

**UK OFFICE**  
**February 2016 REPORT**  
**Prepared by: Venessa Alexander**  
**UK Director**

**Tour Operators**

- **Discover North America** – We met with Paul Jackson, Co-Director, to discuss the opportunity for featuring St Pete/Clearwater in their programme. At the moment, they only feature Miami and Florida Keys, but are looking to expand their Florida programme. They currently contract hotels and attractions with receptives, and are developing their website to attract new customers and to allow them to implement marketing activity effectively. Since our meeting I have sent them images and copy, and we will follow up with them again shortly on the progress.
- **Expedia** – We had a meeting with Kathryn Alker, Business Development Manager, who has taken over responsibility for St Pete/Clearwater from Tom Roche who has left the company. She advised that there was a strong focus on the Caribbean and USA this year, and that they were already seeing good growth for 2016 travel. Visitors to the USA for 2015 were reported at +4% versus the previous year. We have already confirmed our marketing activity with them for this year, and so their creative team will be on contact in due course to advise of the assets required.

**Meetings/Training/Events**

- **USAirtours** – As part of the St Pete/Clearwater consumer campaign, we visited the teams at USAirtours and Travel Planners with the yetis and videographer to engage with the agents and promote the destination. We offered the staff treats and destination information, and many of them enjoyed having photos with the yetis inside the branded taxi.
- **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – We met with Simon Parry, Head of Sales, and Geoff Dobson, Sales Manager to discuss opportunities to work together this year. We have previously organised a joint agent Fam trip, so we would look to do this again, possibly in October if we are able to confirm the budget for this. Again, we would like to confirm a VIP event in partnership with SeaWorld, but we need to confirm the budget first.

**Trade shows**

- **Ferie, Denmark** – Exhibited at the show as part of the Florida's Beaches co-op. This is the largest Scandinavian consumer show and this year saw 61,885 visitors, a slight decrease on 2015. This year the USA was the official partner country for the show with the opening breakfast and the Exhibitor Party being US themed. The show was extremely busy with great traffic to the booth and a large number of requests for information leading to a request to double quantities of guides for next year.

## Trade liaison

- **UK Ad Campaign** – Took place throughout the month of February to include OOH, digital and social activity. Results to follow in next report.
- **Kissimmee** – We have provisionally agreed a joint Kissimmee and St Pete/Clearwater Fam trip for September, which will target tour operator sales agents. Jo Piani from Kissimmee is sourcing the flight seats.
- **Deichmann Shoes/British Airways Holidays Brand Affinity Campaign** – We have confirmed our participation in a UK consumer Brand Affinity campaign with Deichmann Shoes. The campaign will consist of in-store posters and vinyls, dedicated landing page, homepage presence on the Deichmann website, E-newsletter to approx. 80k subscribers, and social media posts for Facebook and Instagram. This will be in market from 14<sup>th</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> April, and we will be working in partnership with British Airways holidays, who will be supporting with a prize including flights, accommodation and car hire. We have already signed off the artwork for the posters and vinyls, and the remaining proofs will be sent through for sign off next month.
- **Sainsbury's Brand Affinity Campaign** – This campaign is now live offering customers the chance to win a 7 night holiday to St Pete/Clearwater in partnership with Travel Planners.
- **Tour America, Ireland** – We received the artwork for sign off, which included; Luas graphics for inside the tram as well as outdoor columns, promotional stand at Luas station, radio and video scripts, flip flop giveaways, and Tour America homepage banner. The campaign is now live and offers the chance to win a 7 night holiday for two, including flights and accommodation.
- **Travel Republic** – We have finally confirmed our marketing activity with Travel Republic in partnership with Kissimmee. This will consist of banners on the Florida holidays and Orlando search pages on their website, as well as a dedicated landing page promoting both destinations. We have sent copy and images to Poonam and are waiting to approve the artwork. This campaign will launch during March.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We have agreed a marketing proposal with Linda Dixey, Product Manager, which includes; email, preferred destination with homepage presence, website banner, social media, affiliate email with TravelPlanners, as well as a trade email and website banner for USAirtours. This activity will go live in March, and we have begun signing off artwork. We will also be running an in-house staff incentive for both USAirtours and TravelPlanners staff for the chance to win high street shopping vouchers.
- **Virgin Holidays/Virgin Retail** – As reported last month, we will be implementing a Virgin Retail In-Store promotion and all activity has now been confirmed. We have agreed that the campaign will take the form of Standee Graphic Displays (in all 105 outlets around the UK) and the campaign will run from the 14<sup>th</sup> March – 11<sup>th</sup> April, which will tie in with the Virgin Holidays Florida Focus in April. In addition to the standee graphics, we will be implementing a retail staff incentive that will offer the top selling agent a chance to win a 7 night stay in the area (4 nights have kindly been donated by The Guy Harvey Outpost & 3 nights from The Postcard Inn) and the communication piece that will be distributed to all staff members will have our area key selling points to

educate the staff on our destination. Branded pens will also be sent to each store for staff to use during this promotion. All elements to the campaign have now been finalised and signed off.

- **American Sky** – Kathryn Glover, Head of Product, contacted us for information as they are updating the copy on their website. They had produced a 10 reasons to visit St Pete/Clearwater guide which included details about the beaches, Dali museum, breweries, Dunedin, downtown St Petersburg, and dolphin watching.
- **Visit USA Ireland** – We provided details of the opening of Opal Sands, along with copy and images for inclusion in the Visit USA monthly newsletter
- **Travelsphere** – We had a call with Kathy Farahat, Senior Product Manager, who advised the business is doing ok to St Pete/Clearwater. They offer one tour for their Travelsphere brand which incorporates Kissimmee, Daytona, St Augustine, Miami, Florida Keys, Naples and St Pete/Clearwater. They also offer one tour for their Just You brand (single travellers) which includes visits to Kissimmee, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Florida Keys, Fort Myers, Sarasota, but St Pete/Clearwater is not included. They have already finalised their 2016 programme, however they will be reviewing the programme shortly, particularly with the hotels featured. Following the call, we sent them copy for their website/brochures.
- **TUI Specialist** – We have confirmed our joint marketing activity in partnership with Tampa Bay, which will target consumers as well as the trade, including; 2 trade newsletters, 3 regional training events, tactical direct mail, e-flyer to trade, sponsored blog, Facebook post, and Footprints email. We have also agreed our participation for their Florida training day in March.
- **BA Holidays** – We have confirmed our participation in their Florida training day, which will be held in Newcastle for their sales agents in May.
- **Premier Holidays** – We have confirmed our joint marketing activity in partnership with SeaWorld, which will launch in June. This will consist of an agent prize winner spa/golf day, training at their head office to their sales team, instore window posters, trade and consumer mailings, dedicated page on their website, and newsletter to trade and consumer.
- **Titan Travel** – Alice Nevins-Ramessur has recently joined Titan as their USA Product Executive. She will be working alongside Jayne White, Product Manager.
- **Stella Travel Services** – Emily Underhill, Assistant Product Manager sent us the proof for their Travel 2 St Pete/Clearwater destination page for their 2017 Florida brochure. Following some amends, this has now been signed off.
- **Thomas Cook** – Jill Townsin, Product Manager, Chloe White, Assistant Product Manager and Diane Day, In Resort Operations Manager, advised they were visiting St Pete/Clearwater in February. We arranged appointments for site inspections for Opal Sands, Sandpearl, Hilton Clearwater, Magnusson Hotel, Tradewinds Island Grand and Guy Harvey, Beach House Suites, Postcard Inn, Sunset Vistas, Barefoot Beach Resort and Holiday Inn Harbourside as well as an overnight stay at the Sheraton Sand Key.

Feedback from Thomas Cook was fantastic with a definite confirmation that they will be expanding their accommodations offering online and in the next brochure.

- **American Holidays, Ireland** – We have been in discussion with Dee Burdock, Product Manager to confirm a marketing campaign in partnership with Kissimmee, to launch later this year. Details are still to be finalised.
- **Bon Voyage** – We had a call with Karen Niven, Product Manager to discuss the performance of the destination. Whilst she wasn't able to provide room nights, she advised that Florida generally was performing well. They contract their product range through receptives, and she will review Opal Sands and Treasure Island Beach resort. Karen had advised that there is an opportunity for training, so she will advise on potential dates.
- **Visit USA UK** – The Visit USA UK newsletter reported that Virgin Atlantic is increasing services between the UK and Orlando to meet high demand for travel - services will begin to increase from late summer 2016. Those in Scotland will have more choice when flying to the Sunshine State, with the current seasonal services to Orlando being extended so that a weekly service is available until the end of November 2016 and from the start of March 2017. There will also be increased frequency between Gatwick and Orlando, with up to 18 flights a week. In late July 2016 and throughout August 2016 the airline will add three extra services a week from Gatwick to Orlando, operating on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.
- **TripAdvisor Accolades** – An email was distributed to all of our trade contacts advising them of the recent TripAdvisor accolades that Clearwater Beach and St. Pete Beach have recently received.

### **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

81

### **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

1 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

#### **Visit Florida plans re-run of sunshine campaign**

Visit Florida plans to run its 'Moments of Sunshine' campaign again in London later this year, and to roll it out to other cities worldwide. The tourism body ran a campaign in the capital throughout January designed to woo UK visitors by 'brightening up the days of Londoners'. Working with industry partners, it surprised commuters in the capital with various free gifts and entertainment. Speaking at Florida Huddle 2016 in Tampa, chief marketing officer Paul Phipps said the campaign had an immediate impact. "Although our research is not complete yet we are so taken with the immediate impact that we intend to repeat the London takeover, not once, but at least twice," he said. "We are the number one destination in the USA for UK visitors we found that we were actually number three in a wish list and we want to change that. "The London campaign is part of the strategy to improve our positioning." Phipps said it was likely the visit of the Jacksonville Jaguars to Wembley in early October will herald the start of a new series of events, and Visit Florida plans to 'invade' again in January 2017. Such

has been the success of the campaign, it is likely to form the template for similar activity in other cities around the world such as New York and Berlin, he added. "Tourism is the number one industry in Florida and as such we have been empowered by Governor Rick Scott to continue the enormous progress we have been making over the past three years," added Phipps. Florida is widely expected to break the 100 million visitor mark for 2015 when statistics are released later in February and aims to be the number one destination in the world. Phipps said the next major project will be at the Goodwood Festival of Speed where it will display its motor sport heritage with a branded car that will be competing around Europe.

1 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **BA Holidays surprised by spending habits of Brits**

Brits will go on an average of four trips this year, according to a survey by British Airways Holidays. Those with an annual salary of £15,000 will take an average of three breaks this year, while those who earn £55,000 will take seven. The survey, carried out in December, found Brits spend 13% of their annual salary on holidays every year. The survey also found: - 16-24 year olds will go away the most times in a year, averaging five trips, compared to three for over 55s

- the majority of Brits will spend seven days researching before booking, but one in 10 Brits spends just one hour
- on average, Brits take seven months, one week and four days to save up and afford a 'big' holiday, and even high earners spend more than six months saving up for a 'dream holiday' abroad
- one in nine Brits don't keep to a budget on holiday, with almost 20% of under 35s admitting they have had to borrow money while abroad
- the average cost of a holiday for a family of four is £4,260, yet only just over half of that (£2,328) will go on flights and accommodation
- 45% of the total cost of a trip abroad will go on pre-holiday pampering, new clothes, extras at the airport, food and drink and items when away
- for single travellers, this rises to 55% of the total cost.

Claire Bentley, managing director of British Airways Holidays, said: "We were really surprised by just how much money goes on pre-holiday shopping, pampering and other extras compared to the cost of the holiday itself." The research was conducted by censuswide on behalf of British Airways. The survey of families was conducted with a sample of 1,011 married people with two children under the age of 16, who have been on holiday as a family in the past two years. The research into single travellers was conducted with a sample of 1,003 single people who have holidayed abroad in the past two years. All other elements of the study were conducted with a sample of 5,006 UK adults.

1 February 2016, Source TTG

### **Kuoni suitor eyes up Tui's Hotelbeds**

Tui has moved a step closer to selling off its bed bank arm with reports emerging of significant interest from a Swedish investment firm. EQT partners, which also looks set to take control of Kuoni Group, has put together plans to merge the two companies, according to The Sunday Times. Tui Group announced plans to offload Hotelbeds Group last year. The decision followed the sale of B2C brand LateRooms to Cox & Kings for £8.5m and the closure of AsiaRooms and Malapronta. The division reported an annual profit before interest, taxes, and amortisation of €82.3 million in 2015 - up from €29.1 million. EQT's bid for Kuoni has put it in pole position, The Sunday Times said, but Tui looks set to invite further bids in an attempt to push the price over €1 billion.

1 February 2016, Source Travel Weekly

### **Families face half-term price hikes as air fares soar**

Families wanting a half-term holiday this month face paying up to eight times more than normal for flights, according to new research. Travellers will be hit by “the perfect storm” of the start of half-term and Valentine’s Day falling on the same weekend. The average cost of flights on the weekend of February 13 is nearly 200% more than flights departing two weeks later, according to the study by online bureau de change FairFX. The biggest mark-up, of 762%, was on a flight travelling from Manchester to Verona on February 13. The second biggest mark-up was on a flight from London to the Austrian ski gateway of Salzburg, which cost 739% more. An investigation by the Times last week revealed that Center Parcs in the UK during February half-term was 194% more expensive than in Holland France, Holland and Germany have different school holiday dates regionally so there are no significant mark-ups during the year. Under rule changes introduced two years ago schools can fine parents £60 for each child taken out of school for a week, meaning a family with four children faces a £240 bill for a week’s holiday. However, while unauthorised absences have fallen, many parents still opt to take their children away in term time because the savings are usually greater than the fines. Paul Cookson, a father whose Facebook protest about the cost of holidays during half-term went viral two years ago and ended up being debated in Westminster, told the newspaper: “I understand that demand pushes up prices but as a parent, that doesn’t stop it being a major frustration.”

2 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Parents ignoring the ban on holidays in term-time: Hundreds of thousands willing to risk fine as savings dwarf the £60 penalty**

Three million school days lost to 'illegal term-time holidays' in 2014. But parents willing to risk fines to make savings on expensive vacations.

Government ministers believe term-time holidays affect children's grades

But parents face paying eight times the normal price for half-term breaks

The ban on taking children out of school for family holidays is failing, figures suggest.

Hundreds of thousands of parents are willing to risk a fine as the savings made on cheap term-time holidays dwarf the £60 penalty. Government statistics reveal that 3million school days were lost to illegal holidays in 2014, according to the latest available figures. This marks a 50 per cent rise in just four years. It means the equivalent of almost one in ten children misses a week of classes every year so they can have a holiday with their parents outside the peak times for prices. Over the same time period, the number of days’ term-time holiday for schoolchildren that were given the seal of approval by headteachers has plunged from 5.5million to 1.3million. The sharp change reflects the extra pressure put on schools to sanction holidays only in exceptional circumstances and to ensure those taking their children out of school without permission are fined. Separate figures reveal more than 50,000 term-time holiday fines – which double to £120 if not paid quickly enough – were issued by local councils last year. A rise of 25 per cent on the previous 12 months. In October the Local Government Association called for a more ‘common sense’ approach to be taken on the issue. Roy Perry, chairman of its children and young people board, said: ‘There has to be a sensible solution whereby every family has the option to spend time together when they choose to, without fear of prosecution from education authorities. ‘The current rules tie families to set holiday periods. They make no allowances for what a family would class as a special occasion or takes into account a parent’s work life.’ However, Christopher McGovern, chairman of the Campaign For Real Education, said: ‘We need to value education more highly. It is a passport to the future and a lot more valuable than a passport to Majorca.

What we sow we reap. A Department for Education spokesman said: 'Missing the equivalent of one week a year from school can mean a child is significantly less likely to achieve good GCSE grades, which has a lasting effect on their life chances. 'Following our reforms there are now 200,000 fewer pupils regularly missing school compared with five years ago.'

5 February 2016, Source Travolution

### **On The Beach sees six month revenues leap by a quarter**

Manchester-based OTA On the Beach Group has seen revenues leap by a quarter, the firm reported in a six month trading update. In an update to the City on trading up to January 31 ahead of today's Annual General Meeting, the firm reported unique visitors to site are up 18.9% year-on-year. It added this has been delivered alongside an overall reduction in the cost per unique visitor. Mobile visitors reached a record 67% of traffic, an increase of 31% year-on-year. The trading update is the first since the company was successfully floated in September last year. The statement added the group's international division, which trades as www.ebeach.se and is live in Sweden, is continuing to make progress and is being tested in Norway. "The group has performed well in the first four months of the financial year," the trading update said. "Our ongoing strategy of investment in technology and directly sourcing supply, combined with our increased investment in both online and offline marketing, has delivered strong growth in bookings and revenues. "On the Beach's agile business model allowed the group to successfully react to rapid changes in consumer demand, which were more prevalent than usual during this four month period. "Compared to previous years and driven by recent acts of terrorism, the business responded well to significant volatility in traffic, as well as stronger demand for holidays in the Western Mediterranean which offset weaker demand for Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean." Chief executive of On The Beach, Simon Cooper, said: "The first four months of the new financial year has delivered a solid period of growth for On the Beach. "Our strategy of investing in marketing, hotel supply and technology to drive growth has delivered an increase in revenue in line with the Board's expectations; with consumers attracted to our wide range of value for money beach holidays. "On the Beach continues to efficiently execute its strategy. The Board believes that the group is well positioned to continue generating attractive levels of growth and therefore remains confident in meeting management's full year expectations."

5 February 2016, Source Travolution

### **TripAdvisor's instant booking platform expands to nine new markets**

TripAdvisor has expanded its hotel booking service to nine more countries. Customers in Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore and South Africa can now make bookings on the popular travel site after it was introduced in the US and UK markets last year. A "global roll-out" of the service is expected in the first half of 2016. The site features more than 70 hotel chains, groups and online travel agencies. President and chief executive of TripAdvisor, Stephen Kaufer, said: "We're excited to help even more travellers around the world conveniently plan and book the perfect trip on our site as we rollout instant booking to more global markets. "The momentum we're building is remarkable and we look forward to continuing our expansion throughout 2016 with the help of our trusted partners." The expansion follows TripAdvisor's partnership with Priceline Group, announced in October 2015, and integration of its Booking.com inventory.

8 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Irish consumers back spending with holiday sales up 40%**

Visa report shows spending up on holidays, nights out and new cars helped by higher pay. Many Irish consumers appear to be spending their way out of the winter blues by splashing

out on leisure pursuits such as holidays – with some agents reporting sales up by 40 per cent – while spending on nights out shows an increase of almost 15 per cent compared with the same month last year. A significant increase in package-holiday spending has seen Irish travel agents record “an unprecedented level of booking enquires” in January with some members of the Irish Travel Agents’ Association recording sales increases of up to 40 per cent compared with January 2014. The latest spending index from Visa Europe also shows double-digit spending growth in hotels, restaurants and bars while spending on transport – largely fuelled by new car sales – was also up sharply compared with a year earlier. The index is based on spending on all Visa debit, credit and prepaid cards which are used to make an average of 110 million transactions every quarter and account for €1 in €3 of all Irish consumer spending. The latest index, published today, shows no slowdown in consumer expenditure in January with a year-on-year increase of 7.2 per cent recorded during the month across all payment methods. This was faster than the 6.5 per cent seen in December and the second-sharpest expansion since the series began in September 2014. According to Visa the surge in consumer spending has been helped by higher wages and reduced unemployment. Wages rose 2.7 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2015, while the rate of unemployment at 8.6 per cent, the lowest since 2008. The fastest increase was in recreation and culture which registered an expansion of 14.7 per cent. Increased consumer spending on leisure activities was highlighted by hotels, restaurants and bars seeing a 12.2 per cent bounce. Transport and communications was boosted by 7.8 per cent growth. The Society of the Irish Motor Industry reported more than 39,800 new cars were sold in January – an increase of more than 33 per cent on the number of cars sold during the same month in 2015.

11 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Air fares expected to fall**

Air fares are likely to fall further in 2016 due to the recent drop in oil prices which has knocked around \$24 billion off the air industry's annual fuel bill, said IATA. Crude oil prices dropped to a 12-year low in January, due to concerns over excess supply and lower demand. IATA said global fares fell 5% in 2015 while growth in passenger traffic was its strongest for five years. "Recent falls in oil prices mean that further falls in air fares are likely to be seen in 2016 as hedging contracts unwind, which will help to stimulate demand over the year," said the airline association.

18 February 2016, Source Travelgram

### **DEMAND FOR AIR TRAVEL IN 2015 STRONGEST IN FIVE YEARS**

IATA's global passenger traffic results for 2015 shows demand (revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 6.5% for the full year compared to 2014. This was the strongest result since the post-Global Financial Crisis rebound in 2010 and well above the 10-year average annual growth rate of 5.5%. While economic fundamentals were weaker in 2015 compared to 2014, passenger demand was boosted by lower airfares. After adjusting for distortions caused by the rise of the US dollar, global airfares last year were approximately 5% lower than in 2014. "Last year's very strong performance, against a weaker economic backdrop, confirms the strong demand for aviation connectivity. But even as the appetite for air travel increased, consumers benefitted from lower fares compared to 2014," said Tony Tyler, IATA's Director General and CEO. Annual capacity rose 5.6% last year, with the result that load factor climbed 0.6 percentage points to a record annual high of 80.3%. All regions experienced positive traffic growth in 2015. North American airlines saw demand rise 3.2% in 2015, broadly unchanged from the growth achieved in 2014. Capacity rose 3.1%, edging up load factor 0.1 percentage points to 81.8%.

18 February 2016, Source Travelgram

### **U.S. TRAVEL TRENDS INDEX: SURGING DOMESTIC LEISURE TRAVEL OFFSETS SOFTENING BUSINESS, INTERNATIONAL MARKETS**

The U.S. Travel Association released its inaugural Travel Trends Index (TTI), a two-prong indicator developed by the organization's economic research team to both track and predict the volume and pace of travel to and within the U.S. The TTI will be released on the first Tuesday of each month. This month's TTI—which measures travel trends as of December 2015—shows that travel growth leveled off at the end of the year and forecasts moderate growth in early 2016. Domestic leisure travel continues to strengthen, thanks to rising wages and low gas prices. Business travel, by contrast, contracted due to volatile markets and rising interest rates, although the TTI predicts a slight recovery for that segment in the first half of 2016. Inbound international travel, while still on a slight growth trajectory, has leveled off considerably due to the strong U.S. dollar. The TTI assigns a numeric score to every travel segment it examines—domestic and international, leisure and business—in current, 3-month predictive and 6-month predictive indicators. As with many indices similarly measuring industry performance, a score above 50 indicates growth, and a score below indicates contraction. The TTI draws from multiple data sources to develop a monthly reading of both international inbound and domestic business and leisure travel numbers, and predict the likely average pace and direction of these travelers over upcoming three and six month periods.

22 February 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Number of Brits going abroad jumps 10%**

UK residents made 13.4 million visits abroad in the three months to December 2015, according to the latest ONS figures. This was a 10% rise on the same three months the previous year. ABTA chief executive Mark Tanzer said the figures were 'very positive' and follow similar rises earlier last year. "This is a clear indication that consumer confidence is strong once again, following the significant falls in passenger numbers we saw due to the financial crisis of 2008," he said. "The booking trends for 2016 are also looking positive, making it imperative that holidaymakers plan ahead and book early to get the widest choice and best value."

23 February 2016, Source TTG

### **Pound falls against foreign currencies**

The recent battering the pound has taken has seen it fall in value against half of the Post Office's 40 most popular currencies. The pound has had a turbulent year to date and fell to its lowest level against the dollar in seven years yesterday as Britain's future in the EU continues to be in doubt. Now the post office has reported that despite being strong against three quarters of the top 40 currencies at the beginning of the year, it has reduced to 25% now. Other currencies that the pound has seen sharp falls against include the Japanese yen, by 11.6%, the Icelandic krona, by 10.5%, the Czech koruna, by 7.8% and the UAE dirham by 7.3%. This is not to say the pound has not risen against certain currencies, including the South African rand with growth of 26%, the Mexican peso which is up by 18%, the Malaysian ringgit by 9.1%, the Norwegian krone by 6% and the New Zealand dollar by 6%. Andrew Brown of Post Office Travel Money said: "This is definitely a year when it will pay people to do their homework before booking a destination. "With sterling's recent fall in value against more than half of our bestselling currencies, you can't blame them for thinking twice about where to go on holiday. "However, canny travellers will be 'quids in' if they opt for destinations with weak currencies or those where local prices are low. "Better still, if they combine both elements their holiday money will stretch further."

23 February 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Economic uncertainty dampens growth in premium-class air travel**

Airlines have reported weaker demand for premium-class travel in the second half of 2015, blaming global economic uncertainty. According to the latest figures from airline body IATA, it was a 'soft end' to the year for industry-wide premium-class travel volumes. It blamed challenging conditions in some of the key industry sectors for premium travel, notably the banking sector, as well as the mining and energy sectors. And it predicted growth is likely to remain only modest in the near term too. Premium traffic volumes grew by an estimated 3.7% in 2015 as a whole. But much of the growth was seen early in 2015 and slowed over the latter months of the year. Seasonally adjusted premium volumes increased by just 0.2% between July and November 2015, and traffic in December was just 1.7% higher than in the same month in 2014. The strongest growth was seen on the North Atlantic, the largest market in terms of revenue, which is estimated to have grown by a healthy 4.5% in 2015. IATA said this was supported by solid economic growth in the US and a modest cyclical upturn in Europe. Meanwhile, slowing growth and even recession in a number of large emerging markets, such as China and Brazil, has hit premium traffic growth. But although premium passenger numbers lagged behind economy volumes growth on most routes at the end of last year, premium fares in general held up better.

24 February 2016, Source TTG

### **Norwegian receives first lengthened Dreamliner**

Norwegian has taken delivery of its first 787-9 Dreamliner. The aircraft is being leased from New York-based leasing company MG Aviation. A further 30 are on order and will be used to launch new routes across North America, South America and South-East Asia. A further 100 Boeing 737 MAX, 100 Airbus A320neo and 34 Boeing 737-800s are all on the order books. Chief executive Bjørn Kjos said: "This marks our continued commitment to the company's global expansion ensuring travellers across that world access to high quality flights at a low fare. "The delivery of Norwegian's first 787-9 marks our continued commitment to the company's global expansion ensuring travellers across the world access to high quality flights at a low fare. "The 787-9 will give Norwegian unrivalled operational advantages, large improvements in fuel efficiency and much lower costs." The Swedish actress Greta Garbo adorns the tail of the aircraft. Its first commercial flight will commence on February 27, from Oslo to Orlando and the aircraft will operate routes to and from Gatwick.

24 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Families could receive up to £142 in refunds for their Easter or summer holiday after Air Passenger Duty on children aged 12 to 15 is abolished by George Osborne**

Families may be entitled to refunds worth as much as £142 on holidays

Air Passenger Duty on children aged 12 to 15 will be abolished from March

Chancellor revealed new move in autumn statement last December

Families may be entitled to refunds worth as much as £142 on their Easter and summer holidays following changes to Air Passenger Duty. A change in the rules introduced by Chancellor George Osborne means APD on children aged 12 to 15 will be abolished from March 1. This means any family which has already paid the duty, which costs £13 per head each way for short haul trips and £71 each way on long haul, is entitled to a refund. The change to APD means that a family of four with two children aged 12 and 14 who have paid for flights to somewhere like Florida leaving after March 1 could be entitled to a refund worth £142. Finance experts say that while some airlines and travel companies are offering automatic refunds, others require people to make a claim. For example, British Airways is

offering an automatic refund on flights booked after September 2015. But anyone who paid for a flight before that date will need to complete an online form to get their money back. The budget airline easyJet is offering automatic refunds. However, Ryanair requires customers to make a claim via an online form. If families fail to make a claim the money will simply go into the airline's coffers, boosting their profits. Any chance that travellers get to make a saving on holiday costs, particularly to the US, will be welcomed. Just this week, the pound slumped to a six-year low against the dollar, falling to \$1.41, which means spending money will not go as far this year. The decision to take children out of the APD system were announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement in December 2014. The charge was first abolished for the under 12s from May 1 last year, and it is now being removed for those aged 12-15. But the decision to take the charge away in two steps, rather than wiping it away for all those aged 15 and under at the same time, has created costs and bureaucracy for the airlines. The editor-in-chief of money.co.uk, Hannah Maundrell, said research suggests many parents will not apply for their money back, either through ignorance of the changes or apathy. A survey of parents found more than half – 58 per cent – thought airlines should offer automatic refunds. Around one third said they did not want to spend the time and effort involved to apply for a refund. Miss Maundrell said: 'As airlines breathe a sigh of relief having just completed the first batch of refunds, they now have to start the whole process all over again. This would be a straightforward process if all refunds were automatic. Sadly, some travel companies are asking people to 'apply' for a refund. This could lead to people being left in APD limbo as one in three parents claimed they would not apply for a refund. Just to add further complexity, parents that booked package deals will have to go back to the tour operator to make a claim, not the airline. On a brighter note, this will save a family of four with two kids £26 on a flight to Europe and £142 on a flight to the USA. Every penny counts when you're bringing up a family. People should do what it takes to get the cash back and put it back into your holiday spending pot.'

25 February 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Long-haul family bookings rise following U16 air tax abolition**

Bookings for Florida and the Caribbean have rocketed following the abolition of air passenger duty for children under 16, according to ABTA. It said figures from GfK's Leisure Travel Monitor show sales for the Caribbean are up 29% for this summer and bookings for Florida are up 13% over two years. It said the increase was 'perhaps partly boosted' by the abolition of APD for children. Families with teenage children will fly for less from 1 March with the removal of APD on economy flights for children under 16. This follows the abolition of APD on flights for children under 12 last May. Following the cut, a family of four (with two children under 16) will save £26 on flights to Europe and £142 on flights to long-haul destinations. Both cuts were announced in the Autumn Statement in 2014 and are a result of a 'Scrap the Tax on Family Flights' initiative, which was launched by A Fair Tax on Flying, of which ABTA is a member. Most airlines and travel companies have refunded or will refund APD on flights for under 16s that were booked and paid for before the reductions come into effect, said ABTA, but it advised holidaymakers to contact their travel company or airline to find out more. ABTA chief executive Mark Tanzer: "The abolition of APD on flights for children and teens under 16 is undoubtedly good news for holidaymakers. However, whilst families will see welcome savings, APD in the UK remains one of the highest taxes of its kind anywhere in the world. ABTA, along with other member of the Fair Tax on Flying, continues to call for a reduction in APD to at least half the current levels to ensure the whole country benefits from a fairer tax on flying."

26 February 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Aer Lingus - Announces extra summer seats on Orlando service**

Aer Lingus has announced extra seats for summer 2016 on their Dublin to Orlando service. The three times weekly service will be operated by a larger aircraft, an A330-300, providing an additional 3,000 seats during the months of May to August. Orlando is one the airline's most popular transatlantic destinations particularly amongst families as it is home to top attractions such as Universal Studios and Disney World. The larger aircraft will help to meet the ever-increasing demand throughout the summer months. The announcement follows the recent launch of three new transatlantic routes from Dublin to Hartford Connecticut, Los Angeles and Newark New Jersey, bringing the total number of direct services to North America to 12. Aer Lingus now operate 30 daily services across the Atlantic, offering value to business and leisure customers in an increased number of markets across Europe and North America. Keith Butler (Aer Lingus Chief Commercial Officer) said, "We are delighted to add extra capacity to serve the strong demand for travel to Orlando over the summer months. We continue to monitor and adjust our schedule to meet our guests' needs, offering more choice and extra convenience. We recognise the strong demand for travel to Orlando, particularly among the family market and we are happy to be able to meet that demand."

26 February 2016, Source TTG

### **Papped! February 26, 2016**

A pair of yetis dropped in to say hello to staff at USAirtours to showcase Visit St Pete/Clearwater's largest ever advertising campaign around London.

28 February 2016, Source Travel Extra

### **How was February for you?**

The ITAA report a definite slow down in sales compared with January. Travel Agents reported their strongest January in years (the strongest ever in some cases) having previously reported their best November and December in some cases. Sunway described February as "nothing to write home about, but not bad after a fast start in January." Falcon say momentum is still strong across the market, with bookings strong for winter also. The ITAA say the market has been slowed by the expense of Aer Lingus and Ryanair now that their sales are over. Tour operator discounts for April and May also stimulated the market in January.