

UK OFFICE

April 2017 REPORT

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander
UK Director

Tour Operators

- **British Airways Holidays** – We met with Mark Tanner, Destination Manager who advised that despite a challenging year, where Orlando was tracking down versus last year, St. Pete/Clearwater was pacing +39% for travel in 2017. Miami was seeing good growth due to tactical offers. He confirmed that Trump was having an effect on bookings, and with the introduction of ban from the listed countries they had seen people cancelling their bookings. Since the online multi-centre capability was launched, they have seen that 40% of their bookings include more than one destination. Regional departures, particularly Scotland were seeing good growth reflected in their June sales. Overall summer is performing really well, but they haven't seen much for travel in 2018 as yet. Since our meeting, Mark has confirmed that during our February consumer campaign they saw a spike in bookings, +81% during the campaign period.
- **Travel Counsellors** – We met with Nicola Holliehead, Destination Manager, who joins Travel Counsellors from Hayes and Jarvis. As it was her first week in the role, she advised that she would follow up with opportunities to work together in the future.
- **Elegant Resorts** – We had a meeting with Caroline Beckett, Senior Product Manager and Emily Bexon, Product Executive, who advised that their target customer is high spend who are looking for a 5* experience. All of the bookings are made via their call centre, and they have 9 USA specialists. They are currently working on updating their website. Overall their business is +4% versus last year, with California as their top performing destination. The Indian Ocean and Middle East are doing well because hotels were providing many tactical offers. The Caribbean has always performed well, however it struggled in January due to the exchange rates putting the cost of a holiday up. Far East was providing good value for their customers. Since their trip last year, they have recently added St. Pete/Clearwater to their programme, which includes The Sandpearl Resort and The Opal Sands Resort. The room nights for 2017 travel are low, but they are keen to support the growth of the destination. Since our meeting we have provide images, copy and video.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Travel Counsellors Training** – We attended their Florida training day at their head office in Manchester and were joined by; Visit Florida, Kissimmee, Miami, Fort

Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Naples, Daytona, SeaWorld, Universal, and a selection of Orlando properties. The day consisted of timed sessions where we were able to present to their sales agents, offering a destination overview as well as distributing brochures and giveaways. After a networking lunch we participated in their TV takeover, which was broadcast live to their homeworking agents. Each partner gave a 5 minute presentation to the viewers to highlight their key messages. There were also a couple of questions for their participating agents to win for on the spot prizes. This was a great opportunity to meet with their sales team face to face, but also to speak to their agents who watched the TV takeover.

- **Virgin Holidays Retail training** – We visited the Virgin Atlantic office to participate in their Florida training day for their retail agents, ahead of the 2018 brochure launch. The format of the day consisted of timed sessions which allowed us to present for approx. 20 minutes with each group. During the day we spoke with 43 agents, most of them had not visited the destination and we also distributed brochures and giveaways.
- **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment/VSPC VIP Event 2017** – Preparations have been finalised for our annual joint VIP event that will take place at Amberley Castle on the 4th May. We have 24 attendees confirmed for our event, which includes partners.

TRADE LIAISON -

- **VSPC February Consumer campaign/Virgin Holidays** – During February and March we launched a consumer campaign in the UK, with various activity including TV and Cinema advertising, digital media including 360 degree video creatives, and a social media campaign offering the chance for customers to win a 7 night holiday to St. Pete/Clearwater each week for the duration of the campaign. As the CTA, Virgin Holidays up weighed the campaign with activity including Homepage banner, social media, retargeting, and internal promotions. We offered customers a daily chance to win £1000 discount for their holiday and a strong lead in price of £699pp, which was promoted across the various channels.

During the campaign, not all of the bookings made by Virgin Holidays qualified for the £1000 daily discount, so we reinvested these unspent funds with Media Agency Group to deliver additional impressions across the digital activity and TV/Cinema advertising. Since the campaign has finished we have provided Virgin Holidays with the winner's details for the weekly social media competitions, and they will liaise directly with them to arrange their prizes.

We have now received the final results for the campaign we ran during February and March.

- National TV advert - 1444 x 30 sec spots over the campaign period, with inclusion on Sky, Tuner TV, ITV, Channel 4, targeting adults with children in the UK which delivered a total of 21,738,110 impacts. Total leads generated from the TV advert for mobile/tablet and desktop – 20,945. Leads from mobile/tablet – 17639, and desktop – 3,306.

- 30 sec cinema advert - targeting family films in London and Manchester at 3360 screens, total 610, 966 admissions.
 - Sky Go - 142,857 impressions delivered, generating 2,952 clicks and a CTR of 2.07%
 - Mobile and Tablet (click through banners and 360 degree video formats) – 4,725,000 delivered impressions, 47,570 clicks and 1.03% CTR. The strongest CTR was 1.39% on 12th March.
 - Desktop creative - 5,911,111 delivered impressions, 4621 clicks and 0.08% CTR.
 - Dwell time – 79 seconds for price point creative and 75 seconds for £1000 off message.
 - St. Pete/Clearwater landing page - Sessions – 6776 -34% (78% were new sessions). Bounce rate – 56%. Average time on page – 02:09 versus 01.49 last year.
 - Competition landing page - Page views – 3784, Unique views – 3324, Newsletter subscribers – 218, Competition entries – 671 (297 entries, 374 bonus entries)
 - Social Media activity - Total page likes (UK) increased from 5,172 on 20 February to 5,560 on 19 March, an increase of 388. Total daily engagement (clicks) rate: 4,095. Total daily reach of our posts: 491,347. Total impressions including shares/likes/news feed placement: 559,626. The most popular post was a video posted on the 7th March, which reached 15,000 people, which was our largest organic media outreach showing that people were interacting with the Facebook page/VSPC. The success of the post was also helped by Virgin Holidays sharing the post on their Facebook page.
 - VSPC page on the Virgin Holidays site saw 17,991 sessions a 1743% uplift over the same period the previous year
 - Homepage banner on Virgin Holidays site – 603,119 impressions with a .06% CTR
 - Virgin Holidays social media posts – 94,715 impressions
 - Referral traffic to VSPC page on the Virgin Holidays site– 10,090 sessions, +1700 uplift yoy
 - Retargeting – 14.6% of traffic
 - Internal communications – Campaign summary sent to all sales agents in the call centre and all retail stores. Brochures, giveaways, incentive flyers and cakes were distributed to the call centre during the campaign launch.
 - Retail stores nationwide - St. Pete/Clearwater was their focus destination for one weekend during the campaign.
 - Incentive - The top sales agent for bookings made to St. Pete/Clearwater during the campaign received a VOU voucher of £50.
 - 389 room nights booked, -10% compared to last year.
The best performing hotel was Marriot Suites on Sand Key, (lead in price point and promoted on all activity).
 - Year to date room nights are tracking at -11% compared to last year.
- **Tour America, Ireland** – We have now received the final results from the recent campaign which was in market 21st February – 16th March 2017.
 - Radio promotion and competition – For 3 of the 4 weeks, Tour America partnered with Sunshine radio to offer their listeners the opportunity to win a holiday to St.

Pete/Clearwater. Radio promotions highlighting a discount message were also delivered each week to the listeners.

- Press – Two Half page advert in the Sunday World, number 1 tabloid newspaper in Ireland with 660,000 readers.
 - Homepage takeover – sessions to the website +28% versus last year, +35% users, 60% of traffic was new visitors.
 - Retargeting Digital banners – 1,734,864 impressions, 21,798 clicks with a 1.25% CTR.
 - x3 E-newsletters – First email was offer lead which received an open rate of 12.64%, 0.89% CTR, second email promoted the radio competition which received an open rate of 15.39%, 1.38% CTR and the third was an offer message which received an open rate of 13.38%, 1.74% CTR.
 - Social – The competition and holiday offers were promoted through their social media channels, including a live stream on their Facebook page of the radio competition and various posts throughout the campaign. For the 4th week, Tour America promoted the final holiday prize through a Facebook campaign. Users were asked to share posts and complete an entry form.
Facebook competition had a reach of 507,609 and 11,258 interactions
Total Social activity - 1,361,786 impressions
 - Themed office/windows – All of the office windows promoted the destination as well as details on the competition, for the duration of the campaign.
 - Room nights booked during the campaign – 592. Overall for 2017 travel, they are currently tracking at +1.4% versus last year.
 - Total Impressions delivered during the campaign – 3,096,650
- **Tesco Brand Affinity promotion/Ocean Holidays** – As part of our February consumer campaign, we partnered with Ocean Holidays on a Brand Affinity campaign with Tesco. We have now received the final results of the activity which ran 2nd March – 6th April 2017.
 - The complimentary Tesco magazine was available from all of their 3529 stores as well as on their website.
 - The full-page promotion featured in their March edition which had a reach of 5.2 million readers.
 - Tesco Living homepage banner received 365,170 views and the Saving Money banner received 2,851 unique visitors.
 - The dedicated landing page received 17,509 visitors and 15,819 competition entries.
 - Total reach of the campaign was a total of 5,585,530
 - **Virgin Holidays** – We have agreed to support the forthcoming Florida campaign with an incentive for their sales staff, both for call centre and retail agents. This will be based on the top seller of room nights booked to our destination during the campaign, who will receive a gift card if they meet the minimum requirements. We have provided Nicole with our key messages for the campaign which will be highlighted in the press advertising. We have received the digital OOH creatives, press advert, and social media activity which has now been approved. The campaign is due to launch next month.

- **VSPC/Kissimmee/Tampa/SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – The UK training mission in partnership with Kissimmee, Tampa and SeaWorld Parks took place from the 24th – 28th April. We visited Gold Medal Travel in Preston, Thomas Cook and Stella Travel Services in Glasgow, British Airways Holidays Call Centre in Newcastle, USAirtours and Ocean Florida in Essex and a total of 270 call centre staff/sales agents were trained over the 4-day mission. The week culminated in an intimate trade dinner in the private dining room at Sea Containers Restaurant at The Mondrian Hotel in London. We had 18 guests at the dinner including our top Tour Operator, Airline and Attraction Ticket Wholesale partners. The week was a resounding success and discussions will take place to run another training mission in 2018.
- **IPW** – Submitted appointment requests and provided input on the invite list for Twice the Party.
- **American Holidays** – The staff incentive that is currently running with American Holidays has been extended into the month of May to increase sales further. The incentive offers shopping vouchers to in-house sales staff that book a holiday to Florida which includes an overnight stay in our area.
- **Expedia** – Ahead of the marketing activity, we provided Keri Appleford with content, images, and video to create the artwork. We have now received the final digital banners and dedicated landing page, which has been approved and will be live until June.
- **Thomas Cook** – Ahead of the campaign next month, we have received the artwork for the digital banners and brochure page which have been approved. We have provided Kelly Munday, Campaign Support Manager, with copy and images for the dedicated St. Pete/Clearwater landing page and will await final proofs for sign off.
- **British Airways Holidays** – We are partnering with Visit Florida and British Airways Holidays on their Florida campaign which will be in market from 20th April to 18th May. The activity includes 3 dedicated content blogs for St Pete/Clearwater with Huffingham Post focussing on various themes/activity offered in the destination, digital adverts across AOL network, and Social Media activity including an interactive map. We have received the remaining artwork for the interactive map, which has been approved, along with the creative content for AOL, ahead of the launch of their Florida campaign this month.
- **Gold Medal/Travel 2 Agent Golf Day** – As part of our marketing agreement, we have provided Denise Laidlaw, Sales Support, Events and Commercial Coordinator, with logos and details of our support for their golf day, i.e. food and drink items. We have also briefed the US office for the DPS advert which will be featured in the dedicated brochure. This has been approved and sent to Gold Medal.
- **Visit Orlando/Norwegian Fam trip** – Following on from last month, we have confirmed rooms at the Holiday Inn Clearwater for this Sales agent Fam trip. We will begin work on the itinerary in due course.
- **Visit Florida Advisory meeting and Luncheon** – We have confirmed our participation in their annual UK and Ireland events which will take place next month. Key partners will also be invited to these networking days.

- **Travel Up** – Johnathan Poole approached us to advise that they are planning a Fam trip to Florida in May for their owner and their bestselling sales agents. We have asked the US office to see if a hotel partner will offer accommodation for the group for one night. We were able to secure accommodation for the group at Holiday Inn Clearwater, and have confirmed an itinerary which includes; site inspections at the Holiday Inn Clearwater Beach, Wyndham Grand Clearwater and Don Cesar, as well as experiencing Clearwater Beach, a Starlite Cruise, Chihuly Collection, Dali Museum and downtown St. Pete during their 2 day trip to our area. Michelle Poyet has arranged welcome bags and will meet with the group during their stay. Johnathan advised that St. Pete/Clearwater was featured in their dealchecker email which sent to their database of over 1 million subscribers. This activity was offered as complimentary.
- **Kenwood Travel** – We spoke with Lyn who advised that they will be featuring St. Pete/Clearwater in their online marketing, so have provided her with images. She confirmed that whilst their business overall is up, Florida is pacing down versus last year. She confirmed that this was mainly driven by the exchange rates. Lyn advised that they would like to arrange an in-house Fam trip for this year, so we have offered our assistance. We will follow up in due course to arrange a meeting as Lyn would like to review their current product range and improve the customer journey on their website.
- **Scandinavia Sales Mission 2017** – After sending out a solicitation to our partners to see who would be interested in attending a dedicated VSPC sales mission in April 2018, we decided that with only a small amount of interest, we would look at doing this in the future. We have since confirmed to Visit Orlando and SeaWorld Parks that we would like to join them again on our annual sales mission in November 2017. We have a call scheduled next month with both parties to discuss further.
- **TUI Specialist/Hayes & Jarvis** – Experience Kissimmee were not in a position to be able to partner with us on a campaign with Hayes & Jarvis and so we have requested a stand-alone proposal, which has been received and is currently being reviewed.
- **Travel Counsellors** – Following on from our training day in Manchester, we have provided Gill Standeven, Visit Florida, with images and key selling points for our destination. An email containing information from all of the partners who attended the day, will be distributed to their database of approx. 1.6k Travel Counsellors agents.
- **Ocean Florida** – We were contacted by Lisa Barrington to advise that they were arranging a Sales Agent Fam trip to St. Pete/Clearwater in April and would like our recommendations and assistance with their itinerary. Working with Michelle Poyet and Rosemarie Payne we were able to confirm tickets for the group to experience the Dali Museum as well as a special dinner at The Don CeSar.
- **Gold Medal Travel** – We have signed off of all the elements for the retail campaign with Gold Medal. The campaign is live and will continue through to the end of May
- **American Sky** – We have received and approved the social media posts, which form part of our campaign with American Sky. The campaign will continue into the month of May with results to follow in due course.

- **Visit USA, Ireland** – Clodagh Oxley, Executive Director, advised that she will be replaced by Gillian Young, who will begin the role from the end of April, and will be our main contact in the future. We have also received the February monthly report regarding traffic to their website during 1st – 28th February 2017 compared to the previous year;
 - 1192 website sessions +80%
 - 1110 users +105%
 - 224 organic visitors -11%
 - 750 direct visitors +252%
 - 2684 page views +11%
 - Ave time on page 54s versus 1m12s last year.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature 488

MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

1 April 2017, Source Travolution

Expedia chief says US travel firms slashing prices due to ‘Trump slump’

US airlines and hotels are slashing their prices to combat the so-called ‘Trump slump’ in incoming American tourism since the president was elected, says the boss of Expedia. Chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi said the moves were in response to President Trump’s travel ban, as well as the strong US dollar. He told the Financial Times: “I think that because of some of the perceived positions coming out of the current administration, the US as a destination is potentially looking less attractive as a product. “One of two things is going to happen. Either the US has to go on sale in order to keep volumes up, or volumes are going to come down. When we look at our business, the leading indicator is pricing. Pricing has come down.” Khosrowshahi said the full picture will be revealed in Expedia’s upcoming quarterly results next month.

5 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

Donald Trump may force Britons to ‘hand over social media passwords’ to enter the US

US officials could force British visitors to provide social media passwords, mobile phone contract details and bank statements as part of Donald Trump’s “extreme vetting” procedures. The former business tycoon is adamant the moves are necessary to safeguard against terrorism and are part of his pledge to increase border security – yet critics claim it could intrude into the lives of millions of visitors. The severe measures could apply to 38 countries, including Britain, Japan and Australia. A possible addition to the application process could be

intrusive questions, like naming a legitimate military target, describing the “sanctity of life” and whether they believe in honour killings. John Kelly, the homeland security secretary, promised that tighter screening was on the way. He said: “We want to get on their social media with passwords... If they don’t want to give us that information then they don’t come.” Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show a sharp drop in the number of Britons travelling to North America in January, the month when Trump became President. While the overall number of British citizens going abroad jumped nine per cent to 4.6 million visits in January, the number going to the US fell by 17 per cent. A spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security said that it was “too early to say” whether the “extreme vetting” measures would apply to British citizens and added “no final decisions have been made”. Currently Britons going to the US have to fill out an online form giving their personal details as part of the Visa Waiver Programme which allows them to stay in America for 90 days. US Senators have described the Visa Waiver Programme as the ‘soft underbelly of our national security policies’ and have demanded reform. Rex Tillerson, the US Secretary of State, instructed consular officials to remember “that all visa decisions are national security decisions. Consular officers should not hesitate to refuse any case presenting security concerns”. Security experts said information extracted from phones and social media could be helpful for identifying threats. However, civil liberties groups argue that the measures are an acute violation of privacy. Greg Nojeim, senior counsel at the centre for Democracy and Technology, said: "A border stop shouldn't be an excuse for extreme surveillance such as downloading the entire contents of your phone."

5 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

Trump slump: Drop in American tourism is costing US billions

As tourists continue to steer clear of Donald Trump’s America, the US travel industry is bearing the brunt of his unpopular policies. The ‘Trump slump’, as it has become known, is alive and well. Since President Trump took office, the numbers show, tourists just aren’t as keen on visiting the United States. International travel to the US dropped 6.5 per cent in the eight days following the president’s proposed travel ban on January 27 when compared to the same period in 2016, according to travel data company ForwardKeys. Online searches for flights to America also dropped by 17 per cent the same week, said flight app Hopper. And the president of Dubai-based airline Emirates, Sir Tim Clark, confirmed in March that the travel ban, which sought to stop nationals from seven mainly Muslim countries from travelling to the US, immediately triggered a drop in bookings from Dubai by over a third. All this has resulted in an estimated loss of \$185 million in business travel bookings from January 28 to February 4, as calculated by the Global Business Travel Association. The drop-off in tourism is predicted to result in 4.3 million fewer visitors this year, which adds up to a staggering loss of \$7.4 billion in revenue for the US. The UK is no exception to this trend. Since Donald Trump took office, almost a third (29 per cent) of Britons said they have been put off holidaying in America and flight searches to the US have dropped overall by 13 per cent, according to a poll by flight comparison site Cheapflights.co.uk. “A significant number of Brits have been spooked by what they see happening over the pond, and are beginning to vote with their clicks as they explore alternative options for travel in 2017,” said managing director of Cheapflights Andrew Shelton. “With UK travellers contributing nearly

\$5 billion a year to the US economy, tourism chiefs in the country should take note of what could be a substantial reduction in support for a major industry there.” These findings were backed up at the end of February by online booking agent Kayak.co.uk, which found that UK flight searches to Miami – the second most popular US city for overseas visitors – had “fallen off a cliff”. Search was down 52 per cent compared to last year. The American travel industry seems well aware of its predicament. Rafat Ali, the founder and CEO of travel intelligence provider Skift, told the Independent: “The US is screwed for the next four years. We are our own worst enemies these days.” Other travel industry insiders have attempted to halt the decline in tourism by appealing directly to the President. Roger Dow, CEO of the US Travel Association, wrote an open letter to Donald Trump in which he expressed his concerns: “Mr. President, please tell the world that while we’re closed to terror, we’re open for business. Imbalanced communication is especially susceptible to being ‘lost in translation’ – so let’s work together to inform our friends and neighbours, who could benefit from reassurance, not just who is no longer welcome here, but who remains invited.” However, it’s not all bad news for American tourism. Bucking the trend, New York has seen a surge in bookings this Easter. According to data from online travel agent Opodo.co.uk, bookings are up 198 per cent compared to Easter 2016. However, this could have more to do with high profile deals offered by budget airlines such as Norwegian, rather than an endorsement of the new president. “With the recent dip in flight prices as airlines vie to offer rock-bottom prices with huge advertising and marketing spend behind them, this choice has been shown to be a very savvy one indeed,” said Lukas Balter, Opodo destination expert, of the rise in New York bookings.

5 April 2017, Source TravelMole

Staycations up nearly 25% this summer

Online searches and bookings for staycations have jumped by almost 25% this year, according to research by travel marketing group Sojern. Its latest data, based on searches and bookings made between October 2016 and January 2017 to depart in June to August 2017, showed a 23.8% year-over-year increase in UK travellers planning 2017 summer trips within the UK. It also found over half of UK travellers planning to stay closer to home this summer are planning short trips of up to 3 days, a 8.8% increase over last year. Sojern also noted a 5.2% drop in the number of UK travellers planning a staycation of 12 days or more, however this group still accounts for 16.6% of the total. Of those still planning to go abroad, Spain continues to be the top destination for UK travellers. But France has been knocked out of the top five destinations this year, having been in third place last summer. Italy and Greece both move up a spot and Portugal is a new entrant in the top five destinations this summer. When it comes to UK tourism, the US is still the top origin for travellers to the UK this summer, followed by the domestic market, Spain, Italy and Australia.

6 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

Norwegian Air’s ticket sales to the US ‘surprisingly good’

Chief executive says firm has yet to see negative impact from Trump's travel ban. Norwegian Air said bookings from Europe to the United States were surprisingly good and that the firm had yet to see a negative impact from the US administration attempts at imposing travel bans. "Bookings to the US are very good, surprisingly good," chief executive Bjoern Kjos said in an interview on the sidelines of a conference. "We have not seen it (a negative impact of the ban attempts). That is probably because we do not fly (directly) from the countries affected." Norwegian Air is Europe's third-largest budget airline by passenger numbers, and recently launched 24 flights a week from Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Belfast flights.

10 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

Now BA threatens to axe free meals on long haul flights and switch to selling M&S sandwiches in a bid to divert more cash into their business class clients

British Airways already ditched free food on short-haul flights in favour of M&S. It seems that policy could be extended to economy seats on long-haul flights. The airline is adding an extra seat into each row on many flights to go 'no-frills'. But Club World travellers will soon enjoy a new 'culinary boutique experience'. British Airways may introduce charges for meals on long-haul flights in economy class at the same time as cramming in more seats. The airline has already caused controversy by ditching free food on short-haul services in favour of sandwiches from Marks & Spencer. And it seems that policy could be extended to economy seats on long-haul flights to the US, Caribbean and Far East. At the same time, the airline is adding an extra seat into each row on many flights in a further move towards becoming a 'no-frills' airline for people on a budget. But while economy passengers are offered packaged sandwiches and tighter seating, Club World travellers will enjoy a new 'culinary boutique experience'. For BA is pouring £400million into upgrading the luxury for customers who turn left when boarding its aircraft. Club World customers can also look forward to new, more comfortable seating because from July seats will come with fresh new linen, bigger pillows, a soft mattress topper and duvet. From September passengers will also enjoy a 'new restaurant-style premium dining service', with display trolleys allowing customers to select dishes from a choice of freshly prepared starters and desserts served on beautiful new table settings. Cabin crew will also be touring the aisles to serve wine and champagne by the glass. Details of the changes were revealed by BA's boss, Alex Cruz, who claims that customers on short-haul flights have come to appreciate the M&S food after a 'rough start'. He argued the change, which came into effect in January had been a 'perfect decision'. Mr Cruz said: 'It's going great. Customers say to us: 'Finally, I have good choices. No more chicken or beef.' Asked if the service could be extended to long-haul economy, he told the Sunday Times: 'We might do it.' Explaining the two levels of service, Mr Cruz said: 'We need to focus on enhancing premium – offering contemporary service, improved catering and lounges and a consistent experience. 'In economy, where we know that price is the driver, we need to focus our efforts on delivering more seats at the lowest fares and giving customers choices.' BA is squeezing 52 extra seats onto its 777s that fly from Gatwick to holiday destinations in the Caribbean, adding one extra seat to each row in economy to make them ten abreast. This is designed to keep down prices and could be extended to flights flying out of Heathrow. The carrier is under pressure from new budget rivals such as Norwegian Air, which offers flights

to eight major US cities from Gatwick at under £130 each way. It also has flights for as little as £69 each way from Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin and Cork.

12 April 2017, Source TravelMole

Spend on Easter holidays up year on year

The average value of trips booked this Easter is up by 14% compared to Easter 2016, according to payments company Worldpay. Some of the increase could be attributed to poorer exchange rates, but Worldpay said transactions are also up by 10% compared to an average week. Thomas Helldorff, vice president for airlines and travel, said: "The fact that Brits are spending more on their holidays this year is a promising sign of confidence amongst travellers."

12 April 2017, Source Travolution

Ryanair targets package market as 'Amazon of travel'

Ryanair will target the package market with "Aldi-style discount holidays" as it also moves to offer long-haul destinations, connecting flights and seats on rival airlines. Only Ryanair connections and services with a three-hour "connection window" will be offered at first, but the budget giant aims to expand "rapidly" to other airports and add connections to long-haul Aer Lingus and Norwegian flights by September. Chief marketing officer Kenny Jacobs said: "This is a big deal for us. It will allow customers to search and book Dublin-Palermo when we don't fly Dublin-Palermo and their bag will be handled by Fiumicino. "It will become available across the network. We're looking to do the same thing with Aer Lingus and Norwegian on long-haul and short-haul from September. You'll be able to book New York or Cancun through Gatwick or Dublin and your bag will be checked- through." Ryanair also plans to sell rival airlines, with Jacobs saying: "We'll sell partner airlines' flights, long and short-haul. It'll be like putting your products on Amazon." But the plans for Ryanair Holidays may alarm the trade. Ryanair expects to carry 130 million passengers this year and Jacobs said: "How many millions of our customers head to the sun on holiday? Even a low single-digit proportion of that is interesting financially. "We'll incentivise customers to book holidays with us." Ryanair Holidays offers hotels of up to five-star in packages "with full consumer protection". It launched in December, was pulled in January when Ryanair accused technology provider Logitravel of screen-scraping and re-selling fares, and relaunched in March with German partners HLX Touristic and Peakwork. Jacobs said: "We're not talking numbers, but we plan to have this in every market. We're like Aldi. We're a discounter."

18 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

Families willing to spend more on their holiday this year

Families are willing to spend 13% more on their 2017 family holiday compared to last year, according to research by ATOL. A survey by the holiday protection scheme found a family of four are now set to spend an average of £3,133 on their annual break this year. But the

research also found unexpected holiday costs mean families end up spending an average of £536.80 more than they budgeted for. ATOL's research revealed that 61% of families struggle with budgeting on holiday. UK holidaymakers are most likely to get caught out by having to pay for additional food and drink outside of their original booking, and being charged for withdrawing money abroad. Parking charges, additional car hire costs, and airport transfers and shuttles were also high on the list of extra costs. Andy Cohen, head of ATOL, said: "Holiday costs can mount up quickly, while you're enjoying your holiday, making it very easy to overspend. "Our research also showed the unexpected can happen, and over their lifetimes nearly a fifth of consumers (18%) have had to pay for replacement accommodation and a sixth (16%) have had to pay for new flights." The survey of 2,000 UK adults who holiday abroad was conducted by Mortar in March.

18 April 2017, Source Travel Weekly

Trump 'travel ban' forecast to cost US \$18bn

The rhetoric around president Trump's US travel ban has damaged the US brand, experts say. A study has forecast that president Trump's travel ban could spark a 10.6 million decline in visitors to the US between this year and next. Tourism Economics predicts the drop, which it expects to be nearly 7% of expected travellers, could cost the US economy \$18 billion and 107,000 jobs. More than half of the anticipated drop would be caused by reduced travel from Mexico and Canada, but Tourism Economics' experts say they are also concerned about declines from the UK and other countries in Western Europe. "The travel ban, such as it is, would affect less than 0.1% of all visitors," said Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics. "But the whole rhetoric around it has damaged the US brand as a destination. It's a very discretionary market. It takes very little for them to shift their travel plan and preferences." Sacks said the strong dollar had also played a role, slowing the drop and even increasing travel since the ban. But he is now forecasting a sharp drop. "Bookings and survey data are all indicating that travellers are adjusting their travel plans," he added. Meanwhile, CNN reports that business travellers are looking elsewhere. A survey by the Global Business Travel Association found that nearly half of business travel managers are expecting to cut back on meetings and conferences in the States.

19 April 2017, Source TravelMole

Long-haul air fares plunge by almost a fifth

Airfares have dropped by an average of 10% over the past 12 months with longhaul ticket prices down by an average of 7%, according to Skyscanner. The fare comparison site said the biggest price drop was on flights to Vancouver, with fares down 18% year on year. It said the typical cost of a flight to the Canadian city was now £576, down £126. Fares to Boston are down by 13%, according to Skyscanner, while to Hong Kong they are down 12%. Fares to popular cities such as Havana, the capital of Cuba, Auckland, Shanghai, Bali, Orlando, Toronto and Perth are all at least 10% cheaper this year than last, it said. Flights to Sydney and Las Vegas cost about 9% less. The best time to book for the lowest fares is 13 to 29 weeks before departure, depending on the destination, it said. According to Skyscanner,

domestic fares have fallen by 7.5%. Its travel editor Cat McGloin added: "We have seen an average 10% drop in flight prices over the last year, but what we are now able to see is where the biggest drops are for those long haul destinations and show travellers that those far flung locations might be more affordable than they think. "Finding cheap prices can be easily if travellers are flexible, choosing to depart from a different airport or changing the date of travel are just two quick hacks to consider."

20 April 2017, Source TravelMole

TUI claims industry first for summer 2018

Thomson and First Choice have expanded their range of mid-haul holidays for summer 2018 after seeing rising demand for trips closer to home. They have added the Bulgarian beach resort of Varna for the first time, a new adults-only hotel in Halkidiki, a new Sensatori resort in Rhodes and two First Choice SuneoClub hotels in Bulgaria. Thomson will also feature self-drive tours from Florida for the first time, including road trips to the Deep South including cities such as New Orleans and Miami. It claims it will be the first UK operator to give clients the option to book flights, car and hotels in one online transaction. First Choice and Thomson are also offering more multi-centre options including to Costa Rica and the Caribbean next summer. Thomson Airways will offer its first long-haul flights from Bristol to the Dominican Republic, using its 787 Dreamliner. Both Thomson and First Choice will offer more 10 and 11 night holidays from Gatwick, Manchester and Bristol next summer. Mark Hall, director of product, said: "We know that our customers are looking for new and exciting holidays for summer 2018 so our focus is on expanding our mid-haul programme to include more choice of destination. "New hotspot Varna offers customers something a little different for their break, with the perfect balance between culture and relaxation. "I'm also delighted that we are continuing the expansion of our luxury TUI Sensatori collection with our new addition in Rhodes and building on our extensive range of holiday types in Florida, giving families, couples and friends more unique holiday options to choose from."

21 April 2017, Source Travelbiz

US social media rules would deter 80% of Irish visitors

It comes as countries visiting the US could be forced to reveal social media passwords, mobile phone contacts, political ideologies, and financial data under new "extreme vetting" rules proposed by the Trump administration. A survey of more than 1,000 people by travel search engine Kayak found 78% of Irish people said they would likely not visit the US if the rules came into force, with 38% stating they would definitely not visit. A total of 69% said the new rules would be an "invasion of privacy", while over half (51% said they would simply refuse to comply with these rules. Another 31% said they would "not feel comfortable" sharing this level of personal information. When asked what concerns they would have in handing over passwords, 37% said they were worried someone would post something on their account, 39% were worried they could mess with settings, for example deleting contacts, and 54% cited concerns over officials gaining access to their bank details. Travel analyst with Kayak Suzanne Perry said the move could have an impact on an already

struggling US tourism industry. “The new presidency and the border control rules that have already been introduced have had a very negative impact on demand for travel to the US from a global perspective,” she said. “As the research shows, introducing further rules such as requiring visitors to hand over social media passwords would have a strong, additional impact on Irish holidaymakers’ likelihood to visit the country and could have further negative consequences for the US tourism industry as a whole.”