

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

**Tour Operators**

**Ocean Florida** – We joined Stephanie Alexander from Sirata Beach Resort and Melissa Bonacore from Holiday Inn & Suites Harborside, whilst they were in the UK on their annual sales mission. We met with John Tatum, Destination Manager, Muna Abanour, Destination Executive and Colleen Creevy, Destination Executive at Ocean Florida. John advised that business to the area was looking strong with room nights +20% compared to last year, and that St Pete/Clearwater was their top selling beach destination and will be an ongoing focus for them. They continue to see Clearwater Beach perform better than the other beach areas, particularly for the recognised chain hotels. He also advised that they are currently offering their sales agents an incentive to win a place on a Florida beaches Fam trip in November. We have since sent them the latest brochures for their sales agents.

**Platinum Travel** – We met with Ciara Foley to provide an update on the destination including details of the new hotel openings, as she is visiting the destination next month. She advised that the bookings were looking positive as customers switch to Florida as Europe is becoming more expensive due to the increased demand, and Florida offers better value for money. She also suggested that booking confidence had improved and lead time had increased.

**American Holidays** – We met with Dee Burdock, Product Manager, who advised that room nights to St Pete/Clearwater were flat, but she was confident that with the campaign in market, this would help to increase the bookings. We provided her with details of the Opal Sands and Treasure Island Beach Resorts to consider for their programme.

**Meetings/Training/Events**

**British Airways Holidays** – We participated in the annual Florida training day at their Newcastle office. The format of the day was in the style of a ‘travel market’ attended by 13 suppliers including; Visit Florida, Visit Orlando, SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Universal, Disney, Miami, Kissimmee, Sarasota, and Fort Lauderdale. We were able to train approx. 35 of their dedicated Florida sales agents, as well as speak with other colleagues who were looking to book their own holiday. We provided them with an update on the new hotels, along with a destination overview, and provided them with maps and the new brochures.

**Visit USA Ireland** – We attended their quarterly update in Dublin and were joined by key Irish tour operators and USA partners, including SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Daytona Beach, and Visit Florida. Clodagh Oxley and Dee Burdock provided an update on their recent activity including a marketing update and advised they are working on updating their website with complimentary banner advert. They will also produce a destination focus monthly newsletter, which will allow all partners equal coverage during the year. A schedule is to be worked on shortly and communicated to partners. Finola Cunningham, US Embassy, advised that Irish visitors to the US were +12% compared to last year (Jan – Jun 2015), versus +9% worldwide visitors to the US. Ireland is still in the top 20 markets to the US.

**Visit Florida, Ireland** – We joined their appreciation meeting and lunch, which included attendees from tour operators and Florida partners. The meeting allowed each partner to provide a destination overview, whilst the tour operators were able to provide a market update and express any concerns. Generally the business was performing well into Florida due to extra flight capacity with good airfares and increased lead time for bookings. Cruise continues to drive a lot of the business particularly from Cape Canaveral. The key concerns raised were; resort fees and exchange rates.

**Visit Florida, UK** – We attended the Visit Florida annual advisory meeting and appreciation lunch which included attendees from key tour operators and Florida partners. The meeting allowed us to provide an update on the new hotel openings and renovation projects, and gain insight from the tour operators on performance. Overall Florida is a strong focus as customers choose to travel long haul due to better value for money, and they are also seeing good early bookings. Multi-centre and cruise holidays continue to book well for many of the operators. Key concerns mentioned include; Brexit, exchange rates (Canada sales have increased significantly recently due to better exchange rate), the Zika virus, and Presidential elections.

**American Holidays, Ireland** – We provided training to their 9 sales agents, which included an overview of the destination and a product update on the new hotel openings. We also met with Patrick Dunne who will be participating in the St Pete/Clearwater Fam trip in partnership with British Airways next month.

**USAirtours** – We joined Stephanie Alexander and Melissa Bonacore at USAirtours for a dedicated training session with their sales agents. We were able to provide a product update, as well as hotel information for Sirata Beach Resort and Holiday Inn & Suites Harborside to their 10 agents.

**Fort Lauderdale** – Meeting with Rosina Williams and Sophie Holloway of Fort Lauderdale CVB to handover Chair of Florida's Beaches.

## **TRADE LIAISON**

- **Visit St Pete/Clearwater/British Airways Fam Trip** – Finalised the forthcoming UK & Ireland fam trip to St. Pete/Clearwater in partnership with British Airways that will take place from the 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June. Reservations/Sales Agents from British Airways Holidays, American Holidays, TUI Specialist, Ocean Florida, USAirtours, American Sky, Funway Holidays, Travel Republic and Travel2 (Stella Travel Services) will be in attendance. The group will be staying at The Holiday Inn & Suites Clearwater Beach and visiting area hotels, attractions, restaurants etc. Geoff Dobson, UK Sales Manager for SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment has kindly confirmed 10 day tickets to Busch Gardens Tampa Bay including lunch vouchers for the group who will be visiting the theme park as part of the itinerary.
- **USAirtours/Travel Planners campaign** – We received the final results for the campaign which was in market 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, and also included an incentive for the sales agents.
  - Travel Planners email – sent on 16<sup>th</sup> March to 133k, which generated 23,361 unique opens, 1399 visits to the website and 32 leads created.
  - Facebook post to an audience of 5545 creating 10 leads.
  - Dealchecker email – sent on 12<sup>th</sup> March, which saw 551 visits to the website, 35 leads and a conversion of 5.8%.

- Cheapflights email – sent on 17<sup>th</sup> March, generating 5822 visits to the website, 11 leads and a conversion of 2.73%.
  - Destination focus banner, TravelPlanners homepage which linked through to 16 destination offers for St Pete/Clearwater.
  - USAirtours email – sent on 10<sup>th</sup> March to a database of 4965 with an open rate of 19.65%.
  - 238 room nights booked during the campaign.
  - USAirtours incentive – 6 bookings made for the top sales agent
  - Travel Planners – 6 bookings made for the top sales agent.
- **Virgin Holidays Retail Campaign** – We received the final results for the Retail campaign which ran 14<sup>th</sup> March – 11<sup>th</sup> April.
    - The St Pete/Clearwater standee was displayed in 103 Virgin Holidays stores nationwide.
    - During the campaign, we also ran an agent incentive for the opportunity to win a 3 night stay at Postcard Inn and 4 nights at The Guy Harvey Outpost. This was rewarded to the top seller during the promotion and gift certificates have been provided to the winner.
    - 693 room nights were booked through their retail channels, and 1173 room nights for all channels including retail. Whilst the room nights were down compared to last year for this period, it was advised by Nicole Gibson, Brand Partnerships Senior Executive that it is difficult to measure the direct performance for retail activity as customers may make an enquiry but go on to book through another channel. This activity will complement the Florida campaign which is due to launch later in the month.
- **British Airway Holidays Res Agent Fam** – Ahead of their arrival on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May, we liaised with Michelle Poyet to arrange welcome bags for their Sales Agent Fam group who were staying one night at Hyatt Regency Clearwater followed by one night at The Don CeSar Beach House Suites, before heading to other areas of Florida. The participants were from their dedicated Florida sales team in Newcastle. Following their return we have received positive comments from the agents according to Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive, who lead the trip.
- **Experience Kissimmee and St Pete/Clearwater Joint Fam Trip** – We have now confirmed accommodation for the sales agent fam trip to Kissimmee and St Pete/Clearwater in September at Sunset Vistas Beachfront Suites, Treasure Island. Work will begin on the itinerary in due course.
- **Elegant Resorts** – We provided Caroline Beckett, Senior Sales and Product Manager, some recommendations of luxury hotels in St. Pete/Clearwater for one of their clients who is looking to book a multi-centre holiday to Florida.
- **British Airways Holidays** – Caroline Smith, Americas Commercial Manager, advised that after many years of development, their ‘complex packages’ implementation launched on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. The new booking capability enables customers to book multi centre and/or multi component itineraries in one opaquely priced transaction, which is available online on ba.com and through their call centre. She was confident that this system development would provide a ‘real opportunity to continue to grow (our already growing business) and help support some of the gateways and destinations where our business has

not been so strong in the past. The system has been live for 3 days so far and early indications on booking levels so far are really strong. Florida so far is our most searched for and booked destination!’ Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive advised that room nights were -21%, however bookings made in April for travel in 2016 had improved. Summer is still struggling despite flight availability.

- **Tour Operator Feedback** – Submitted detailed market intelligence from Virgin Holidays, BA Holidays, TUI, Trailfinders, Funway and Expedia as to their input and concerns regarding local rates and blackouts which is impacting business from the UK.
- **IPW** – Submitted appointment requests for IPW and rescheduled double booked appointments.
- **Visit USA UK** – We have confirmed our attendance at their annual USA Independence Ball, which will take place at Park Plaza Victoria Hotel on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July.
- **Gold Medal** – We received the final artwork from Harriett Moon, Partnerships Manager, including a Florida four page special consumer magazine, which had been signed off. The campaign launched at the end of April, is in market this month and will continue through until June.
- **British Airways** – We have received the Scoota artwork from Gemma Abrahams, which forms part of the Florida campaign. This has now been approved for the launch of the campaign which is in market 24<sup>th</sup> May – 5<sup>th</sup> June.
- **USAirtours** – We received the artwork for a dedicated Florida email and Norwegian Cruise and Stay email, both of which include St Pete/Clearwater, and have been approved.
- **Ocean Florida** – The final campaign elements were approved and the campaign is now live and will run until June.
- **UK & Ireland Sales Mission** – Work has commenced on an itinerary for the forthcoming UK & Ireland Sales Mission that will be taking place from 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> September. Cities we will be visiting include Dublin (Ireland), Manchester, London and Crawley. Trade events will also take place in both Dublin and London.
- **Swanson’s Travel** – Anders Persson provided the artwork for the advert for Nordea Masters Official Magazine, which has a circulation of 40,000 readers, and is produced for distribution during the European tour in Stockholm on 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016 as part of the agreed marketing campaign we will be running together.
- **Travelopia (TUI Specialist)** – We received the proof for the Trade e-flyer which included St. Pete/Clearwater and Visit Tampa Bay as part of the marketing campaign. This was approved by both partners and sent to the trade on 20<sup>th</sup> May. We sent key selling points to Isla King, Destination Executive to create the trade blog, which will go live next month. We have also agreed a date in August when we will join Josephine Ando from Visit Tampa Bay with the Retail Sales Managers in Birmingham and East Midlands, visiting some of the Thomson stores to provide training on both destinations.

- **TUI Specialist** – We received a notification from Nicola Hollihead, Destination Manager, to advise of the changes to the Specialist division following the announcement from Lesley Rollo, Managing Director.

“You may have seen the news this morning that TUI Group has decided to sell its interest in Specialist Group, home to Hayes and Jarvis. I am sorry that I haven’t been able to tell you personally in advance of the stock exchange communication, but as a publicly listed company we have a responsibility to tell our shareholders first about such developments. Specialist Group is a fantastic collection of more than 50 brands, led by strong management teams. These brands have loyal customers and offer incredible products and experiences. However, there is little vertical integration possible with the rest of TUI’s Tourism business. TUI Group has therefore decided that these brands will grow best in an independent environment. This therefore means that TUI has decided to sell all of its brands in Specialist Group, with the exception of Crystal Ski. At this stage we don’t know who the buyer may be. TUI is committed to selling Specialist Group as one entity and not selling the brands separately. ...and introducing Travelopia, the new name for Specialist Group! To give us a new collective identity, we’re delighted to announce today that Specialist Group will be renamed Travelopia. Travelopia will be a unique collection of some of the world’s greatest specialist travel brands. Hayes & Jarvis has loyal customers, incredible products and hugely experienced teams that have built up strong relationships with yourselves over many years. This will not change and for us it is very much business as usual and we thank you as always for your much valued support. We are all incredibly excited at the prospect of running our business as an independent entity. We are more committed than ever to driving growth and look forward very much to growing our fruitful partnership with you.”

- **Visit St. Pete/Clearwater/Visit Florida/Virgin Holidays** – The campaign has now launched (2<sup>nd</sup> May) and is in market until 31<sup>st</sup> May.
- **Expedia** – The campaign has launched and will be running until the beginning of June.
- **Travel Planners/Sainsbury Brand Affinity campaign** – We received the details from Sainsbury of the winner of the 7 night prize to St. Pete/Clearwater including flights, hotel and car hire, which was supplied by Travel Planners. We have provided these details to Linda Dixey who will liaise directly with the winner to get the prize confirmed.
- **Premier Holidays** – We have confirmed our training sessions for June as part of our marketing agreement, in partnership with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment. We also provided them with copy and images in preparation for the marketing activity.
- **USA Rejser** – Christian Willumsen, Product, Marketing and Online Manager, advised that room nights were tracking at +16% versus last year with most bookings for summer. He expects that the winter bookings will be made later in the year.
- **St Pete/Clearwater Hotel Inventory** – During their visit to the UK, Stephanie Alexander and Melissa Bonacore advised that there has been a change in school summer holiday dates for US schools, which means that children return to school by the 14<sup>th</sup> August. This will open up inventory across all hotels to the International market who are wanting to travel in August.

- **Rolfs, Sweden** – Following on from an email from Johnny Gardsater, we provided destination information and itinerary suggestions to Christian Holmedal, for two groups who are planning to visit St Pete/Clearwater in February and April 2017. Both groups were planning to fly into Miami and spend 12-15 days travelling around Florida.
- **Funway Holidays** – We have confirmed dedicated training with their sales agents in their Bromley office for August.

### **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

95

### **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

3 May 2016, Source Travel Weekly

#### **Orlando reports record visitor numbers in 2015**

The Florida theme park capital of Orlando attracted a record 66.1 million tourists last year. The 5.5% rise compared with 2014 means that visitor numbers have more than doubled over the past 20 years, growing from 32.4 million in 1995. A total of 33 million room nights were sold in Orlando in 2015, resulting in tourist development tax collections topping \$230 million in Orange County, home to the central Florida tourism district. Orlando's hotel inventory has grown by more than 37% since 1995, topping 117,000 rooms last year. Passengers using Orlando International airport increased by more than 72% over the period, reaching 38.8 million in 2015. Visit Orlando president and chief executive, George Aguel, said: "Reaching more than 66 million visitors to Orlando is an amazing accomplishment for our tourism community. "This new milestone and rapid growth over the past two decades is a result of having a tourism industry and community partners that are focused on growth and investment, dedication to the needs of our visitors and the global marketing and sales efforts of our Visit Orlando team and member companies."

4 May 2016, Source TravelMole

#### **BA extends pre-order meals to Gatwick long-haul flights**

British Airways is rolling out its pre-order meal service for customers on long-haul flights from Gatwick. The service was successfully introduced at Heathrow in 2014. Customers can select their meal between 24 hours and 30 days before their flight using 'manage my booking' on the airline's website. BA has added several new long-haul routes from Gatwick this year, including Costa Rica, New York, Lima, which launches today, and Cape Town starting on November 24.

4 May 2016, Source Travolution

#### **Tech investment and growth opportunities for Hotelbeds after €1.2 billion sale**

Tui sold market-leading bed bank Hotelbeds to private equity firm Cinven Capital Management and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) last week for just under €1.2 billion. Each company is buying 50% of Hotelbeds, which has a database of 72,000 beds. The bed bank, based in Palma, Majorca, is the group name for an accommodation wholesaler set up in 2001 by First Choice before its merger with Tui. It works with tour operators and travel agencies worldwide and commands about 6% of the global market. The group also includes Hotelopia, which provides accommodation and Atol cover to easyJet Holidays. Tui chief executive Fritz Jousen said: "This is a good deal for Hotelbeds and for Tui." He said there had been "numerous bidders". Hotelbeds chief

executive Joan Vila said the new investors would leave the group “well placed to invest more strongly in technology innovation and distribution”. Cinven was previously a leading investor in travel technology firm Amadeus. Partner Jorge Quemada described Hotelbeds as “the largest accommodation distribution network within the B2B bed bank market” and said: “We believe there are considerable growth opportunities through investment in IT, as we did with Amadeus.” In advance of the sale, Jousen told an exclusive Travel Weekly dinner: “Hotelbeds is a world market leader, but at the same time it has only 6% market share. It is a strongly growing, very profitable company – a platform connecting 70,000 hotels to 31,000 sales organisations, online travel agents and travel agencies. The deal is subject to regulatory approval but is expected to go through by September.

5 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Booking hotels directly could save tourists £20m a year: Three-quarters of travellers use comparison sites without realising they don't always offer the best deal**

Only one in ten travellers always book direct according to IHG survey. Research suggests this could save holidaymakers as much as 10%. 87% of Britons believe that price comparison sites show all available rates. A staggering three quarters of Britons choose to book hotel stays through price comparison sites because they believe they guarantee the best rates - but they may be paying over the odds. Only one in ten travellers always book direct, according to a recent survey, which means the vast majority could be stretching their purse strings more than they need to. In fact, they could save £20million a year if they booked direct, the study claims. Almost 90 per cent of Britons believe that price comparison sites show all available rates, which is not always the case, yet a further three quarters admit they wouldn't use online comparison sites if they knew they might overpay. IHG Rewards Club, the loyalty programme of InterContinental Hotels Group, which carried out the research, has estimated that British travellers could save up to ten per cent when they book their stays directly through a hotel company. Nearly half of holidaymakers would never knowingly want to overpay for anything. The findings come at a time when regulatory changes are taking place, which means that hotel groups are starting to have more flexibility when it comes to guaranteeing their guests the lowest prices. For the 35 per cent of Britons who claim they no longer know who to trust when it comes to getting the lowest rate, this will mean the process is more transparent. Consumer champion Sarah Willingham said: 'So many of us assume that booking with a price comparison website will mean we get the cheapest price and that we will save money but the reality is that you should always try booking direct as there are often big savings to be had. 'Recent changes to regulations and practises are great for the consumer and mean that more hotels companies are now able to guarantee their guests the lowest prices available direct. 'Booking direct also has the added benefits of loyalty recognition, such as upgrades and points towards free nights, as well as the added extras like free Wi-Fi and breakfast included.' Travellers could save more than £20million a year on hotel stays across Europe, simply by changing the way they book, IHG believes. The survey also uncovered some interesting findings about the booking habits of travellers across the UK based on where they live. Under ten per cent of Londoners book direct, meaning those in the capital are most likely to miss out on bagging the best rates, coming in just above those in Wales (seven per cent). The savviest shoppers are in the south west, with nearly two in ten claiming to always book directly through a hotel company. It's an easy switch, but travel-hungry Britons are still booking through comparison sites, with only half claiming to know how they work.

6 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Former arch rivals Aer Lingus and Ryanair set to reach deal – Walsh**

Ryanair is likely to feed passengers to the Aer Lingus long-haul network as part of what would be an unprecedented formal agreement between the two former arch rivals, according to IAG chief executive Willie Walsh. The two airlines have held high level talks at various stages over the past year or more on a so-called interlining model. It could see Ryanair feeding passengers from its extensive network at Dublin to Aer Lingus routes serving North America. Speaking yesterday en route to San Jose in California, as British Airways launched an inaugural flight to the city from Heathrow, Mr Walsh said that while nothing concrete has been agreed between Aer Lingus and Ryanair, a feeder agreement is almost certain to be inked at some stage. "I'd be surprised if we don't reach agreement with them at some point," he said. "There were very advanced talks with Aer Lingus at a high level," said Mr Walsh. "I briefly discussed it with Michael (O'Leary), but we had senior people in Aer Lingus discuss it with senior people in Ryanair. "We've no objection to working with them. If customers want to connect from a Ryanair flight, we're very happy to do that. There were some commercial issues, but I think it's workable." IAG, which also owns British Airways, Iberia and Vueling, acquired Aer Lingus last year for €1.36bn. Ryanair had tried three times to buy Aer Lingus but was blocked by Brussels. Mr Walsh said IAG remains open to the feeder idea with Ryanair and that there's "no objection to it". He added: "It would be more of an option for Aer Lingus (than BA or Iberia) because of the Ryanair network at Dublin Airport. If we can reach a commercial agreement with Ryanair, and if customers want to do it: absolutely, no problem." He added: "Ryanair has an interesting network into Dublin from cities not served by Aer Lingus, and unlikely to be served by Aer Lingus. So, anything that improves the connectivity onto our transatlantic (network) something that would be attractive for us." Ryanair has also reached an agreement in principle with Norwegian that will see the Irish carrier feed into the Scandinavian airline's operations out of London Gatwick to the US.

6 May 2016 Travelbiz

### **Aer Lingus set to offer wifi on long-haul flights**

Airline's parent IAG has struck a new deal with US tech firm Gogo to provide wifi. Aer Lingus will offer wifi to long-haul customers under a new deal struck between its parent and US tech firm, Gogo. The carrier's owner, International Consolidated Airlines' Group (IAG) said on Thursday that four Aer Lingus Boeing 757s will be fitted with satellite technology giving passengers full broadband access. The system will allow travellers to use multiple devices and provide high quality streaming for services such as Netflix and Amazon. By 2019 80 per cent of IAG's long haul fleet will be fitted with the system, known as 2Ku. Commenting on the deal, IAG chief executive Willie Walsh said "this state of the art technology will provide greater bandwidth, faster and broader coverage to our airlines' customers". Mr Walsh indicated that customers could have to pay extra for aspects of the service. "I would expect that for some services like streaming, there would be a charge, but the basic service is likely to be free," he said. He added that IAG was still debating the actual pricing structure. Mr Walsh likened the service to wifi in hotels, where guests generally get a basic service at no extra charge to their room rate, but do not get streaming, which requires extra capacity. The service will be rolled out across all IAG airlines' long-fleets to fit in with their general maintenance schedule and will begin next year. Mr Walsh said that the aviation industry believes that passengers will ultimately "bring their own entertainment on board" for long-haul flights.

6 May 2016, Travelbiz

### **Fury of families turned back at airports over missing microchip: US bans Britons with 'old' passports**

The change in America's entry requirements was put into play on April 1. Travellers visiting the country must have a biometric or e-passport to enter. E-passports, which were introduced in 2006, have a symbol on the front. Passports issued between June and October 2006 may not be biometric

Families flying to the US are being barred from boarding planes at the last minute due to a hidden change to passport rules. Up to three million Britons face having their holidays plunged into chaos by an American anti-terror law quietly introduced on April 1. Even though they have valid tickets and visas they could be turned away at airports because they do not have the latest biometric passports. Distraught families yesterday told how their travel plans were ruined by the rule change. One father was told at check-in that his partner and two-year-old girl could board the plane but not him. British Airways last night admitted it had 'no way of knowing if a person has a valid passport' unless they checked it themselves before travelling. The 'wrong' passports are ones without a biometric chip. Those being accepted display an 'e-passport' symbol on the front showing it contains the chip, which can be used to prove the holder's identity. The problem affects passports issued before October 2006, when the biometric system was brought in. Those more than ten years old are no longer valid which means the ones at risk were produced between April 2006 and October 2006. During this period around three million could have been issued which will not work for travellers to the US, although HM Passport Office refuses to say how many are affected. An estimated 80,000 of those with the 'wrong' passports already have US travel plans. Hannah Elphick, 25, whose partner Kevin Nash was refused travel at Gatwick Airport check-in, was forced to go ahead without him to Florida with their two-year-old, Kloe. Travel expert Simon Calder said: 'The travel industry as a whole has not covered itself with glory. While some travel agents and operators have been letting their customers know about the changes, others seem to be relying on the long-established rule that passengers are responsible for adhering to all the right rules. The rule came in under the US Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015. It follows last year's shootings in San Bernardino, California, by a US-born man of Pakistani origin and his Pakistan-born wife. The Department of Homeland Security said it had been advising travellers about the change since December, both on its website and when they apply online for electronic travel visas, known as Estas. A spokesman said the warnings stated 'anyone with a passport issued in 2006 needed an e-passport after April 1, 2016,' adding: 'We also sent out at least two notices to the airlines on how to verify e-passports.' BA said: 'The week before our customers travel to the US, we send a reminder email recommending they check they have the right documentation, with links to detailed information on the changes.'

7 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Half-term holiday hell for thousands of families as more than 1,000 Thomas Cook air crews plan to go on strike over 'dangerous' cuts to their allowed break times**

Cabin crews rest times have been halved to 20 minutes every 12 hours

Air stewardesses and stewards have started voting on industrial action

They claim the new rules are 'dangerous' and put passenger safety at risk

The strike could affect scores of flights during the May half-term break

Scores of flights during the May half-term could be hit by a strike among cabin crews working for travel giant Thomas Cook. More than 1,000 air stewardesses and stewards began voting yesterday on industrial action over what they claim are 'dangerous' cuts to break periods. Under the new rules, cabin crews rest times have been halved to 20 minutes during an 11 hour 59 minute duty period. The Unite union, which is backing the action, says staff

feel they are being 'pushed to the limit' in a bid to maximise profits which is, in turn, putting passenger safety at risk. Cabin crew claim that cutting break periods will mean they will be tired and, potentially, unable to maintain passenger safety in an emergency. Before the changes, cabin crew were entitled to a 20-minute break every six hours, but the changes reduce this to 20 minutes every 12 hours. Unite said a cabin crew member will typically work 10 to 15 hour shifts and up to 60 hours a week. Duties include pre-flight preparations, safety and security checks, passenger boarding, in-flight service of headsets, drinks, food, duty free sales and other promotions, such as scratch cards. Thomas Cook's new 'Airshoppen' service for passengers, allowing passengers to pre-order duty free online and have it delivered to them in their seats, is putting extra pressures on cabin staff. The strike ballot of crews working on flights to major tourist destinations from 10 airports across the UK, closes on May 25 and could lead to industrial action during the half-term school holidays which begin a few days later. The action would affect flights out of Stansted, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, East Midlands, Gatwick, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle airports. Thomas Cook said the changes to rest periods had been agreed by union representatives and were in line with industry safety guidelines. 'We have offered to meet union representatives and the message we hear directly from our crew is that they're looking forward to a great summer of flying customers on holiday.'

7 May 2016, Source Travel Weekly

### **Term-time holiday prosecutions thrown out of court**

Two prosecutions of parents who had taken their children on holiday during school term-time have been thrown out by a court. Swindon Borough Council had started legal proceedings against the couples after they apparently failed to maintain an attendance record for their children that was above the 90% government benchmark. But magistrates said the cases could not go ahead because there was not a legal benchmark for 'persistent absence', Mail Online reported. One of the couples had taken their child out of secondary school in October for five days so they could go on holiday, meaning their attendance was 92.96% for the autumn term. But this was disputed by senior education welfare officer Jenny Logan, who said the number was actually 86.84% when calculated over the six terms. The second family had also gone on holiday with their child for five days in September. "I am delighted with the outcome of the court case and the magistrates' decision to dismiss this," one of the fathers said. A council spokesman said: "The verdict has only just been delivered, and we are now considering our options. We have a responsibility to make sure that children get the best education they can, and attendance at school is a vitally important part of that." The families involved could not be named because there is a court order to protect the children's identities.

11 May 2016, Source Travel Weekly

### **Tui confirms intention to sell Specialist Group**

Tui Group has ended months of speculation by announcing its intention to sell off its Specialist Group. In a half-year trading update issued to the City this morning, Tui chief executive Fritz Joussem said the group was a profitable portfolio of specialist travel businesses led by strong management teams. It is expected the deal will be completed some time between September and April and the sale will be led by chief executive of Tui Group Will Waggott. The Specialist Group consists of more than 50 brands including the Specialist Holidays Group and a number of adventure, education and sports events operators, and Tui's intention is to sell it as one. The travel giant said there was limited linkage to the firm's content strategy and little vertical integration with Specialist Group, hence the decision to sell it off. Crystal Ski and Thomson Lakes and Mountains are exempted from the disposal and will be integrated into Tui's mainstream business under UK and Ireland managing director

Nick Longman. In 2014, former Tui Travel plc chief financial officer and commercial director Waggott took control of SHG when he was appointed chief executive of the Tui AG non-mainstream division. Since the creation of the mainstream division following the merger of Tui Travel and Tui AG it has been speculated that the firm would sell its specialist brands. It would only confirm they were being "managed for value". Asked about speculation that SHG was to be sold off at a Travel Weekly Business Breakfast last year Christine Franks, head of M&A at Tui, said it was in no rush. She said: "It's a huge portfolio of brands, and some of those are highly integrated into our mainstream business. Some are performing really well, some are underperforming. "What we need to establish now is how to turn some of those businesses around and whether we are going to sell them or keep them in a group. We are not in a hurry." SHG was established when several businesses within Tui were brought together. The group has UK headquarters in Crawley and Surbiton as well as is Dublin, Aarhus, Denmark; Clearwater, Florida; and Castelnaudary in France, and operates in 23 source markets and sells around 750,000 holidays a year. While SHG has numerous brands, some of which are currently defunct, it is best known in the UK for Austravel, Citalia, Hayes & Jarvis and Sovereign. The Specialist Group also includes Sunsail, Le Boat and The Moorings, as well as American Holidays, which primarily sells in Ireland, and Marco Polo and My Planet which sells in Denmark and Sweden. In October last year, SHG launched trade-only Travelmood as it sought to court independent and third party agents into booking. In October last year the group closed Meon Villas and in March confirmed the sale of the brand to Oliver's Travels. Last week Tui confirmed the sale of its global bed bank Hotelbeds that was in its Specialist Travel division, to GNVA Acquisitions Limited for €1.191 billion in cash.

11 May 2016, Source Travel Weekly

#### **Tui Specialist Group companies to operate under new Travelopia brand**

Tui's Specialist Group will be renamed Travelopia following the announcement that it is to be sold off by Tui Group. The division, which comprises more than 50 brands, would not reveal any more details but confirmed it would operate under the new name with immediate effect. The confirmation follows a tweet posted by an employee of Specialist Group company Quark Expeditions, which said: "Exciting News – welcome #Travelopia! A new home for fantastic specialist #Travel brands delivering incredible inspiring experiences!" Tui Group announced this morning that it would dispose of its Specialist Group, which includes the Specialist Holidays Group, but would retain Crystal Ski and Thomson Lakes & Mountains within Tui UK & Ireland under managing director Nick Longman. The sale process will be overseen by Specialist Group chief executive Will Waggott. Speaking during an investors' update this morning, Tui Group chief executive Fritz Jousen said: "They (Specialist Group) are great brands. This is a good, strong set of businesses. But they have one thing in common – they don't use our brands or our IT, our ships, our aviation so there's no synergy. We want to be vertically integrated." On Crystal Ski and Thomson Lakes and Mountains, he added: "They are instrumental for our winter occupancy in the UK and that's why they will stay."

11 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

#### **American Holidays & Travelmood to be sold by TUI**

American Holidays and Travelmood (part of the Specialist Holiday Group...owned by TUI) have been put up for sale along with about 50 other companies in the SHG group. "We believe that a disposal of Specialist Group in one transaction is the best way to maximise value from these businesses for TUI's shareholders," said TUI. Following the first successful step with the sale of Hotelbeds Group in the first half of 2015/16, the TUI Group has made the decision to initiate the process to sell the Specialist Group. "Our strategy is very clear,

with the three imperatives scale, vertical integration and one common brand. We are aligning our business based on common platforms to gain competitive advantage. However, there is little vertical integration with the core Tourism businesses. In addition, the potential impact on profitability and the large amount of brands are strong strategic arguments not to combine the portfolio under the TUI brand. The disposal of the Specialist Group portfolio is supposed to happen in one transaction in autumn 2016 with the exception of two brands. Crystal Ski and Thomson Lakes & Mountains will not be sold and instead they will be transferred to the business in the UK and Ireland with effect from today. Both Crystal Ski and Thomson Lakes & Mountains have strong synergies and vertical integration with the core Tourism business.” So it’s very much business as usual in Dublin.

11 May 2016, Source Travolution

### **Two thirds of consumers only book travel online**

More than two thirds (68%) of consumers globally now exclusively book their travel online, latest research reveals. But seven out of every 100 respondents surveyed ended up with plans not in line with their expectations, highlighting a definite need for increased education when booking online. The research, conducted for brand protection specialist MarkMonitor, analysed the online behaviour of consumers around booking travel online, including bargain hunting for seasonal goods and attitudes towards piracy. The firm surveyed 3,257 people across eight countries, including the UK, US, Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands. Of those consumers who booked a holiday that fell short of their expectations, posting a negative review was their first reaction (42%), above trying to get a refund (40%) and complaining to a licensing body (35%) - demonstrating the power of online “word of mouth”. Following a bad experience, 37% of respondents report their debit or credit card details were misused or stolen, showing the requirement for increased vigilance when shopping or booking online. With one of the main reasons for using the internet to book travel being that it’s cheaper, 75% of consumers also go on to search for discounted goods online prior to their holidays, including sunglasses, clothing and shoes, event tickets, guide books and luggage. MarkMonitor chief executive, Mark Frost, said: “With the growth of social media and a culture where consumers have the power to make their displeasure widely known through social networking sites, online brand protection has never been more important. “This is especially evident in the fact that when asked how they vetted a travel site, almost half (47%) of consumers said they read the reviews.

13 May 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Pivotal term-time holiday case goes to High Court**

The case of a father who refused to pay a fine for taking his daughter on holiday in term-time without permission is due to be heard by the High Court. Campaigners say the case is pivotal in the fight against the tougher rules being imposed by the Government since 2013. Jon Platt took his daughter to Disney World Orlando in April 2015 and she missed seven days of school. He refused to pay the first fine of £60 and then refused to pay again when the fine was doubled. He has crowdfunded £25,000 to cover the legal costs of fighting his case. Magistrates on the Isle of Wight had previously ruled there was no case to answer because Mr Platt's daughter had attended school regularly and was there for over 90% of the time - enough not to be classed as persistent truancy by the Department for Education. But the island's council has now asked the High Court to clarify whether the court should have taken into account attendance outside of the offence dates 'as particularised in the summons when determining the percentage attendance of the child?' The High Court's decision could affect future cases. According to the most recent figures, 50,414 fines were issued to parents in the academic year 2014/15, generating £3 million.

13 May 2016, Source TTG

### **Online booking in Britain continues to grow**

The amount of time Brits are spending online in the 45 days up to making a travel booking has increased by 45% in the space of a year. A new study by Expedia entitled The British Traveller's Path to Purchase has revealed UK travellers spend 2.4 billion minutes engaging with digital travel content during the period. Launched at the Phocuswright Europe conference this week in Dublin, it showed nearly one billion of those minutes is spent accessing the media via mobile, an 82% increase year-on-year. The increase means 28 million people now access travel content on a mobile, compared to 25 million people using a desktop. However, nearly half (49%) of all people use multiple devices to engage with the content. However, once on a mobile, browsers remain the preferred way for the public to access travel content with 64% preferring them to apps. Despite the convenience of modern technology, the choosing and buying of a holiday remains a drawn-out process for the consumer; during the 45-day purchase path and online travel booker will visit sites more than 121 times. The time spent online also unsurprisingly heightens towards the end of the process with the average number of visits essentially tripling. Meanwhile more than half (54%) of UK online travel bookers start their research with multiple destinations in mind. OTAs and search engines were the most common initial online resources used to narrow down the choice, at 12% each, while family and friends remain the most commonly used offline resource.

17 May 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Court victory leads to immediate rise in term-time holiday sales**

Bookings for family holidays during school term dates have risen 88% since last week's High Court victory, according to an online travel agency. Data from Sunshine.co.uk suggests the figure will rise further. Searches for holidays during school term time are up 92% since news broke on Friday that judges ruled a council could not legally force a fine on a father who took his daughter out of school for a holiday. Over the weekend, bookings and searches for holidays during the school summer break fell by 32% and 45% respectively. According to the term time family bookings made so far, most parents plan to take their children out of school during the first week of July or last week of September. To assess the impact the case of 44-year-old Jon Platt's court victory, Sunshine.co.uk analysed both searches and bookings made on Saturday and Sunday (May 13 and 14) and compared them to the previous weekend. Sunshine.co.uk managing director Chris Clarkson said: "We wanted to keep an eye on bookings and searches over the weekend to see what impact the case had, especially since the Government announced that it would consider making alterations to the law as a result. "It seems that many parents are already taking this court case as a sign that they too could get out of a fine if they take their children out of school for a holiday - especially those who've already booked." Flight search website Cheapflights said families could save up to 45% travelling during term-time; it is advertising flights to Lanzarote in September for £204 compared to £374 in August. "Hopefully this ruling will lead to some relaxation of the rules to flatten out those peak demand periods, giving everyone the chance to enjoy the benefits of a family getaway," said MD Andrew Shelton. For those who don't want to take their kids out of school for holidays, Shelton said they could save money by booking flights at the right time. "Tuesdays are the cheapest days to book, and generally the best fares are advertised about 50 days ahead of departure with the most expensive being seen three days before travel," he said. "The time of your flight departure can also impact flight costs; morning flights tend to be more expensive so those who have the flexibility to travel between 6pm and midnight can benefit from savings. "Further, Friday is consistently the most expensive day to fly because of the increased demand of those trying to get away for the weekend. It's also

worth considering currency fluctuations - where the Pound has strength against the local currency will also provide families with more bang for their buck."

22 May 2016, Travelbiz

**If you want a real thrill in Florida... go to a museum! The Sunshine State has far more to offer than theme parks (if you know where to look)**

Florida's tourism industry was well established by the First World War

Go beyond Orlando to Fort Myers and Anna Maria Island to see the coast

Don't miss stops like the Circus Museum or the Venetian palace Ca' d'Zan

....An even more impressive collection of art is on view in St Petersburg, 60 minutes north of Sarasota. The town was named after the Russian city – a decision that came to be regretted during the Cold War when all things Russian were deemed to be the work of the Devil. I've had a soft spot for Salvador Dali ever since my art teacher informed my classmates and me that all followers of the surrealist art movement were 'charlatans'. Dali's playful approach to art was catnip to adolescents, and we were quickly painting our own versions of melted watches and lobster telephones. For me, Dali's greatest artist achievements are his wonderful house at Portlligat on Spain's Costa Brava coast, and the Dali museum in his home town of Figueres. And number three on the list is the Dali Museum in St Petersburg, built around the world's largest privately owned collection of his works. Reynolds and Eleanor Morse built a fortune from mining machinery, and through their friendship with Dali, they gradually acquired more and more of his works which eventually needed a home. In 2011, they were housed in an impressive new gallery in St Petersburg. If Dali's friendship with mining machinery millionaires seems unlikely, I was surprised to learn at the museum that Dali was a close friend of Walt Disney. A special exhibition features home-movie footage showing Walt and his wife visiting Dali in Spain.

24 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

**Lack of resources threatens US pre-clearance service at Dublin Airport**

The much-vaunted pre-clearance service at Dublin Airport, which saves passengers two hours in transit, is under threat. The Irish Independent has learned that there are serious issues with the service offered to passengers by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Passengers currently travelling from Dublin Airport to America can save up to two hours of queuing at immigration in the United States by pre-clearing in Ireland. Dublin is the only European country offering the pre-clearance service, which means passengers can avoid immigration queues and can collect their bags once they land in the US. However, department officials have warned Transport Minister Shane Ross that while preclearance "operates very well", there have been difficulties with "CBP manpower resources and hours of operation" in Dublin Airport. The transport department said all flights to the US that wanted to do so were precleared in 2015, but it warned that the service was now in doubt. "With increasing passenger numbers, there is a risk that all flights will not preclear in 2016 unless permanent additional resources are provided by US CBP," the department brief stated. Business and travel organisations here have warned that a reduction in the pre-clearance service would have major consequences for Ireland. The Irish Travel Agents Association (ITAA) said preclearance in Dublin attracted passengers from the UK and other European countries. "We would have grave concerns of any indication that the pre-clearance service was going to be cut back or reduced in any way shape or form," said ITAA president Cormac Meehan. "The current service is excellent and we would like to see it retained. Some of the airfares out of Dublin would be more competitive than what they might achieve coming out of the UK."

24 My 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Zika will infect people within US in weeks, warns disease expert**

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that the US should be doing more to prepare for the onslaught. More than 500 people in the country have contracted the virus, but they have all travelled to Latin America - the epicentre of the outbreak. "We already have Zika in the United States. But it is travel related," said Dr Fauci, speaking in a television interview on Sunday. "The concern is that we will have local transmission; in other words, people who get infected in the United States, get bitten by a mosquito, but who have never left the continental United States. "We fully expect that that will happen as we get to the more robust mosquito season in the next month or so." It comes as Zika is now a notifiable disease in Ireland. There have been a number of confirmed Zika cases in Ireland, but these have been in people who have travelled to Zika infected countries. In the US, Dr Fauci said that the disease's arrival there was inevitable, so the priority should be in limiting mosquito breeding grounds and installing screens in homes. "We need to make sure that those local outbreaks don't become sustained and don't become disseminated," he said. "That's the reason why we need to have a very, very forceful preparation right now before that happens." Zika is transmitted via mosquitoes and, it is now known, sexual contact. While most people develop a fever which passes quickly, pregnant women have given birth to babies suffering from severe brain damage. In some cases, adults have also become paralysed from the virus. The Centre for Disease Control says there are currently 157 pregnant women in the US who have been diagnosed with Zika. On Thursday, the Senate passed a \$1.1bn (€1bn) plan to combat Zika and scientists in the US are working on a vaccine, which is the main use of the government funding.

24 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **David Cameron claims family holidays could cost £230 more after Brexit**

David Cameron says falling pound could hit holiday spending and accommodation in latest warning about Britain leaving EU. The cost of a family holiday could rise by £230 and new limits on duty free could put an end to "booze cruises" to the continent if Britain votes to leave the EU, David Cameron is to claim. In the latest warning about the price of Brexit, the prime minister will argue that the cost of holiday spending and accommodation could go up because of the falling pound. The leave campaign is likely to level charges of exaggeration and scaremongering at the new Treasury figures, released a day after a warning about job losses, lower wages, higher inflation and falling house prices. But Downing Street insists it is setting out the government's objective viewpoint ahead of the 23 June vote. In its new analysis, the Treasury claimed holiday prices could go up as soon as this summer because the pound is likely to fall by around 12%, making the cost of accommodation, food and drinks higher for those travelling overseas. It predicted that two years after Britain leaving the EU, the average holiday for four people travelling together for eight nights in Europe would cost £230 more. The government argued that other benefits would be at risk, including the end of roaming charges from 2017, free healthcare within the EU and booze cruises because of potential limits on duty free. "All the evidence points to the value of the pound falling after a vote to leave the EU. A weaker pound means people's hard-earned savings won't go as far on holidays overseas," Cameron will warn. Cameron warns against 'self-destruct' vote to leave EU. "The choice facing the British people on 23 June is increasingly clear: the certainty and economic security of remaining in the EU, or a leap in the dark that would raise prices – including the cost of a family holiday." His warnings add to a previous ones by airline chief executives, including Carolyn McCall of easyJet and Michael O'Leary of Ryanair, that the price of flights could be affected. McCall said: "For easyJet and our passengers, membership of the EU has been a good thing. The common aviation area created by the EU allows any

European airline to fly anywhere in Europe. This has kept all airlines' costs low and has enabled low-fare airlines like easyJet to expand. "If the UK were to vote to leave the EU any new, more restrictive aviation arrangements would add cost and therefore fares would rise. And a weaker pound would mean the cost of a holiday abroad – including food, accommodation and drinks – would be more expensive. That is why we think our customers are better off in Europe." Two bosses of mobile phone companies backed the government's claims that the UK would not necessarily benefit from the end of mobile roaming charges from June 2017 if it left the EU. Brexit could risk tourists' safety and push up flight prices, say top travel figures. Gavin Patterson, chief executive of BT Group, which owns EE, said: "Because of the UK's membership of the EU, BT and EE have been able to offer our customers lower charges, including inclusive roaming plans and data charges that are over 90% lower for Britons travelling on the continent. Voters need to think very carefully before turning their backs on an institution that helps to ensure benefits like that are delivered." Vittorio Colao, chief executive of the Vodafone Group, said: "The end of roaming charges – which was driven by the EU – and Europe-wide offers from operators like Vodafone – the European leader in 4G – mean that everyone can use their mobiles anywhere in Europe without having to worry about excessive costs. "Britain will benefit from being part of a borderless European single digital market as it will create new opportunities for economic growth. Consequently, we believe it is better to be a shaper and leader from within, rather than being just a commercial neighbour."

25 May 2016, TTG

### **Packages lose ground in leisure trip market**

The number of overseas package holidays being booked by UK residents has failed to keep pace with the overall leisure market. Even though package holiday sales rose by 5.1% to 16.7 million in 2015, the total number of overseas breaks increased by 9.4% to 42.2 million over the same period, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Total spending on all overseas holidays added up to £26.3 billion in 2015 including £11.5 billion on package holidays – the first time it has exceeded £25 billion since the pre-recession year of 2008. ONS figures show that package holidays accounted for 39.6% of all international leisure trips last year – down from a 41.1% share of the market in 2014. UK holidaymakers still purchased 808,000 more overseas package holidays in 2015 than they did in the previous year. Packages have been steadily recovering since 2010, with the exception of 2012 when sales dipped by 1.8%, and have been growing at an average annual rate of 3.1% over the past five years. They reached their lowest point in 2010 when Britons purchased 14.3 million package holidays – by comparison, 18.95 million packages were sold in 2006. The ONS figures also showed that the average amount spent on a package holiday was £687 in 2015, which was same as in 2014 and was also higher than the average for all holidays of £623 per trip. Spain continues to be the top destination for UK residents with 13 million visits in 2015 – an increase of 6.1% on the previous year – followed by France with 8.8 million visits and Italy at 3.5 million. Abta said that the 9.4% rise in overseas travel in 2015 was "the largest annual rise in nearly 20 years".

25 May 2016, Source Travolution

### **Dnata to refocus Travel Republic with new peaks marketing campaign**

Travel Republic owner dnata Travel has admitted that focus waned on its business in the UK as it sought to integrate its technology into overseas markets. However, the Emirates-group owned travel giant has vowed to put a renewed focus on the OTA brand with a marketing push planned to start in June for peaks. "We are pushing hard on Travel Republic and focusing the on their business trying to make sure they are focussed and do not get

distracted,” said Iain Andrew, dnata division senior vice president. Travel Republic now sits in a B2C division of dnata Travel UK, along with online retailer Travelbag and beach holiday specialist OTA Sunmaster. “We brought these business in to get their capability into the Middle East,” said Andrew. “Maybe we should have given them a bit more breathing space to makes they could focus in the core business.” Andrew admitted one-time leading independent UK OTA Travel Republic has lost ground to rival brands such as On The Beach and Love Holidays. “On The Beach has done very well and they are giving us a run for our money,” he said. “We are now 100% focussed back on the UK.” The new peaks TV campaign will include some television but also radio. Travel Republic launched its first major nationwide UK television advertising campaign in January. Andrew said Travel Republic is working to diversify its marketing channel mix away from being reliant on Google PPC advertising.

26 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Transport officials look to expand US pre-clearance at Irish airports**

Transport officials are looking to extend US pre-clearance at Irish airports in response to losing exclusivity on the much sought-after service to other European airports in the coming years. The US Department of Homeland Security last year said it was entering into negotiations with 10 foreign airports with a view to extending the coveted pre-clearance facilities to other countries in the coming years. London’s Heathrow and Manchester Airports are among those currently in negotiations to secure US pre-clearance which allows passengers travelling to the US to complete all necessary immigration and customs inspections before arrival, saving travellers up to two hours on the other side of the Atlantic. US officials indicated last month the service could be rolled out in UK airports in the next five years. The facility, currently in operation in Shannon and Dublin airports as well as Abu Dhabi, the Bahamas, and several Canadian airports, is seen as critical to the Irish airports’ claims of being transatlantic hubs. In response to the likelihood the service will be rolled out elsewhere in Europe, Department of Transport officials are looking to expand the offerings in Shannon and Dublin to retain the Irish airports’ competitive advantage. Former transport minister Paschal Donohoe wrote to US Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson in order to open negotiations “in relation to establishing a framework for securing enhanced services in the longer term”. It is unclear which additional services are being sought. According to ministerial briefing notes supplied to Mr Donohoe’s successor, Shane Ross, the US side responded to the letter advising it was moving through its own internal procedures to allow it to enter negotiations. The briefing notes also warn that additional resources will be needed to ensure the pre-clearance system continues to work adequately at Shannon and Dublin. A spokesperson said that while there are no immediate resource concerns, the department considers it “prudent to plan for future growth and any additional resources that may be needed”.

26 May 2016, Source TravelMole

### **Thomas Cook insists looming strike won't hit holidays**

Thomas Cook Airlines claims that it has plans in place to make sure its customers will still be able to go on holiday if the cabin crew union Unite carries out a threatened strike, but it has not specified yet what those contingency measures will be. Union members have voted in favour of a strike over the airline's decision to cut inflight rest breaks for cabin crew. The union said around half its Thomas Cook union members voted in the strike ballot, with 74% of those backing industrial action. However, a strike won't affect travel this coming half-term as the union must give Thomas Cook seven days notice of any industrial action and no notice has been served. A Unite spokesman said union officials will hold talks with the airline and

the conciliation service Acas today and next Tuesday to try to avert a strike. It claims Thomas Cook has reduced breaks for cabin crew to one 20-minute rest for every 11 hours and 59 minutes worked, the minimum recommended by the Civil Aviation Authority. The union wants crew to have at least two 20-minute breaks. A spokesman for Thomas Cook Airlines said: "We're disappointed Unite cabin crew members have taken the decision to vote for strike action. "The safety of both our people and our customers is our top priority and we rigorously adhere to the rules around crew breaks. He said the airline was "committed" to working with Unite to find a solution to end the dispute. "Meanwhile, we've put together plans to ensure that our customers will still be able to go on holiday, despite any possible strike action."

29 May 2016, Source Travelbiz

### **Zika expert warns Britons to 'think twice' about trips to Disney World because the virus is set to reach the US**

Virus can leave babies with under-developed brains if mothers are infected No evidence that mosquitoes on the US mainland infected with Zika virus But London professor believes the situation could change during summer Warning comes after scientists said the Rio Olympics should be moved A leading British expert has warned pregnant women and couples looking to conceive to 'think twice' about travelling to parts of the US – including Florida, home to Walt Disney World – because of the growing threat of the Zika virus. Those considering holidays to southern states including Texas, Louisiana and Florida – which contains Miami, Cape Canaveral and the Florida Keys – should look at alternatives, said Professor Jimmy Whitworth of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. There is currently no evidence that mosquitoes on the US mainland are infected with the virus, which can leave babies with under-developed brains if their mothers are infected during pregnancy. But Prof Whitworth said he believed the situation could change as the summer heat builds and – with it – the number of mosquitoes. His assessment is backed by US scientists. Prof Whitworth told The Mail on Sunday: 'At the moment, if you said to me, "I'm going to Disney World tomorrow," I'd say, "Go for it! That's fine". 'Because we don't think there's any Zika in mosquitoes in the US right now. But will there be, in two or three months' time? Well, there might be, as the situation might change.' The warning comes after more than 100 scientists said the Rio Olympics should be moved or postponed because of the outbreak. To continue would risk spreading Zika globally, they added. Zika is carried by the *Aedes aegypti* species of mosquito, which has swept the virus throughout South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Transmission is now occurring in Mexico, on the US's southwestern border, and Cuba in the east, 90 miles from Key West. Prof Whitworth stressed Zika was only a minor health risk to most people. Four in five of those infected experience no illness and, in those that do, symptoms are usually limited to fever and mild joint pain. 'If you are not pregnant or not thinking of getting pregnant, then I don't think it is something to worry about,' he said. But the virus can wreak havoc with the developing foetus, curtailing brain and head development to produce a condition called microcephaly. He said pregnant women and those trying for a baby 'need to consider their plans and, if there is an alternative to going to those parts of the US, strongly consider it'. He added: 'They should think twice and seek up-to-date expert advice.'