

UK OFFICE
December 2014 REPORT
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UK Director

Meetings/Training/Events

Ocean Florida – Visited the offices of Ocean Holidays in Romford, Essex to conduct area training during a sponsored lunch. Three sessions were completed and some 20 staff were trained. Their existing knowledge of our area was good and they appreciated the update and especially enjoyed the new training video.

Carnival Cruise – Held an introductory meeting with Charlotte Mendoza, Marketing Executive for UK and Ireland, at their offices in London. They operate a small number of Caribbean cruises from the Port of Tampa on the Carnival Paradise and Carnival Pride. An overview of our area was provided before a discussion regarding possible opportunities to partner together on initiatives going forward. Carnival do not have a Cruise and Stay (or similar) programme in the UK and their main customer business is direct cruise only. They enjoy good partnerships with a number of retail operators and Jetline Cruise was specifically mentioned. Charlotte advised she would update their UK Account Managers about our meeting and agreed the best possible course for future partnership might be via a joint promotion with Jetline Cruise or other retail partner. A follow up call to this meeting is planned in late January.

Visit Florida – Attended the recent partners meeting and Christmas lunch that was held at the Orange Restaurant in London.

TRADE LIAISON

- February ad campaign
 - Extensive liaison with Miles Media, VSPC and Virgin Holidays regarding youneedsun.com landing page
 - Extensive liaison with Rooster PR regarding a dedicated PR strategy to support the February campaign
 - Signed off of online banners for the digital campaign
- Finalised the co-op marketing plan and forward to VSPC and BVK
- USAirtours/TravelPlanners - Confirmed participation in a joint co-op marketing campaign with TravelPlanners. The campaign will incorporate a featured Destination/Preferred Partner for a period of one month including prominence on the TravelPlanners homepage. Other elements include a dedicated landing page feature, inclusion in two email newsletters to their consumer database of 50k, a TravelPlanners favourite destination banner displayed on the website homepage as well as articles and special offers on their Facebook page. Campaign dates will be from 1st – 31st January 2015.
- Stella Travel Service - A co-op marketing proposal was received and we have now confirmed participation in a campaign that is due to launch the first week of January 2015. The campaign will feature a homepage banner ad for one month, a

flight/hotel/holidays search banner landscape ad and inclusion in their January 2015 e-newsletter. Also confirmed is a campaign e-shot, Travelmole Partner e-shots, sales blitz/PR & social media activity and a booking incentive for agents and call centre staff...

- Travel Republic - We have now received and finalised a joint co-op marketing campaign that will run from March – June 2015. The activity agreed includes online banner ads, a banner ad on the UK newsletter, social media support and a dedicated blog post.
- Ocean Florida - Confirmed participation in a co-op marketing campaign that will consist of three e-newsletters (feature, flash & educational), one splash page that will run for a period of twelve months, one right side banner for one month and social media/blog articles that will run at various times throughout the year. The campaign will run during May 2015.
- Expedia UK - Received and confirmed participation in the January Peaks campaign which will consist of online run of site activity as well as a dedicated landing page including video footage and suggestions of what to do in our area. The campaign will include homepage banner ads and placement banner ads on various search/waiting pages and will launch late December, running through to the beginning of February 2015. We have provided Expedia with all copy, images, logo and video footage and the campaign elements have now been approved and signed off for launch.
- Gold Medal Travel - Discussed the possibility of running a Retail Travel Agent promotion in conjunction with Gold Medal Travel's partner Consortia Travel Agencies. A proposal has now been received and we will be participating in a campaign that will run in April 2015. It will include dedicated A3 size printed in-store posters in 200 travel agencies around the UK as well as participation in their Access All Area's event in Preston where over 100 agents will be hosted over 2 days to take a look behind the scenes at Gold Medal HQ. All 100 agents will have a unique opportunity to attend 4 training sessions on each day and enjoy an informal networking evening in a local Preston eatery. Our sponsorship includes training 50 Independent Travel Agents on our product and the networking event that will be hosted. We will also be included in follow-up communications to all agents attending the event with information we would like to provide them with.
- Tour America (Ireland) - Finalised our joint co-op marketing activity campaign which will include e-mail newsletters, web banner ads, full window domination in the Tour America Dublin travel agency (for a period of one month), half page adverts in the Sunday World newspaper and a radio promotion with adverts on Dublin's Q102 radio station. The campaign will launch in January and continue through to March 2015. We have provided Tour America with copy, imagery and logos and work has commenced on approval of the above elements.
- Barrhead Travel - Will include our area in their Turn of Year campaign and, as part of this, we have confirmed a staff incentive promotion that will give Barrhead Travel agents a chance to win one of three £100 Love to Shop vouchers in a prize draw. Agents will need to book at least a one night stay in our area to qualify and each booking made will mean an entry into the draw thus increasing the chances of them winning one of the prizes.

- McColl's Newsagent Promotion - Tour operators have been approached to partner on this campaign scheduled to run from February 17th for a 3 ½ week period. The brand awareness campaign incorporates nearly 1,300 UK stores nationwide and includes POS in-store elements such as A0 posters, till screen advertising and shelf barkers as well as direct mail leaflet distribution to some 650k homes. Online elements include a landing page, banners and inclusion in an e-newsletter sent to a database of some 150k loyalty card holders. Entry to the competition is via purchases using the McColl's loyalty card during the period with a chance to win a 7 night Florida family holiday for 4 (including flights, accommodation, car hire and attraction passes). The campaign is expected to reach some 3m UK customers.
- Signed of the Discover America Nordic Ad
- Visit USA Newsletter – Provided information on the fall 2015 opening of the Opal Sands Resort for inclusion in the next Ireland and Denmark e-newsletters to both trade and consumer databases.
- Discover America – Finalised plans for January's Workshop event in Stockholm, Sweden including shipment requests.
- Florida's Beaches –
 - Organised shipping for Oslo show and liaised with Fort Lauderdale and Miami re the staffing of the show
 - Discussions with partners re TUR
Added Florida's Beaches information to the Reselievsmessen website
 - Confirmed with FDM that Florida's Beaches will be doing presentations at the FDM Show
 - Finalised travel plans for FERIE event in Billund Denmark at the end of February including liaison with the Fort Myers Danish representative, Hannah Johannson.
- James Villa Holidays – Made contact with Edward Frampton-Fell to enquire about the response to the recent solicitation request that was submitted after the November meeting at WTM. Edward advised that he had not heard from any area partners to date. Given they are specifically seeking apartments/condos in our area the opportunities are a little limited and this was recognised. However we agreed to assist with supporting their desire to expand their programme in our area as best we can going forward and will remain in periodic contact with Edward to provide updates.
- Holiday World Trade/Consumer Show, Dublin - Final preparations have been made for our attendance as part of the Florida's Beaches consortium at the Holiday World Trade & Consumer show in Dublin, Ireland. The show will run from the 23rd – 25th January 2015.
- British Airways Holidays – Made contact with new Destination Executive for Florida, Sara Di Lenardo, and arranged an introductory meeting at their Crawley office for 29th January after she returns from Florida Huddle. Mark Tanner, Destination Manager for Florida, is also expected to attend.
- Virgin Holidays – Provided support for a new website initiative that Virgin Holidays has commenced in partnership with MSN ('MSN Plan-it Mojo'). It allows for the

development of an interactive customer experience when researching details of the holiday destinations they offer. For our area this includes the initial assignment of 30 'pins' that each feature an attraction, activity, hotel, or destination. By clicking each pin the customer gets to read copy relating to the particular item and view a relevant image or video. We have supported this initiative by providing a large number of images and links to relevant videos relating to the 30 pre-designated pins for our area. The next stage of our support for this project will be to suggest additional 'pin' content for inclusion and support these by providing relevant copy, images or video content.

- Visit Florida Travel Guide – Confirmed our contact details for the new Visit Florida UK Travel Guide produced by BMI Publishing that will be distributed to consumers and travel agents.
- Voyage Prive – Made contact with James Williams, Head of Tour Operating, regarding the recent solicitation that was submitted after a meeting held in November. They are keen to work with boutique hotels in offering exclusive offers to their membership but only received one response (Hotel Indigo in St. Petersburg). We have recommended a follow-up solicitation request be sent out to support their growth plans in our area and will arrange this in the coming weeks.
- Audley Travel – Followed up a November meeting with James Butler, North America Product Manager by providing some area information and links relating to arts & culture attractions as well as nature and wildlife options that may appeal to their customer base. They are developing a Florida programme and we expect to assist with a solicitation request as part of this process.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

Source Virgin Atlantic Newsletter, December

Virgin Atlantic confirmed 3,500 extra seats from Glasgow to Orlando via a third weekly service over the months of June, July, September and October 2015. The additional flights will operate on a Sunday as a new Boeing 747 service.

Source Travolution 1st December

Aito 2014: Industry warned to prepare for Google's entry into sector

Google will enter the travel sector within 18 months in a move which could "take out" large online travel intermediaries, predicted Travel Weekly columnist and financial journalist David Stevenson. Stevenson, speaking at the Aito Overseas Conference 2014, warned the travel industry to be ready for Google's market entry, by as soon as the end of the next year, and encouraged niche travel companies to engage with the search engine. He said: "What we are waiting for is the emergence of Google as a distribution channel. We reckon in no more than a year and a half, Google will properly enter the travel industry. "Google can only operate where there are tens of millions of customers. It cannot operate in niche markets which is why I think it is your ally. You provide specialist content and Google likes that and likes working with people with specialist knowledge. It can operate in the online travel agency (OTA) market. "I think you [Aito companies] should engage radically with Google, put Google on everything. Those who fight Google fail." Stevenson, who advises international banks on how to deal with changes in the web and has Google as one of his

clients, suggested large online travel agents (OTA) may struggle to survive or will be acquired by the search engine. “The change will take out OTAs; it will do that by buying the right businesses,” he said. Stevenson named TripAdvisor.co.uk as a company that would survive, hinting that Google would be interested in buying the site “within two years”. He added that Google had struggled to put in place a “payment gateway” but was well on the way to fixing this problem. “That will be solved soon. The mobile gateway is slowly starting to happen. Google is ready in terms of having rich content. They are trying to build a crossover between TripAdvisor and social networking sites,” he said.

Source Travel Weekly 1st December

Regional airports back Heathrow expansion

Heathrow’s bid for a third runway has won the support of five regional airports. The bosses of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford, Liverpool and Newcastle airports say that expansion at the West London hub would be the “right choice” for the whole of the country. They have sent a joint letter to Sir Howard Davies, chairman of the Airports Commission, which will recommend next summer whether to expand Heathrow or its rival Gatwick. Choice for passengers who live outside of London is limited as Heathrow is already full, the airport chiefs argue. A lack of available take-off and landing slots at the airport is restricting the number of domestic routes available and is making it harder for people who live outside of the capital to reach long-haul markets. “The so-called London airports debate is not about London at all,” the airport chiefs write in the letter, published today in the *Telegraph*. “It is about the aviation industry as a whole. “Heathrow’s role is as the UK’s hub, one of only six worldwide with more than 50 long-haul routes, and expansion there would create over 200,000 more slots. “For expansion to benefit the whole country there must be a mechanism in place to strengthen and secure domestic connections to the UK’s hub. We will be backing Heathrow expansion in the Airports Commission consultation as the right choice for the whole of the UK.” The letter is signed by Carol Benzie, managing director of Aberdeen airport; Amanda McMillan, managing director of Glasgow airport; John Parkin, chief executive of Leeds Bradford airport; Andrew Cornish, chief executive of Liverpool John Lennon airport; and David Laws, chief executive of Newcastle airport. A national consultation on the Airports Commission options, which allows members of the public to have their say, is open until February 3.

Source Travel Weekly 1st December

British Airways agrees regional rail tie-up

Travellers in the catchment areas of Cardiff, Bristol and Exeter airports are being targeted by British Airways in a rail-air ticket tie-up. Fares will be available to book via agents for travel from 11 First Great Western stations to Heathrow via Paddington and the Heathrow Express. A single booking will combine air and rail travel from Friday (December 5) through a new partnership between BA, First Great Western and Heathrow Express. If a train is delayed or a connection missed, passengers will be rebooked on the next available flight and get overnight accommodation if the next service is not until the following day. Travellers will also be able to take the next available train if their flight is delayed. The deal will be available from First Great Western stations at Oxford, Bristol Parkway, Bristol Temple Meads, Bath, Cardiff, Exeter, Plymouth, Swansea, Penzance, Par and St Austell. BA head of UK and Ireland sales and marketing, Stephen Humphreys, said: “This is a great new way for our customers living in Wales and the West Country to get on track right from the start to enjoy a trip with British Airways. “Our partnership with First Great Western and Heathrow Express will make flying more accessible and convenient for customers travelling from regions in the UK without local airports.” Mark Hopwood, managing director of First Great Western, said: "This is all part of

our work to make journeys easier and simpler for our passengers. For many of our customers travelling to Heathrow by train already saves time, hassle and money. "Complemented by our work to add more seats to trains, the upgrade of our first class accommodation and free Wi-Fi, this product will make it even more attractive BA customers looking for a worry-free way to get to Heathrow." Heathrow Express managing director, Keith Greenfield, said: "This partnership removes a layer of hassle for customers and affords them extra protection against possible problems. This kind of joined-up travel is what today's leisure and business travellers expect."

Source Travel Weekly 3rd December

The Sun newspaper to launch holiday deals platform

The UK's biggest-selling daily newspaper, The Sun, is launching a new holiday deals platform in January, claiming there is "still a gap in the market for another holiday deals platform". The site, TheSunHolidays.com, which will sit outside The Sun's subscription model, will launch on January 5 following a four-week promotional campaign in the paper starting on December 19. News UK's head of travel, Victoria Sanders, said: "The Sun has six million readers every day. They trust us and we want to give repay them with good value deals. Our new TheSunHolidays site will offer travel companies phenomenal distribution to holiday-loving, bargain-hunting, deal-loving British consumers. "We did a lot of research before launching this and discovered that Sun readers take on average three holidays a year, two of them overseas. We've been sending people away to UK holidays parks for £9.50 for 25 years and are, in fact, the UK's largest sellers of short-breaks. But this is the first time we have done anything like this." Sanders, former managing director of Teletext Holidays, will work with a limited number of partners initially to key destinations like Spain, Greece and Turkey. She also expects to sell lots of cruise which she said was really popular in recent years via the print newspaper. Agents and operators can load deals will can be searched via destination or via categories such as 'beach', 'family', 'young & lively' or 'long-haul'. The deals will be listed with the most recently-posted deal at the top. There will also be a 'Sun Exclusives' tab, featuring time-sensitive offers, including discounts, Buy One Get One Frees and value added extras. Sanders explained the site would also feature editorial content from The Sun travel editor Lisa Minot and her contributors, and the plan is to promote the offers through "a tie-up between print, digital and email, all pushing readers online. The launch was announced by Sanders at last night's Travolution Awards which TheSunHolidays.com was headline sponsor for.

Source Travel Weekly 4th December

Virgin confirms two-ship cruise line start-up

A former president of Disney Cruise Line is to take the helm of Virgin Group's planned cruise venture. Tom McAlpin will join Virgin Cruises as chief executive, having most recently worked for The World, Residences at Sea in the same position. Virgin Cruises, which will be based in the Miami area in Florida, plans to design and build two cruise ships. New York-based private investment firm Bain Capital Partners is investing an undisclosed sum in the start-up. Virgin Group would not say when the line will start operating, citing "competitive reasons." Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson (pictured) said: "We plan to shake up the cruise industry and deliver a holiday that customers will absolutely love. "They'll be sailing on the latest ships offering a great quality, a real sense of fun and many exciting activities all delivered with the famed Virgin service." McAlpin said: "Cruise guests deserve something better and different to what is being offered today, and Virgin Cruises is committed to creating breath-taking experiences for them and a new generation of guests. "Opportunities like this do not come often, so I am very excited to lead this business and

introduce the Virgin brand to the cruise industry, as it has always put customers at the heart of what it does.” Ryan Cotton, a principal with Bain Capital, said: “We are pleased to pursue this exciting opportunity with Virgin, one of the world’s most respected and iconic brands. “With a small number of global players, an experience in need of refreshing, and consumers ready for something new and exciting, the industry exhibits all the characteristics of one that is ripe for a new entrant.”

Source Travel Weekly 4th December

Walsh leads demands on chancellor to axe APD entirely

The Chancellor’s decision to abolish Air Passenger Duty for children led to immediate demands that the government go further. Willie Walsh, chief executive of BA parent International Airlines Group, said: “Scrapping APD for children might be popular with some voters and will definitely be welcomed by hard-pressed families travelling on their summer holidays, but it will do nothing to improve the UK economy. “APD must be axed in its entirety not just for children. The UK still has the highest flying tax in the world.” EasyJet chief executive Carolyn McCall said: “This is really good news for families which will provide savings of £13 per child on flights to destinations in Europe and as much as £69 on our longer flights.” “We hope this is the first step towards the abolition of APD. ”McCall called on all political parties “to commit to the complete abolition of this damaging tax”. Flybe chief executive Saad Hammad said: “The scrapping of APD on flights for children under the age of 12 is to be welcomed. However, this is just tinkering at the edges and represents a missed opportunity by The Chancellor to show he is serious about economic regeneration of the UK regions. “The needs of regional passengers are still being ignored. It’s time for the Chancellor to seriously listen to the UK regions and deliver reform quickly.” British Air Transport Association chief executive Nathan Stower described the move as “an early stocking filler for families”, but said: “Introducing the first change for children under-12 in May presents significant practical difficulties. “The industry has always said changes to APD should have at least a 12-month lead in time due to advance bookings.” Virgin Atlantic chief executive Craig Kreeger said: “This is another step on the long road to reform of this economically damaging tax. “There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the huge benefits of reducing or abolishing APD across the whole of the UK.” Hugo Burge, chief executive of Momondo, said: “This is a step in the right direction and welcome news for families, but the UK still has punishingly high aviation taxes. “There is still a long way to go to wind back a series of increases which has seen APD rise from just £5 in 1994 to the £71-plus in tax which British holidaymakers will continue to pay for long haul.” The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) congratulated the UK Chancellor. But WTTC president and chief executive David Scowsill said: “The pledge does not go far enough. “The next government needs to dramatically reduce or abolish APD. The tax is self-defeating and is overdue to be consigned to history.” Announcing he annual results, which saw revenue drop by 3% to 14.6 billion, Tui Travel chief executive Peter Long said: "We have delivered another year of out-performance against our growth roadmap achieving an underlying operating profit growth of 11% at constant currency rates. “This demonstrates the strength and resilience of our business model in what has been a competitive trading environment for many tour operators and airlines. “The combination of our market leadership position, scale, focus on unique holidays distributed increasingly online and our relationship with the customer throughout their whole holiday experience continues to provide a strong basis for sustainable, profitable growth.” He added: "The merger with Tui AG will strengthen and future-proof our combined group. “It will also enhance the certainty of long-term unique holiday growth and reinforce our clear competitive advantage through further control over the end-to-end customer experience. “This will mark the start of an exciting new phase of

growth, delivering significant opportunities and value to customers, employees and shareholders."

Source Travel Weekly 11th December

Air fares set to fall, says IATA

Lower oil prices and stronger worldwide GDP growth are helping boost global airline profitability and are set to trigger a fall in fares. Airlines are expected to post a collective global net profit in 2014 of \$19.9 billion - up from \$18 billion projected in June, according to latest IATA projections. The figure looks set to rise to \$25 billion in 2015. "Consumers will benefit substantially from the stronger industry performance as lower industry costs and efficiencies are passed through," IATA said. Average return air fares, excluding taxes and surcharges, are expected to fall by some 5.1% on this year's levels. The expected \$25 billion net post-tax profit represents a 3.2% margin. Airlines will make a net profit of \$7.08 per passenger next year against \$6.02 earned in 2014 and more than double the \$3.38 earnings achieved in 2013. The return on invested capital is expected to grow to 7% from the 6.1% expected to be achieved in 2014. IATA director general and CEO Tony Tyler said: "The industry outlook is improving. The global economy continues to recover and the fall in oil prices should strengthen the upturn next year. "While we see airlines making \$25 billion in 2015, it is important to remember that this is still just a 3.2% net profit margin. "The industry story is largely positive, but there are a number of risks in today's global environment— political unrest, conflicts, and some weak regional economies- among them. "And a 3.2% net profit margin does not leave much room for a deterioration in the external environment before profits are hit." He added: "Stronger industry performance is good news for all. It's a highly competitive industry and consumers—travellers as well as shippers—will see lower costs in 2015 as the impact of lower oil prices kick in. "A healthy air transport sector will help governments in their overall objective to stimulate the economic growth needed to put the impact of the global financial crisis behind them at last."

Source Travel Weekly 12th December

Tui board resignations ahead of merger

Ten directors have resigned ahead of the merger between Tui Travel and its German parent Tui AG. They include Tui AG's chief executive Fredrich Jousen, chief financial officer Horst Baier and chief operating officer Sebastian Ebel. Also leaving with immediate effect is Tui Travel non-executive deputy chairman Sir Michael Hodgkinson and non-executive directors Valerie Gooding, Janis Kong, Coline McConville, Minnow Powell, Dr Erhard Schipporeit and Dr Albert Schunk. Following the resignations, the board will comprise of Tui Travel chief executive Peter Long, deputy chief executive Johan Lundgren and chief financial officer Will Waggott. Tui Travel shares were suspended prior to the announcement yesterday. Applications have been made to the UK Listing Authority and the London Stock Exchange for shares in the combined group to be admitted to listing and trading from December 17. This follows plans for the all share merger becoming effective. The €6.5 billion merger plans to create the world's largest travel group were originally agreed in September.

Source Travolution 17th December

Gatwick pioneers Amadeus cloud-based tech to improve efficiency

Gatwick has become the first airport to use cloud-based technology supplied by Amadeus that will allow it to significantly increase the number of flights it handles. The Airport-Collaborative Decision Making Portal (A-CDM) will enable the airport to manage 55 flights per hour and cater for an additional two million passengers a year on its single runway, Already the world's busiest single runway. Gatwick is among a small group of airports to join

the Europe-wide A-CDM standard, with others including Munich, Paris Charles de Gaulle, Madrid and Zurich. Gatwick opted to use Amadeus' cost effective cloud technology to speed up the implementation time of A-CDM. As a result it was able to roll out the portal to 300 users in just eight weeks. A-CDM has been designed to make airports operate more efficiently and transparently by sharing accurate information with key stakeholders in a timely manner. Amadeus said this should result in better air traffic management with fewer delays and increased capacity, as well as an improved passenger experience. The Amadeus A-CDM Portal can predict future flight problems over a three-to-four hour period, identifying which flights might be delayed and how they can be turned around faster to make sure they leave on time, even if they arrived late. With accurate data stakeholders can make cooperative decisions to rapidly deal with operational issues. Michael Ibbitson, chief information officer of London Gatwick Airport, said: "We have received extremely positive feedback from our Amadeus A-CDM Portal stakeholders. "It is easy to use and enables them to make better decisions that contribute to smoother and more efficient operations. "The portal supports all partners at the airport involved in activities from refuelling and de-icing and to ground handling and cargo. Those employees have access to real-time data about what's happening across London Gatwick – it's a game changer. "We constantly strive to embrace new technologies at London Gatwick that will improve the travel experience and operating environment. "We estimate that thanks to Amadeus' A-CDM Portal, we will be able to increase capacity to more than 40 million passengers on a single runway following wider adoption of the portal in the next year or so." John Jarrell, Amadeus's head of airport IT, added: "Communication gaps still prevail in the airport ecosystem – a collaborative approach is key to align on aspects such as disruptions, flight information, number of bags on board and passengers in transit. We hope to see other airports follow Gatwick's innovative use of the Amadeus A-CDM Portal to facilitate improved communications and operational efficiency."

Source Travel Weekly 18th December

IAG bid for Aer Lingus rejected

International Airlines Group has confirmed that it has had an offer for Aer Lingus rejected. Shares in the Irish airline soared by as much as 19% as reports emerged that IAG was preparing a bid for the carrier. An IAG statement confirmed that a proposal had been submitted and rejected. The statement said: "IAG notes the recent movement in the share price of Aer Lingus and confirms it submitted a proposal to make an offer for the company, which has been rejected by the board of Aer Lingus. "There can be no certainty that any further proposal or offer will be forthcoming. "A further statement will be made if and when appropriate." A deal would give IAG a significant increase in valuable take-off and landing slots at Heathrow. However, any deal would have needed the backing of Ryanair, which holds a 29.9% stake in Aer Lingus, and the Irish government, which has a 25% shareholding. Aer Lingus is the third largest airline at Heathrow. Last month it increased its profit forecast for the full year after a rise in the number of passengers taking long-haul trips as Ireland's economy returned to health.

Source Travel Weekly 27th December

Consumer confidence returning to sector, claims Abta

Consumer confidence is slowly returning to the travel sector with more consumers planning increased spending on holidays next year than those looking to cut back, Abta's 2015 trends report reveals. The study, developed in association with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, shows that 20% of people state plan to spend more on holidays and only 15% say they are planning to spend less. This growth is being led by more affluent consumers with value

for money and a desire to maximise holiday experiences dominating the rest of the market. More wealthy people are breaking away from the cautious optimism that has dominated the market for the last couple of years. While this group remains relatively small, it looks set to drive some growth in the travel industry in 2015. People took an average of 3.0 holidays per person last year, however those in social class 'A' took 4.7 holidays per person. This is a marked increase from 2013 when this group took 3.6 holidays per person and is likely to continue into 2015. Holidaymakers are maximising their expenditure and leisure time by combining events, shows or experiences with their holiday as well as taking multi-centre, 'challenge' holidays and activity breaks. The continued growth of the package holiday is also a key part of the drive towards value for money. Many people plan to explore new destinations in 2015 with more than a third (35%) thinking they will take a holiday to a country they have never been to before. Living like a local is a key trend across all age groups as people are looking for more authentic holiday experiences. The 'destination celebration' has become an important trend with the desire to commemorate, celebrate and share experiences expected to drive an increased number of group holidays in 2015 such as anniversaries, stag and hen trips and overseas weddings. City breaks overtook beach holidays as the most popular type of holiday in 2014 and are expected to hold the top spot into 2015, with 43% of people planning a city break and 42% planning a beach holiday. Abta's 'destinations to watch' for 2015 are: 1. Austria, 2. Botswana, 3. Cuba, 4. Dominican Republic, 5. Japan, 6. Latvia, 7. La Gomera, 8. Norway, 9. Pacific Coast (US), 10. Singapore, 11. The Netherlands, 12. The Peloponnese. Abta chief executive Mark Tanzer said: "We do expect to see the slow but steady signs of recovery that have been characteristic of 2014 continue into next year. "We are seeing strong growth from the most affluent end of the market and we expect this to drive interest in luxury and tailor made packages. "The rest of the market remains resilient with value for money continuing to be a priority. Holidaymakers want their holiday to work hard for them, whether that's by offering new experiences, combining different destinations or simply delivering great value." Country-specific travel advice has been provided by the FCO in the report to ensure Britons travelling abroad next year remain safe. FCO head of consular communications Michael Vibert said: "This year's Abta report notes that British nationals will be doing more to make the most of their holidays abroad in the next twelve months. "With many travellers set to visit unfamiliar destinations and fit in as many activities as possible, it's more important than ever to plan and prepare fully. "Most people who travel abroad have a trouble-free trip but things can and do go wrong. Simple steps such as checking the FCO travel advice, taking out comprehensive travel insurance, and researching the country and health risks before you go can help to ensure that your holiday is one to remember for all the right reasons. "Not all consular cases are preventable, and for those British nationals who do run into difficulties the FCO will do all it can to help. "For example, we can issue replacement travel documents and provide help to those who have been a victim of crime or are in hospital. "However, we cannot pay medical bills, lend money or influence another country's legal system."