

UK OFFICE

February 2014 REPORT

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UK Director

Meetings

Virgin Holidays

Met with the team at Virgin Holidays to discuss our co-op marketing plan and the forthcoming Visit Florida Campaign. Virgin Holidays advised us that Florida was up 14% YOY versus the same period in 2013. Their best-selling hotels continue to be The Marriott Suites and Sheraton Sand Key Resorts in Clearwater and the Tradewinds Resorts and Postcard Inn on the Beach in St. Pete Beach. Also discussed further co-op activity around their NCL Cruise programme out of Tampa.

General Meetings and Events

Visit USA Workshop, Copenhagen - This is the largest USA event organised for the travel industry and media in Scandinavia. 60 exhibitors attended including States, CVBs, airlines, car rentals, attractions and hotel companies. Media and Product Managers arrived first to ask one on one questions. They were able to take St Pete/Clearwater brochures and maps for future reference and most wanted a general overview of the destination. Mr Rufus Gifford, The American Ambassador to Denmark attended the event and was a guest speaker. Retail agents were invited to attend in the evening and were able to collect our collateral and ask questions. Many advised that their customers travel around not just in Florida but have a Florida holiday and visit other states as they have the time to do so. Many also advised that twin centres were very popular.

Tampa Bay & Co - Meeting with James Litston to discuss joint co-op opportunities and proposed joint September fam trip in conjunction with BA.

British Airways – Meeting with Marc James to discuss load factors on the Tampa service and working together for 2014.

Getabed – 6 days of joint sales calls with the Getabed Northern and Southern Sales Managers took place as part of our co-op marketing agreement. Visited 23 retail travel agencies in Hull, Wetherby, Leeds and East Anglia. Had the opportunity to talk one on one with the agents about St Pete/Clearwater which was invaluable as we visited smaller independent travel agents. Brochures and maps were left with the agents. Feedback on Florida and our area was positive. Florida overall is doing well, with a lot of the agents pushing twin centres and ones that were not now have the information, knowledge and confidence to suggest the twin centre option.

Barrhead Travel – Attended our in-store event in conjunction with Barrhead Travel at their branch in the Silverburn Shopping centre in Glasgow. We had the opportunity to set up a stand at the entrance to the store and speak to consumers as well as distribute literature and giveaways in this very busy shopping mall.

Trade Shows

Ferie Fur Alle, Herning – Denmark. Florida's Beaches exhibited at the show which saw 64,250 visitors over a 3 day period an increase of 1% over 2013. There were also a large number of tour operators exhibiting at the show and interest in Florida's Beaches was excellent.

Swanson's Travel Show – Attended the show on behalf of Florida's Beaches. The show was held at the Swanson's office and is considered one of the largest American travel shows in Sweden now in its 12th year and with 1800 visitors this year, broke past visitor records. It was a very successful show with a lot of interest in the Florida Beaches and the majority of consumers were wanting to travel around Florida to see the different beaches on a fly-drive holiday.

FDM Travel Show – Attended the show on behalf of Florida's Beaches. This was the first year that FDM Travel had done this show and attendance was excellent with over 1800 visitors. We had great interest for the Florida Beaches. Many of the consumers we met had already visited Florida and were interested in returning. As with the majority of Scandinavian visitors, interest was highest in touring around the State.

TRADE LIAISON

- American Sky – Confirmed a joint co-op marketing campaign with American Sky Holidays that will run throughout the month of March. Activity includes an online banner campaign, social media activity and e-newsletters. Provided American Sky with up to date imagery and copy.
- Ocean Florida – Ocean Florida will be partnering with us on a joint destination marketing campaign in April/May 2014. The campaign will include a banner ad leading to a dedicated landing page, 3 x e-newsletters and social media activity. Images, copy and logos have been sent.
- Confirmed participation in the BA Holidays April campaign in conjunction with Visit Florida. As last year we will also be launching joint advertorials in conjunction with Tampa Bay and Co off the back of the campaign. Advertorials will run in BA Highlife Magazine and national newspapers The Telegraph and the Express. Submitted copy and imagery for the advertorials.
- Finalised and launched a campaign with Hotels.com in Sweden and Norway which will run for 6 weeks.
- Conducted site visit for joint VIP event with Busch Gardens and invite has been sent out to tour operators.
- Finalised and signed off the artwork for the Travel Republic co-op campaign which will run for 6 months from March. This is an online campaign including banner ads, landing page and VSPC blog.
- Ongoing sign off of activity with Virgin Holidays including first sign offs for the Visit Florida campaign.

- Land's End Consumer Promotion – Secured a consumer brand awareness campaign with the Land's End Clothing Brand. The promotion will take place during the month of May 2014 and will run for a period of 6 weeks. The campaign is based on winning a family holiday for 4 to St. Pete/Clearwater and British Airways Holidays have been secured as our partner. The campaign will tie in with the release of the adult and family catalogue launches and will include exposure in the adult catalogues bound-in-voucher (circa 258,000 consumers) and 1 page exposure in the kids catalogue (circa 205,000), a dedicated landing page for the competition including area details and imagery, E-newsletters and social media activity.
- Details of the Brand USA fam have been finalised and it is confirmed that the group will spend 2 nights in St Pete/Clearwater. The final night in destination is their final night in Florida and as such the other Florida CVBs that have participated in the trip have been invited to join us for a final night event to be held at the Sheraton Sand Key.
- A request was received from Virgin Holidays to assist with a joint fam trip they are hosting to Orlando and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater in conjunction with Barrhead Travel Agents 30th April – 2nd May. Liaised with our office in resort and a final itinerary has now been forwarded where the group will experience all that our area has to offer.
- BA have confirmed 10 seats for a res agents fam to take place in September 2014 in conjunction with Tampa Bay & Co.
- Invitations for the Aer Lingus have been sent out and the fam is nearly filled. Liaison with Tampa Bay & Co and VSPC stateside regarding the itinerary.
- Funway Holidays are sending a group of their top selling agents to our area on a fam on May 1st.
- We have confirmed another retail in-store campaign with Flight Centre/Infinity. The campaign will include window boards, online banners leading to our microsite, external advertising and social media activity. Provided their marketing department with up to date images, copy, logos.
- Ongoing administration on behalf of Florida's Beaches including rebooking of the booth at TUR as BFor cancelled their participation at a late date. Finalised brochure shipments to Ferie, Swanson's and FDM.
- We provided Visit USA Ireland with details of St Pete/Clearwater being ranked in The New York Times as a Top Global Place to visit in the world in 2014 for use in this month's e-newsletter that is sent out to their trade and consumer database.
- Confirmation of participation in a consumer/agent event taking place at American Holidays to target customers who have always dreamed of heading to the Sunshine State. This has been confirmed for March where 60 consumers will come to American Holidays office in Dublin to watch a 10-15 minute presentation of our area.
- Bookabed Ireland – Training for Bookabed in house res staff has been confirmed for April.

- Virgin Holidays – Confirmed attendance at their Supplier Training Day in April
- American Sky Ireland & UK – Reservations training has been confirmed in April at the Dublin office. We shall also be visiting their UK call centre to train their UK reservations team during the month of April.
- The E-newsletter that we participated in with Letsgo2 has now been distributed to their consumer database. We have been advised that the E-newsletter generated 64 clicks (12.85% ratio) to our landing page with 3 bookings being generated with a total of 16 room nights booked. Letsgo2 also included St. Pete/Clearwater in a generic newsletter that was sent a few weeks later and this saw a total of 28 clicks (7.65% ratio). We have been advised that overall, Florida is now in the top 10 searched destinations for the company and they continue to actively promote the state. Letsgo2 have also scheduled several newsletters in the next few months and will be including our area FOC.
- The Wacky Warehouse promotion that took place from the end of January to the end of February has now finished and we have received the following results:
 - The homepage banner ad generated 46,790 unique visitors during the month long promotion
 - the competition landing page received 7,159 unique visitors
 - total competition entries received were 6,009 with a total of 2,828 opting in for additional information.
 - Two Facebook posts reached a total of 36,984 consumers and 1,155 Twitter follows saw a Twitter post.
 - The E-newsletter that was distributed as part of the campaign also reached 30,000 consumers.
 - The total reach equalled 322,088 and had a total media value of £27,542..
- Waitrose Promotion – finalised all creative/activity for the consumer brand awareness campaign in conjunction with Waitrose and USAirtours direct consumer brand ‘Travel Planners’. The campaign was launched in-store on the 27th February and will run for a period of 1 month.
- Travel Up/Magic Holidays – Confirmed training for the call centre staff at Travel Up/Magic Holidays in Blackpool in March.
- Virgin Holidays – Provided Virgin Holidays with spot prizes for them to use for social media initiatives on the forthcoming Visit Florida campaign that we are partnering on.
- Thomas Cook – A meeting has been scheduled with Jill Townsin, Product Manager at Thomas Cook Signature.
- Funway Holidays - Final preparations have been made for the Funway Sales Managers sponsored training and lunch event. We shall also be training their in house call centre staff prior to meeting with the Area Sales Managers.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

04 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Getabed announces new appointment

Getabed has named John McKibbin as sales manager for Ireland, as it plans to expand operations in the republic. The OTA already has operations in Northern Ireland and has only recently commenced operations in the Republic of Ireland. McKibbin brings with him experience from Travelcube and Needahotel. He said: “I am delighted to be joining such a great team. “Getabed is very well known and liked within its sector and I hope that we can mirror some of the great work in the Republic of Ireland and start building strong relationships and winning awards over here too.” Matt Stuart, Getabed global managing director, added: “We are absolutely delighted to have McKibbin join us. “He has an excellent reputation with the agents in Ireland and is exactly what we need to progress and take the product to market in the region.”

04 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Thomas Cook and Brand USA launch social media competition

Thomas Cook Group and Brand USA yesterday launched United Stories of America, a pan-European social media competition that offer participants the chance to win a holiday to the USA every month. Following on from the announcement that Thomas Cook Group and Brand USA have entered into a multimillion dollar partnership, designed to inspire travel to the USA, United Stories of America will run simultaneously across the UK, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands from today through to April 2014. The competition forms part of the joint “Discover America” campaign initiative, which aims to highlight the diversity of experiences available across the country. Tourists who have yet to travel to the USA will be able to enter the United Stories of America competition by pinning their American dream destination to a map, hosted on Thomas Cook’s Facebook page, and giving the reasons why they would like to experience a holiday there. Those across Europe who have already travelled to the US, and would like to enter the competition, will be invited to use an app that allows them to share their memories by pinning their favourite experience to an interactive map and sharing with friends. Brand USA president and chief executive, Christopher Thompson, said: “There are no better advocates of the USA than the people who have spent time there and enjoyed it. “By encouraging visitors to talk about their holidays and share their incredible US experiences, we hope this will lead to many more consumers discovering this land, like never before.” Thomas Cook’s group head of media & partnerships, Stuart Adamson, said: “United Stories of America, along with the wider campaign, demonstrates our determination to deliver highly engaging, creative solutions for Brand USA, with digital at their core. “By taking advantage of the scale of Thomas Cook as a brand, we are confident that our activities to promote ‘Discover America’ will firmly position America’s incredible variety of destinations and holiday options in the minds of consumers across Europe in a fun and innovative way.” Aside from an all-expenses paid holiday to the USA for four people, entrants also have the chance to win vouchers to put towards a holiday. The competition forms part of the largest media and partnership deal Brand USA has made with a travel retailer in Europe and is part of a fully integrated, omni-channel campaign targeting consumers across Thomas Cook’s platforms from online through to in-store, direct and inflight.

05 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

Double growth for Skyscanner

Flight comparison site Skyscanner has seen its business double during 2013, the fastest in three years. Its mobile strategy and global reach has seen its revenue increase 96% to GBP65.8 million (US\$108.6m) in the year while its visitor and app downloads doubled. The site now has 25 million unique visitors a month and has seen 30 million downloads.

Milestones in 2013 included the acquisition of Barcelona-based Fogg; increased investment from Sequoia Capital and new growth in the Americas including an office in Miami. Shane Corstorphine, Skyscanner's chief financial officer, said: "This last year has proven to be our most successful to date and underlines the importance of offering a truly global travel search tool to travellers around the world. We've built a platform to continue to support rapid growth over the coming years and we're now investing heavily to ensure we can continue to provide a great service to users." Its growth has been driven by its flight search with rapid pick-up in the Americas and the Asia Pacific region.

10 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Thomas Cook tipped to have narrowed underlying losses

Thomas Cook is tipped to reveal it has narrowed underlying losses when it announces its first quarter results tomorrow. Numis analyst Wyn Ellis told *The Scotsman* that he expects the figure to have dropped from last year's £70 million, despite the fact that the quarter lies in the operator's weakest three months. However, he added the ongoing unrest of Egypt and Thailand is predicted to have a negative impact on the operator's first-quarter results. But he predicted the results will not be all bad, adding: "We believe that the poor weather in the UK over the past several weeks may have helped to stimulate early summer booking."

Meanwhile, Credit Suisse analysts said Cook was a "compelling turnaround story". Rival Tui Travel released its first-quarter results <<http://www.ttgdigital.com/news/tui-travel-cuts-losses-and-reports-strong-january/4690350.article>> last week, revealing it had cut its first quarter underlying operating loss by 7% thanks to capacity management and the restructuring of its French division.

10 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Norwegian Getaway christened in star-studded ceremony

The latest addition to Norwegian Cruise Line's fleet has set sail from Miami for the first time following a star-studded christening ceremony. The Norwegian Getaway, which is now the largest ship to homeport year-round in PortMiami, made its first weekly seven-day voyage to the eastern Caribbean on Saturday. The ship was christened on Friday by the Miami Dolphin cheerleaders and rapper Pitbull. Norwegian Cruise Line's chief executive Kevin Sheehan said he was looking forward to a successful first season for the Norwegian Getaway. He said: "We thank Miami-Dade County for this warm welcome and the Miami Dolphins Cheerleaders for christening this beautiful ship and are looking forward to a very successful inaugural season." The ceremony was also attended by US celebrity chef Geoffrey Zakarian and US baker Buddy Valastro, both of whose food will be available on board. The three-deck vessel, which is described by NCL as 'Miami's ultimate ship', will be showing Broadway musical Legally Blonde, as well as offering its 4,000 passengers an ice bar, outdoor theatre and aqua park. Sheehan added: "Miami's ship is home and we couldn't be more proud to bring this spectacular vessel to this electric city."

11 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

dnata plans Gold Medal investment

dnata plans to invest in new brands Gold Medal, Netflights and Pure Luxury in both

the UK and overseas markets after acquiring the names from Thomas Cook. The Dubai-based firm, which is part of the Emirates Group, will look to take lessons from each side to get the best out of technology, marketing and processes to not only develop Gold Medal in the UK but take the brand into markets such as the UAE and India. The group also took on Netflights and Pure Luxury under the GBP45 million deal with Thomas Cook and will look to launch these products into its home markets. “dnata bought Travel Republic for its capabilities and that business is growing, so the same concepts now apply to Gold Medal where we can take something successful in a current market and take it into new markets,” Iain Andrew, divisional senior vice president of dnata told Travel Daily. “We took technology from Travel Republic to offer to our online travel agency businesses in the Middle East and now we can look to Steve [Barrass] and his organisation to offer their services to more independent travel agents.” Steve Barrass, managing director of Gold Medal told Travel Daily the acquisition is a ‘win win’ situation for both parties, with the firm now able to develop further relationships and products for independent travel agents. “Gold Medal is a B2B brand and enables dnata to get into that arena with travel agents, wholesalers and online travel agents where it has predominantly had B2C brands before,” Barrass explained. “Gold Medal brings another element to dnata, but it also means the brand will have more investment and buying power that independent travel agents can benefit from.” Andrew already has detailed plans for the businesses having been interested in the brands for several years. “This is the end of a long process. We started talking to Gold Medal more than a year ago about the acquisition and we are pleased we have now reached an agreement,” he said. “We’ve been interested in Gold Medal for a few years now and were involved in the original tendering process when Thomas Cook took them on [in December 2009], so we’ve shown a real commitment.” The 470 staff members at Gold Medal’s Preston base were told they would retain their jobs this morning and have shown “tremendous enthusiasm” for the takeover. And as for Thomas Cook, the company will now become a customer of Gold Medal’s and allows all parties to focus on their core products. “Thomas Cook is now a very important customer and we have to deliver their expectations. We have a good relationship and would like to expand that in the coming years; it’s definitely a long-term partnership for both of us,” said Andrews.

12 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

Virgin airport staff to wear Google Glasses

Virgin Atlantic’s airport staff will be equipped with new wearable technology, including the Google Glass and Sony SmartWatch systems. In partnership with aviation IT developer SITA, the airline will equip staff working in its ‘Upper Class Wing’ at London Heathrow Airport with the new technology. Virgin Atlantic staff wearing Google Glasses and Sony SmartWatches will be able to start the check-in process as soon as guests arrive, as well as updating passengers on their latest flight status and destination information, such as weather forecasts. In future, the technology will be expanded to inform staff of passengers’ dietary requirements and other personal information. The technology will be trialled during a six-week period, with the potential for a wider roll-out in the future. “While it’s fantastic that more people can now fly than ever before, the fact that air travel has become so accessible has led to some of the sheen being lost for many passengers. Our wearable technology pilot with SITA makes us the first in the industry to test how Google Glass and other wearable technology can improve the customer experience,” said Dave Bulman, Virgin Atlantic’s director of IT. “We are upholding Virgin Atlantic’s long tradition of shaking things up and putting innovation at the heart of the flying experience,” he added. The new solution Google Glass and Sony SmartWatch technology will be integrated with a purpose-built app built by

SITA, and the Virgin Atlantic passenger system. This will push individual passenger information directly to the assigned staff member's glasses of watch as the passenger arrives. Jim Peters, SITA's chief technology officer, SITA said; "2014 is shaping up to be the breakout year for wearable technology, and Virgin Atlantic is the first to bring its vision to reality. At SITA Lab, we've taken the lead in testing and trialling this new technology for the air transport industry, and it's been fantastic to work with Virgin Atlantic to launch the industry's first wearable technology application."

13 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Norwegian sees profits slip

No-frills airline Norwegian has blamed start-up costs for its long-haul operation for a fall in annual profits. The carrier, which starts flying from Gatwick to New York, Fort Lauderdale and Los Angeles in July, saw full-year profits slide to £43 million last year from £61 million in 2012. The airline said costs relating to the long-haul venture had amounted to £21.3 million. These included problems relating to its fleet of Boeing 787s that led to large bills for hotel accommodation for delayed passengers. Norwegian took a big hit in the final three months of 2013 with problems of this nature, when it saw a loss of almost £28 million, compared to a profit in the same period in 2012 of £2.3 million. The fourth quarter illustrated the airline's rapid growth, as it carried 5.25 million passengers, an increase of 20%. It now has 85 aircraft, which will include a long-haul fleet of seven 787s by the end of this year. Despite the setback, the carrier still recorded its seventh consecutive year of profits and saw turnover increase 21% to £1.54 billion. Total 2013 passenger numbers were up three million to 20.7 million. Bjorn Kjos, the carrier's chief executive, admitted there had been challenges with "significant and unexpected costs due to the start-up of the long-haul operation, with delayed deliveries of aircraft and many technical issues". A weak Norwegian Krone had also affected results, he said, but added: "However, it is clear that our business model works and is in line with our strategy. Cash flow from operations has been very strong. We have cut costs and added new capacity, while at the same time maintaining the load factor. Strong competition on certain routes affects the price level, but Norwegian is still better equipped than ever to meet the competition." Norwegian's Gatwick flights came a step closer after the airline revealed it had set up a subsidiary company in Ireland, Norwegian Air international Limited to operate them, thereby bringing the non-EU company under the Europe-US Open Skies agreement. Some however, also believe it will allow the carrier to employ cheaper labour.

14 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Cook focuses on US and Canada in 2014-15 escorted tours

Thomas Cook Tours has released its 2014-15 fully escorted tours programme with a new-look website and major focus on the US and Canada. Features on the new site include more tour-specific content, extensive imagery and video and testimonials from previous guests. Enhanced search functions enable users to filter tours by destination, types of tour and specific interests. There is also an upgraded booking system. The latest programme features more than 70 tours worldwide, covering North America and Canada, Africa, Australasia, Europe, Latin America and Asia, with itineraries ranging from seven to 28 days. Nine new itineraries include Highlights of Florida, 10 days starting in Miami that includes Key Largo and Key West, the Everglades National Park, Naples, the Space Coast and a visit to the Kennedy Space Centre, the country's oldest city St Augustine, and Orlando. Departures this year are in May, October and November, from £2,589pp. Prices include return international flights, and door to door pick up within 100 miles of UK departure airport.

14 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

The TTG Interview: Opening the UK's eyes to the USA

Brand USA has only been in existence for a few years, marketing the states in all their diversity. So how is it going? Edward Robertson talks to Alfredo Gonzalez, senior vice-president global partnership development, about UK visitor numbers and new initiatives. Selling travel may appear to be a science like many other businesses, but those who have worked in the trade for long enough know that it is also an art. Knowing what your customer numbers are before the official statistics are released becomes second nature for those with years of experience. Which is why Alfredo Gonzalez, Brand USA senior vice-president global partnership development is confident in his current prediction, even though it contradicts recently released United Nations' World Tourism Organization figures which show global tourist numbers rose by 52 million to 1,087 million. Official Brand USA statistics show in 2012 the number of Brits visiting the country dropped by about 2% to 3.8 million, although average spend per visitor grew by 6%. And in the absence of official figures for 2013, Gonzalez' experience in destination promotion already tells him what the results are likely to be. "My gut instinct is we're probably going to be flat in (UK) visitor numbers because of our forecasts," he says. He puts this down to no major increase in seat capacity from carriers while none of the key UK-friendly destinations, including California and Florida, have registered the jump in visitor numbers required to drive a countrywide increase. But that's not to say Gonzalez is downbeat, instead he is focusing on what can be done to improve matters. He says: "In a way it is disappointing, but we do take into consideration that Brand USA has been in existence for three years and operating as a marketing machine for two in the UK." And even with only two years' operations in the UK, Gonzalez is confident that the tide is turning as key cross-Atlantic legacy airlines begin to understand Brand USA's messaging, in particular its promotion of the country's geographical diversity. "What we have done over the year in 2013 and into 2014 will move that entirely. The demand is up, and the message we now have is going to carry all the year through," he says. "The airlines will have to add capacity - if you don't get the airlines to increase their growth then you're going to have a problem. What we need is more capacity to complement the demand." And following news that low-cost airline Norwegian will operate flights to Los Angeles, New York and Fort Lauderdale from Gatwick as of July, Gonzalez hopes the legacy airlines' pride may further drive capacity. "I hope this is a message to the (legacy) carriers as they need to step up their own growth, they don't want to let another country come in and fly out of London," he says. Gonzalez is also confident that this year's Brand USA Megafam, of which *TTG* is the exclusive travel trade media partner, will help agents ensure any new flights are full. A total of seven different itineraries, covering 21 American states, have been drawn up for the 2014 Megafam in May. Many of these states were untouched by the 2013 Megafam, which proved so successful. Gonzalez says: "When they go back [to the UK] their experiences are what they will share with other travel agents. "They will go back home not as a travel agent but as a Brand USA ambassador." He adds this year's focus on the diverse experiences available in the US also taps into the increasing consumer emphasis on experience over product alone. "It is the experience in the diner, meeting locals in the park and having your kids meet other kids," Gonzalez says. While the 100 agents who win places on the Megafam will see this first hand, Brand USA has also focused on ensuring that those who do not go also understand the destination. Gonzalez says the USA Discovery Program, which was launched last summer, features more of a focus on the diversity of the US than was available before. "Our training model will give those travel agents the information that is necessary to say I can then work that client off the fence and say is this what you're looking for," he adds. And while Gonzalez is confident that all these components will give enough drive to grow the UK market in 2014, he is also looking to the future, having instigated

conversations with apparent regional competitors, including Mexico and Canada, as to how they can all benefit from future projected tourism growths. He says: "We're not considering our competition as competition but as a complement. "We've been in discussions with other countries where we can do joint ventures - we're having interesting discussions with our friends in Mexico and some interesting conversations with our friends in Canada. "Our visitors from the UK feel comfortable getting into a car and driving around... we know the multi-destination holiday in the UK is popular. "We will be able to give travellers a more diverse product." Gonzalez adds although he met with Mexico representatives to discuss the matter last month, the idea was only first mooted at World Travel Market 2013, meaning the trade will have to wait before selling cross-border packages. "It is an interesting product but it is not going to be put into place overnight," he adds. And with so much going on, it is easy to see why Gonzalez is so confident about Brand USA's future in the UK. "Like any start-up it is a learning experience - we had to manage not only a giant product but also general expectations," he says. "We now have the right elements for this incredible promotion machine which is Brand USA. "We can now reach all levels out there, be it Thomas Cook, British Airways or one of the retail outlets on the high street." But perhaps the main driver of Gonzalez's confidence comes from the fact that having moved from his previous job as vice-president of tourism and international business for the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau last year, it's a journey he has travelled too. "I had to change from thinking I am promoting a small destination with 1.5 million residents to the entire US," he says. "It was a process of learning what this entire country offered. "I've had to open my eyes about the great diversity of product and we've had to open the UK's eyes."

24 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

School holiday debate heads to Parliament

MPs will debate the introduction of school holiday fees and increased holiday prices at Westminster this afternoon following on-going comments from travel companies and parents. In recent weeks many have commented on the higher cost for holidays during the time when children are off school, after new legislation was introduced on 1 September 2013 meaning parents are fined for each day their child is taken out of school during term time. A not-for-profit organisation has been set up under the name Parents Want a Say which said it has sent the views of more than 200,000 parents to every MP ahead of the debate this afternoon. The group is calling for the amendments in the term time rules to be scrapped. Craig Langham, who launched the organisation said: "Parents are not saying that taking children out of school is an absolute right. They simply want to revert back to allowing Head Teachers to make common sense decisions based on circumstances. These new changes will affect many families who cannot afford the cost of a holiday during the normal mid-term break. It will also impact on businesses who cannot allow the majority of staff to be on holiday at the same time." Travel companies have also backed the parents' view according to a Travelzoo survey, with 85% of respondents saying they have already seen a financial impact since the changes came into place last year. Seven in 10 travel companies said the government should not interfere with family holidays and 67% felt it was unacceptable the industry was not consulted on before. "We've seen cases in the media recently where parents have now been fined for taking their children out of school for holidays during term time, and a quarter of the travel companies we surveyed said that they might have to put prices up during the summer holidays to counteract the drop-off of families travelling during term time," said Travelzoo's European managing director, Richard Singer. "We want to bring the industry together and are taking steps to form an alliance of operators and travel companies who want to work with the government to ensure that the situation improves for parents and the industry alike," he added. Travelzoo set up an e-petition called the 'Parent Trap' which already has 38, 504

signatures and calls for Air Passenger Duty to be reduced or scrapped during holiday time to help families afford a break during peak time. Meanwhile ABTA has continued its stance and renewed its call for staggering school holidays by region like other European countries to lengthen out the peak periods in the summer and February half term particularly. A poll of its members found 85% backed the staggered move and also encouraged families to book early to get the most affordable holiday. “This poll shows that the industry is concerned about the issue and that it is committed to a constructive dialogue and to finding a workable solution to help alleviate some of the pressure around periods of extremely high demand that can result in higher prices. Our discussions with Parliamentarians in recent weeks make clear that MPs understand the way pricing works, and appreciate that the travel industry is highly competitive; our hope therefore is that Monday’s debate in Parliament will focus on considering staggering school holiday dates as an option that merits further review and consideration,” said Mark Tanzer, chief executive of ABTA.

25 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

BA tops brand poll

British Airways has become the first airline to take the Consumer Superbrand title in a national survey. It is also the first time that any travel brand has topped the poll by The Centre for Brand Analysis, which surveys 3,000 adults. Frank van der Post, British Airways’ managing director brands and customer experience, said: “We are very proud of what we have achieved in recent years - from our role in the London 2012 Games and our investment in new aircraft and cabins, to our ‘To Fly. To Serve.’ campaign. We will not take this award for granted, but will continue to build on our success.”

25 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

California streaming with YouTube takeover

Visit California has announced it will take over YouTube for all of Friday to inspire more tourists to visit its shores. In a global first, the tourism board will release a video every hour from midnight across the UK, US, Canada and Australia to mark the launch of a new Dream 365 Project. Dubbed ‘24 Hours. 24 Dreams’, the videos will cover both well-known and undiscovered experiences in the US state with a “variety of fun, off-beat, thought-provoking content” with the tourism board having 100% share of voice on YouTube and is expected to deliver more than 135 million impressions. Visit California is also working with Google as its global media platform to launch the project, after developing a relationship nearly a year ago to build a communication strategy for the tourism board’s messages. “We’re excited to see Visit California launching such a cool and unique campaign that features new content every hour in the YouTube masthead,” said Rob Torres, industry director, travel for Google. “The travel industry is starting to embrace the power of online video and with this initiative; Visit California is leading the way. They are creating a memorable brand experience for consumers online and leveraging the capabilities of YouTube and the Google Display Network to extend that experience across devices and international markets.” In addition videos, memes, tweets, time-lapses and photos will be displayed on visitcalifornia.co.uk/dream365. Attractions to be shown will include Bob Burnquist’s floating skate ramp, Edward Sharpe’s Big Top, the first California DreamGig with Band of Horses at Coachella and a Boston Terrier’s Shasta Cascade adventure weekend. “We want the launch of this campaign to emulate the pioneering attitude California is known for,” said Caroline Beteta, president & CEO of Visit California. “Our first-of-its-kind content partnership with Google will showcase the unique and creative ways Californians from across the state realise their dreams; the land of boundless opportunity, epitomised by Hollywood, Silicon Valley and its frontier heritage, California is

the place where people don't just dream, they Dream Big.”

25 February 2014 – Source Travel Daily

80 new jobs at Barrhead

Barrhead Travel has announced it has created 80 new jobs as part of its expansion. More than GBP1.5 million will be invested in the new full and part-time roles in its Scottish outlets, predominantly in its Glasgow headquarters. Fifty of the jobs will be located on the west coast, while 20 will be located in Edinburgh and the east coast, while 10 new roles will be based in Aberdeen and the north. The roles will be available in departments including sales, marketing, IT and HR. “Business growth and reinvestment continues to be front of mind for us. Over the years we’ve evolved our offering to meet the needs of the customer and this next stage in our growth plan will keep us ahead of the competition once again,” said Sharon Munro, chief executive of Barrhead Travel. “Being in a financially stable position to create 80 new jobs across the country, given the economy in recent years, is something we’re immensely proud of. We’re looking for experienced travel agents, call centre staff, business development executives and foreign exchange cashiers to start immediately.”

27 February 2014 – Source TTG Digital

Exhibitors flock to book for WTM 2014

World Travel Market 2014 is poised to be the biggest yet, with almost half of the exhibition floor space already reserved. Several new exhibitors have already taken stand space, and many returning standholders have increased their presence at the show. WTM senior director Simon Press said: “The rate at which exhibition space is being booked suggests that WTM 2014 is poised to be even bigger and better than last year. “WTM 2013 was a record year, with participant numbers up 5% to more than 50,000, and the event facilitated more than £2.2 billion in industry deals. “The gathering recovery in the global economy and upbeat feedback from exhibitors at this early stage gives us confidence that 2014 could be yet another record year.” New exhibitors for WTM 2014 - which takes place from November 3-6 - come from across the globe and different market sectors. They include Hanatour from South Korea and Greenlife Tours from Ireland Furthermore, Ajman - one of the seven emirates of the United Arab Emirates - will be making its WTM debut, while Macedonia will return to WTM after a three-year absence. Last week TTG Media was named as the event’s official media partner for the third year in a row.