounges and could be housed in a separate building. In the meantime, he is keen to grow the airline’s long-haul operations, particularly following the success of its first longer route, which saw Emirates double its daily 777 service less than a year after launching it. Nasser said: “It is the fastest that Emirates have ever gone – from a daily to a double daily service – in its history apart from in Beijing.” Air India is launching an Amritsar flight this month and Nasser is confident they will soon enjoy seamless connections with Stansted’s short-haul services. He added: “How do you connect the low-cost carrier with the long-haul carrier? We’ve basically cracked it and are in test mode that allows airlines to co-operate without interline agreements.” An announcement concerning the new arrangements is also expected in 2020.

9 October 2019, source: TTG

The Travel Network Group threatens to end supplier relationships unless protection offering confirmed

Speaking to *TTG* at the Abta Travel Convention, Gary Lewis, chief executive of The Travel Network Group, said Super Break’s failure to protect accommodation-only bookings – which only emerged following its failure in August – had triggered alarm bells. “[The collapse of] Super Break highlighted there was a lack of understanding [among agents] of what the risks were,” he said. “We’ve gone to all 170 business partners to ask if they protect

accommodation and whether our members are at risk. We've had 165 replies to say what they are doing and if they don't respond, we will turn them off." Lewis said the challenge was to ensure companies keep agents updated if they change their financial protection, and said he was currently in conversation with Abta to push for new rules to force suppliers to alert agents of changes. He warned the collapse of Super Break had been overshadowed by Thomas Cook's failure, which he said had also flagged serious concerns about financial protection, particularly for former Freedom Travel Group members.

9 October 2019, source: TTG

Hays Travel agrees to acquire all 555 UK Thomas Cook shops

The agreement will see Hays Travel acquire a total of 555 stores around the UK, providing re-employment opportunities for a significant number of former employees of Thomas Cook's retail operations, who were made redundant following the appointment of the Official Receiver as liquidator on 23 September 2019. Following the appointment of the Official Receiver last month, Hays Travel has already recruited 421 former Thomas Cook personnel and has further offers outstanding to former employees. David Chapman, Official Receiver, said: "This represents an important step in the liquidation process, as we seek to realise the company's assets." Jim Tucker, Partner at KPMG and joint special manager of Thomas Cook's retail division, said: "This is an extremely positive outcome, and we are delighted to have secured this agreement. It provides re-employment opportunities for a significant number of former Thomas Cook employees and secures the future of retail sites up and down the UK high street. "We are pleased to have achieved this in a short time frame and in the context of a complex liquidation process, which is testament to a lot of hard work from a number of parties. "Over the weeks ahead, we will work closely with Hays Travel and landlords to ensure a smooth transition of the store estate." John and Irene Hays, managing director and group chair of Hays Travel, said: "Thomas Cook was a much-loved brand employing talented people. We look forward to working with many of them."

10 October 2019, source: TTG

TUI to add extra two million seats for 2020

The massive capacity increase will cover Turkey, Greece, Balearics, Canaries, Egypt, Mexico and Florida. The two million seats are just under the 2.4 million Atol-protected capacity left when Thomas Cook collapsed. Tui said it would offer more 7, 10, 11 and 14-night durations and "even more flights" from Manchester, Doncaster Sheffield, Birmingham, Newcastle and Glasgow. Tui Airways will also create jobs for more than 100 pilots and 200 cabin crew. Andrew Flintham, managing director Tui UK and Ireland, said: "At Tui we're committed to offering outstanding holidays, flown from local airports to popular holiday hot spots. We understand the importance of providing great flexibility and choice and recognise the need for customers to spread the cost of their holidays with 0% deposit and direct debit payments. The customer is at the heart of everything we do, and this additional growth demonstrates our continued commitment for people to discover their smile with us." Dawn Wilson, Tui Airways managing director said: "We are delighted that our additional flying allows us to grow our team of 'moment makers' at Tui Airways. Every year we welcome new cabin crew and pilots, and this year is set to be our biggest and best yet. I'm particularly proud to be able to commit to offering over 50 Thomas Cook captains the opportunity to join Tui Airways and continue to fly customers on their holidays." Pilots union Balpa has praised Tui for reaching

out to ex-Thomas Cook pilots. General secretary Brian Strutton said: “Balpa has worked closely with Tui Airways on its expansion plans, and we are really pleased that so many new jobs have been earmarked for former Thomas Cook pilots. Tui is achieving its business growth in a morally responsible way and Balpa is pleased to support them.”

11 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Barrhead Travel confirm plans to open up to 100 more shops

Glasgow-based Barrhead Travel has ambitions to more than double the size of its UK retail network following the collapse of Thomas Cook. The company, which was bought by US travel giant Travel Leaders Group last year, has 76 stores in the UK and wants to open up to 100 more. Travel Leaders Group chairman Mike Batt said the expansion would create hundreds of jobs for former Thomas Cook staff, 'a good number' of whom have already joined the company, according to president Jacqueline Dobson. Barrhead was one of several retailers hoping to buy some of Thomas Cook's stores from the liquidators, but they lost out to Hays Travel which bought the lot. However, Barrhead said it still sees an opportunity to expand across the UK. "With the backing of Travel Leaders Group, we are looking forward to opening more Barrhead stores and helping our colleagues across the industry get back to serving their loyal clients," said Dobson. "The high street travel agency is very much alive in the UK and is pivotal in today's holiday booking journey. Customer experience and employee development remain our number one priority and this philosophy will be prominent across all of our new stores."

11 October 2019, source: TravelMole

MPs to quiz Fontenla-Novoa and Green over Thomas Cook collapse

Thomas Cook's former chief executives Manny Fontenla-Novoa and Harriet Green will be quizzed by MPs investigating the company's collapse. However, the first people to be questioned will be the leadership team at the time of the failure, including chief executive Peter Fankhauser. The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy select committee will grill Fankhauser, chairman Frank Meysman, chief financial officer Sten Daugaard, and the head of Thomas Cook's remuneration committee Warren Tucker at a session next Tuesday. The committee, chaired by the Labour MP Rachel Reeves, is expected to focus on executive salaries, corporate governance, the firm's high debts and the role of its auditors. PwC, Thomas Cook's auditor until 2017, will give evidence, as will the Financial Reporting Council and the government's Insolvency Service, which is managing the company's liquidation. Manuel Cortes, the general secretary of the transport workers' union TSSA, will also be involved in the inquiry. Fonenla-Novoa, who was in charge of the company from 2003 to 2011, and Green, who led the company for two years following his departure until she was replaced by Fankhauser, will be called to give evidence at a later, as yet unconfirmed date.

11 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Norwegian amending Gatwick to USA services for summer 2020

Norwegian is cutting the number of flights from Gatwick to Miami, Orlando, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro next summer. At the same time, it will **increase frequency on three**

other routes to the US. SVP commercial Matthew Wood said: "In line with our business strategy of moving from growth to profitability we are ensuring that we concentrate on key routes across our network where we see strong demand." **The airline is increasing frequency** to San Francisco, Austin in Texas, Denver and **Tampa from the end of March 2020.** It will offer daily flights to San Francisco, up from five flights a week, and four flights a week to Austin and Denver, both of which currently have three. The service to Tampa in Florida will increase from twice weekly to three flights a week. In total, it will offer 75,000 extra seats on these routes next summer. However, its Gatwick to Buenos Aires service will be cut to five flights a week, Gatwick to Miami will reduce to six weekly flights, Gatwick to Orlando will go down to five flights a week and Gatwick to Rio De Janeiro will reduce to three weekly flights from the end of March 2020.

12 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Travelopia chief outlines plans to ditch brands

Travelopia, formerly the specialist holiday division of TUI, has outlined plans to reduce its brands to just 10 with the next year. Speaking to delegates at the ABTA Convention in Tokyo, chief executive Andy Duncan said it has already closed or sold off some of the weaker and sometimes loss-making brands. The business had more than 50 brands when it was sold by TUI last year to private equity group KKR for £325 million. Brands being retained include adventure specialist Exodus, Quark Expeditions, private jet company TCS, yachting businesses Sunsail and The Moorings and tailor-made businesses including Hayes & Jarvis, Citalia and Sovereign. Duncan said there hadn't been much investment in the specialist brands by TUI for over a decade. "Some brands were quite weak and they were treated the same as a strong brands," he said. "There were some divisions that didn't fit with the rest of the group, such as the group student and school trips, which had better homes elsewhere. We had to make some tough choices." The process is around half way there and is expected to be completed with the next 12 months. Duncan said all of the priority brands would rely on a balance of direct and trade sales, depending on the brand. "There were legacy relationships with TUI that had got in the way of working with other businesses, but that's no longer the case," he said. Duncan, who came from outside the industry and previously worked in television and for Camelot, said this was his first ABTA Convention and the event had given him the opportunity to speak to industry peers and learn a lot more about the industry. "I can't match many of you in terms of your industry experience, but I think I bring new experience and ideas from other industries," he told delegates. He said he was particularly experienced in customer experience and the data and digital side, which would be a focus for Travelopia. "We've not been very good with data so that's a real opportunity," he said. He also believes there are opportunities for a more co-operative approach in the travel industry. "It's a complex world but I think there are partnership opportunities where travel businesses could legitimately compete in some areas but partner in others," he said.

14 October 2019, source: TravelMole

ABTA to resist any rise in ATOL levy

ABTA has vowed to resist any attempts to increase the £2.50 per passenger levy paid into the Air Travel Trust Fund following the collapse of Thomas Cook. It is feared there might be calls to increase the levy to replenish the heavily depleted fund to cover the expensive Thomas Cook repatriation and refunds to customers. Following XL Leisure's collapse in 2008

the levy was increased from £1 to £2.50. Peter Bucks, chair of the Government's recent Airline Insolvency Review, said the majority of travellers would be prepared to pay up to £5. The CAA says there are no immediate plans to raise it again but at last week's ABTA Convention in Tokyo, chief executive Mark Tanzer made a point of saying ABTA would fiercely resist any rise. "The failure of Thomas Cook has made a big dent in the Air Travel Trust Fund, but we would very much resist it changing beyond £2.50," he said. He said even if there were further failures 'there aren't many more companies of the size and scale of Thomas Cook'.

15 October 2019, source: TTG

Flybe to be rebranded Virgin Connect in 2020

It follows Connect's acquisition of the struggling regional carrier last year. The Connect consortium is led by Virgin Atlantic with a 30% stake, with Stobart Group also holding a 30% stake and Cyrus Capital Partners 40%. Connect pledged to rebrand Flybe under the Virgin banner from the outset, and revealed the Virgin Connect moniker on Tuesday (15 October). It will do away with Flybe's long-standing purple livery and will embrace Virgin's trademark red branding. Virgin intends to use Connect as a regional feeder airline, operating from 12 UK bases, for its long-haul operations, operating out of Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast International. Connect says it will be offering customers "an enhanced experience" while maintaining its regional heritage. "As Flybe, we have been connecting passengers across the UK and Europe for 40 years, and as we embark on an ambitious transformation, Virgin Connect will continue our work as Europe's largest regional airline," said Connect. "As part of the extended Virgin family, Virgin Connect will reflect the innovation and entrepreneurship of Virgin's wider brands, putting our customers first and offering better value. "Providing great customer experience is at the core of Virgin Connect's DNA and will be one of the many ways in which we will differentiate ourselves in the regional market upon rebranding next year."

16 October 2019, source: TTG

Former Thomas Cook chiefs to join Barrhead Travel

Former Thomas Cook chiefs Chris Mottershead, Kathryn Darbandi and Nicki Tempest-Mitchell have been appointed by Barrhead parent Travel Leaders Group to project manage Barrhead's nationwide expansion plan. The announcement follows Barrhead and parent Travel Leaders Group's announcement last week it was seeking to grow Barrhead's retail network by up to 100 stores. A UK-wide recruitment drive to hire former Thomas Cook employees is already under way, and the expansion team will work strategically to implement new store openings across the country. Mottershead will coordinate the expansion effort, with Darbandi and Tempest-Mitchell supporting him by harnessing their combined 60 years of experience to deliver the growth strategy and help develop the Barrhead brand across new locations. "Chris, Kathryn and Nicki have an extensive knowledge of the travel retail industry and are very well placed to identify the locations and teams necessary to create a successful retail footprint across the UK," said Travel Leaders Group chairman Mike Batt. Barrhead president Jacqueline Dobson added: "Chris and the expansion team will bring valuable insights and experience to help extend Barrhead Travel's quality service to new communities, and we look forward to the first of many new store openings under this initiative. "It is

gratifying to see that they reflect our group values: prizing people development, customer experience and dedication to the high street travel agent.”

17 October 2019, source: TTG

Virgin Atlantic claim “public want more choice at Heathrow”

A Populous poll of more than 2,000 Brits, commissioned by Virgin, found 57% of respondents wanted to see more competition at Heathrow. Nearly 60%, meanwhile, said they would choose to connect via Heathrow if it offered a greater range of airlines. More than a third though (36%) said they had connected to international destinations via European airports rather than the UK’s main hub airport. Reasons cited included cost and a lack of connecting flights from their regional departure airport. Virgin earlier this year acquired Flybe, which it will rebrand Virgin Connect next year – the carrier serving as regional feed for Virgin’s long-haul operations. Virgin says expansion at Heathrow via a third runway will create capacity for a second flag carrier at the airport, a spot it has long had designs on. Its polling found 59% of respondents would choose to connect via Heathrow if there was greater competition. Shai Weiss, Virgin Atlantic chief executive, said it was “crystal clear” the British public wanted more choice at Heathrow airport, and reiterated his belief Virgin was “best positioned” to address the lack of competition. “Change is not a choice but a necessity,” said Weiss. “We have outlined our ambitions to create effective competition when Heathrow expands by proposing 84 new routes, linking domestic and European flights to international destinations, benefiting passengers through more choice and lower fares. With a third runway due to open from 2026, the government has a unique opportunity to transform competition at the airport by re-assessing the way take-off and landing slots are allocated. This once-in-a-generation opportunity cannot be missed.” Weiss is due to address politicians and industry representatives at the Airlines 2050 conference in London on Thursday (17 October). Virgin set out its new route proposals for an expanded Heathrow last month.

17 October 2019, source: TTG

Norwegian and JetBlue ink interline agreement

The partnership will allow customers to combine fares into a single booking on connecting flights between Europe and the Americas, with baggage checked through to their final destination, and take advantage of both carriers’ route networks. Interline flights will be bookable during the first half of 2020 through both airlines’ websites, as well as by travel agents via the GDS. It follows New York-based JetBlue’s commitment earlier this year to launching transatlantic services to at least one as yet unnamed London airport. The partnership will connect more than 60 US and nearly 40 Caribbean and Latin American destinations to Norwegian’s network via New York-JFK, Boston and Fort Lauderdale airports, from which it currently offers more than 20 non-stop routes to Europe. Norwegian chief financial officer and acting chief executive Geir Karlsen said the partnership would open up smooth international travel to more customers. “JetBlue is the largest airline at several of our key gateways in the United States, specifically New York-JFK, Boston and Fort Lauderdale, and this partnership will create a plethora of new route connections for customers on both sides of the Atlantic,” said Karlsen. JetBlue chief executive Robin Hayes added: “This new agreement with Norwegian seamlessly connects JetBlue’s robust network throughout the US, Caribbean and Latin America with the exciting European destinations on our new partner’s route map. “Norwegian shares our belief customers benefit when we can

bring competition and low fares to the transatlantic market currently dominated by joint ventures, legacy alliances and sky-high ticket prices.”

21 October 2019, source: TTG

Former Thomas Cook bosses and auditors to face grilling by MPs

Parliament’s inquiry into Cook’s collapse will continue on Tuesday and Wednesday following criticism of the two former chiefs and accountancy firms PwC and EY. Fontenla-Nova was at the helm of the company when it underwent rapid expansion from 2003-2011, with some believing the debt mountain built up during this period contributed to its demise. Green is under the spotlight for her remuneration package during a two-year period in which she led the operator. Both former chiefs will give evidence to the government’s Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee on Wednesday. Also present will be Bill Scott, former chief finance officer. The questioning of the accountancy firms, which will be on Tuesday, follows criticism by the Institute of Directors over accounting methods used at Cook. The IoD has also questioned how directors’ pay and bonuses were calculated on profits that excluded one-off negative items. Tuesday’s hearing will also receive evidence from Manuel Cortes, general secretary of union TSSA, who will detail the impact of the collapse on workers and consumers.

21 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Extinction Rebellion postpones Gatwick protest

An Extinction Rebellion protest at Gatwick on Thursday was called off after other protestors came under attack from commuters during a stand-off on the London transport system. Climate change activists had planned to gather at Gatwick's South Terminal on Thursday morning to 'indulge in a bit of mischief' and give a 'wake-up call' to the airport. But the action was postponed after protests on the London transport system turned violent. A small number of people still met in the airport and handed out leaflets but were discouraged from wearing any Extinction Rebellion branding. According to local media, there was a huge police presence at the airport in preparation for the protest. Extinction Rebellion said it was taking stock of the reaction to its protests on the London Underground. Activists climbed on to trains at Stratford, Canning Town and Shadwell during Thursday's rush hour but angry commuters dragged them down. One of the protestors was seen, in video footage, kicking out at a commuter as he was grabbed by the leg. A statement by Extinction Rebellion said: "We would like to express our sadness that events escalated this way. "We are aware that one of our activists responded in self-defense in a moment of panic when confronted by a threatening situation. He acknowledges his accountability for this action, and we offer gratitude for members of the public who helped to protect him. To those that engaged in violence, we acknowledge that we disrupted your life today. Rather than let this incident divide - at this moment of heightened attention - we think it is right to reach out to you, to invite you to have a conversation about what happened today. In light of today's events, Extinction Rebellion will be looking at ways to bring people together rather than create an unnecessary division." Around 1,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square for a peaceful protest on Thursday night.

22 October 2019, source: TTG

On The Beach aiming to ‘significantly increase’ market share

The OTA released a trading update for the 12 months to 30 September this morning (22 October) ahead of announcing its preliminary results on 27 November. “Trading has remained in line with management’s revised expectations for the full year,” said the company in a statement. “The compulsory liquidation of Thomas Cook Group has had a significant impact on the package travel industry. For On the Beach, this has created an unprecedented opportunity to take additional market share at an increased rate. As a result, the group has started to strategically increase its marketing investment both online and offline to attract new customers to Onthebeach.co.uk, Sunshine.co.uk, Classic Collection and Classic Package Holidays, and is well positioned across all channels.” The group said it will update shareholders further on release of its preliminary results. Simon Cooper, chief executive of On the Beach Group, said: “I would like to thank all teams across the business for their exceptional response following the compulsory liquidation of TCG in ensuring that customers were either re-booked or refunded in the shortest possible time whilst maintaining our high quality customer experience standards. On the Beach has an exciting opportunity to significantly increase its market share over the short to medium term by leveraging its strong brand and core capabilities.”

24 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Thomas Cook’s chiefs slammed for ‘passing the buck’

MPs have hit out at Thomas Cook chiefs for continually passing the buck and refusing to take responsibility for the demise of the company. Rachel Reeves MP, leading the inquiry into Thomas Cook's collapse, said she was fed up with hearing everybody refusing to take responsibility. "Everybody has blamed everyone apart from themselves. It would be good to see someone from Thomas Cook holding their hand up and saying, 'we got it wrong and I wish we'd done it differently'," she said at a hearing yesterday. "They never look at themselves and blame the decisions they've made. It's the volcanic ash, it's the hot weather in the UK, it's the depreciation of the pound, or it's the debt acquired by somebody else. It would be really good to hear someone from Thomas Cook say to your customers and your suppliers and your employees, some of whom are sitting here today, to hear them say 'we got it wrong' rather than just passing the buck to someone else." Her words came as MPs grilled former CEOs Manny Fontenla-Novoa and Harriett Green and former finance chief Bill Scott about the part they had played. Fontenla-Novoa refused to accept that his decisions to merge with MyTravel and The Cooperative Group during his leadership were wrong. His acquisition spree has been blamed by his successors for stifling the company with massive debt. Green argued that she had begun to make progress but had been ousted by the Board before she could complete her transformation. Last week the most recent CEO Peter Fankhauser also insisted he would not have done anything differently.

24 October 2019, source: TTG

Britons taking fewer overseas holidays in 2019

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the number of holidays abroad fell by 2% to 14.3 million for the three-month period compared with the previous year. Business trips dropped even more steeply during this period, falling 10% to 1.6 million visits. This decline came despite a 1.5% rise in overseas holidays in July, which rose to 5.2 million during the month. Although total international trips by UK residents were down by 1% for the first

seven months to 25.8 million. Overall there were a total of 20.1 million international visits by UK residents between May and July, which was down by 3% year-on-year. One of the major trends was a rise in visits to North America, which rose by 4% to 1.1 million, while trips to Europe dropped by 4% to 16.8 million for the three month-period. Visits to other countries outside North America and Europe rose by 1% year-on-year. There were 7.1 million visits by UK residents in July, which was a fall of 2% compared with July 2018, although the level of spending on these trips stayed constant at £4.8 billion. For the first seven months of the year, the number of UK residents going overseas fell by 2% to 39.8 million. The figures are compiled from responses to the ONS's International Passenger Survey. The number of overseas visitors coming to the UK rose by 1% year-on-year to 10.8 million from May to July, including a 1% increase in July. James Schofield, head of food, drink and leisure at Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, said of the figures: "After a positive start to the year, Brits' appetite to travel overseas waned as they entered peak season, and these figures show that trend continued into July. It was encouraging to see, therefore, that overseas travellers were able to shrug off slowing global growth and take advantage of the continued relative weakness of sterling to visit the UK."

25 October 2019, source: TTG

Impact of Cook failure on ATOL renewals will come in 'next months'

The September Atol figures are due to be released on Monday (28 October), after the CAA extended existing Atols to 25 October. Alan Bowen, legal advisor to the Association of Atol Companies, told *TTG* Cook's collapse was unlikely to affect this round of renewals because documentation and accounts had already been submitted before Cook's collapse on 23 September. "It's over the next year and future renewals where it will have a real impact," he said. "A lot of Atol holders have lost money because Cook was taking full payments so far in advance – 18 months for one of my clients." The latest Atol figures show On the Beach, which renews its licence every April, has replaced Cook as the third largest Atol holder with 1.65 million passengers. Loveholidays moves up to fourth place with an Atol for 1.37 million. Preliminary publicly available figures show Tui UK and Jet2holidays retained the top two spots as the largest Atol holders. Tui UK told *TTG* it intended to let the CAA "know about our intention to increase our Atol", while Jet2 has so far increased its licensable passengers by 105,000 to 3.9 million for the same period. Tour operators can apply to the CAA to increase their licence to carry more package passengers at any time following renewal.

25 October 2019, source: TTG

BA Holidays reveals most popular destinations for 2020

With the *Abta Holiday Habits Report 2019* finding trips away continue to be a spending priority, BA Holidays has published its destination hot list for next year. Despite Tokyo receiving a boost thanks to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, New York remains the most booked holiday through the airline for 2020. Orlando, Las Vegas, Dubai and Barbados all reached the top-five most-searched holidays, while other popular long-haul destinations include Punta Cana, Cancun, Dubai, Barbados, Antigua, Mauritius and Cape Town. Areas benefiting from a growth in bookings included the Seychelles, Durban, Tel Aviv, Maldives, Dalaman, Palma and Marrakech. The most trips were booked for January and popular European destinations include Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Corfu and Faro. "UK holidaymakers

love to travel, and our holiday hot list shows a mix of new and everyday popular destinations that are going to be big for 2020,” Claire Bentley, managing director of BA Holidays, said. “Classic city break New York remains the most popular holiday destination, but we’ve found that all-inclusive holidays are now the break of choice for BA Holidays customers, and that bookings to more exotic locations, such as the Seychelles and Maldives, are quickly growing.”

28 October 2019, source: TTG

Jet2 sales top £1m for Hays Travel’s ex-Cook stores

It came after Westminster’s inquiry into the collapse of Cook revealed Hays had paid “just over £6 million” for Cook’s network of 555 shops, equating to about £11,000 per branch. While owner John Hays wouldn’t be drawn on financial details, he did reveal that as of Thursday (24 October) 350 of the former Cook stores were open and were continuing to be “rolled out really fast”. A total of 2,000 Cook staff had been recruited. “We’re having to do some temporary things to get them open, like buying 4G broadband routers. We’re also using packs of signage with very clear Hays Travel branding that we’re putting in the windows.” He added the new shops were “trading better than expected. During the first few days we did £1 million in sales with Jet2, just from the new ones – they couldn’t sell Jet2 before.” Dean Beale, chief executive of the Insolvency Service, revealed the £6 million figure during the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy select committee inquiry, which has been taking place in London.

28 October 2019, source: TTG

Virgin Atlantic to launch trade rewards programme

Lee Haslett, vice-president of UK and European sales, said the initiative would be “a leading incentive scheme from an airline” and would be based on “driving bookings and engagement” via agents. “I can’t say too much about it yet but it will be unique,” he told *TTG*. “No other airline has a scheme like it for the trade and we’re coming out with it at some point next year.” In an interview in this week’s *TTG*, Haslett, who joined Virgin Atlantic in June from Virgin Holidays, said 2020 was poised to be “a massive year” for the carrier and the wider Virgin Group. “We’re building really strong foundations for the future and that includes the trade. We value the job agents do for us and their customers and we want to work with agents who want to work with us,” Haslett said.

28 October 2019, source: TTG

TUI says package holiday demand still healthy despite Cook demise

That was the message of Tui Airways northern region managing director Dawn Wilson, speaking on a CEO panel at the Airlines 2050 conference. She said the failure of rival Thomas Cook “really hurt”. But she rejected the idea Cook’s collapse meant the package holiday was losing popularity with British consumers. Wilson said: “I believe the whole model is still popular. We take six million customers on holiday every year from the UK and one of our competitors, Jet2, does something similar.” Instead, she argued Cook’s failure was largely thanks to its inability to keep up with the times and the changing tastes of UK

consumers. She said customers no longer wanted regular meetings with reps, although they still wanted service at their fingertips digitally. “We’ve changed our business over the past five or six years,” Wilson said. “We’re looking at diversifying what we do and we are looking at how we can digitalise those aspects. You have to be very fast-paced in this industry, as there are lots of people out there who want to take a share of what you do.” Wilson also spoke of Tui’s keenness to get its Boeing 737 Maxs back in the air as soon as the aircraft model is deemed safe by global authorities following two deadly crashes. The firm had received 15 of the aircraft from an order of 60 and warned in March their grounding could cost the airline as much as £258 million. Wilson said: “The consumer will be confused at the beginning; we’ve got to work with the industry and the regulators to be clear about what has happened in the interim period and what has changed.”

30 October 2019, source: BBC News

UK general election confirmed for 12th December

UK parliament has voted in favour of a general election to be held before Christmas on the 12th December. The impasse was finally broken and now Boris Johnson’s government hope an election will clear the way for them to enact Brexit by the new deadline of 31st January 2020.

30 October 2019, source: TravelMole

Boeing accused of building ‘flying coffins’

US lawmakers told Boeing it put profits before lives when it rushed to get clearance for its 737 MAX 8 aircraft, which suffered two fatal crashes, killing 346 people, before being grounded earlier this year. Questioning Boeing chief executive Dennis Muilenburg, the US Senate Commerce Committee said the aircraft manufacturer had engaged 'in a pattern of deliberate concealment' to get FAA approval for the MAX jet. Lawmakers said Boeing was aware of problems with the aircraft's automated control system MCAS, which has since been identified as a factor in both the Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines crashes. Senator Roger Wicker said messages between Boeing staff during certification that raised issues in the MCAS test system betrayed 'a disturbing level of casualness and flippancy'. Senator Richard Blumenthal said Boeing had rushed the approval process and engaged in a 'pattern of deliberate concealment'. He suggested that pilots had been misled and Boeing had, in effect, designed a 'flying coffin'. Muilenburg admitted the firm had made 'mistakes'. He told the committee: "We have learned from both accidents and identified changes that need to be made," he said. Senators also criticised the regulatory process, saying there was excessive 'cosiness' between Boeing and safety officials at the FAA. Blumenthal described the US certification process as 'absolutely broken'. Muilenburg said the aircraft manufacturer supported 'strong oversight' but declined to support increasing the authority of the FAA. Since the grounding of the 737 MAX aircraft in March, Boeing has been working on a software fix. It has also overhauled its review procedures. But senators said the continued delays in re-certification cast serious doubt on the initial approval. They blamed Boeing for not sharing more information about the MCAS system with regulators and pilots. Senator Maria Cantwell said the crashes should spur broader scrutiny of automated systems, which are becoming more common - not just in aircraft but also in cars and other forms of transport.

31 October 2019, source: TTG Luxury

Growth expected in global luxury tourism until 2023

A report released by Statista also predicted that luxury trips, defined as being those made by people with net assets of more than \$1 million and who spend an average \$2,400 each travel day, will grow by 7.3% annually until 2023. It analysed the luxury market of nine countries: the US, China, Germany, India, Mexico, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa and Morocco. The US had the largest luxury travel market, with a value of nearly \$263 billion, and China came in second, worth \$90 billion. Statista predicted China's and India's luxury markets as being those that will grow the most rapidly in the next five years, driven by increases of affluent travellers in their domestic markets. "A key trend that has been shaping luxury tourism in recent years is the increase in multi-generational travel," Dr Friedrich Schwandt, Statista's founder and managing director, said. "Families are seeking an opportunity to spend quality time together and strengthen bonds. As millennials and generation Z gain economic influence and represent an increasing proportion of luxury travellers, adventure, uniqueness, as well as sustainability also become vital, as they contribute to a high-profile social media image." The report went on to say that that luxury market represents 14% of the total global tourism market, which is said to be worth \$5.9 trillion.