

## FY09/10 Sales & Marketing Plan UK, Ireland & Scandinavia

### Background statistics

2008 started very strongly in terms of UK and Irish travel to the US but the impact of the worldwide economic crisis is affecting every corner of the economy including travel. Despite this the following markets all posted increases in visitation to the US to the end of 2008:

UK	Total 4,564,895	1.5% up
Ireland	Total 531,198	8% up
Sweden	Total 397,097	18% up
Norway	Total 213,983	24% up
Finland	Total 118,448	23% up

- In 2008 UK visitors to Orlando numbered approximately 935, 200. On the basis of UK visitor numbers to Pinellas County to the end of 2008 (638,283), 68% of British visitors that went to Orlando also came to St Petersburg/Clearwater.
- British visitors to Pinellas County were up 12.2% in 2008 and represented a 63.4% share of all European visitation.
- To the end of February 2009, UK visitation to Pinellas County was up 6.4% over the same period the previous year.

In terms of deplanements to Orlando and Sandford, charter carriers are down and scheduled carriers are up. The main impact has been the demise of XL Airways and has meant that between March 2008 and February 2009 UK passenger deplanements into Orlando/Sanford are off by -5.8%.

Direct seat capacity into Orlando/Sanford airports will fall by an estimated 112,325 seats in 2009 or by 10.9%. Most of the decline in capacity is due to the loss of about 75 thousand seats that were provided by XL Airways in 2008 and the merger of TUI and First Choice and My Travel and Thomas Cook.

Scheduled carriers delivered 67% of passengers to Orlando/Sanford during the past 12 months (March 2008 – February 2009) compared with 59% during the previous 12 months. Passenger volumes between the UK and Miami/Tampa/Ft Lauderdale fell by -0.1% during the past 12 months compared with a -5.8 % decline for Orlando/Sanford.

New trends are emerging as a result of the economic crisis. Firstly, consumers are making enquiries much closer to their planned departure date than they have previously. Secondly, the number of enquiries is very high compared to the number of bookings, demonstrating that consumers are really shopping around, not necessarily to get the cheapest deal but to get the best **value** on offer in the marketplace. Finally, consumers are biding their time before actually confirming their booking. A series of surveys held in the industry since October 2008 consistently shows that British travellers in particular will not forego their vacation at any cost. They are leaving it later to book but they are travelling.

The primary focus for the UK Office is to continue to capitalise on the huge number of UK visitors travelling to Orlando and work on persuading them to come to our beach. The key is ensuring the St Petersburg/Clearwater appeals to as wide an audience as possible ie families with young children, families with teenage children, younger couples and older couples.

As such much emphasis in training sessions and in talking product has been and will continue to be on the great diversity of activities, the fact that the area can be as busy or relaxing as you want it to be, the simplicity of the great beach and the proximity to Orlando. It must be remembered that although numbers to Florida are projected to be down slightly to the end of 2009, until every visitor that goes to Orlando also comes to St Petersburg/Clearwater, we have not fulfilled our potential. Based on 2008 figures we received 32% fewer visitors than Orlando or nearly 300,000 UK visitors and that is who we need to convert.

### **Primary sales goals for FY09/10**

- To maintain and increase visitation to St. Petersburg/Clearwater by UK, Irish and Nordic visitors and maximise their length of stay and spending in-resort.
- Achieve this by leveraging partnerships and budgets with tour operators and Florida partners to appeal to a wide audience.
- Position St Petersburg/Clearwater as a destination with fantastic beaches within close proximity to Orlando appealing to families and couples of all ages

We have started to see a good turn-around as a result of our efforts to reposition the area post-construction, with more product featured, an increase in room nights booked and generally a much more positive outlook by operators in general. However our aim remains to convert every possible UK, Irish and Scandinavian visitor coming to Orlando to also come to St Petersburg/Clearwater.

### **Strategies to achieve the goals**

- Attendance at World Travel Market in London and heightened profile via sponsorship of the coat check areas.
- Attendance at Florida Huddle in Clearwater
- Attendance at 8 consumer shows throughout the year in UK, Ireland and Scandinavia.
- Ongoing tour operator sales calls and training in UK, Ireland and Scandinavia to maximise product inclusion and room night sales
- Close liaison with Visit Florida, Busch Gardens, Orlando Tourism and other Florida suppliers to co-op on budgets where possible and align ourselves with credible partners
- Initiate major co-op marketing campaigns with tour operators such as Virgin Holidays, Travel City Direct, Cosmos, Trailfinders, Funway, Lotus, TUI, American Holidays and Tour America including national press, direct marketing to their client database and online.
- Tour operator VIP special event in conjunction with Busch Gardens
- National retail agent in-store promotion with TUI in 530 shops including call to action, training of TUI retail agents and targeting of the TUI consumer database
- Maintenance of the Visit St Petersburg/Clearwater Travel UNI training programme for travel agents launched in the current fiscal year aiming to have 500 agents signed up within 12 months