

## UK OFFICE

### March 2018 REPORT

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

#### Tour Operators

- **Ocean Florida** – We met with Lisa Barrington, Head of Commercial who advised that they had a really strong January for bookings, February was flat, and March is looking on par with their forecast but they have needed to be fairly tactical to get the business. They are seeing a significant demand for out of range dates, approx. 30% of their bookings are for Easter 2019. Generally, the US airfares have been higher than other destinations, but BA offered a really good airfare to Fort Lauderdale boosting the cruise business. Multi-centres continue to perform well, particularly New York and Orlando and New York and Las Vegas. Clearwater Beach remains their top beach destination with Miami picking up. Also, Lisa mentioned that they have 10 new recruits starting this month in their sales team, and they are also working on an in-house agent fam trip for April in partnership with Norwegian. We have offered our assistance once the details have been finalised.
- **If Only** – We met with Rachel McAneny, Product Manager, who advised that whilst their US programme is still very small, they are pleased with the bookings they are seeing. They are working on promoting the brand to their agents, and are confident that the USA will become their top selling destination. She mentioned that 50% of their bookings are multi-centre holidays and they will soon be launching their Caribbean programme.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We spoke with Keri Mulqueen, Destination Executive who advised that our area was struggling for 2018 and she was concerned. Some of their top selling hotels are driving the decrease in volume, including reasons such as; close outs for renovations, less offers from hotels compared to other destinations, a focus more on the domestic market and ADR. Naples has picked up for them compared to last year as renovations are complete. Miami and Fort Lauderdale are doing really well due to the capacity into Fort Lauderdale. We are their number 2 beach behind Miami for volume, but we are still down considerably whereas all other beach areas in Florida are up. They are currently working on their Florida campaign, which we will be supporting, so she urged our partners to support during this time. As of the 1st May Mark Tanner will be moving into the Caribbean team, so they are looking to see who will be replacing him. Keri will still remain our main contact though.
- **Kenwood Travel** – We met with Nicola Hollihed, the new Product Manager to discuss our area in general and to obtain an overview from her. Nicola is very new in the role and advised she is just settling in but she advised that they currently use Hotelbeds, Bonotel and Mark Travel to book their hotels. She advised that Kenwood Travel are currently working on a new revamped website that is due to launch in quarter 4 of 2018 and this will give their consumers the capacity to book multi-centre holidays on their website and that they are creating a new online team to service these internet bookings. We discussed

training for their sales staff and discussions are currently taking place to set a date. We have followed up with Nicola by sending our image library, logo's and up to date copy

### Meetings/Training/Events

- **Ocean Florida** - We attended their Florida training day at their Head Office in Romford, which also included; Daytona Beach, Florida Keys, Sarasota, Fort Myers and Naples. We provided dedicated training to 37 of their sales agents as well as distributing brochures, maps and giveaways. We also hosted a joint lunch for the agents allowing for networking opportunities.
- **If Only** - We visited their office in Glasgow to provide training to their sales agents, none of whom had visited our area in the past. We provided an overview of the destination, what's new and also distributed brochures, maps and giveaways.

### TRADE LIAISON

- **Boardmasters** – We contacted Lisa Barrington, Head of Commercial, to discuss our partnership with Boardmasters, including opportunities to partner with us. We have sent Lisa all of the details of the activation and have asked that in exchange for exposure they offer a holiday prize for 2 adults and 2 children including flights, accommodation and car hire. This competition would be available to anyone visiting our stand at Boardmasters during the 5 days of the festival. We are currently waiting for an update on their interest. We have also offered the opportunity to USAirtours and will await feedback from both partners. We had a follow up call with Yan and Paul from Vision Nine to discuss the finer details of how the activation will look and work. We are in the process of finalising the contract and then they will begin working on the creative for our feedback. Alongside this, we have been in discussion with Rooster on their proposal for social and media activity prior to and during the event. We have also asked for a plan on how they are going to give away the Boardmasters entrance tickets.
- **Thomas Cook** – We have now agreed our participation in their Brand USA activity, which will launch in April. This includes digital activity, landing page, targeting and Facebook paid advertising. In addition to this, Andrew Pickering has confirmed an added value package which includes activity in their Florida Beaches campaign. This will launch in April and includes; dedicated Florida Beaches brochure, instore plasma screens, retail window displays, Excursionist advertorial and in-flight magazine advertorial. We have provided assets and will await creatives for our approval. We have now approved the Florida Beaches brochure.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** – We have now received a final proposal that we have agreed will be a stand-alone opportunity. The proposal will see both promotions running in tandem on the USAirtours brand site (Trade) and TravelPlanners brand site (Consumer) and is proposed to be in partnership with Brand USA. The activity is due to commence in May and will run for a period of one month online but will have additional activity taking place throughout the whole of the spring/summer months. Activity that will be included was reported back in our January monthly report. The proposal has now

been sent to Brand USA for approval and work will commence once we have received confirmation from them.

- **Experience Kissimmee/Visit Tampa Bay/SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – The full schedule and itinerary (including Trade Partner dinner and lunch events) for the joint training mission will be taking place from the 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> April has now been finalised. We will be training a total of 250 reservation, sales and travel agents over the course of 4 days. We will also be hosting both UK and Ireland tour operator and airline trade partners (over 35 in total) at either a lunch or dinner event.
- **Thomas Cook, Sweden** – We have confirmed our participation in a joint campaign with Icelandair which will launch in August and run for 2 months. The activity includes; website banners, newsletters and social.
- **Visit Florida Campaign** – We have received the creatives for the Stylist and Shortlist for the British Airways activity. Ahead of the Visit Florida activation in London and Manchester this month, we have arranged for some premium giveaways to be distributed during the day to the consumers. We have also completed to briefing form for
- **Tour America** – Keith Gribbin, one of the Sales Agents we have taken to St. Pete/Clearwater on a FAM in the past has contacted us for assistance with his personal family trip to the area next month. We have provided Keith with complimentary Clearwater Marine Aquarium tickets as well as advising him on what is new in the area since he last visited.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We have now received the Florida campaign proposal which forms part of our overall marketing campaign with Virgin Holidays. This campaign is due to launch in May and will include; print and digital activity in partnership with the Evening Standard, Facebook, and dedicated Virgin Holidays landing page. We have confirmed our participation. We have also received the proof for their inflight magazine which has been approved.
- **Ocean Holidays** – We have received a proposal for marketing activity which includes; social, homepage banner, landing pages, blog and email, and would launch in June and run for a month. We have agreed our participation and have sent the proposal to BUSA for approval.
- **Virgin Holidays Retail** – We have received a retail proposal from Virgin as we are considering an in-store promotion in the early summer. The proposal is currently being perused and further questions are at present being asked by us with regards to the best options, their recommendations based on past in store Florida campaigns and dates available for us to run a promotion.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – The Visit USA Committee in Ireland included details of the recent TripAdvisor awards for Clearwater Beach and St. Pete Beach for the best beaches in the US in 2018 in their monthly e-newsletter that is distributed to their trade, media and consumer lists.
- **Tour America** – Shona Fagan, Tour America contacted us to advise that they are finalising the prize details for the winner of our recent joint marketing campaign with

Kissimmee. We have provided her with contact details for The Sirata Beach Resort so that she can liaise directly with the hotel to confirm the accommodation element for the winner.

- **Brand USA Mega Fam** – Jonathan Gough, PR Manager, contacted us to advise that TTG would like to write a feature on the fam trip, highlighting the local people that the agents will meet during their stay. We have put him in touch with our US office to make arrangements with Hank Hine at the Dali Museum.
- **Barrhead Travel** – We have confirmed our participation in their Florida training day in April. The day will consist of timed training sessions as well as a networking lunch with their sales agents.
- **Travel Leisure Magazine** – Terry Stafford contacted us to advise that he is writing a feature on Florida beaches and has asked for some information. We have provided him with copy and images as requested.
- **Southall Travel** – We have confirmed training for their sales staff next month.
- **Oversoiske Rejser, Denmark** – Following on from Marion's meetings at ITB, we have contacted Kirtsen Skjold, Director of Long Haul Destination, who was requesting further information about our destination.
- **James Villas** – We contacted Lee Brown, Contractor, after his meeting at ITB with Marion, to provide further information about St. Pete/Clearwater.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** - Tony Lane provided their Q1 marketing results (YTD), which are as follows;
  - Website – 1495 sessions, 1374 users, 3263 page views, 53 second average session
  - Social - Facebook: 2,571 Page Likes, Twitter: 586 Followers, Instagram: 178 Followers, LinkedIn: 17 Followers.
  - Email - New e-zine format working well with 22% open rate / 1.6% click through (above industry averages).

## **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

61

## **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

2 March 2018, Source TravelMole

**BA and American to launch 'basic' transatlantic fares**

British Airways and American Airlines are joining the fight to lure frugal flyers in the ultra-competitive transatlantic market by rolling out no-frills tickets on some flights. BA's new fare will launch in April on selected routes for passengers with hand baggage only. Its partners American, Iberia and Finnair will also offer no-frills fares. They will be called 'Basic' on AA, BA and Iberia, and 'Light' on Finnair flights. BA said more information on routes and pricing will be made available when the fares go live. AA said basic economy ticket holders will get main cabin seating and the same snacks or meals as other economy flyers but are required to pay a fee to check a bag. Also, they won't be able to upgrade and board after most other passengers. The move to a basic economy option by legacy carriers is a direct response to the growth of low-cost carriers on transatlantic routes, with the likes of Norwegian Air and Wow Air rapidly expanding their transatlantic routes networks. Delta Air Lines recently said it is adding basic economy fares on international routes.

6 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Online abandonment rates for travel 'soar'**

Travel customers across Europe are now more hesitant to commit to an online booking than this time last year, new research shows. Marketing technology company Ve Global has analysed behavioural trends from hundreds of thousands of online travel sessions and says website abandonment rates are 'soaring'. Booking abandonment online, where users begin but fail to complete a purchase, stood at 92.8% in the second half of 2017, up from 85% in 2016. Hotels (97.7%) and airlines (94.6%) in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (DACH) were the hardest hit, with travel agents also suffering from tip-toeing window shoppers, losing 97.4% of online bookings during the checkout process across Europe. Irish companies performed the best in turning browsers into bookers with an abandonment rate of just 89.3%, with UK travellers almost as keen to seal their bookings (90.6%). There was better news for the more low-cost travel options, with coach and ferry converting 15% of online traffic into bookings. The data also found that customers using desktop were more likely to convert than those on mobile once the booking process had begun. One in 10 who started the process on desktop or laptop converted compared to just one booking for every 20 checkout sessions on mobile, and in 6.6% of cases on a tablet device. Morten Tonnesen, CEO at Ve, said: "While the entire industry continues to invest heavily in digital, this data clearly shows that consumers in every subsector of travel are spending more time browsing their options before committing to a purchase. "This represents a considerable worry for travel companies allocating vast sums of their marketing spend to the digital ad space in order to attract people to their websites, only to lose them in the booking process."

6 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Transatlantic flights under threat post-Brexit**

Flights between the UK and the US might have to be scaled back once Britain leaves the European Union unless a new Open Skies deal can be reached. Once Britain is no longer part of the EU, it will no longer be part of the current Open Skies agreement, which was brought in 10 years ago to allow any EU and any US airline to fly between any US or EU airport. And at the moment, the US is proposing to replace this for the UK with a basic bilateral agreement, which could mean some existing transatlantic flights will no longer be permitted. Bilateral agreements usually only allow a limited number of flights to a limited number of destinations. One of the obstacles in reaching a new agreement with the US is that airlines operating many transatlantic flights, including British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, are not majority owned by either UK or US firms. However, the Department for Transport said talks

with the US were progressing well. A spokesman added: "Our discussions with the US about a new UK-US air service agreement have been positive and we have made significant progress. Both sides want to conclude these discussions soon. "All parties have a shared interest in ensuring that existing rights will continue under the new bilateral arrangements, allowing airlines on both sides of the Atlantic to continue to operate existing services as well as to seek to develop new ones." British Airways' owner IAG said: "We have every confidence that the US and UK will sign a deal that is in everyone's interests and that IAG will comply with the EU and UK ownership and control regulations post Brexit." Virgin Atlantic said it remained 'assured that a new liberal agreement will be reached, allowing us to keep flying to all of our destinations in North America'.

7 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Travel to US yet to recover from Trump travel ban and Brexit**

International travel to the US has yet to recover from President Trump's travel ban and the Brexit referendum. Latest figures from ForwardKeys, which predicts future travel patterns by analysing 17 million booking transactions a day, said bookings for the first two months of the year were down 0.02% on 2017. Last year saw an overall dip of 2% in arrivals following the first of the Trump travel bans on travellers from a number of mainly Muslim countries. The Forwardkeys' findings show that the impact of sterling's fall against the dollar, following the 2016 Brexit vote, persisted well into 2017 and put off many Britons visiting the US. The number of Chinese visitors to the US also flattened out in 2017 after substantial growth in 2016. Looking forward six months, international bookings to the US from within the Americas are currently 7% ahead of where they were at the same time last year, while long-haul bookings from elsewhere are just 0.5% up. Miami - traditionally Florida's biggest destination city - was 1% down last year while Orlando was 0.8% up and Fort Lauderdale was up 2.7%.

7 March 2018, Source Travolution

### **Virgin Holidays' new app provides 'rep in your pocket'**

Virgin Holidays has created an app which is says gives customers "direct access to a holiday rep in their pocket". The My Virgin Holidays app offers phones, email or live chat service with reps and stores all of a customer's travel details on their device, and making information accessible offline to avoid roaming charges. It also features a holiday countdown clock so users can check how long until their break. The app, available on iOS and Android devices, has been built by Virgin Holidays with the help of design consultancy Clearleft. Joe Thompson, managing director at Virgin Holidays, said: "What better way to put customers in control of their holiday by placing everything they need in the palm of their hands? They'll have peace of mind by not only having direct access to their travel plans at any time, but by knowing that help or advice is just a swipe away, allowing them to concentrate on making great travel memories." Virgin Holidays is hoping to make it possible for customers to add excursions onto bookings, view live travel information such as flight and gate times and receive weather and check-in notifications via the app in the future.

8 March 2018, Source Travelbiz

### **VIRGIN ATLANTIC TO CUT CHECKED BAGGAGE FOR CHEAP FARES**

Hand-baggage-only ticket is aimed at 'making long haul travel affordable and accessible for millennials', airline claims.

For the first time in its 34-year history, Virgin Atlantic is telling travellers who want the cheapest fares that they can take only cabin baggage. The airline that Sir Richard Branson founded has unveiled “economy light”, a ticket that subtracts checked luggage from the present offer. It will be available from spring 2019. “The new economy light ticket will always offer Virgin Atlantic’s lowest fare,” says the airline, “making long haul travel affordable and accessible for millennials”. Compared with rivals, the cabin baggage allowance is meagre. It is broadly the same as Ryanair’s. The maximum dimensions are 23x36x56cm with a weight limit of 10kg. On British Airways, which is launching similar hand-baggage-only fares in April, cabin luggage can be one-third larger and weigh up to 23kg. In addition, both airlines allow a smaller item — though Virgin Atlantic’s rules say a handbag or small backpack must be “as you would normally use it (in other words, not just being used to contain items that would otherwise be regarded as baggage)”. Passengers can also carry “a small amount of duty free goods”. Those travelling on the cheapest tickets will be assigned seats in the main economy cabin at check in. The existing economy class is rebranded “classic economy”, with an added benefit of the right to select seats free of charge at any time after booking. A new “economy delight” section will offer three extra inches of legroom. Passenger prepared to pay the premium will also get priority check-in and boarding. Craig Kreeger, the airline’s chief executive, told The Independent: “All of our economy products — light, classic and delight — still include free drinks, the same food, the same frequency of service from our cabin crew. On board, economy is economy. “But there are customers who have different expectations and want a choice, but not really compromising on any of the stuff on board.” In a dig at British Airways’ “densification” process of adding extra seats, Mr Kreeger said: “Unlike some other airlines, we’ve been actually taking seats off aircraft to create extra legroom.” The new configuration means Virgin Atlantic will effectively become a four-class airline, with economy, economy delight, premium economy and its business product, Upper Class. When the carrier was first launched in 1984, it had only economy and Upper Class. “Virgin Atlantic was started by Richard [Branson] with the fundamental belief that we could do things better for customers”, said Mr Kreeger. “The idea that we could now create a match of how customers would like to fly in economy and give them choices with the great Virgin experience on board regardless of the price they paid I think is totally in keeping with the Virgin Atlantic spirit.” Virgin Atlantic’s partner, Delta, has already launched “basic economy” fares on transatlantic flight, but has no weight limit for cabin baggage. The aviation analyst John Strickland said: “Airlines like Virgin are witnessing the passenger appeal of long-haul low-cost services, especially out of Gatwick, and they see these new fare offers as an opportunity to tap into additional very price-sensitive traffic. “Equally, of course, it provides a defence against loss of traffic to long-haul low-cost carriers as well as making their lives more difficult by reducing any price advantage they may have.”

8 March 2018, Source Travel Weekly

### **Online overload is pushing people back to agents, says Kuoni**

Tour operator Kuoni claims holiday bookers are increasingly looking for trusted experts to guide their decisions having become deluged with information online. The firm seized on the findings in its Worldwide Trends Report 2018 to claim ‘online overload’ has ‘prompted a return to real advice from trusted experts’. The independent study conducted for Kuoni by Censuswide in January, found 79% of people say they feel saturated with online forums,

reviews and prices. Kuoni said almost two thirds of people said they want to know that the person they book a trip with has really “been there and done that”. The operator said: “This shift in perception sees more people turning to experts and specialists when it comes to booking holidays, who are able to cut through the conflicting online reviews and search results.” Further research showed holidaymakers now spend over an hour doing online research, before seeking a professional’s opinion in a bid to shortcut to the best choice. Kuoni said this shift in attitude has helped it establish its high-street presence of over 50 stores which now employ over 300 people throughout the UK. Derek Jones, managing director of Kuoni, said: “Holidays are a big investment and the exciting bit starts with the planning. “Increasingly people end up with so much conflicting information when they start searching that it ends up being more of a headache than a holiday. “Despite transformational technology, there is a growing thirst for genuine expertise. “Conversations are still at the heart of holidays, from planning them to remembering them in the years that follow. Trust has never been more vital when it comes to travel.”

9 March 2018, Source Travolution

### **Booking.com considers adding flights**

Online accommodation giant Booking.com is “looking at” adding flights to its site, says chief executive Gillian Tans. Speaking at German travel trade show ITB in Berlin, Tans said: “One third of our customers think about [booking] their flights before accommodation, one third during [the process of choosing accommodation] and one third after booking accommodation.” Asked whether Booking.com would add airline ticketing to its site, Tans said: “We are looking at that. We will change if we see customers want booking.com to help with this. “If we see customers don’t want to do [flight booking] with booking.com, we won’t do it.” Tans explained: “Everything on our website is tested. We create two variants of everything and see which one customers prefer.” She said the site carries out more than 1,000 experiments with variants each day, saying. “It’s extreme sometimes.” Tans added: “Every booking is touched by machine learning and in a few years 50% of bookings will touch AI [artificial intelligence].” Booking.com is also testing and adding different payment options, but Tans ruled out accepting cryptocurrency Bitcoin. She said: “We invest a lot in payments to make them easier, but we don’t do anything in Bitcoin. I don’t know that Bitcoin will become anything.” The OTA is part of the group formerly known as Priceline which rebranded as Booking Holdings in February to reflect the importance of its Amsterdam-based accommodation site. Booking.com accounts for 80% of the group’s annual revenue despite Priceline remaining among the biggest OTAs in the US. Priceline acquired Booking.com in 2005 for \$133 million.

14 March 2018, Source Travolution

### **Travel Up Group unveils ‘Fly Now Pay Later’ credit option**

Online firm Travel Up Group is the latest to adopt an instant credit service for flight payments. The option will then be extended to include hotels, package holidays and other travel-related products. Alternative finance provider Fly Now Pay Later is supplying the service following similar deals with Moresand Group, Brightsun Travel, Lycafly, and SkyLord Travel. Fly Now Pay Later secured £20 million funding last year from Honeycomb Investment Trust to originate and manage a growing loan portfolio and expand its online holiday credit service across the travel sector. The credit option enables consumers to spread the cost of their booking over three to ten monthly instalments, paying a one-off transaction fee at the time of booking. Fly Now Pay Later also offers consumer protection in the event of

financial failure by a travel provider. Chief executive and founder Jasper Dykes said: “The service offers travel operators the opportunity to help increase conversion rates, deliver incremental revenues and introduce an additional revenue stream into their business. “We believe it will bring great benefits, such as increasing consumer choice, boosting bookings and travel operator profitability, helping to spur travel market efficiencies and the sector’s overall growth. “Over the past few years we have considerably enhanced our service, signed a number of high-profile travel partnerships and significantly increased our lending capability, which puts us on a course for robust growth this year. This will enable us to help travel operators further boost their performance and help consumers to fund their holidays across the entire travel sector.” Travel Up Group chief executive Ali Shah added: “Our customers are increasingly looking for innovative travel solutions to put them in control of their holiday experience from the planning stage through to booking flights, hotels, car hire, attraction tickets and now payment terms. “To give customers more choice of flexible payment options on travel products, Travel Up launched the Fly Now Pay Later initiative on flight only bookings last month and we’ve already seen hundreds of customers take up this payment option in its first month. “We plan to roll out the initiative across all the products of the groups’ brands over the coming months and expect this payment method to be an increasingly preferred choice for many of our customers”.

15 March 2018, TravelMole

### **Parents are budgeting for school fines**

An investigation by the BBC has found parents are now actively budgeting for the cost of school fines when planning their term-time family holiday. It found parents across England and Wales have been fined about £24 million for failing to send their children to school during the past three years, but some councils are issuing penalties at a rate five times higher than the average. A total of 155 local authorities in England and Wales issued around 400,000 penalties over three years, although 19 did not supply data. Scotland and Northern Ireland do not issue fines. On average, the BBC found that in 2016/17 councils issued 12 penalties per 1,000 children either for truancy or for parents taking children away on holiday during term time. But some councils - East Riding of Yorkshire, Suffolk and the Isle of Wight where parent Jon Platt lost a high profile legal battle - issued penalties at a rate of more than 60 per 1,000 pupils. Some councils reported a drop in the number of fines issued for term-time holidays during the Jon Platt court case. Next year, the Isle of Wight is cutting the main summer school holidays to five weeks and adding an extra week in the autumn.

16 March 2018, Travelbiz

### **Virgin Atlantic nosedives into the red due to Brexit-hit pound and hurricane disruption**

Airline Virgin Atlantic nosedived into the red last year after taking a hit from the Brexit-hit pound, hurricane disruption and engine woes that grounded some of its planes. The carrier - founded by Sir Richard Branson 33 years ago - was left nursing underlying pre-tax losses of £28.4m for last year, against profits of £23m in 2016. It marked its first loss for four years and came amid "significant operational challenges and a difficult economic backdrop," according to the group. Virgin Atlantic carried 100,000 fewer passengers last year, at 5.3 million, as the pound's collapse following the Brexit vote knocked demand from UK travellers, despite boosting US customers flying to Britain by 20pc. Its load factor - a key measure for how well airlines fill their planes - also slipped, down to 78.3pc from 78.7pc in 2016. As well as the sterling woes, the group was impacted further by faults with Rolls-Royce Trent 1000 engine parts, which led to some of its Boeing 787 Dreamliners being grounded. The issue has

impacted a raft of airlines, also including British Airways, and saw Rolls recently warn over a charge of around £340m it will take this year for the cost of repairs to fix the faults. A devastating hurricane season also compounded Virgin Atlantic's problems, with storms such as Irma causing havoc across the Caribbean and Florida Keys. Craig Kreeger, chief executive of Virgin Atlantic, said: "There were three big external issues that we had to deal with in 2017; the full year impact of a weak sterling relative to the dollar, an industry-wide engine supply issue and severe hurricane disruption in the Caribbean and US. "While some of these challenges will remain prevalent in 2018, we will stay focused on delivering for our customers." Virgin Atlantic is now hoping the launch of three new economy products this spring will help lead its fight back. It said the new options - economy delight, economy classic and economy light - will offer customers more choice and a lower price point. Annual results for the group also showed profits dropped sharply at its Virgin Holidays business, down 19pc at £15.5m, despite a 1.5pc increase in customers to 397,000. Virgin Atlantic, which is now 49% owned by Delta Air Lines, is headquartered in London and employs more than 9,000 people worldwide.

16 March 2018, Source Travelbiz

### **Travel trends: British holidaymakers like to play it safe**

BRITISH holidaymakers are not ones to branch out when it comes to exploring new parts of the world. A new survey suggests UK travellers prefer to repeat holidays year after year choosing safety and security instead. British travellers like to place it safe when it comes to booking their holiday. According to a new report released by the Travel Republic, the "safety" of a city determines whether holidaymakers are likely to venture out of their comfort zone. The survey questioned 2,000 holidaymakers as to their travel habits year on year. The results highlighted that 62 per cent of the British public repeat holidays opting for familiarity and safety instead. Further questioning revealed that British travellers are more likely to return to a previous destination based on dining preferences. In fact, 49 per cent revealed that they would return to a previous holiday destination as they liked the food and drink. Out of those questioned, 93 per cent of British travellers has repeated a holiday in the past. On average, holidaymakers admitted to visiting the same country 10 times, the same town or city nine times and the same resort eight times. Travel Republic even reported that some places in the UK are more likely to repeat a holiday than others. Those from the north east said they are 45 per cent likely to book a holiday again yet that figure rose to 71 per cent from those asked in Yorkshire. Frank Brehany, a travel expert, explained: "We are all essentially creatures of habit, but travel should be all about breaking out of the mould of our daily lives and receiving physical and mental nourishment. "We should stretch out by taking day trips to other parts of our favourite countries and experiencing a different angle to life there; it will feed your curiosity to try something new." The report highlights that "fear" especially that of the unknown prevents British holidaymakers from branching out. As part of an investigation into smart cities, the Global Smart City Performance Index has revealed the world's safest cities. Taking into consideration four main elements of a city, its mobility, health, safety and productivity, the top ten safest cities have been released. Singapore came out top - surprising also the most expensive city to live in - with New York and Chicago in second and third retrospectively.

18 March 2018, Source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

### **Trump Slump' leads Spain to overtake US in tourism**

Spain is expected to become the second most popular tourist destination in the world, overtaking the US, as the so called 'Trump Slump' cause a dip in the US tourism industry; says GlobalData a leading data and analytics company. Rapidly growing tourism flows herald a strong 2018 for the industry however as Konstantina Boutsoukou Consumer Analyst at GlobalData explains "As Spain overtakes the US in the list of the most visited countries in the world, the global tourist community has sent a strong message that divisive and discriminatory policies can greatly hamper sector growth". Despite the recent political uncertainty following the Catalan independence referendum and the terror attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils last August, the Spanish tourism industry has proved to be very robust and has experienced strong growth in the last 12 months. According to figures from GlobalData, international arrivals to Spain increased by \* 4.8%; from 75.6 million tourists in 2016 to 79.3 million in 2017. The UK, followed by France and Germany are the three largest source markets for Spain, making up 53% of total arrivals to the country. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, has also confirmed that early projections reveal that the total tourist expenditure in Spain recorded an all-time high, reaching £77 billion in 2017. Official statistics by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), have not been released, however current projections from the organization reveal that arrivals to the US are down from 75.9 million in 2016, to 72.9 in 2017. The decline of tourism is estimated to cost the US economy £140 million a week, equivalent to £7.3 billion a year. However New York City and Los Angeles have fared better than most US cities. Arrivals to Los Angeles have increased by 2.2%, mainly due to a growth in domestic arrivals and Chinese visitors. New York arrivals have increased by 2.1% mainly due to a surge in US visitors. Boutsoukou adds, "The travel restrictions are seen by many tourists as state-sponsored Islamophobia, and are putting off many travellers from visiting the US. The ban has given rise to a general wave of withdrawals particularly among Middle Eastern, African and European tourists. Flows from Mexico have also registered a decline, as Mexican citizens seek to boycott the construction of the 'Trump Wall' at the border between Mexico and the US."

19 March 2018, Source Travel Newsgram

### **BRITISH AIRWAYS TESTING BIOMETRIC BOARDING GATE TECHNOLOGY IN ORLANDO**

Passengers flying with British Airways from Orlando International Airport (MCO) to London Gatwick can now use biometric boarding at the gate. A quick photo is all that is needed to board the international flight – no passport, no boarding card. SITA integrated automated boarding gates with the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and airline's IT systems to allow the necessary checks and authorize boarding. Raoul Cooper, Digital Airport Design Manager, British Airways, said, "Our customers are always our first priority and we want to make their journey as smooth as possible. Working closely with SITA at Orlando has allowed us to explore various ways of incorporating the US biometric exit check. Together we have designed a really smooth and secure departure process for our customers, including children, as they leave Orlando. This complements the learning and insight we have gained in Los Angeles where a similar technology trial is under way." The move is a joint initiative by the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA), British Airways and CBP to incorporate the US biometric departure (exit) check for passengers as smoothly as possible. John Newsome, Chief Information Officer, GOAA, said, "This innovative boarding process is already proving popular with passengers. They simply look at the camera and within seconds the gate opens and they can board the flight. It is easy, fast and most importantly, secure. While we are currently using SITA's gates for biometric exit with British Airways, they are common-use boarding gates so they can be easily used by other airlines at MCO." The option to board at Orlando by simply looking into a camera is available now to British Airways passengers on

flight BA 2036 to London Gatwick. The trial will run for up to 90 days. Participation is optional and passengers can choose to provide their passport and other documents to an agent to board the flight. British Airways says that during the early days of the trial, the response from passengers has been very positive with nearly 100% of passengers opting to simply look in the camera and board the plane. Diana Einterz, SITA President, Americas, said, "We are working closely with the US CBP, airlines and airports to test different ways of doing the US biometric exit check. This includes our recent award-winning work with JetBlue at Boston Logan International Airport, and British Airways at Los Angeles International Airport. We have designed this solution to meet the needs of all parties. It is based on industry-standard common-use gates so it can be used by any other airline at Orlando and by airlines at any other common-use airport."

21 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **UK holiday prices could be hit by booming world economy**

Travel companies have been warned that European travel is likely to become more expensive as other world economies are growing faster than the UK, potentially driving up prices across the Continent. India could overtake the UK as the world's fifth largest economy by the end of this year and there is a 'vast amount' of new wealth in China, plus there is 'an awful lot' of Chinese tourism, said Nick Parsons, chief editor of payments provider OFX. In contrast, the UK economy is forecast to grow at less than 2% a year for the next five years, its lowest for 70 years, said Parsons. "That has direct implications for tourism. The vast majority of travel from the UK is to Europe - 85% to 90% - and the problem is that the price for European travel is being set for the world economy that is growing rapidly." He said it was vital that the UK economy grows at a faster rate than predicted by Chancellor Philip Hammond in this month's Spring Budget speech, or the growth of the travel industry will be 'anaemic at best'. Parsons, an expert in global foreign exchange, warned delegates to 'be prepared for disappointment'. Speaking at the ABTA Brexit briefing, he urged against complacency following the recent rise in the value of sterling, warning that it could slide again in the future. "A lot of businesses feel comfortable as long as the euro is no lower than 1.10, today it is 1.14, but do they have a strategy to prepare for 1.10? I would say think about your euro strategy, forward buy some of your currency requirements."

21 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Travel 'superbrands' named**

British Airways, Emirates and Virgin Atlantic have all made it into the top 20 list of Business Superbrands for 2018. However, Heathrow Airport was the only travel brand that made it into the top 20 list of Consumer Superbrands, coming in at number 16. ABTA qualified as a Business Superbrand for the 12th year running and was also voted a Consumer Superbrand for the second consecutive year. Superbrands says it is 'the definitive benchmark for brands who've set the agenda, outwitted the competition and built enviable reputations'. The consumer brands are chosen by 2,500 members of the public. Number one was Lego, followed by Gillette and Apple. The business brands are chosen by a panel of business-to-business marketing experts alongside 2,500 individual business professionals. The list was topped by Apple. BA was fourth, followed by Emirates while Virgin was number 13. Thomas Cook was voted the best Superbrand in the consumer tour operator/travel agency category, BA the best airline, P&O won the best cruise category and Hilton Hotels & Resorts the best hotel. ABTA said: "Achieving Superbrand status in both business and consumer markets sends a powerful message. Customers who book with an ABTA member can feel reassured

that they are booking with a prestigious travel company, employees can feel proud to work with them and business stakeholders can trust and rely on the organisation to do well."

21 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Norwegian raises more cash as its losses deepen**

Low cost carrier Norwegian is raising fresh capital, plans to sell some of its aircraft and it's also considering offloading its loyalty programme to pay for its rapid expansion. The airline announced this week that its first quarter losses were higher than last year despite a leap in revenue. The airline plans to raise Nkr1.3billion (\$165 million) through a private placement, it announced yesterday. It will sell five Airbus 320neo aircraft to raise a further \$15 million to \$20 million. The airline said it has also started a strategic review of its Reward programme to look at 'its incorporation and possibly ownership'. Norwegian said its pre-tax loss for the first quarter was expected to be Nkr2.6 billion compared with a Nkr 1.8 billion loss last year. During the same period, revenues were up by almost a third to Nkr 7.1 billion. In a statement, the airline said: "Additional capital will boost competitiveness and protect existing and future investments in a market characterised by higher oil prices and fluctuating currencies. "The company is now positioning itself for the final stages of a strong growth period that has lasted for several years and will reach its peak by the second quarter of 2018." Norwegian said that both fuel prices and exchange rates were worse than it had previously estimated. Fuel was 8% higher in the first quarter and the euro 8% stronger than expected.

23 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **More children taking holidays in term time**

The number of British children missing lessons to go on holiday rose in the last school year, according to the latest figures from the Department for Education. The percentage of pupils who missed at least one session due to a family holiday in 2016/17 was 16.9%, compared with 14.7% in 2015/16. The absence rate due to family holidays agreed by the school was 0.1 in 2016/17, the same as in 2015/16. The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to unauthorised family holidays increased from 0.3 per cent in 2015/16 to 0.4 in 2016/17. The Government's report said authorised holiday absence rates are much lower now than in 2006/07 but have been increasing gradually since that date. Tighter rules came into force in September 2013 stating that term time leave may only be granted in exceptional circumstances, prompting a sharp fall in authorised holiday absence around that time. The figures also show a drop in the proportion of parents being fined for taking their children out of school without permission. The latest figures relate to the time when parent, Jon Platt, won a high profile legal battle after refusing to pay a fine from the Isle of Wight Council for taking his daughter to Disney World in term time. He later lost the case when it was referred to the Supreme Court, but it is believed publicity around the case meant many parents decided to take term-time holidays thinking they would not receive penalties.

23 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Overseas travel from the UK drops for sixth consecutive month**

The number of overseas trips by UK residents has suffered a year-on-year fall for the sixth consecutive month. Figures released by the Office of National Statistics today showed the numbers dropped in both November and December 2017 compared to the same months in 2016. The number of visits abroad by UK residents in November 2017 was 4.2 million, 3% down on the previous year. Overseas visits also fell by 1% in December to 3.9 million. Year-

on-year figures for overseas travel from the UK have been down since July. From October to December there were 3% fewer visits abroad by UK residents compared with the same three months in 2016, and UK residents spent 7% less on these visits. There was a 10% drop in visits to North America and a 1% decrease in visits to European countries. Visits to countries outside Europe and North America fell by 7%. Closer analysis of the figures show the slump is largely down to a drop in business travel. Business visits fell by 14% and visits to friends and relatives dropped by 3%, while holiday visits rose by 1%. Meanwhile, the ONS figures also reveal a drop in the number of overseas visitors coming to Britain. Numbers were down by 2% in November 2017 to 3 million and by a more drastic 11% to 2.6 million in December. Between October to December there were 8.8 million visits to the UK, 7% less than the year before. Holiday visits fell by 8% to 3 million while business visits decreased by 9% to 2.2 million. Spend in the UK by overseas residents also fell 3% on the previous year to £5.3 billion.

24 March 2018, Source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

### **2018 hectic to Icelandair**

2018 will be a hectic year for Icelandair. Beside opening five new American destination during May and June, the airline will double the flights to Tampa from two to four weekly and going from five to seven weekly to Orlando, which means that the sunny Florida will get 11 flights a week from Scandinavia. The Florida flights will start in the fall. The flights to Tampa will be Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. It will be possible to combine the two Florida- destinations and also a third destination Iceland with a free stop-over to or from the US.

26 March 2018, Travel Weekly

### **Tui reveals summer 2019 programme**

Tui has revealed its summer 2019 programme with 720,000 additional seats and 16 new concept hotels across its Tui and First Choice brands. The UK's biggest tour operator has increased capacity in Greece and Turkey and Croatia based on customer demand. It has also ramped up its operations from regional airports, with half a million of its additional seats from six airports: Doncaster/Sheffield, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow, East Midlands and Birmingham. Five new aircraft will operate on 40 new routes from 15 airports, with 65% of them unique to Tui. Half of the new routes are to Turkey, Greece and Croatia while 200,000 seats will be available to year-round sun destination Cape Verde. Its long-haul programme will see Tui's first flight from Doncaster/Sheffield to Orlando Sanford, Florida, where it will offer more villa and self-catering options in-destination. From Doncaster/Sheffield, Tui will add 110,000 seats including new routes to Pula, Croatia, Hurghada, Egypt, Kos, Greece and Bodrum, Turkey. New flights to Cancun from Bristol and Manchester and extra capacity to the Mexican airport from Glasgow and Newcastle will also be added for summer 2019. Tui, which said around one million customers book its concept hotels, is also to make more 10- and 11-night durations available for summer 2019 as customers seek more flexibility. UK & Ireland commercial director Richard Sofer said: "Summer 2019 is the most ambitious programme we have ever introduced. "We are focusing firmly on growing our amazing range of holidays through an extended regional flying programming, concentrated on the core destinations holidaymakers want to travel to, while offering the flexibility of holiday duration they want. We've added capacity where we know we have customer demand and will be opening 16 new flagship resorts across TUI and First Choice affirming our commitment to our exclusive hotel concepts. "Our intention is to open up new possibilities to existing

customers whilst attracting new holiday makers to the TUI and First Choice brands. This is just the first step in an exciting vision which will evolve over the next 12 months and beyond.” The summer 2019 programme goes on sale April 5.

26 March 2018 Source Travel Weekly

### **Tui to extend long-haul regional flying to Yorkshire in 2019**

The first long haul holiday flights to Florida from Yorkshire are being introduced by Tui UK for summer 2019 as part of an extended regional flying programme. Tui will be the only airline flying long haul from Doncaster Sheffield airport next summer with a Boeing 787 Dreamliner service to Sanford for access to Orlando. Total capacity from the airport is being raised by 110,000 seats, with Doncaster Sheffield seeing a 15% share of Tui’s overall passenger growth for summer 2019. Thousands of free child places will be available across all TUI and First Choice holidays with £50 per person deposits for short and mid haul and £125pp long haul.

28 March 2018, Source Travolution

### **EasyJet expands ‘Worldwide’ flight-connections service**

EasyJet has expanded its flight-connections service ‘Worldwide by easyJet’ to seven additional airports and carriers including Thomas Cook Airlines and Tui-owned Corsair in France. The budget carrier pledged to “sign up other airlines throughout 2018” and revealed it’s in “advanced talks” on further expansion with airlines in the Middle East and Far East. EasyJet launched its connections platform at Gatwick last September allowing passengers to book connecting long-haul flights with Norwegian Air and WestJet of Canada, and it extended the service to Milan Malpensa this spring in partnership with Italian airline Neos. It has now added connections to Thomas Cook Airlines’ long-haul flights from Gatwick to the US and Caribbean and connections to Corsair and La Compagnie flights from Paris Orly, plus Norwegian flights from Paris Charles de Gaulle. The Worldwide platform allows the booking of connecting flights between partner airlines without a need for the ‘interline’ and codeshare arrangements required of network carriers.

29 March 2018, Source TravelMole

### **Union welcomes BA decision to keep north east calls centres**

British Airways' decision to keep its two call centres at Manchester and Newcastle in-house, rather than outsource them, has been welcomed by Unite, the country's largest union. The airline was considering shifting around 1,000 jobs in the north east of England to external company Capita as part of a review of its global call centre operations launched last June. But Unite said the airline had announced today that it was keeping the jobs in-house following what it described as a period of 'intense negotiations' between the company and the union. Unite said it was particularly pleased that it saw off a proposal that could have seen the 'controversial' outsourcing giant Capita take over the centres that deal with customer queries relating to new bookings, checking upgrades, flight prices, hotel bookings and car hire. Unite national officer for civil air transport Oliver Richardson said: "We are very pleased that, working with the BA management, we have been able to make the strong case that customer services are best served by the centres remaining within BA. "This will give reassurance for the future to our members at Manchester and Newcastle. This decision has come about without any loss in pay and terms and conditions for the workforce, although we are working closely with the company to implement mutually agreed efficiency savings. "More generally,

I think there is a new mood across business and other organisations in the UK that, following the recent Carillion debacle, outsourcing is not necessarily the best option if you wish to develop your business successfully - and keep the customers happy." Rival union GMB has blamed an IT error that forced BA to ground some flights last year on its decision to outsource some crucial functions.