

**UK OFFICE**  
**June 2015 REPORT**  
**Prepared by: Venessa Alexander**  
**UK Director**

**TOUR OPERATORS**

Attended IPW in Orlando where meetings were held with the following operators:

**Bookabed**

Met with Bev Fly to discuss possible co-op opportunities. Bookabed are a wholesaler to the Irish travel trade and their numbers to St Pete/Clearwater have been steadily increasing.

**Trailfinders**

Met with Charlotte Forrester, the new Florida Product Manager. Provided a general area overview as Charlotte has not previously visited. Room nights to Clearwater are up 24% YTD but to St Pete are down 41%.

**Kuoni**

Met with Sarah Beckwith, New Product Manager. Provided general area overview as Sarah has not previously visited. Discussed opportunities to train their retail network of 40 stores. Awaiting a proposal and room night information.

**Ocean Beds**

Met with Lisa Barrington. Discussed the new inventory of beachside homes they now have on sale in Pinellas. Discussed co-op ideas for the new fiscal.

**Kenwood Travel**

Met with Pete Brudenell who is responsible for marketing. Kenwood have just expanded their US product and are keen to work more closely with us. They do substantial business in to Florida but room nights to St Pete/Clearwater are poor. Spoke about improving our pages on their website and including video.

**GTA**

Met with John Taker. GTA have concentrated so far on main gateways and more mainstream destinations but are increasing their focus to include beach. They are very keen to improve inventory in our area and talked them through the destination and what currently sells well in the UK.

**American Holidays**

Met with Dee Burdock. Having invested a good amount of funds for co-op this year, we were pleased to hear that our area is tracking 11% up on the same period the previous year. Dee is obviously keen to work with us further on co-op and will come to WTM with a proposal.

**American Sky**

Met with Geoff Dobson who advised we are 29% up on the same period the previous year. He is keen to work with us on co-op as we didn't do co-op with them in this fiscal and has also requested further staff training as they have had a number of new staff join them.

## **TUI**

Met with Suzanne Harvey who advised that all Florida Beach destinations are doing well but SPC is outselling all other beach destinations other than Miami. We are currently working with them on a co-op campaign in conjunction with Visit Tampa and are awaiting an update on room night stats.

## **BA/BA Holidays**

Met with Mark Tanner, Marc James and Gemma Abrahams. 2014 we finished 38% up for BA Holidays and currently we are tracking at 4% up in terms of room nights. They have concerns that our area is showing more close out dates and less offers. Whilst our growth has slowed down, other areas such as Naples are seeing double digit growth, which gives them some concern. The Tampa flight is showing a 6% increase in forward bookings with a 10% increase in yield. They are showing a slight loss of market share to the Virgin/Delta codeshare.

## **Tour America**

Met with Veronica Flood and Mary McKenna. We are currently tracking slightly down for Tour America but they have advised they will produce some marketing activity for us free of charge in September to compensate. Spoke about a possible direct to consumer campaign in Ireland and have sent through some examples of the ideas we are thinking about in the UK. Awaiting feedback.

## **Virgin Holidays**

Met with James Killick who advised that Clearwater is up 7% and St Pete is down 5% to end of May. They are looking to promote the Gulf Coast more thanks to the Virgin/Delta codeshare. Provided info on new hotel development coming on line in the next 18 months.

## **Cosmos**

Met with Neil Garner. Their Florida programme as a whole is not looking very promising delivering 70% less seats in 2015 than they did in 2014. As a result their focus has very much been on Orlando and not on any sort of twin centre programme. They are talking to Norwegian about the possibility of working with them but this is a discussion in progress.

## **Thomas Cook**

Met with Jill Townsin who advised that their Florida programme has grown massively over the past year. Now they have reached a point where they are happy with their Orlando business they will be concentrating more heavily on their twin centre programme. St Pete/Clearwater is their biggest selling beach destination so they are very interested in working with us on a co-op basis in the new fiscal.

## **USATours – Denmark**

Met with Christian Willumson who advised that their Gulf Coast programme is steadily growing. They are delighted with the new Lufthansa service in to Tampa and feel this will be of great benefit to the destination in terms of Scandinavian visitors.

## **Travel Republic**

Met with Eli Steiner who advised we finished 2014 at 4% with 2106 room nights booked, second only to Miami. Bookings YTD to end of May are tracking at 4% up. We have invested in co-op marketing this year with Travel Republic which we feel has contributed to these numbers.

### **Funway Holidays**

Met with Nick Talbot who advised we were 2.3% up in room nights as compared to Florida which is tracking 5.4% up. He confirmed we were their biggest selling beach destination and requested our participation in their Florida Beaches co-op campaign launching October. Participation has since been confirmed.

### **Icelandair**

Met with Mark Johnson who wanted to meet us to advise that Icelandair are becoming much more proactive in the market in terms of promoting their US destinations and are keen to work with us on fams and co-ops. Follow-up meeting to be scheduled.

### **Risskov Travel**

Met with Michael Jensen who is very keen to work with us, Visit Orlando and Lufthansa in a joint co-op promoting a twin centre package. Awaiting a proposal.

### **Travelpack**

Met with Vishak Patek who advised that after several years in the US wilderness, Travelpack have made a concerted effort to relaunch their US programme and now have a team of 10 sales staff selling the US. They are keen to grow business to St Pete/Clearwater and provided an area overview.

### **Bon Voyage**

Met with Theresa Wilson who advised our area is 12% up year on year. They feel they have a good range of product in the destination and will be coming on a site visit later in the year to look to source additional.

### **Premier Holidays**

Met with Heidi Blades who advised that we are tracking down slightly compared to same period last year. Heidi cannot really explain why this is as we have continued with our marketing support and feels it might be down the fact the destination is becoming less competitive compared to other destinations.

### **Lastminute.com**

Met with Scott Humble who advised that Lastminute.com had been bought out by the Rumbo Fly Bravo Group which meant they now had substantial assets behind them for a huge direct to consumer ad campaign. It also means that they now have massive buying power and can focus especially on holidays rather than lastminute UK days out and theatre tickets. He'll keep us updated with developments.

### **Audley Travel**

Met with Mark Ziles. Audley have a fairly upmarket programme and are in the process of expanding their US product. They are looking to contract our area through Bonotel and provided an area overview. Sent images and copy as follow up.

### **Gold Medal Travel**

Met with Ashley Pilkington who advised that Florida is tracking 47% up year on year and our area is tracking at 99% up with a total of 1755 room nights booked as of end of May. We have been consistent with our marketing support and this is reflected in this growth

## **OTHER MEETINGS**

Florida's Beaches – Chaired the annual catch up meeting between the CVBs and distributed annual accounts and confirmed staffing for the forthcoming shows. Also discussed booth displays and all agreed that new display material is needed. Miami offered their in-house services to design this and currently deciding which format the displays will take.

Scandinavian Sales Mission – Meeting with Visit Orlando, SeaWorld Parks and Universal Resorts to discuss the November Sales Mission. Confirmed we will work with Icelandair and Visit Orlando will liaise with them in terms of events. Mission will visit Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm.

## **TRADE LIAISON**

- Hosted a post IPW fam in conjunction with SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment. The group consisted of TUI, Stella Travel, Cosmos, Ocean Florida and Virgin Holidays and stayed at the Postcard Inn.
- Site visit took place for venue for the VIP tour operator event with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment which will take place on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Invitations have now gone out.
- Confirmed a national consumer campaign to run in Jan and Feb 2016 in conjunction with national grocery retailer, Morrisons. Promotion will include print, digital and social elements with an estimated reach of 5 million UK consumers.
- Confirmed Megafam to take place in conjunction with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment 9<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> October for 30 participants. This will include retail travel agents and tour operator reservations staff.
- Premier Holidays/VSPC/SWP&E/Visit Tampa – Finalised additional campaign elements including window posters in both Premier Travel and Travel Centre branches (200 in total), a travel agency flyer (10,000) will be distributed and a newsletter will be sent to over 4,500 agents. A newspaper advert in the local Cambridge News will be placed in early July.
- Visit USA newsletters/website – Provided information on the new Mural Tour that showcases the modern art springing up in the St. Pete/Clearwater area to both Ireland and Denmark for inclusion in future trade and consumer newsletters.
- Global Travel Group - Participated in the first of two travel agent roadshows that took place in Bolton on the 10th June. The event was attended by a total of 30 Global Travel Agents including agency staff and home-workers. We were the only tourist board in attendance with other partners including tour operators, airlines and cruise companies. The feedback from the day was the event was very well received and the agents were very pleased to have received training and information packs to take away with them from our destination. A second training event with Global Travel Agents will be attended on 8<sup>th</sup> July in Newport Pagnall.
- McColls Newsagent Promotion – Assisted the winner, Stella Odum-Jones, of this promotion from March 2015 by confirming the flight and hotel elements of the prize with Virgin Holidays and Postcard Inn on the Beach respectively so that she and her family can enjoy a week's stay in our area from 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. Also supplied her with 4 x Clearwater Marine Aquarium tickets.

- THG Holidays – Confirmed participation and sponsorship of the THG Annual Golf Day that will be taking place on the 7th August. The sponsorship day will give us the opportunity to attend and promote our destination to some 180 golfers taking part.
- American Holidays – Provided Dee Burdock, Product Manager USA & Canada, with the new contact details at the Hilton Clearwater Beach in preparation for contracting for their 2016 brochure.
- TUI – Work continued this month on approval of the campaign elements as part of our co-op agreement in partnership with TUI Specialist and Visit Tampa Bay including the retail newsletter and blog post. We will also be conducting destination overviews at a retail training event in Peterborough planned for 29<sup>th</sup> July.
- Ocean Florida – The Coop marketing plan finalised last month was implemented in the month of May. Performance results are expected in early July and will be reported next month.
- Ocean Florida – Assisted John Tatum, Destination Manager at Ocean Florida with complimentary tickets to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and The Dali Museum as he will be travelling to our area for his annual vacation in July.
- Visit USA Association UK – Provided the Visit USA Association with a high res version of the Barefoot Beach Resort's logo to include on the July 4th Visit USA Ball invitation as part of the prize offering that VSPC partners have donated to its charity prize draw.
- Gold Medal Travel – Continued to approve campaign elements for the 'Ride & Unwind' / 'Play and Pause' campaigns that we are participating in with Gold Medal and Netflights. Elements approved include the direct mail piece for Netflights, the Netflights 'Where To' magazine DPS, the model banner for their Netflights website, the Netflights E-newsletter as well as the Gold Medal Consumer Magazine DPS.
- Gold Medal Retail Campaign – Assisted with the Merchandising campaign by providing collateral for inclusion in goodie bags that were to be distributed to some 300 retail stores across the country promoting our area. Also provided detailed training notes and materials to each of the Gold Medal team fulfilling the campaign and conducted a conference call session reviewing the training and key messages for each store visit. They, in turn, conducted this training with the merchandising team ahead of the campaign which was successful in highlighting our destination and a report is expected next month.
- BA Holidays – Assisted in the final preparations of the FAM trip itinerary for the BA dedicated Florida Team visit to our area from the 13th – 15th June. Activities confirmed included an evening at Tropicana Field to watch a Ray's game as well as visits to The Dali Museum and The Chihuly Collection.
- Flight Centre/Infinity Holidays – Training has been scheduled at the Flight Centre/Infinity Holidays call centre in New Malden and will take place on the 1st July. A total of 9 agents will be trained and updated on our area.

## **ENQUIRIES:**

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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## **MARKET INTELLIGENCE:**

June 03 2015 – Source Travel Weekly

### **BDO head hints at Audley Travel sale**

Audley Travel, which was sold for £95 million three years ago, will be sold again for £200 million later this year, ITT overseas conference delegates heard today. The disclosure came from BDO head of mergers and acquisitions, Peter Hemington. Private equity investors Equistone Partners Europe took a stake in Audley Travel in 2012. The Oxfordshire-based company, founded as Asian Journeys in 1996, specialises in tailor-made tours and safaris. The operator, which has annual revenues of £150 million, opened its first US office in Boston and a London base last year. It employs 350 people and is headed by chief executive Ian Simkins.

June 03 2015 – Source Travel Weekly

### **Manchester and Heathrow shortlisted for US pre-clearance**

Manchester airport and Heathrow have been shortlisted by the US Department of Homeland Security as priority airports to host US security pre-clearance. Pre-clearance, which allows passengers to clear immigration, customs, and agricultural inspection by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) before boarding their flight, means that passengers can avoid waiting in often lengthy queues after landing in the US. International flights which have been pre-cleared can use domestic terminals at US airports, meaning passengers connecting onto onward domestic flights can do so with shorter transfer times than those who have not been pre-cleared. Only two other airports in Europe – Dublin and Shannon - allow for pre-clearance, with none offering it in the UK. US homeland security secretary, Jeh Johnson, announced that 10 airports in nine countries - including Manchester and Heathrow - had been selected for expanded pre-clearance. He said: “A significant homeland security priority of mine is building more pre-clearance capacity at airports overseas. “We have this now in 15 airports. I am pleased that we are seeking negotiations with ten new airports in nine countries. “I want to take every opportunity we have to push our homeland security out beyond our borders so that we are not defending the homeland from the one-yard line. “Pre-clearance is a win-win for the travelling public. It provides aviation and homeland security, and it reduces wait times upon arrival at the busiest US airports.” Airlines serving the US from Manchester include Delta, American, United, Thomas Cook, Virgin Atlantic and Thomson, accounting for more than 1.3 million passengers a year. Manchester airport managing director, Ken O’Toole, said: “We have been in discussion with the US Department of Homeland Security for some time about securing pre-clearance at Manchester airport for passengers travelling to the US. “It is pleasing to see we are on the priority list of airports, as a service like this has the potential to enhance the customer experience for passengers travelling to the US from the UK’s global gateway from the North. “It will potentially make Manchester more attractive to airlines looking to start routes from the US into the UK. “We look forward to working with both the UK and the US governments in the coming months to ensure that Manchester remains a priority and is granted pre-clearance status.”

June 10 2015 – Source Travolution

### **BA announces adoption of Apple Pay**

British Airways has announced it will offer its customers access to Apple Pay through its app, when the payment method launches in the UK. Apple Pay lets iPhone 6 and Apple Watch owners pay via their device, so BA customers will be able to pay for flights, holidays and experiences in this way. When a consumer adds a credit or debit card to Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device, nor on Apple servers. Instead, a unique Device Account Number is assigned, encrypted and securely stored in the device. Each transaction is authorised with a one-time unique dynamic security code, instead of using the security code from the back of a card. Kevin McQuillan, head of BA.com, said: “We’re excited that we will be one of the first UK companies to introduce Apple Pay, making booking flights even easier. “The addition of Apple Pay - along with the recent launch of our app for Apple Watch, mobile gate notifications at Heathrow and our digital Executive Club membership card – are just a few of the ways in which we are helping our customers by putting more travel essentials at their fingertips.” Apple Pay users can still receive the rewards and benefits offered by credit and debit cards

June 22 2015 – Source Travel Weekly

### **Kuoni tour operator sold to DER Touristik parent**

Kuoni Group’s tour operating businesses have been sold to the owner of German operator DER Touristik for an undisclosed sum. The takeover includes Kuoni UK together with tour operations in Switzerland, Scandinavia and the Benelux region. The tour operating activities will continue to trade under their existing brands. Rewe Group, which owns DER, is acquiring the right to use the Kuoni brand in Switzerland and the UK, while Kuoni Group remains the owner of the Kuoni brand. The businesses, which employ 2,350 staff, will be run as part of the DER Touristik travel division. The tour operating activities that have been acquired generated turnover of around CHF 2 billion last year. The acquisition positions DER Touristik as a leading pan-European travel company. The deal gives DER Touristik new competitive advantages in the beach holiday business as well as in international purchasing of flight, hotel and other customer services, a statement said. The two parties said they have agreed not to disclose the purchase price or contract details. The acquisition is subject to the approval by the relevant competition authorities in the EU and Switzerland. The takeover is expected to be completed in the third quarter of the year. The sale of the European tour operating activities is likely to impact Kuoni Group’s half-year results of discontinued operations with a loss of around CHF180 million. Kuoni hopes to complete its search for a buyer for the remaining tour operating activities in India, Hong Kong and China this year.

Kuoni Group chief executive, Peter Meier, said: “The successful sale of our European tour operating activities marks a significant milestone in the development of the Kuoni Group. “European tour operating has been closely associated with the Kuoni name for more than 100 years. “Our tour operating businesses and all their brands are now being taken over by the REWE Group and its experienced DER Touristik travel division, which will integrate them into its growth strategy. “I am pleased that with this sale we have found an ideal, forward-looking, long-term solution for our customers and employees.” Kuoni chairman, Heinz Karrer, said: “With the sale of the entire European tour operating business we can complete the new strategic direction of the Kuoni Group more quickly than planned.” On Twitter Kuoni UK managing director Derek Jones described the deal as “the start of a new era” with the business in good shape and in good hands. Kuoni Group announced in January that it would be concentrating on its core business as a service provider to the global travel industry and governments under three divisions - Global Travel Distribution (GTD), Global Travel Services (GTS) and VFS Global.

June 25 2015 – Source Travel Weekly

**Thomson to go by 2018 but First Choice to remain**

Tui has confirmed it will replace the Thomson name with the Tui ‘powerbrand’ in two or “at the latest” three years, but First Choice will remain. Group chief marketing officer Erik Friemuth told Travel Weekly: “We’ll migrate Thomson [to the Tui brand]. “We have not said we’ll have a single brand strategy, but a single brand strategy for our power brand. There are brands within Tui that differentiate themselves nicely. We’ll keep the VIP brand in Belgium, for example. “We’re referring to the main tour operator brands in our source markets when we talk about migrating to the power brand Tui.” Friemuth agreed First Choice was likely to be the biggest brand “left outside Tui”. “Thomson is super-successful and the brand plays a part in this,” he added. “That is why we put the UK to the end of the process. “Thomson offers by far the most mature customer experience in our company.” But he insisted: “We want this process to be formalised in two or, at the latest, three years.” He said: “It’s too early to talk about the execution of this in the UK. We’re at the planning stage; nothing has been decided yet. “We’ll migrate [to the Tui brand] in the Netherlands [from October] and introduce it in France. Belgium will be next year, then the Nordics.” Tui is already the brand in use in Germany, where consultancy Interbrand rated it the 24th-best German brand of 2015, up from number 30 in 2014, and assessed its value to have increased year on year to €1.4 billion. Friemuth said: “It underlines what we’re doing. Power brands tend to have a higher valuation. “In Ireland or the Nordics we have a pretty cluttered customer experience. We want to present one brand. “Digitally, we’re aiming for one URL, Tui.com. This will help us to be more competitive online.”