

# **UK OFFICE**

## **June 2013 REPORT**

**Prepared by: Venessa Alexander**  
**UK Director**

### **IPW**

Attended International Pow Wow in Las Vegas and met with the following operators:

### **Expedia**

Discussed the forthcoming Manchester consumer campaign and the in-kind campaign that Expedia are providing in return for the call to action on the consumer advertising.

### **Destination America**

Strong self-catering product in Florida and were requesting self-catering information for our area.

### **Tour America**

Discussed the recent co-op promotion and spoke about the forthcoming August window campaign as well as marketing moving forward in to the new fiscal.

### **Virgin Holidays**

Discussed current business and were advised that 2013 is 7% up and 2014 is already 35% up. Spoke about a number of marketing opportunities including co-op on their cruise programme.

### **USAirtours**

Advised they are growing the direct side of the business and they are also producing a brand new Florida villa and apartments brochure. Spoke about co-op and will meet at WTM to discuss further.

### **FDM Travel, Denmark**

Spoke about their consumer show to be held in early March and adding a St Pete/Clearwater online presence as we are not currently featured in the brochure.

### **Aer Lingus**

Have just signed an agreement with JetBlue to provide connecting routes through New York. Spoke about a potential Irish product fam in May 2014 connecting via New York to Tampa.

### **Premier Holidays**

Advised they are having another fantastic year and St Pete/Clearwater continues to do very well for them. Currently showing a 20% increase on 2012.

### **Travelsphere**

Meeting as follow up to a lead that went out to solicit hotels for a 2014 tour programme. Provided a more detailed overview of the area and spoke about a possible 2<sup>nd</sup> night to be added to the tour series.

### **Flexible Trips**

Main discussion was regarding the restructure between Gold Medal and Thomas Cook and the new marketing and product teams covering all Thomas Cook products.

### **BA/BA Holidays**

Spoke about the recent campaign which turned room nights around as there had been a substantial decrease before April but they are now showing a 58% increase on 2012. Average length of stay has also increased from 4 to 6 nights.

### **Spies, Denmark**

Sent approx. 250 pax to SPC in 2012 but couldn't provide room night info. Spoke about possible co-op in conjunction with Visit Orlando and awaiting a proposal.

### **American Holidays, Ireland**

Business to SPC is up about 15% for 2013 which reflects bookings to Florida in general. Provided information on new hotels in downtown St Pete.

### **Gold Medal Travel**

Advised after the split with Thomas Cook, they will be producing a dedicated Florida brochure, in which St Pete/Clearwater will be substantially promoted. They will be in touch with requests for images etc nearer production date.

### **Complete North America**

Discussed the forthcoming Jaguar Owners Club meet that is coming to SPC in March 2014. Awaiting confirmed dates but they wanted advice on activities during their stay.

### **Stella Travel**

Looking to expand their SPC product and provided an area update. They are showing a 6% increase in 2013 albeit on small numbers.

### **Getabed**

Wholesaler to the UK travel industry and provide accommodation inventory from around the world. Have not focussed much on the US but now have a team in place to increase and proactively push this product. Provided an update on area accommodation and offered assistance with any proposed contracting trips.

### **Sunway Holidays, Ireland**

Have been running a US programme for 3 years and were up 36% in 2012 and 45% to Florida. They are seeing an increase in repeat business and advised that SPC is their best-selling destination after Orlando by a long way. Spoke about possible co-op and will follow up at WTM.

### **Meetings with Tour Operators**

#### **Funway Holidays**

A meeting was held with Melissa Tilling and Nick Talbot to discuss the recent joint campaign as well as discussing other possibilities in the future. We went over the campaign results as per the recent meeting at Pow Wow and were also advised about a second phase plan that is due to commence in September 2013. Advised our budgets are being set and that we would look at this at a later stage once details have been confirmed. In the meantime we

have provided Funway with video footage of our destination for them to include on their website. The recent fam trip that we were assisting on has now taken place and we had some fantastic feedback from both Funway and the agents themselves.

### **Flight Centre Retail**

A meeting was held with Sarah Dean to discuss the forthcoming retail promotion launching in September 2013. Trained Sarah on the destination and also provided her with copy, images and logos for the campaign. Preparations will be on-going over the following months.

### **Lotus Travel Group**

General update meeting held with Sarah Wilson at Lotus. Discussed the area in general and received a positive update from Lotus regarding the destination. Sarah advised that Florida continues to sell well for them and most of their bookings do include a fly-drive element

### **Other Meetings**

**Visit Florida** - Attended the Visit Florida general partners meeting in London

**Trailfinders** – Trained 26 front line sales agents at the main Trailfinders retail outlet in Kensington, London. Provided the agents with up to date area information, literature and giveaways.

**Premier Holidays** – Attended the Travel Agent Managers Meeting training session and hosted dinner for Directors, Regional Managers, Branch Managers and travel agents from both Premier Travel and Travel Centre branches in and around the Norwich area of the UK. We got to network and discuss the area with over 20 members of staff and the hosted dinner was very well received.

### **TRADE LIAISON**

- **Barrhead** – The recent Retail In-Store promotion with Barrhead Travel in Scotland has now ended and we are currently awaiting results. The last element of the campaign will take place next month and is the shopping centre promotion that will be highlighted by Barrhead Travel Staff in a Glasgow retail shopping centre over a period of 2 days. The retail staff will man a stand with our literature and giveaways. Barrhead Travel are also producing a joint pop up banner booth for us to use at this event as well as others in the future. When the stand is not being used it will be displayed in their flagship branch in Glasgow.
- **TUI Specialist/Tampa/St. Pete/Clearwater Promotion** – This campaign is still running and this month we have signed off 2 x Hayes & Jarvis weekly email footer advertisements as well as the splash page. Campaign on-going.
- **Results from the campaign with Tour America** have now been received. During the campaign period 564 room nights were booked to St Pete/Clearwater and forward bookings are up 33%. We received 5130 click through on the online portion of the campaign as well as a 29% open rate on the targeted email blasts.
- **Signed off co-op for Virgin Holidays** email to their client database

- Trailfinders have reported that business to St Pete/Clearwater is up just under 50% over 2012
- Signed off creative for the Manchester advertising campaign which launches on bus sides, taxis and bus shelters on 1<sup>st</sup> September and will run for a month. Liaison with Expedia regarding the call to action and with Rooster re PR spin off opportunities.
- Schedule for the 2014 Scandinavian Sales Mission in conjunction with Visit Orlando, SeaWorld Parks and Universal Resorts has now been confirmed. The Mission will take place week of 17<sup>th</sup> March.
- Confirmed with Virgin Holidays that one part of our co-op money will now be allocated towards a co-op with Virgin Holidays and NCL. This will take the form of email blasts and substantial exposure on the Virgin Holidays cruise website during the months of August and September.
- As Chair of Florida's Beaches signed up for the Holiday World show in Dublin and the FDM Travel show in Copenhagen. Extensive liaison with Miami CVB re design of the new Florida's Beaches brochure and the redesign of the posters.
- Visit USA Ireland - Provided details of the new Hollander Hotel in Downtown St. Petersburg to the VUSA.IE for their June e-newsletter, which has since duly been sent.
- Continued liaison with Rooster PR
- Gold Medal/Thomas Cook Signature – Sign off on-going as part of our co-op marketing activity with Gold Medal/TCS.
- Visit USA UK – The recent e-newsletter from the VUSA in the UK had details of a package in Florida from America As You Like It which included a stay at the Hilton on Clearwater Beach.
- Tour America – Liaison with Tour America continuing on both the August Window Campaign and staff incentive.
- Norwegian Cruise Line – Confirmed our participation as NCL's Destination of the Month Campaign partner for October. A general training information sheet was produced and sent to NCL for distribution to all of their travel agent partners, of which they have over 3,000.
- Bathstore Promotion – Liaising with Virgin Holidays to assist the recent prize winner that was drawn after the campaign ended.
- Decathlon Promotion – Liaising with TUI Specialist to assist the prize winner drawn once the campaign had finished.

#### **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

24

## **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

04 June 2013 – Source Travolution

### **Virgin to open social media ‘Holiday Laboratories’**

Virgin Holidays is to open the first of two paperless ‘holiday laboratories’ this weekend, giving customers the opportunity to create their own holidays on giant screens and iPads.

The first of the new-look retail outlets will open within House of Fraser at Bluewater shopping centre in Kent on Saturday. The second will open in a standalone shop in the Meadowhall Centre in Sheffield on July 8. Both stores will be paperless, with no brochures and a focus on video content and imagery to inspire customers, who will be able to “pull together” itineraries using motion capture – technology that records their movements – and take away the results in digital format to browse further at home. The holiday laboratories will feature “multi-sensory” environments including textured flooring, mini putting greens, mood lighting to reflect different times of day, and scents to recreate the sensation of being on holiday. Customers will also be able to have a photo taken against a ‘green screen’ after booking, so they can share details of their holiday on social media. Mark Anderson, customer and sales director, said: “Our holiday laboratories have been designed with one purpose – to harness the latest technology and the increasingly powerful influence of social media to create something really different on the high street. “As our retail network has grown, we’ve increasingly seen the need to put ‘play’ at the heart of the buying experience and these two stores are the logical conclusion of that process.” The Bluewater store will also include a Disney area, with a space for digital research and a dressing-up box for kids.

Hugh Wood, vice-president and managing director of Disney Destinations International, said: “We are always looking for new and exciting ways to interact with our customers and this new offering from Virgin Holidays will bring the Walt Disney World and Disney Cruise Line brands to life in a magical way that enriches the customer booking experience.” The new stores add to an expansion of Virgin Holidays’ retail estate, which will consist of 110 outlets, including temporary pop-ups, by mid-summer. Other operators and agents including Kuoni and Abercrombie & Kent have also opened new-style stores that exploit modern technology. Thomas Cook opened its first concept store in Leeds last year.

04 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **Expedia embarks on marketing campaign**

Expedia has unveiled a new marketing campaign today ready for a roll-out on Monday. The multi-million pound campaign has been devised with Oglivy & Mather with the line ‘Travel Yourself Interesting’ and will be shown at London’s rooftop cinemas, in print and social media. They feature ‘underdog’ characters in a yacht club and office who become the centre of attention while sharing their travel stories.

04 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **TUI to buy 60 next generation Boeing 737s**

TUI is planning to buy 60 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft for £4 billion. It says the deal, subject to shareholder approval, will help it “re-define mainstream holidays”. Deliveries will start in 2018 and will run until March 2023. TUI said it has secured a significant discount to the list price of each aircraft through “concessions, allowances and support from Boeing”. It also has the right to purchase a further 30 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft at a later date. Chief executive Peter Long said: “A major part of TUI Travel’s strategy is to provide our customers with unique holiday experiences they can only get from us. “This multi-billion pound investment in the B737 MAX - representing the future generation of more fuel-efficient aircraft for our short and medium-haul programmes - will be a further driver in delivering this.” “I can

confidently say that being able to offer our customers the most advanced, comfortable aircraft, whether they are travelling with us to short or long-haul destinations, while reducing our environmental impact, will only strengthen our position." TUI Travel owns and operates six European airlines across its Mainstream Sector - Thomson Airways, TUIfly, TUIfly Nordic, ArkeFly, Jetairfly and Corsair - and around 80% of its passengers travelled on narrow-bodied aircraft to short and medium-haul destinations during the last financial year.

The 737 MAX aircraft uses a new technology engine type from CFM which Boeing claims gives a 13% improvement in fuel efficiency and a 40% noise reduction over today's main competitors. Today's announcement comes as the first of TUI's Boeing 787s touches down in the UK. The Thomson 787 Dreamliner flies into Manchester today at 11am, having flown from the Boeing Everett Factory in Seattle. It will be followed with the delivery of a further three Thomson 787 aircraft this summer. Thomson will fly the 787 from London Gatwick, Manchester, East Midlands and Glasgow airports, on long haul routes to Sanford, Florida and Cancun in Mexico, starting from July 8.

04 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Advantage in talks to keep hold of Barrhead Travel**

Talks are taking place between Advantage Travel Centres and one of its largest members, Barrhead Travel, following the announcement that Barrhead is joining up with Midcounties Co-operative Travel. Barrhead and Midcounties are forming a new partnership, Venture, which they claim will create the largest buying group in the industry. Set to launch on November 1, the venture will see Midcounties take on Barrhead's Nevis in-house technology system, which Midcounties chief executive Ben Reid described as "the future of travel retailing". The pair plan to work together to increase their buying power with suppliers.

Barrhead chairman Bill Munro said the similarities between the businesses were striking from the outset. One of Advantage's largest members, Barrhead says it has given its notice to Advantage and will leave at the end of September but Advantage leisure director Julia Lo Bue Said insisted talks are still ongoing and Barrhead remains a member until its membership expires in March 2014. When asked about the impact on Advantage should Barrhead leave, she said: "Barrhead operates very independently and therefore there will be no impact to our overall buying power which on leisure, is in aggregate of around £1.5 billion." Midcounties had joined Advantage as a temporary measure following the Thomas Cook Co-operative Travel merger. It is due to leave in September. Senior management from all parties are currently in Abu Dhabi for the Institute of Travel and Tourism Conference, where the discussions are taking place. Barrhead Travel, founded in Glasgow by Bill Munro in 1975, is Scotland's largest independent travel group and employs 750 staff across 50 locations. It bought UK-based cruise agency 'The Holiday Specialists' in December 2012 in a deal worth in the region of £3 million. Barrhead Travel predicts the acquisition could see its 2013 turnover climb by 22% to over £200 million. Midcounties Co-Operative Travel, which aims to become the leading independent travel retailer in the UK, has 400 staff in total across 54 high street travel branches, online and consortium businesses, including 130 Personal Travel Agents nationwide.

06 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Brits in Florida warned tropical storm is heading their way**

Holidaymakers in Florida have been advised to keep a close eye on weather reports as the first named tropical storm of the Atlantic hurricane season is expected to hit the state, bringing torrential rain and the risk of flooding, later today. Tropical Storm Andrea pummelled the Caribbean island of Cuba with heavy downpours yesterday, and it is heading towards Florida at 10mph, according to the US National Hurricane Centre. It is expected to

make landfall on the Florida Panhandle late today, unleashing up to eight inches of rain across much of the state, before cutting across southern Georgia and travelling up the East Coast on Friday and Saturday. The Foreign Office said travellers should pay attention to weather reports on radio and TV and follow the advice of local authorities.

06 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Travel industry set for boost in spending**

The travel industry will be the first to prosper once the British economy starts to recover, according to research by communications company Pitney Bowes. Its survey of 1,000 British customers revealed that six out of 10 were planning to splash out on a holiday once the economy has improved. Pitney Bowes, which provides technology solutions to companies to help them connect with customers, said 60% of those surveyed put holidays above buying new clothes, home improvements, a new car and eating out. 38% of those quizzed said they had significantly cut back on holiday spending in the past two years. What people are planning to spend their money on when the economy picks up: Holidays/travel, 60%, Clothes shopping 38%, DIY and Home improvements 33%, Restaurants 28%, Change of car 25%, Cinema 16%, Haircuts 15%, Theatre 12%, Shoes 11%, Live sporting events 10%, Gigs 9%, Dentist visits 8%, Gym membership 7%, Sports/Movie TV subscriptions 7%, Pension contributions 6%, Handbags 4%, Insurance 4%, Babysitter 3% and Taxis 3%.

09 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **Brits ‘second fastest – growing luxury consumers’**

British consumers are one of the fastest-growing luxury hospitality groups, a new luxury hotel index has found. Digital Luxury Group’s World Luxury Index into the hotel market found Brits to be the second biggest growing sector for luxury travel, up 8.5%, behind only Russia at 12.8% and ahead of China’s 3.3% growth. New York and the US generally dominates luxury hotel stays, while London, Dubai and Paris were the top growing destinations. Based on 133 million consumer online searches, the results found interest in luxury hotels to be up 1.5% on last year, with ‘luxury major’ hotels like Ritz-Carlton leading growth. Hilton led the way in the ‘upper upscale’ category while Four Seasons has seen the most increase in the ‘luxury exclusive’ group. “The luxury hotel market is very heterogeneous from one market to the other. We have defined for this study 3 main categories: luxury brands integrated to hotel groups and hotel groups that are playing mainly or only in the luxury market segment. In the three categories, emerging markets are showing increasing interest for luxury hotel brands and the US market is by far the dominant market with the most connected and savvy consumers,” said Samad Laaroussi, holder of the Chair of Luxury Hospitality of Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne.

09 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **‘We are now in the technology race’ declares Monarch**

The Monarch Group has declared it is now in the online technology race as it continues work on the integration of Codegen technology. The airline, package holiday and accommodation-only provider, and river cruise operator, will complete the integration of Travelbox later this year having started last December. This will see the traditional travel agency selling platform Viewdata finally switched off in 2014 after a transition period during which technology will translate from the old system to the new. Codegen was chosen from a shortlist of six technology providers after Monarch went out to tender last year. Stuart Jackson, Monarch Group distributions director, said replacing its previous 20-year-old system known as Cosnet

ensures it is “in the race” to compete online with OTAs. “The project is not just IT, it’s business transformational. We have not fallen into the trap other companies have in the past where you buy a new system and you mould it back into existing practices. “We have gone the other way. The business will work around the way the system operates. You get quicker and more agile implementation and modernised internal processes in the new system. “If you try to adapt a new system to what you do now it will take twice as long and be twice as expensive. This way you get greater clarity throughout the business and it gives you the opportunity to re-energise divisions and departments.” For Monarch’s own website the new system will allow a greater degree of merchandising and bringing in third party and dynamically created product that compliments its own programme. For accommodation stock it means it can reciprocate with other bed bank providers giving greater insight into the market and drastically cutting down speed of property integration. Jackson said previously it took five to eight days to bring a new property into the system, with the new technology this could be brought down to as little as just half an hour. “That enables the tour operator to grow exponentially the volume of product it has, the ability to compare and contrast and dynamically create products so price competitiveness will be better. “We will always be a traditional package holiday operator but Cosmos will offer package holiday and in the background some of them will be dynamically created. “Some will be on third party suppliers outside of the Monarch group, but they will all be fully protected.” The intention is that restrictions associated with the outmoded Viewdata technology are ended and any partners will be able to merchandise to consumers just like Monarch does on its direct website. Here meals can be pre-booked and customers can choose their seat. Currently travel agency partners are not able to do this on their systems. Viewdata will be switched off in October although a translation mode will continue to reconfigure the code for a year while agents transition over and they should see no difference. Some of Monarch’s agent partners connect directly to the supplier while others go through intermediaries like Comtec and Multicom. “It’s important not to lose any revenue opportunity. People are not optimising the revenue sales opportunity because they are not taking all the product that’s on offer,” said Jackson. “We are now in the technology race. OTAs have done very well with good technology integrated into SEO and third party product and legacy operators have always been slightly behind. We are now in that race.”

11 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **British Airways prepares for aircraft deliveries**

British Airways is to receive its first Dreamliner Boeing 787s later this month, followed by its first Airbus A380 in July, it has announced. The carrier’s Dreamliners will arrive at Heathrow on 26 and 27 June, with its A380 to follow shortly on 4 July. BA will be the second British airline to operate the Dreamliner after Thomson Airways received its in late May. “The delivery of these exciting aircraft opens a new chapter in British Airways’ history. We are proud to be leading the way in Europe in operating both these aircraft types,” said Keith Williams, chief executive at BA. “These deliveries form the centrepiece of the £5bn investment British Airways is making in new aircraft, smarter cabins, superb lounges and new technologies to make travel more comfortable in the air and on the ground.” After training in Manston Airport, Kent and trials at Heathrow, the A380 will fly from Heathrow to Los Angeles from 15 October then to Hong Kong on 15 November. Its Dreamliner destinations will be “unveiled shortly”. BA’s A380 will be on display at the Paris Air Show next week, while Boeing plans to have a pair of Dreamliners at the event.

12 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **New Brand USA training launches**

Brand USA has unveiled a new online training platform for travel agents in the UK & Ireland. The new tool, USA Discovery Program, includes information on the US states and ideas on holiday themes so agents can cross-sell destinations within the country. It has initially launched with quizzes based around 'Big City Buzz', 'the Great Outdoors' and 'Winter Sports' with others including Food and Drink, Music/Heritage/Culture and Fly/Drive to be added. The system has also be integrated into social media and includes a forum where agents can share knowledge. Those that complete the course will be named as a USA Specialist with invitations to events, roadshows and fam trips. "We hope the USA Discovery Program will provide agents with the knowledge and skills needed to sell the USA more effectively to their customers," said Chris Thompson, president and CEO, Brand USA. "By creating a platform that allows Brand USA to speak directly to the agents we hope to give them a voice to deliver feedback on what they would find useful in future modules. This ever-evolving and developing program has vast opportunities for both agents and U.S. partners to interact, and we look forward to working with them to provide the support and tools they need to sell this land, like never before," he added.

12 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Monarch group announces deep cut in pre-tax losses**

Monarch Group claims to have made "substantial progress" towards its target of restoring the company to overall profitability by October after reducing its pre-tax loss for the last financial year by 71% to £14.9 million. Executive chairman Iain Rawlinson said the Group had made a "satisfactory" start to the current financial year, to April 30, with good growth in passengers, yields and revenues. He said its tour operations, including Cosmos, Avro and bed bank somewhere2stay, had exceeded its targets. "There is a growing customer awareness and appreciation for our core proposition across our divisions of superior experience at a competitive price," added Rawlinson. "Together with the 8.9% increase in Group revenues confirmed today for the 2012 financial year, and the success of the on-going cost-reduction improvements, this performance underlines the substantial progress we are making towards our target of restoring the Group to overall profitability by November 2013." The Group achieved £31.6 million of operational cost savings in the year to October 31 2012. The Group's tour operations saw a 15% rise in revenue for the first half of the year to £75.5 million following a 14.6% rise in passengers to 188,000. The company said the implementation of its new TravelBox bookings system had enhanced its online offering and customer experience. It saw a 13.6% increase in unique visitors to its website to 9.8 million during the first half of the year, following on from a 21% increase to over 20 million for the year ended October 2012. Monarch Airlines revenues for the first half of the year were up 10% to £206.4 million following a 7% rise in passengers to 1.9 million and a 42% rise in ancillary seat revenue. Rawlinson added: "As at the beginning of June 2013, bookings for the key departure months of July and August are advancing well with both the Airline and Tour Operations Divisions ahead of last year in load factors and yields for the summer season.

"We have appropriate levels of capacity and high-quality inventory at competitive prices available, and we are satisfactorily positioned to meet the requirements of our customers during the peak summer trading period." However, he said trading conditions remained challenging due to the economic outlook in the UK. "Our performance expectations for the market for the remaining part of this year and next are accordingly conservative."

18 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Kuoni to open 4 new concessions – John Lewis partnership expands**

Kuoni is to open four new John Lewis concessions in the autumn. The concessions will open in stores in Brent Cross, Aberdeen, Welwyn and Leicester. Last autumn, Kuoni opened concessions in Oxford Street, Southampton, Reading and Cardiff John Lewis stores. Kuoni MD Derek Jones said: "We are delighted our brand synergy with John Lewis has been so successful for both businesses and we're really excited to have the opportunity to grow our partnership further and open four more concessions." Kuoni also has a growing retail network of 22 branded high-street stores around the UK and five independent partnership stores. Speaking to TravelMole in March 2012, Kuoni national retail sales manager Helen Roberts said the operator was proud to be involved in the revival of high street retailing.

"The future is bright for the high street, and our brand awareness continues to grow as the word spreads that Kuoni is in town and we are seeing more customers interacting with the brand," she said.

18 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **Rumours circulate around Virgin Atlantic, Delta Merger – DOT ‘approves codeshare’ while EC ‘to clear Delta’s stake’**

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) has approved a codeshare agreement between Virgin Atlantic and Delta as the airlines wait to hear about the future of their joint venture.

Tweets from Flightglobal journalist Edward Russell at the Paris Air Show said the DOT had approved a “limited” codeshare between the airlines but not immunity. This would cover international routes and see Delta place its code on Virgin Atlantic’s Little Red flights. It comes after a source at the European Commission (EC) told Reuters that it was due to clear the deal without conditions, which would see Delta take a 49% stake in Virgin Atlantic and the pair split costs and revenue on flights between the USA and UK. An unnamed source told the newswire the EC does not think the deal would affect competition in the trans-atlantic air market. If this comes into fruition, the launch of the airlines’ joint activity would be put in doubt after they previously said they would not go ahead without immunity. Both airlines will not comment on the rumours while regulators consider the venture, which is expected to see a decision announced on Thursday (20 June). Competition regulators will be assessing the impact of the trans-atlantic venture, which would aim to compete with the American Airlines/British Airways tie-up. Virgin Atlantic and Delta have said they believe the BA/AA venture, as well as the recently-grown United Airlines, dominate travel between the USA and UK. If approved, the venture would see the airlines operate 31 round-trip flights and a new Heathrow-Seattle service launched.

18 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Boost for Orlando flights from Manchester**

Virgin Atlantic is to offer 30,000 extra seats to Orlando from Manchester Airport in summer 2014. A 455-seat Boeing 747 will replace a smaller 314-seat Airbus on all 11 of its weekly flights to meet high demand, it said, resulting in up to 2,000 extra seats to and from the Sunshine State every week. The airline aims to carry up to 10,000 passengers a week from Manchester to Florida next summer, a 25% increase from this year. The move further confirms Virgin Atlantic's commitment to expansion in Manchester following the recent launch of its domestic service Little Red, which operates four daily return flights from Manchester Airport to London Heathrow, it said. Edmond Rose, director of airline planning at Virgin Atlantic said: "Orlando has always been one of our most popular destinations and across our network we offer nearly 40 return flights a week to Florida. "We are delighted to see continued high demand for our flights from the North West of England and to meet this

demand we have taken the decision to bring a second Boeing 747 jumbo jet onto this route, resulting in a huge increase in the number of seats available for holidaymakers looking for a sunshine break. "This continues our recent work with Manchester Airport to expand our operations, after we launched our first ever domestic flight from the airport this Easter. We now offer passengers from the city four daily flights to London Heathrow, opening up a host of onward connection opportunities on our worldwide network, with destinations varying from Tokyo to Cape Town, Lagos to Los Angeles."

19 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **UK charter carrier named best in the world**

Thomson Airways has been named World's Best Leisure Airline by air travellers from more than 160 countries. Thomson was ranked as the Best in Leisure Carrier at the 2013 World Airline Awards announced at the Paris Air Show. As the largest airline passenger satisfaction survey in the world, the awards recognise the opinions of thousands of air travellers from around the globe who are asked to rate their experiences with more than 200 airlines. However, the awards are run by Skytrax, whose airline and airport review site, [airlinequality.com](http://airlinequality.com) was discredited last year by the Advertising Standards Authority which found it was unable to back up several of its claims, including providing proof that reviews on its website were posted by genuine passengers. The ASA said that Skytrax, which also runs an airline review site [airlinequality.com](http://airlinequality.com), had not followed the robust procedures it claimed it had in place to check all reviews on the website were genuine. Skytrax claims its World Airline Awards, which are separate from [airlinequality.com](http://airlinequality.com), are based on the rating of over 40 key aspects of airline product and service, including everything from check-in, seat comfort and in-flight entertainment to cabin cleanliness, quality of food and the service from cabin crew. The UK-based business said "the survey is held in high esteem for its clarity of process, and the rigorously rules of independence". Chris Browne, MD for Thomson Airways, said: "We are so proud to receive this fantastic accolade, given the strength of the competition, but most of all because it is voted for by passengers. "The World Airline Awards are highly sought-after across the global airline industry and this award is testament to all the hard work of all the team here at Thomson to deliver unique holiday experiences to our customers. "We are committed to modernising every aspect of the holiday experience and aim to further improve and enhance our service to customers, with the introduction of the brand new Thomson 787 Dreamliner this summer." Turkish Airlines won the title of Best European Airline for the third year running and was also voted the Best Business Class Catering. Abu Dhabi-based Etihad was named Best First Class for the fourth consecutive year and also won Best First Class Seat and Best First Class Catering. Winners of other categories are expected to be announced on the Skytrax website shortly.

21 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Kuoni CEO to leave**

Kuoni Travel Group CEO Peter Rothwell is to leave at the end of this month "following the decision of the Board of Directors". The group said Rothwell, who joined at the start of 2009, has successfully transformed (Kuoni) into a leading, global, and broad-based travel service provider. "The Board of Directors thanks Peter Rothwell for having led the Kuoni Group through this transformation, which has now been largely completed," it said in a statement. Group chief financial officer Peter Meier will become CEO with immediate effect, on an ad interim basis, in addition to his finance role. Kuoni has already begun recruiting for a new Group CEO, and said an appointment is expected to be announced in the course of 2013.

21 June 2013 – Source Travelmole

### **Delta gets approval for Virgin Stake**

Delta's investment in Virgin Atlantic has won approval from the U.S. Justice Department and the European Commission. Both regulators agreed that the deal, which will see Delta buy a 49% stake in Virgin for \$360 million, does not pose an antitrust threat. They said the pair would still be competing against transatlantic partners American Airlines and British Airways, as well as other airlines. The deal still requires approval from the U.S. Transportation Department.

25 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **Travel urged to 'wake up' to mature market needs**

The travel industry is blinkered when it comes to the needs of the older traveller, according to charity Age UK. The charity's Engage Business Network, which aims to share insight to businesses, found 52% of those aged 50 or over travel overseas at least once a year and 23% would do more if they felt more catered for. The network encouraged spaces like airports and hotels to have an 'inclusive design' which takes in accessibility needs or thought around those who are not as mobile. It will be holding a seminar on 25 June around the topic with Feroze Varavia from Gatwick Airport sharing how it developed its terminals to support the growing mature traveller market. "Nearly one in five people aged 50+ say that the "fuss" at airports is the main reason why they do not use air travel so changes like Gatwick's are exactly what Age UK's Engage Business Network is encouraging through the adoption of inclusive design. Meeting and understanding the needs of the older population is crucial if airports, and the travel industry as a whole, are going to market to the older population successfully," said Ian Rutter, senior manager at Age UK's Engage Business Network. "Age UK's Engage Business Network believes that inclusive design needs to become part of mainstream thought across all sectors including both meeting the needs of our ageing population and improving accessibility and the experience for all," he added.

25 June 2013 – Source Travel Daily

### **Virgin and Delta reveal details of venture**

Virgin Atlantic and Delta Air Lines have released details of their planned joint venture at a conference hosted by Ed Bastian president of Delta Air Lines and Craig Kreeger chief executive officer of Virgin Atlantic. The two confirmed that Delta had successfully completed its purchase of a 49% in Virgin Atlantic and that the carriers would now start cross-selling seats as of 29 June and codesharing from 3 July. Kreeger asserted that the venture was a "key part of [Virgin Atlantic's] strategy" going forward" and that it would offer "more opportunities for our customers". He added that: "The partnership with Delta will allow us to stretch our wings further and continue to keep innovating and offering award-winning service." It was also confirmed that both frequent flier programmes would remain intact and customers on one could collect points using the other. Delta passengers will also be able to make use of services between the UK and US as well as Little Red, Virgin Atlantic's domestic service. Bastian was also keen to stress that Delta had no intention to become a majority stakeholder in Virgin while the company would succeed where Singapore Airlines failed because of the amount of air traffic between the states and UK. "Our joint venture will allow us to operate better and align our schedules, but over the course of the next year we will see examples of where we can create value and provide a better competitive reach," added Kreeger. Kreeger also used the opportunity to say the Virgin Atlantic brand will remain intact and said the Delta partnership is a "fundamental turning point" in the history of the airline. "I'd like to reiterate that the Virgin Atlantic brand will remain true to its roots. It will not change and we are proud of the brand," he said.

26 June 2013 - Source Travel Daily

### **Internet ‘overtakes in bookings share’**

The UK leads the way in making internet bookings across the European markets and has now overtaken other booking methods, according to new data results. Data analysed by ITB Berlin and tourism research firm IPK International said travel agencies are becoming “less important” in western Europe after 2012 was seen as the first year that more trips were booked online than through a high street or call-based company. One in five holidays is thought to be sold through an offline agent in the UK now, compared to one in three in 2008. Sales on the internet have grown 47% since 2008 and is now said to have a 78% share of the market. The results suggested a shift in the mainstream sector but did not specify the type of holidays that were booked through each channel. “Above all flights, followed by accommodation but also travel insurance or car hire are booked online. In countries where obtaining a visa is difficult and for long-distance trips travel agencies continue to play an important role,” said Dr Martin Buck, director of travel & logistics at Messe Berlin. In markets where outbound travel is growing such as China and Russia the travel agent was still deemed as important in the trip planning stage.

26 June 2013 - Source Travel Daily

### **Global Leisure bookings rise**

Hotel bookings for the leisure market grew 3.7% globally last month in what companies will hope will lead to a “solid” summer. Technology firm Pegasus Solutions said the rise had come from an increase in rates, which has returned to levels seen in 2009. Bookings and rates are expected to increase through to August. In the corporate market bookings were up 2.4% in May although has been gathering at a slightly faster rate than the leisure market in recent months. “Each June, hoteliers hold their breath in anticipation of what the potentially profitable summer travel season will bring,” said David Millili, chief executive officer of Pegasus Solutions. “For the last few years, we’ve seen consumers refuse to sacrifice vacations entirely as they’ve made adjustments to length of stay and hunted for lower rates to accommodate tighter budgets. This summer, we’re seeing the same commitment to holidays coupled with more willingness to book at higher rates than last year,” he added.

26 June 2013 - Source Travolution

### **Travel Republic marks 10th Anniversary**

Online travel agency Travel Republic has launched both a sale and a video competition to mark its tenth anniversary. Customers are being asked to submit personal birthday wishes in video form, including songs, animations and family holiday snaps to be in with a chance of winning 10 prizes including seven nights in Crete. The company, which claims more than one million holiday searches a day, says destinations rising in popularity this year include Mykonos, with bookings are up 169% on last year, due in part to new direct flights from Manchester by easyjet; Berlin, up 133%; and Cancun, up 96%. Founder and CEO Paul Furner said: “I can vividly remember our first booking back in June 2003. Ten years on we employ over 350 people in the UK, have a growing operation in Barcelona and have plans to drive annual turnover to the £1 billion level within the next three years. “We have incredible staff and trading partners and I would like to thank them for their ongoing support.”

27 June 2013 - Source Travelmole

### **BA confirms routes for 787 Dreamliner**

British Airways has confirmed that Toronto and New York will be the first destinations served by its 787 Dreamliners. The airline is planning to serve Toronto with the 787 from

September 1 and Newark from October 1, subject to regulatory approval. Willie Walsh, chief executive of parent IAG, said: "The 787 is a tremendous, innovative aircraft which sets new standards for environmental performance and operating efficiency and I'm sure British Airways customers will love it. "The 787 will become a mainstay of the British Airways fleet over the next few years. This is the first of 24 that will arrive by 2017, and we have announced plans to convert further options for the aircraft into firm orders for delivery from 2017, including for the new larger 787-10 version." BA's first 787 is due to arrive in London Heathrow at lunchtime today. The airline has ordered 24 787s, which will arrive over the next four years, and has also ordered 12 A380s and six additional 777-300ERs. BA will be the first in Europe to operate both the 787 and the A380. Flights for the 787 are now on sale, with a special return fare of £787 return in World Traveller Plus (premium economy) to both cities available from today until midnight on July 16. World Traveller (economy) seats to Toronto will start from £517 return and to Newark from £444 return. Travel dates are between October 21, 2013 and December 13, 2013, and December 25, 2013 and March 27, 2014. Lead-in fares for the 787 to Toronto on September 1 are £619 in World Traveller, with limited availability, £1,028 in World Traveller Plus and £2,857 in Club World. Lead-in fares for the 787 to Newark on October 1 are £444 with limited availability, in World Traveller, £787 in World Traveller Plus and £2,505 in Club World.

29 June 2013 - Source Travelmole

### **Nearly a third of Brits feel ripped off when booking a holiday**

Nearly a third of Brits say they feel as if they have been ripped off when booking a holiday, according to a report commissioned by Teletext Holidays. The Great British Holiday Report, based on an online survey of 1,775 Brits, found 31% felt they had been ripped off. Teletext Holidays said it believed the dissatisfaction was down to the new culture of "extras". "It is certainly the case that the travel industry has undergone major changes, especially with the growth in no frills, low-cost airlines," said Amy Patel from Teletext Holidays "The cost cutting that needs to go into creating these cheap flights have had a massive impact on how package holidays are put together today. By regulation, our governing bodies state that any two items sold at the same time constitute a package holiday. "Therefore, more often than not, the all new package holiday now consists of only a flight and the accommodation. This in itself is not unusual for the customer, as there have always been extras to pay for; these include insurance and airport parking etc. "However this has introduced a new culture of extras, like transfers and fees which are often added at a later stage in the booking process. This saw the emergence of a new trend in the holiday market, something we call the dynamic package holiday." The report also looked at booking patterns and found that 23% of Brits book within two months of travel and 67% book within six months of departure. Of these, 12% book within a month of travel, possibly enticed by last-minute offers. It also highlighted marked differences between the sexes, with men the most likely to book a last minute deal and women almost twice as likely to book more than a year in advance. The average holiday spend is £554.40 per person, although 45% spend £400 or less, with just 17% spending more than £800. The report showed that when travelling overseas, the most popular countries for families are: 1.Spain 2.France 3.USA 4.Greece 5.Italy. The most popular cities are: 1.Barcelona 2.Paris 3.Dublin 4.Rome 5.Amsterdam. The most popular beach resorts are: 1.Barcelona 2.Florida 3.Benidorm 4.San Francisco 5.Sydney