

UK OFFICE

December 2017 REPORT

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander
UK Director

Tour Operators

- **Funway Holidays** – We met with Melissa Tilling and Amy Shine, who recently joined Funway from Cosmos and is their new Product Manager. They both advised that 2017 has been a bit of a struggle, largely driven by the exchange rates and increase in rates. September wasn't as strong as they hoped and sales have continued to be slow for the following months. They are seeing some positive bookings for 2018 and are confident that customers will start returning to the US. This year, they have seen demand for Far East and the Indian Ocean, but terror threats were having a noticeable effect on where customers were choosing to travel. Since the changes with their contract with Sandals, they have had a restructure to their sales team. They currently have 3 agents at their office in Bromley and the rest are homeworkers.
- **USAirtours/TravelPlanners** - Met with Linda Dixey, Anne Wylie and Mine Yusuf to discuss our past activity in 2017 as well as discussing moving our partnership forward into 2018. We discussed activity that we would like to run with both brands and are waiting for a final proposal to be sent to review. We are also in the process of discussing a possible 3-way campaign with Experience Kissimmee and discussions are still taking place. Linda advised that 2017 was their best year on record and that USAirtours are up 15% year on year and the TravelPlanners are up 5% year on year. Although Orlando is down for them year on year, their sales and room night stats to Florida Beach destinations are up 10-15% year on year. The Sirata Beach Resort is still their number one bestseller in St. Pete Beach and the Hyatt Regency is at present their top seller on Clearwater Beach.
- **Tour America** – A meeting was conducted with Veronica Flood for a general catch up meeting and to discuss our joint activity in 2017 and as well as activity moving forward into 2018. We again are discussing the possibility of a 3-way out of home campaign with Experience Kissimmee and are currently waiting on a joint proposal. Veronica advised that the US is looking very positive for 2018 from the Irish market and with the added airline seat capacity into Florida, that this should benefit all regions including our area.
- **Ocean Florida** – A general update meeting was held with Lisa Barrington, Matt Rains, Muna Abanour, Lauren Pond and Colleen Creevy to discuss our area in general and our joint activity into 2018 as well as the forthcoming Visit Florida campaign that is due to launch at the end of this month. We are waiting for our co-op marketing proposal of which some activity may be attributed to a joint campaign with Experience Kissimmee. The proposal will be with us in early January. Lisa advised that our area is doing well and is currently 5% up year on year with our destination being their number 2 best seller after Orlando. Matt advised they have recently added the Caprice Resort on St. Pete

Beach to their accommodation portfolio. We provided Muna with new imagery and sent our New & Now newsletter to everyone that attended the meeting for their information.

- **Platinum Travel** – A general catch up meeting was held with Ciara Foley and Austin Carroll to update them on all that is new in our area. They advised that the US is still a very strong seller with New York, Las Vegas and Florida being their top selling destinations in the US. Ciara mentioned the possibility of perhaps doing a joint campaign in 2018 and we advised them to send a proposal as and when they are looking to run this to see if we would be able to partner with them on this.
- **American Holidays, Ireland** – We had a general update meeting with Dee Burdock when we went in to train their staff in advance of the January peak booking season. Dee advised that in 2017 American Holidays sent 23,000 passengers to the US which is slightly down on passenger figures in 2016. Dee advised that New York and Las Vegas are still their top selling destinations with passenger numbers doing well. Canada is also doing very well due to the favourable exchange rates. We were advised that our area is performing well for 2018 with a pace of +25% year on year and that Clearwater Beach is faring better for them than St. Pete Beach although having said that their number one selling hotel is currently the Sirata Beach Resort.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Funway Holidays** – We visited their office in Bromley and provided dedicated training to their office based staff as well as their homeworkers. We gave an overview of the destination, as well as provided them with brochures and maps.
- **American Holidays** – We trained a total of 7 staff members on our recent visit to American Holidays in Ireland. We provided the sales agents with a comprehensive overview and update on our area and also provided them with literature and giveaways.
- **Visit USA Committee Ireland** – Met with Tony Lane, the new Executive Director of the Visit USA Committee in Ireland. We gave Tony an overview of the area and our past activity with the organisation. Tony advised that they are now starting to look at a monthly e-newsletter like they used to do in the past, they will be doing more digital activity in 2018 still to be confirmed, he also advised that they will be hosting an agent appreciation night as well as an agent roadshow in 2018 but dates are still to be announced (possibly May). Tony advised that the Irish economy is picking up and that airline seat capacity to the USA from Dublin, Cork and Shannon increased by approximately 20% and that they now have 4 million seats available, with three quarters of this capacity being used on leisure travel.
- **Experience Kissimmee/Visit Tampa Bay/SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – Met with Jo Piani and Michaela Gray to discuss the 2018 joint training mission that will be taking place from 16th – 19th April 2018. We discussed the schedule and have agreed that we will this year be visiting Dublin, Belfast, Peterborough, Cambridge and the Gatwick area. We discussed hosting a trade dinner in both Dublin and London and possibly an agent lunch in Belfast.

- **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** – Met with Ruth Roseweir to finalise dates for the 2018 joint Mega Fam so that they can start to work on sourcing flights with Virgin Atlantic (Dates suggested are the 5th – 12th October with the first four nights in Orlando and the last three nights in St. Pete/Clearwater). We also discussed the potential joint event for key partners on the 20th September and that we are working on possible venues at the present time.
- **Thomas Cook** – Visit Florida arranged a Buzz Day at Thomas Cook’s head office in Peterborough on Wednesday 13th December. We met with approximately 100 members of staff and they showed good enthusiasm for the region. The day was arranged in a marketplace format with each supplier having a table allowing the Thomas Cook Staff to wander around and speak with each of the suppliers. We were also able to distribute brochures, maps and giveaways. Other CVB’s and attractions who attended included Daytona Beach CVB, Sarasota, Kennedy Space Centre, Disney & Kissimmee.
- **Bookabed** – We have chased the campaign results from Bookabed and results are now due to follow in the new year due to staff holidays over the Christmas period.

TRADE LIAISON

- **UK Consumer Campaign** – All assets for the campaign have been signed off including detailed work on a new pre-roll video for the campaign which launched on 26th December and will run through to end of January with additional Expedia exposure to end of March. This will be a purely digital campaign with Expedia as the call to action. All copy and input on imagery has been submitted for the landing page on Expedia. Campaign will include digital banners over several platforms including YouTube as well as pre-roll video and the digital scratch off advert.
- **Visit Florida Campaign** – Most assets for the campaign have now been submitted as well as finalising aspects of the Heart FM Radio campaign. We have been supplying assets to tour operator partners in conjunction with the Visit Florida annual campaign. We provided imagery, logos, copy, key selling points to Funway Holidays/My America Holiday, Ocean Florida and Thomas Cook. We have already completed sign off on some activity with Funway Holidays and are waiting on creative from both Thomas Cook and Ocean Florida ahead of the launch. We have also provided details to Rachel at Visit Florida to include in a dedicated training seminar they are conducting with Funway Holidays as part of the campaign initiative.
- **Tour America** – We have now received the final results from the activity we ran in November in partnership with Kissimmee, which ran for a week.
 - Facebook adverts
 - Campaign video – 18,060 impressions (2,343 organic, 16,220 paid), 16 reactions, 49 post clicks, 9,310 video views.
 - Website drive advert – 7,708 impressions (paid).
 - Offer post – 28,372 impressions (4,663 organic, 23,709 paid), 473 reactions, 429 post clicks, 268 photo views.
 - 360 video – 16,823 impressions (3,318 organic, 13,568 paid), 17 reactions, 168 post clicks, 4,630 video views.

- Facebook conversational post – Total 20,360 impressions, 82 reactions,
 - Total social media campaign – 81,565 impressions, 81,440 interactions, 13,940 video views.
 - Website traffic
 - Homepage – 3,525 sessions
 - St. Pete/Clearwater destination page – 224 sessions
 - Room nights booked during the campaign – 68
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- **THG Holidays** – John Bowden contacted us to advise that he is working on the next edition of their brochure. We have provided him with feedback, along with new images and copy.
 - **Nordmann's Reiser** – We have received proofs for their travel offers which will be promoted on their website and through their social media channels. We have also received their newsletter for sign off. This forms part of our campaign and have now been approved.
 - **Funway Holidays/My America Holiday (MAH)** – We have received a draft copy of their Florida Beaches brochure. We have provided amends including new copy and images and will await the revised proof for approval.
 - **Florida Beaches consumer show, Scandinavia** – Ahead of Reisilev in Oslo in January, we have arranged for brochures and maps to be sent to the venue.
 - **VSPC and Tampa Sales agent Fam trip** – Following on from our meeting at WTM we have confirmed with Josephine that we will plan a joint fam trip to Tampa and St. Pete/Clearwater in June. This trip will target sales agents who have not been to either destination. We will work with Josephine in the coming months to finalise dates, participants and an itinerary.
 - **VSPC and Experience Kissimmee Product Manager Fam Trip** – We are currently discussing the possibility of a joint Product Managers FAM trip to both Kissimmee and St. Pete/Clearwater and discussions are on-going. We have proposed dates for the week commencing 12th September with three nights in each resort.
 - **Virgin Holidays** – Discussions are taking place with Virgin Holidays to discuss retail activity in 2018. We are currently awaiting details regarding proposed activity and this will be with us in January once the retail planning meetings have taken place this month. We are also awaiting a final co-op proposal from them.
 - **Brand USA Mega Fam** – We have confirmed accommodation at Sheraton Sand Key for the group arriving in April. We are waiting on further details from Brand USA before we begin planning the itinerary.
 - **If Only** – We have arranged training in March for their sales agents in their Glasgow office.

- **Red Cow, Dublin** – Following on from our meeting at WTM, we have confirmed to Veronica at Tour America our attendance for their consumer travel show in September.
- **Resia, Stockholm** – We have confirmed dedicated training to their sales agents in their Stockholm office in January.
- **Visit USA, Ireland** – After providing details of the Craft Beer Trail, we were featured in the December e-newsletter which is sent to both their trade and consumer databases.
- **Flight Centre/Infinity Holidays** – We touched base with Emily Oliver to introduce ourselves and we will touch base with her in the spring to arrange a meeting once she has settled into her new role of Destination Owner for North America.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE:

1 December 2017, Source Travel Weekly

400 jobs at risk as Thomas Cook closes 50 shops

Thomas Cook is to close a further 50 shops affecting just under 400 staff. Around two thirds of the shops closing are Thomas Cook stores and a third are Co-operative Travel. It is the latest round of shop closures announced by the company in the last year as it reviews its retail network. It represents the largest single round of shop closures since 2013 when Cook announced it was shutting 195 high street stores. Staff were informed on Thursday and today (Friday). The stores which are affected are either in close proximity to other stores or located where a decline in footfall has impacted profitability, the company said. Where there are two stores in the same town or in close proximity, staff at both retail outlets will be put under consultation. The company hopes to redeploy a large proportion of the staff affected either in other shops or elsewhere in the business. The closures will take place between now and March 2018. The closures follow a rise in the number of holidays booked online – in 2017, 47% of its holidays were booked in store while web sales in the UK grew by 27%. The company said this demonstrated progress in its strategy to become an omni-channel business. After announcing its year-end results last month, chief executive Peter Fankhauser acknowledged the shift towards online was moving “faster than expected” and the business would have to “follow the customer and be where they expect it to be”. “If we get that shift then we have to manage those stores for profit,” he said. “If the stores are unprofitable then we have to check whether we still want to have that store or close it.” Cook has closed 84 shops since last October. This latest round of closures will take its total retail network to 640. As well as closing shops Cook has opened two new Discovery stores in high footfall areas, such as shopping centres, and refurbished 10 in the last 12 months. Director of retail and customer experience Kathryn Darbandi said: “We continually review our network of stores across the UK to make sure we’re offering customers the best of Thomas Cook, and it is clear that to succeed we have to operate as a truly omni-channel business. “We’re one Thomas

Cook to our customers and we will offer them a world-class service whichever channel they chose to book, be that retail or online.”

1 December 2017, Source TravelMole

Pound is worth more in two thirds of holiday hot spot

British travellers are getting a better exchange rate than this time last year in over two-thirds of the top holiday destinations, according to new research. But the study by travel money specialist No1 Currency found that going to Europe will be more expensive this winter. Since Christmas last year, the Pound has risen in value by over 5% against almost half of the most popular foreign currencies, including Turkey when it has strengthened against the Turkish Lira by as much as 23% since last year. The biggest savings are for those going further afield this Christmas. In New York, every £1000 will mean an extra \$100 dollars to spend and Brits will also get more for their Pound this year in Costa Rica (10.9%), Sri Lanka (11.2%) and New Zealand (11.3%). But families going to the Eurozone will find that €1000 will set you back £30. Croatia and Hungary are also both 3% more expensive and a less favourable exchange rate means Poland will cost 9% more than last year. Simon Phillips, retail director at No1 Currency, said: "On the face of it, it's been a rocky year for the Pound. "Dig a little deeper and you'll find that in two-thirds of holiday hotspots, you can actually get more for your currency than you could a year ago. For those planning to get away to one of those destinations where the native currency has dropped by more than 5% against the sterling, it'll feel like Christmas has come early. "However there are still a number of countries where the Pound is worse off than last year. For those who have left their festive destination planning to the last minute, it's worth looking around to see whether you'll be getting more for your Pound."

2 December 2017, Source TravelMole

US tourism leaders worried about drop in visitors

International tourism to the US fell nearly 4% in the first half of the year, and tourism leaders are worried. In every region except Canada, tourism was down as just 33.8 million non-resident international travellers came to the US, or a 3.9% decline on the same period in 2016. Two regions impacted heavily by Trump Administration rhetoric and policy - the Middle East and Mexico - saw the biggest declines. There was a fall of nearly a third from the Middle East and almost 10% from Mexico. "The latest government travel data is deeply concerning not just to our industry, but to anyone who cares about the economic well-being of the United States," said Roger Dow, chief executive of the US Travel Association. "Travel is our country's No. 2 export and supports more than 15 million American jobs. These numbers are an undeniable wake-up call, and correcting this troubling trend needs to become a national priority." NYC & Company, the tourism marketing agency for New York City, has already voiced concerns for the industry. "The data released by the National Travel and Tourism Office underscores the concerns we have had this year about the international tourism landscape in the US," said NYC & Company CEO Fred Dixon, who called the industry 'vulnerable' to US policy.

5 December 2017, Source TravelMole

Budget airlines fuel long-haul travel boom

A significant fall in the cost of long-haul travel and a boom in the number of available flights led to a 29% rise in the number of bookings by European travellers this year, according to

online travel company eDreams ODIGEO. Its European Traveller Insights Report 2017 showed long-haul fares fell 7% this year - down from an average of €610 in 2016 to an average of €569 return. The average cost of a long-haul flight from the UK was £551 for the first nine months of the year to the end of September, £95 less than last year. Singapore tops the list of destinations with the biggest forward-booking growth in 2018, rising 163% so far. San Francisco, Miami and Los Angeles also made the top list as each has seen a drop in the cost of flights by 19%, 12% and 17% respectively this year, according to eDreams. "Airlines across Europe are increasingly engaging in a transatlantic price war, with for example low-cost carrier Norwegian selling flights from the UK and Ireland to America from as little as £69 one way or £138 return," it said. According to the Centre for Aviation, 15 long-haul, low-cost airlines have launched since 2012, the latest being IAG's Level. EDreams said these carriers were providing 'stiff price competition' to the more established long-haul carriers, and driving prices down across the board.

5 December 2017, Source ITTN

Hayes & Jarvis Arrives at Duke Street in Dublin

Introducing Hayes & Jarvis as Travelopia's new brand at the Cliff Townhouse in Dublin, John Devereux said that the new innovation would be a positive addition to the Travelopia portfolio along with Al Fresco, American Holidays, Marco Polo, and My Planet, reports Ian Bloomfield. With the rebranding of the premises at 18-19 Duke Street, Dublin 2, as Hayes & Jarvis and American Holidays, the first three weeks trading has been a great success as Irish consumers continue to buy into the long-haul holiday product. Lesley Rollo, Managing Director, Hayes & Jarvis, who was visiting Dublin for the media launch, said: "Hayes & Jarvis have worldwide Destination Specialists who have expert knowledge of the product – and with 65 years of experience serving the UK market and more than 60 worldwide destinations on offer, we have a winning formula to support the Irish market."

13 December 2017, Source TravelMole

Norwegian announces Gatwick expansion

Norwegian today confirmed it is planning new low-cost long-haul routes from Gatwick after buying 28 weekly take off and landing slots from Lithuanian carrier Small Planet Airlines. The airline already flights from Gatwick to nine US cities and Singapore and it is planning further long-haul routes to Argentina, Chicago and Austin launching early next year. It said it is now planning how to allocate the new 28 weekly slots, which cover the summer 2018 period. Chief commercial officer Thomas Ramdahl said: "London Gatwick is at the heart of our global growth ambitions so securing these crucial new slots will allow us to offer our passengers even more new routes, additional flights and affordable fares. "Together with the launch of new routes to Argentina, Chicago and Austin in 2018, gaining extra capacity at London Gatwick is another huge boost as we get ready for our biggest ever year in the UK."

21 December 2017, Source Travelbiz

BA unveils First Class offer as part of winter sale

British Airways is offering passengers the chance to upgrade to First Class for just £200 more each way than a Club World ticket for a limited time only. Available on the majority of routes across the Atlantic, it means lucky travellers will get access to the new First wing at Heathrow, the Concorde room with complimentary concierge services and spa, and a private flat-bed six-foot seat with luxury bedding. The offer is part of the airline's winter sale which

also sees the airline dropping prices by up to 20% in World Traveller, World Traveller Plus, Club World and Club Europe. Chief commercial officer Adam Daniels said: "This year we've decided to offer our customers a gift that even Santa would be proud of. "With seats in First from just £1,719 and weekend city breaks including flights and hotels through BA Holidays from £99 per person, Christmas has come early for anybody who is thinking of taking a special trip in 2018, or needs a last-minute present to wow a loved one." The sale will run until the end of January.

21 December 2017, Source Travelbiz

Trump slump: How demand for trips to nearly every US city fell in 2017

The demand for flights to nearly every major US city fell this year, providing further evidence that Donald Trump's presidency has put people off visiting the country. Data from the flight search website Kayak found that British interest in four cities (Philadelphia, San Francisco, Orlando and Las Vegas) fell by at least 10 per cent compared with 2016, while demand for flights to a further eight - including New York and Los Angeles - dropped by five per cent or more. The only US cities bucking the trend are Houston and Denver – neither of which could be considered mainstream options for UK travellers. It adds to the weight of evidence that the incumbent US president is doing little to increase his country's appeal among holidaymakers – the fall in visitors has even been labelled the "Trump slump". Just how bad is the slump? Official figures show that this year, while international travel has been growing around the world, America's total overseas arrivals have fallen by 5.3 per cent year-on-year, while arrivals from the UK are down 6.3 per cent. This decline might not sound vast, but it is significant, costing the US economy up to £140m a week, according to the Global Business Travel Association. For those still keen to visit the US, there's good news. The falling demand means cheaper fares. Kayak's research found that average prices for flights to 13 of 16 key US cities had fallen by as much as 19 per cent. Where are Britons going instead? If fewer people are visiting the US, where are they going instead? America's neighbours, for starters. Canada, according to World Tourism Organisation figures, is anticipating a 6.7 per cent year-on-year increase in arrivals for 2017. To the south, Mexico is looking at a 9.9 per cent boom. Kayak highlighted a surge in demand for destinations closer to home, too. Are other destinations suffering? According to Kayak's research, demand has dipped sharply - by 38 per cent - for flights to Copenhagen. The firm suggested an increase in average prices of 63 per cent had contributed to the fall, along with competition from its Scandinavian neighbours. Globally, the Maldives (down 43 per cent), Dubai (down 24 per cent), Kuala Lumpur (down 23 per cent) and Hong Kong (down 20 per cent) are also on the wane.

22 December 2017, Source TravelMole

Bright outlook for long-haul travel

The outlook is bright for long-haul travel, except for the US, according to the analysis of flight bookings by ForwardKeys. The company, which tracks around 17 million flight booking transactions a day, said the climate in the US is expected to be 'somewhat cooler' than the rest of the world. It said 2017 was an outstanding year for long-haul travel. Globally, there was 7% growth. Inbound air travel to the Asia Pacific region was up 4.4%, to Africa and the Middle East flight arrivals were up 11.5% and to Europe they were up 13.3%. The only negative was the Americas, where growth was virtually frozen at just 0.1% up on 2016. Looking at the travel forecast for the first quarter of 2018, ForwardKeys said long-haul flight bookings are 'generally exceptionally bright' everywhere, 10.4% ahead of the equivalent

moment last year. Current long-haul bookings for the Asia Pacific region are 12% ahead of where they were last December. The notable exception is the US, where bookings for international arrivals are just 2.6% ahead. Olivier Jager, CEO Forward Keys, said: "One has to be optimistic. Despite 2017 being a year filled with economic and political uncertainty, it is one in which long-haul travel has grown strongly and that trend looks set to continue."

28 December 2017, Source TravelMole

Three million Brits set to book a holiday this week

The big freeze is set to spur three million people to book their holiday in the next seven days, with more people expected to travel to the US in 2018 than they did last year. Figures from the Civil Aviation Authority show Spain remains the top holiday destination for next year, while the US is second on the list. Italy, which was the number-two destination in 2017, has dropped one place. Greece and France remain fourth and fifth. Portugal, the Caribbean, Australia, Canada and Cyprus make up the remainder of the top-10. Despite the weakness of the pound driving up costs, the popularity of the US is stronger than ever with over a million more people looking to travel across the pond in 2018 than 2017. The London bubble sees those from the capital bucking the trend when it comes to travel—only 7% of those that live in London see Spain as their next holiday, compared to the national average of just under a quarter (23%). However, over half of holidaymakers don't consider ATOL protection as important. Research shows 43% see ATOL as a 'holiday essential' and the CAA says the figures shows there is still a need for consumer education. CAA consumers and markets director Richard Moriarty said: "With more consumers than ever using the period between Christmas and New Year to book trips abroad, we want to make sure as many people as possible understand the benefits of the ATOL scheme."