Welcome to the Thomas Cook Holiday Report. Now in its second year, we produce the report in each of our three major source markets, the UK, Germany and Sweden, using our own booking data combined with a specially commissioned survey to look at the latest habits of our sun-seeking customers.

With their Easter break just behind them, families are eagerly looking forward to their next big trip this summer. For many – many more than you might expect – this summer is about a return to much-loved destinations that have been off the map in recent years. Bookings to Turkey and Egypt are strongly up on last year and Tunisia, which only recently reopened to Brits, is also selling well.

In addition, customers are increasingly looking further afield for their sunshine. Searches for long-haul on our airline website are up 65 per cent year-on-year as the growing number of interline agreements makes the world more accessible than ever before.

What customers expect when they arrive in destination is also changing. In a year when Sunbeds hit the headlines, customers are telling us how important personalisation is when booking a holiday. Two-thirds of people say they are interested or very interested in personalising their hotel stay and a similar number are keen to personalise their flight experience.

The growing interest in interior design at home is also spilling over to holidays. Our customers tell us the design of the hotel influences where they choose to go with almost half saying that hotel design is more important than it was five years ago.

What’s different is the way we spend our money when we’re away. The report shows that when customers go into Holiday Mode, their approach to their finances becomes a bit more laid back. The final chapter looks at how customers can enjoy themselves on holiday, creating everlasting memories without returning with a holiday hangover.

Of course, holidays are all about fun. ‘Overheard on planes’ opens a window on some of the more amusing and slightly baffling things that some of our youngest customers ask about on the journey.

We hope you enjoy the report – and also that you learn something new about these, the most important weeks of the year.

Peter Fankhauser
CEO
Thomas Cook Group
CHAPTER 1
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Our decisions on where to travel say a lot about our changing demands and desires. And this summer’s top five destinations only tell half the story. While this year’s hot spots may seem relatively unchanged, the gap between Greece and Turkey has narrowed dramatically as tourism in the eastern Mediterranean returns to previously seen levels. So why do some destinations win us back again and again? And what is this summer’s next big thing?
BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

TURKEY PACKS A STRONG SUMMER GAME, CHALLENGING EVEN THE REIGN OF SPAIN

When it comes to this summer’s best-selling destinations, the order of the top five countries only tells half the story.

The big hitters for this summer have changed very little year-on-year - by bookings, the top five destinations so far are Spain, Greece, Turkey, the USA, and replacing Cyprus in the number five spot, the Caribbean. Cayo Santa Maria in Cuba launches in May – an exclusive for the UK market – helping to boost Caribbean numbers this year.

But while Greece was the standout success last year, this summer Turkey looks to be coming back into the nation’s affections as the gap between Greece in the number two spot and Turkey at number three has narrowed dramatically. In fact, on the strength of bookings so far, Turkey outsells Greece, and Balearic islands. Greece, Turkey, the USA, and, replacing Cyprus have been added to meet demand, including Thassos in 2016, Mykonos last year and the Olympus Riviera on the mainland (see p. 6) for 2018. With flights to Greece’s second city Thessaloniki, the new addition brings the total number of Greek airports served by Thomas Cook Airlines to 14.

Perhaps even more surprising are the second fastest growers outside the top five. Brits have returned to Egypt in big numbers and are showing similar enthusiasm for Tunisia now the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice has changed.

Package holiday bookings to Turkey are currently up 64% year-on-year. That popularity should continue as Turkey sees the highest number of return customers of any destination - 15%, up from 15% last year. And online it converts more lookers into bookers for Thomas Cook than any other destination even though it isn’t the top search term. Thanks to its keen pricing and quality all-inclusive product, it is families that are fuelling the extraordinary growth to Turkey.

Package holiday bookings to Egypt are up 69% year-on-year, even with Sharm el Sheikh effectively closed to tourists. Visitor numbers to the Red Sea are now close to where they were for Thomas Cook in 2015, although centred entirely on Hurghada and Marsa Alam, which was introduced in February 2017 for the winter 2017/18 season.

Could Tunisia be the next winter success story? Three weekly flights to Hammamet were reintroduced in February. The first flights sold out and bookings have been strong in the months since. So much so that Thomas Cook Airlines has increased to 11 weekly flights for this summer.

Importantly, the family share of bookings for Tunisia is 44% and for Egypt 54%. Clearly, the nation’s appetite for sunshine at a fair price fuels our demand to revisit these old favourites.

Equally adventurous and proving popular for families, Marrakech is the other surprise for 2018. More often thought of as a long-weekend break for couples and friends, families are challenging this stereotype and account for 46% of this winter’s bookings.

FURTHER AFIELD

For the original jet set, New York WAS the US. It is still strong for UK travellers, and is now a year-round route for Thomas Cook Airlines - so summer in the city is as much a draw as Christmas shopping or ice skating in Central Park. But the Big Apple does face stiff competition from other US gateways. For families, Orlando still rules (see p. 218) but for adventurous travellers, direct flights to the likes of San Francisco and Los Angeles bring the romance of the great west within easy reach. San Francisco flight sales are up 54% this summer compared to the last with the addition of a third weekly flight, and Los Angeles is up 8%. New for 2018 is Seattle (launching twice weekly from Manchester in May) which is proving a hit with customers who make up nearly half (48%) of flight bookings online.

The nation’s desire to explore the world is clear. Searches for long-haul on thomascookairlines.com are up 63% year-on-year. However the desire for adventure goes much further than the US.

More and more airlines are teaming up with regional partners to offer a vast array of destinations around the globe. Formerly the preserve of the bigger flag-carrier partners to offer a vast array of destinations around the globe. Formerly the preserve of the bigger flag-carrier airlines, these interline agreements open up a world of choice for leisure travellers, and with the cost of connecting flights often cheaper than direct, globetrotting is no longer just for gap years.

**Excluding Thomas Cook Airlines direct destinations.

Thomas Cook Airlines’ own interline agreements with US carriers, such as Alaska Airways and JetBlue mean that the whole of the Americas are now in reach. The number of feeder destinations has grown by 30% so that today’s passengers can fly to more than 90 destinations worldwide. From the US East Coast, South American cities such as Bogota, Mexico City and San Juan are within easy reach. From the west, Canada beckons – Hawaii too. And partnerships like Worldwide by easyjet offer even more choice, a customer could fly from Milan to Gatwick with easyjet then connect onto a Thomas Cook Airlines flight to Orlando, all in one booking.

**Based on tour operator and flight-only bookings up until 26 February 2018

POWER PLAYERS

The top 5 destinations for summer 2018*

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*Based on tour operator and flight-only bookings up until 26 February 2018

(E)SEATTLE
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(S)ALT LAKE CITY
(C)HIAGO
(N)ORTH CAROLINA
(S)AN FRANCISCO
(B)OSTON
(N)EW YORK
(A)TLANTA
(L)A
(S)OUTH CAROLINA
(M)EXICO CITY
(O)RLANDO
(B)OGOTA

**Excluding Thomas Cook Airlines direct destinations.

FURTHER AFIELD

Straight to the States...the 10 most popular connections from Manchester**

**Excluding Thomas Cook Airlines direct destinations.
HOT TAKES ON OLD FAVOURITES

IT’S NOT WHAT YOU’RE EXPECTING.
SUMMER ’18 SERVES UP CLASSICS WITH A TWIST

If you think a package holiday is JUST evening entertainment and pool aerobics, prepare to think again. While this remains a very popular choice for families and couples up and down the country, the nation’s desire for more than just a beach has meant the package holiday destinations on offer today are more varied than they’ve ever been.

The desire to experience a country like a local has driven sales of Thomas Cook’s family-run authentic hotel range, Manos, by 17% year-on-year so far this summer. Flexible packages in Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Goa allow holidaymakers to get off the beaten track.

Italy is consistently strong for UK tour operators but Sicily perhaps doesn’t spring to mind when you think package holiday. It ticks all the boxes for the ‘real’ Italy: wild, unspoiled beaches, Roman ruins, historic old towns and a food tradition that stretches far beyond pasta. The Nero D’Avola wine helps, too.

The launch of Comiso flights brought it all within reach last year, and a new SENTIDO property in Marina di Ragusa is the comfortable choice. The word is spreading with package bookings for the largest island in the Mediterranean up 62% compared to last summer.

Like fashion, travel has the ability to reinvent itself, to change, while somehow stay the same.

That is how it will feel on the Olympus Riviera anyway. A new summer destination for Thomas Cook and an exclusive for the UK, this stretch of coast has all the hallmarks of a Greek classic: 40 miles of golden sands at the foot of Mount Olympus and a region full of traditional towns and villages with tavernas and bars. Set just 80km from Mount Olympus itself, the hiking trails will satisfy everyone no matter how active they’re looking to be.

A-LIST HOLIDAY, B-LIST PRICE

Sardinia will be familiar to any lovers of luxury. Developed by the Aga Khan in the 1950s, the Emerald Coast or Costa Smeralda is synonymous with celebrity. Generations of stars have visited, from Princess Margaret to Jon Bon Jovi, but you don’t need to pay an A-list price to experience it. The four-star SENTIDO Orosei Beach costs around £699 for a week in June – that wouldn’t leave much change for a single night on the Emerald Coast.

Costa Smeralda is, in fact, just one corner of the region of Gallura – literally ‘the higher ground’ on the northern tip of the island. With a hire car you can visit the smart resorts strung along the shore: the Gulf of Asinara to the west, Santa Teresa Gallura further north and the likes of Palau, Isola Rossa, Badesi and Cannigione in between. However, Sardinia’s real appeal lies in its beaches, rather than the celebrities you might spot on them.

Oddly, centenarians may be easier to spot than celebrities: more 100+ year-olds live in Sardinia than in all of the US. Must be the local diet: either fish straight off the boat, or meat, fruit and vegetables from farms inland.

FARE’S FAIR

Some hits come straight from nowhere and despite Bulgaria being an established holiday destination for many years, flight-only sales are up 49% this summer compared to last. Value for money remains a big draw along with the new Varna route which offers something different to the established Bourgas.

Croatia, too, is a rising star. Dubrovnik is a new Thomas Cook Airlines route from Manchester and with capacity added for Split too, flight-only sales are up more than 500% year-on-year for the Adriatic coast.

CHAPTER 9: WHERE ARE WE GOING?
**ASK A PILOT...**

**What is turbulence?**

The air is a fluid, just like water. If we imagine a nice still lake with a rowing boat on it, that is similar to flying through still calm air. Now, if we imagine the same boat on the river rapids at your local theme park, this is the same as turbulence - the choppy water or air is caused by turbulent non laminar flow beneath the surface. It is absolutely nothing to worry about; the aircraft is still flying forward at nearly 500mph albeit over some small speed bumps!

**Do we have to turn off our electronic devices for take-off and landing? Why is it ok to have them on during the flight?**

The number of mobile phones and electrical devices has increased exponentially over the last few decades. There is now such a cross section of devices that it is impossible to assess the impact of every device on the aircraft. Therefore for most airlines, a general restriction on all electronic devices during take-off and landing – the most critical parts of the flight – ensures the highest levels of safety.

**You have two pilots, what does the one not flying do?**

When we fly, the captain has ultimate responsibility for the flight. However we share the flying so one pilot will act as what we call ‘pilot flying’ and will fly the aircraft, while the other pilot will act as ‘pilot monitoring’ and will primarily monitor the other pilot as well as talk on the radio and complete any paperwork. Prior to take-off, the pilot monitoring will walk around the aircraft to check the fueling and loading along with inspecting the exterior. The pilot flying will ensure everything is ready to go and program the flight management computer with the route and performance figures.

**Why do you dim the lights for take-off and landing?**

By dimming the lights, all of our eyes, pilots and cabin crew, can adjust to the dark for a better awareness of what is going on outside as we prepare for take-off and landing. In the unlikely case of an emergency landing, the lighting available during the evacuation may be greatly reduced. Reducing the aircraft lighting for a short period before landing allows time for the human eye to adjust to low light levels.

**How much do you use autopilot and when do you use it vs. not using it?**

It really depends on a number of factors, including weather, route, airspace and distance of the flight overall. Significant attention is required to fly an aircraft and autopilot is there for pilots to use when brainpower and attention can be focused on monitoring of conditions such as weather changes, turbulence and fuel performance.

**How much do you talk to Air Traffic Control (ATC) on an average flight? Do you ever have small talk?**

The radio chatter with air traffic depends on the airspace. We talk to ATC a lot over land. The closer the aircraft is to land and the more planes in the vicinity, the more we talk to ATC. It is extremely rare to have any small talk with ATC, but we do get asked for feedback on clouds and turbulence. Over the ocean we rely on a form of text messaging via satellite for ATC, as it is much more reliable and faster. Small talk is generally discouraged especially when the frequency is busy, but at quiet times there is sometimes the odd comment or hello to a familiar voice.
Chapter 2

The Package Holiday of Today

Going bespoke was once the preserve of the few. Now it describes the way we live at home and go on holiday. From choosing our own sunbed to taking a tour of our hotel room – before we even arrive – tailor-made is the future of package travel, whether you book it yourself or appoint an expert to help.
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

THE PACKAGE HOLIDAY HAS EVOLVED. PICK ‘N’ MIX BEST DESCRIBES HOW WE TRAVEL TODAY

For years some have seen the package holiday as the poor old-fashioned cousin of the independent holiday. Or, more recently, as the inflexible version of the do-it-yourself break. But times are changing.

According to Mintel, the volume of the package holiday market is expected to grow by 7.5% from 2017 to 2022. So is 2018 the year the package comes back into vogue for those who had drifted away from agents and operators? Might those who thought it “uncool” to holiday with a tour operator think again?

Figures for summer 2018 seem to suggest this is the case. More than half of this year’s bookings to date are from customers who are new to Thomas Cook or haven’t booked with the holiday company in the past five years. And of existing customers, one fifth (12%) say the number of package holidays they go on has increased in the last three years.

Ongoing political uncertainty combined with the regrettable failure in recent years of several established holiday companies, has no doubt influenced the nation’s decision to think again about how they holiday. safe in the knowledge that a reputable tour operator has their back from start to finish.

But the data suggests there’s much more to it than just peace of mind.

Brits’ growing desire to personalise everything – from their burgers to their cars – is visible everywhere. When it comes to package holidays, choice has been more limited. However the demand is there – 68% of people say they are interested in or very interested in personalising their hotel stay and 64% in personalising their flight experience.

Adapting to meet travelers’ increasingly sophisticated needs is essential to staying relevant. Among Thomas Cook customers, holidays outside the traditional seven and 10-night pattern are on the up. with nine to 12-night bookings rising 17% year-on-year for summer 2018. And in a key year for Brexit negotiations, the country seems to be coping with the ongoing uncertainty and turbulent exchange rate by opting for all-inclusive holidays. While self-catering bookings for summer 2018 are down 3%, all-inclusive trips are soaring. Bookings are up 17% year-on-year and now make up 63% of this summer’s holidays.

Not only is this trend spurred on by the reassurance of knowing what you’ve spent in advance, but it is also helped by a new breed of all-inclusive hotel. 67% of Brits say they like to choose a hotel that serves locally-sourced food and today it wouldn’t be unusual to find local delicacies as part of the dinner buffet. From Gran Canaria’s famous red mojo sauce to Croatia’s homegrown Plavac Mali red wine, the all-inclusive buffet has come a long way since the days of chicken nuggets and chips.

Brits go on package holidays more frequently than three years ago

1 in 5

63%

68%

of summer 2018 bookings are all inclusive

of travellers want to personalise their hotel stay

BREAKING FREE

Holidaymakers’ desire to pick and choose what they do and don’t want as part of their package has prompted holiday companies to innovate beyond just offering a wide choice of destinations and flight times.

Since sunbeds hit the headlines in January when it became possible to pre-book a sunbed before you leave the UK, half of the beds available have been snapped up. For just €30 per sunbed, this first service of its kind from a tour operator lets travellers choose their preferred location for the duration of their stay and will be available in 30 hotels this summer.

It’s not just when buying a home that location is key but on holiday too. To date there have been over 12,000 bookings for the Choose Your Room service which is now being extended to 300 Thomas Cook hotels this summer. With families making up half (49%) of bookings, parents are happy to spend €30 to have a room by the pool. easing the pain of multiple trips back to the room for a long list of forgotten items.

What’s more guests can now also book Early Check-In and Late Check-Out to suit their arrival and departure times.

Finally, there’s no hiding the fact that the airport experience with children is not the highlight of any family holiday. In fact, almost half (49%) of parents say that they find travelling through the airport very stressful. Thomas Cook has come to the rescue to ensure holidaymakers can enjoy the last precious day of the holiday with a new Easy Check-In service. This free service means customers can check-in for their Thomas Cook Airlines flight, receive their boarding card and wave goodbye to their suitcases at their hotel and then just go straight through security on arrival at the airport later that day. Available to guests at 22 hotels across the Med and Canary Islands this summer, the service will be expanded to more destinations and hotels in 2019.

SERVICE 24/7

Given Brits’ unending appetite for sun and beach breaks, you would think the weather had the greatest influence on our holiday enjoyment.

In fact it’s the service and care that customers experience while on holiday which has one of the biggest impacts. Last summer service and care ranked higher than value for money, accommodation, and much much higher than the weather. for customers when asked what influences their decision to re-book or recommend to a friend.

However with around 600,000 people on holiday with Thomas Cook from around the world at any one time during the peak summer season, there will inevitably be some snags along the way. Recognising that the nation has been living in an all-hours service culture for some time now – and that expectations don’t and shouldn’t change when you leave the country for a week or two – Thomas Cook introduced a 24-Hour Hotel Satisfaction Promise. The goal was simple; if, on arrival, a customer’s hotel wasn’t as it was described at the time of booking, the issue will be fixed or they will be moved to another hotel of the same standard within 24 hours. And if it can’t be resolved then customers can claim a voucher for their next holiday or opt to return home on the next available flight with a full refund. During summer 2017, just two vouchers were issued and one flight home arranged.

With customer expectations quite rightly not dwindling, the Hotel Satisfaction Promise is being rolled out to 3,000 hotels this summer and the 24-hour response rate will be introduced to the in resort Connected Service Team by the end of the year.

This means that customers who contact a Connected Consultant with a query or question via email or phone while on holiday, will be offered a solution or response within 24 hours.

12,000

Choose Your Room bookings

50%

of bookable sunbeds available have been reserved

22

hotels with Easy Check-In
With more than 600 travel agencies, retail is still a big part of the business.

But what they see there may surprise them. Thomas Cook’s new generation of Discovery stores – such as the flagship branch at the Westfield Mall in East London – is attracting new bookers, some of whom have never set foot in a travel agency before.

No longer will you find racks of holiday brochures. Instead photo galleries and video tours of hotels bring them to life. Virtual Reality (VR) helps to make the intangible seem physical and real. VR goggles can provide a 3D view into hotel rooms, a look around destinations and even what it’s like to fly Premium. Since last year, the number of videos available to customers has increased by 50% to 60.

New technology is also being trialled throughout the booking process, in store, online and on mobile. For the January peaks season, Thomas Cook partnered with mobile app Shazam, so that when an advert was Shazamed on a phone, a 360° tour of either a Sunprime hotel or Sunwing Family Resort appeared.

But for many, it is old-fashioned personal service that wins out. A bright, expansive space, the privacy of the one-to-one meeting areas, tea and coffee over a chat with an experienced agent and even the occasional glass of prosecco for a special occasion – this is what puts customers in the holiday mood.

Like the Police, who received 999 calls when KFC ran out of chicken this year, the Duty Office does get its own share of non-emergency complaints. It’s raining, the sea isn’t blue enough, it’s the wrong sort of sand, these sorts of issues get passed on to the resort team. But as important as reps are, they are not trained to deal with serious crimes, nor do they have the resources to evacuate an entire resort. This is what the Duty Office is for – and with 50,000 calls a year they are used to dealing with anything.

Only one thing is certain in the Duty Office. No two days are ever the same.

As Thomas Cook’s UK Duty Office and welfare manager, Will Staples has access to an emergency fund and during his four years in the role there have been a few occasions where he’s needed to use it. Whether it is the evacuation of a busy holiday destination as described above, or dealing with an individual incident, it is the Duty Office’s role to be there. And when travellers return home from an emergency, the team will offer counselling support, often staying in touch for customers for weeks if not months.

“We try to make it as easy as possible for customers to deal with Thomas Cook. We want them to feel like they’re dealing with a small and dedicated team, rather than a faceless corporate.”

“If you’re the sort of person that gets your energy from high-pressure situations, and enjoys dealing with the unexpected, then the Duty Office is probably the place for you.”

Will Staples

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the Thomas Cook Duty Office has your back

Today more than ever, the benefits of travelling with a fully-bonded tour operator are clear. But the duty of care goes far beyond offering financial protection. Emergency backup is one of the key benefits of booking with a reputable operator and Thomas Cook has a Duty Office on call 24/7 to assist customers wherever they may be in the world.

Less than 1% of holidaymakers will have cause to use it, but for those who do, the Duty Office is vital.

Based at the head office in Peterborough, the 19-strong team is trained for the worst, from child protection and assault to large-scale emergencies such as the evacuation of the Gambia last year. When an electoral dispute prompted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to change its travel advice, 3,500 Thomas Cook customers were brought home in the space of 72 hours on 16 flights. A special assistance team from the UK was also flown out to support the operation.

More day-to-day incidents include smoothing the way when a passenger misses their flight or has the wrong visa, or finds out too late their passport isn’t valid.

Despite dominance of booking online, there is still a place for traditional high street travel agencies. But their role is changing and Thomas Cook is adapting to this shift by ensuring its booking channels work seamlessly, no matter what a customer’s booking preference.

CLICKS VS BRICKS

One trend which shows no sign of slowing down is the growth of mobile in the looking and booking. In the last 12 months, mobile searches on thomascook.com have increased by 27% year-on-year and mobile bookings by 24%.

1 in 5 bookings made on thomascookairlines.com come from a mobile

23% share of mobile bookings on thomascook.com – up from 19% last year

790% increase in online searches for Tunisia on the day the first flights departed

A one week holiday for two in June 2019 to the Sunprime Numa Beach hotel in Turkey**

£93.38

13 payments of £93.38 with £0 deposit

Total price of holiday £1214

*Based on a survey of 1,500 UK parents in December 2017
**Based on Thomas Cook’s new £0 buy now pay later payment plan

We know from our 2017 Holiday Report that over a third (36%) of Brits are always thinking about where next to go on holiday. And despite consumer confidence faltering in some industries, they remain bullish when it comes to holidays.

The annual overseas getaway tops the list of spending priorities for half of all families, more important than home improvements or a new family car*.
Even if we spend most of our holiday outside – swimming, sunbathing, drinking and dining al fresco – it’s what’s inside that counts. A third of travellers believe the hotel is more important than the destination as our growing obsession with interiors at home is now reflected on holiday too. But the holiday doesn’t start when you set foot inside the hotel – today it starts when you step on the plane.
Be able to recreate what we see in interior design magazines in our own home is no longer just for the elite. The surge of high street – and supermarket – equivalents for designer lamps, throws and cushions in recent years has seen the nation get inspired when it comes to interior design.

And as we become more design-conscious at home, so too does our desire to holiday in style.

Today, 91% of holidaymakers say that the décor influences the hotel they choose and almost half (43%) say that this is more important to them today than it was five years ago. For a third (33%) of Brits, the hotel is even more important than the destination itself. Think back to the last time you told someone you were going on holiday. The question after "where are you going?" is often "where are you staying?" but a few years ago it would have almost certainly been "who are you going with?" or "how long are you going for?"

Proving that we are a nation which likes to be on trend home and away. 45% of us today choose a hotel where the interior is up to date with current design trends and 20% take note of the little things like fortunes, fittings and room accessories. The design really is all in the detail.

So details matter more than ever, and people are willing to pay a little extra for them to make their holiday perfect. Five-star bookings are up 58% for Thomas Cook year-on-year, and those premium bookings, 52% are from families. A growth of almost 5% on the previous year if travellers are concerned about the economy, Brexit or any impending financial doom. They do a good job of hiding it.

Of course you don't need to book a five-star hotel to satisfy interior needs. Recognising the way in which holidaymakers choose their hotel, and the importance they place on its décor, holiday companies have upped their game to suit all budgets.

### FLYING HIGHER

No longer do we simply want to 'get there'. The journey is now an increasing priority with 99% of Brits considering it an important or very important part of their overall holiday. The airport and flight are where the holiday begins.

And with the journey so important, travellers are making the most of every moment and elevating it to new heights by adding some je ne sais quoi. It is no longer just the hotel where travellers can splash out on personalising their experience, the flight sets the tone for the rest of the holiday.

It doesn't have to be a giant leap either...

For short and medium-haul flights, Economy Plus - ECOPlus – offers many of the services that Premium customers get including priority check-in and boarding, drinks, a James Martin meal and extra hand and hold baggage. Launched at the end of 2017, it has so far proven popular with couples without children. For many, a holiday without the kids is a luxury in itself and with two thirds of ECOPlus bookings coming from travellers aged 45+ we can see they are getting into Holiday Mode (see p. 32-33) with enthusiasm.

On long-haul flights, travellers start designing that special journey from the get-go. The Premium upgrade with Thomas Cook Airlines is most often booked at the time of purchase. Premium is available on long-haul flights from Glasgow, London Gatwick, Stansted and Manchester to Cuba, the Caribbean, USA, Mexico and India. Customers booking Premium Class tickets have a separate premium cabin that offers more of everything, from priority check-in and boarding to increased baggage, extra legroom, drinks, entertainment and a premium James Martin meal.

### AIRCRAFTED FOR YOU

Consumers now expect reliable and friendly service, relevant recommendations, curated convenience and tailored experiences in their everyday lives. Even with something as simple as retail therapy, we can now shop where, when and how we want to. Fitting around our busy lives. When eating out, restaurants once tailored only to major dietary requirements; now the most personal dining preferences are par for the course - anything to provide satisfaction and build loyalty.

In the no-frills carrier era, a one-size-fits-all approach to service has been reigning supreme. But what about differing needs and personas? Some travellers are looking for more than a toastie from the onboard shop. As indicated by the success of Thomas Cook Airlines' partnership with celebrity chef James Martin, a reminder that even a short-haul flight can be made more enjoyable with a tasty treat. His signature meals are available as a standalone purchase from £5.25 for children and £8.50 for adults.

We know that the plane is no longer just a means to get to your sunbed - as well as making it more special it can also be more practical. Duty-free shopping is still a big part of any journey by air. 41% admit buying on impulse at the airport and 36% treat themselves to items they usually wouldn't at home. Moreover, 35% of holidaymakers spend the rest of their holiday money on duty free on the way home. Clearly the holiday doesn't stop when you leave the hotel either.

For Thomas Cook Airlines' customers, retail therapy can begin much earlier. Airshoppen is a different take on the standard duty-free shopping experience and has proven popular in Thomas Cook's German and Nordic markets. Duty-free treats are ordered in advance from a huge selection online and then delivered direct to your aircraft seat. No hauling bags around, no queuing, no fuss. Just savings of up to 50% Thomas Cook is the first player to introduce this new style of duty-free shopping to the UK and it has been a hit since launching in the UK last year. Sales are up 45% year-on-year and with the majority of passengers spending up to £100 at the airport (£39 spend E1-E40; 44% spend E51-£100), it could shift the way we think about buying holiday essentials. With everything from suncream to beachwear on offer, as well as an exclusive brand of gin available only on Airshoppen (perfect for sundowners on your hotel balcony), savings are significant.

41% of Brits admit buying on impulse at the airport or on the flight.

### 35%

of holidaymakers spend their leftover holiday money on duty free on the way home.
When it comes to holidays, we know that design matters. Just like our own homes, the style of hotel rooms has evolved over the years and where we once saw hotel bed sheets awash with colours and patterns, today you’re more likely to find neutral shades when you walk through the door.

But what has influenced these changes? According to Michael Schickinger, founder and creative director of Lambs & Lions, a design agency specialising in lifestyle products and experiences, interiors are designed according to social demographics.

“Our world in the past decade has changed dramatically. In our daily lives there is a permanent flow of information which we need to digest. This can be quite exhausting. When we stop we want to lie back and recharge, simplicity instead of complexity - this influences the approach for designers.”

Perhaps it’s no surprise then that 69% of people choose a hotel that will make them feel at home.

“The design in our home has become increasingly important. Nowadays people are more conscious of design and looking for like-minded atmospheres. Through the media they have more access to interior design and place more value on it. This means there is more demand on hotels to make the right design choices.”

“People like hotel design to be a more daring version of their own style. In Casa Cook, the mix of materials is more extreme than most would use in their own home. However guests are often inspired and we get lots of requests for where they can buy the accessories from.”

1 in 5 Brits choose a hotel that has the style and decor they would like in their own home.

69% of Brits say that the design of a hotel’s communal area is as important as the room itself.

“1 in 5 travellers say that the style of the room’s accessories influence where they book.”

“We live in a constant design circle. Styles come and go and then return again later in a new guise. The mid-century designers built tough and timeless items which in today’s era last well. Today’s trend for vintage has been influenced by a desire for value and people are finding these retro items at second-hand markets and shops. It is a trend which is being replicated in hotel rooms across the world.”

“If you look back to the 70s, the flower power fashion trend extended to interior design. The liberation of society and the movement to be more expressive led to designers becoming more expressive too, as can be seen through this hotel room.”
EGO TRAVEL

It’s not just millennials who like to post their holiday exploits on social media. But it is mostly millennials who say that social media posts are a factor when choosing a hotel – over half (52%) of 18-24 years olds consider it during the booking process.

That’s not to say those over 24 don’t think about it. In fact 15% of 55+ year olds admit to considering what social media posts they would be able to share to make their friends jealous when deciding which hotel to book.

Despite it being considered the granddaddy of social networks, Facebook isn’t just used by the actual granddaddies when on holiday. Over half (56%) of 18-34 year olds said they use Facebook the most for sharing their holiday snaps as do 43% of 55+ year olds.

“We don’t design environments so that they’re instagrammable. Our goal is in general to design spaces in harmony with its players – colours, surfaces, the mix of items and their proportions need to work together. This helps of course when taking pictures.”

Michael Schickinger, founder and creative director
Lambs & Lions

Want to make your holiday pics stand out on social media? Professional photographer Mark Chilvers gives five top tips on how to take the perfect phone shot:

• Hold phone with both hands and use volume buttons for shutter release to improve stability
• Remember the rule of thirds: put the subject on the crosshairs of your nought and crosses board for better composition
• Look for leading lines – a strong diagonal coming in from the corner leads the eye into the picture
• Consider colour and light. On a small screen primary colours work especially well. If you can set a red, green or blue off against each other, it will really pop
• Shoot in the golden hour and you can’t go wrong. The hour before dawn or dusk makes everything work; portraits, landscapes even shots in your hotel room

See Mark’s work @markchilvers on Instagram
CHAPTER 4
IT’S A FAMILY AFFAIR

Life is full of distractions we cannot ignore: whether work or the nagging glow of a TV, phone or tablet, families are pulled in every direction. But the one thing that brings them together is a holiday. Holidays give us a chance to press reset - all those distractions dissolve once you step off the plane, feel the welcome heat of summer and the promise of a pool, beach and perfect hotel room.
Quality time is an elusive target and one we worry we don’t meet often enough. Indeed, almost half (48%) of British parents believe they spend only an hour or less quality time with their children during the average working day and 74% feel they lack quality time with their children overall.

Half of mums and dads say that a family holiday abroad is their top spending priority this year, indicating that a trip away really is the best and easiest way to reset the balance. In a working week, the average estimated time parents spend reading with their kids is 34 minutes – on holiday it is two hours and seven minutes. Time spent playing at home is 44 minutes a week vs. seven hours, 13 minutes abroad.

But a holiday may only be a week long and time is still precious.

Choosing your favourite sunbed is one quick trick to make the most of the day, while choosing your room in advance and booking an early check in gets you straight into Holiday Mode (see p. 32-33). The holiday can begin even earlier if you clear the airport in record speed (see tips overleaf).

This season Thomas Cook is paying even more attention to the little things that make a difference, starting with reading. By joining forces with family-run independent children’s bookshop Smallprint, it is creating book boxes for kids of all ages. The boxes have gone on trial at the Sunwing Fanabe Hotel, Tenerife, with books hand-picked by the team at Smallprint that the whole family will enjoy.

Aside from reading and play, mealtimes are probably the best source of quality time.

Holidays give us plenty to talk about at the dinner table but for younger ones, Sunwing Fanabe has another trick up its sleeve: new activity tablecloths, featuring kids’ club favourites Lollo and Bernie, to encourage family fun and conversations at meal times. This should help to redress the balance for the 72% of parents who say they wish they simply had more time to talk to their children about their day in a normal working week.

Research based on a survey of 1,500 UK parents in December 2017.
UP IN THE AIR

Almost half (45%) of British parents find travelling through airports stressful and a similar proportion (42%) worry about the airport in advance of their holiday. As a result, 70% allow more time to clear the triple hurdle of check in, security and departures when travelling with children.

If this sounds like you, cabin crew at Thomas Cook Airlines and the experts at Manchester Airport (the airline’s biggest UK airport hub serving 68 destinations, 16 of which are long haul) recommend the following:

Before you fly
• Bassinets can be booked up to two days in advance in Premium, subject to availability.
• Remember the baggage allowance: under twos get up to 10kg which can be carried in a separate suitcase or combined with other passengers on the same booking who have pre-purchased their hold baggage (excluding USA flights).

At the airport
• Almost a third (28%) of British parents say security is their least favourite part of the airport experience when travelling with kids. But if you have a buggy, look out for the family fast lane at security to help this part of the journey.
• Take your buggy right through security to the departure gate where airline staff will take it from you and return it to you at your destination.
• Terminal One at Manchester Airport now has a breastfeeding area in departures, offering a quiet, private space for mums. Children can accompany them, or enjoy the kids’ TV area opposite with partners and siblings.
• You can pre-order milk or medication and collect it from Boots after security. Ask in restaurants about warming milk as many will do this free of charge in hot water rather than the microwave.

On the flight
• Give little ones a bottle on take-off and landing – the sucking helps them with pressure in the ears. Take lollipops for older kids.
• Pack plenty of distractions and drip feed them throughout the journey so they don’t get bored: books, food, pencils and paper playing cards, travel games.
• On long flights, keep a surprise goodie bag back until the last minute, just in case.
• Bottles, baby food and nappies are available on Thomas Cook’s long-haul flights on request (subject to availability).
• Pack a change of clothes in hand luggage so you are ready for anything. As well as lots of wipes.
• Look out for the new children’s hot meals and meal boxes on Thomas Cook flights this summer, available to pre-book from £3.25. Little ones get a beach ball and first flight certificate onboard too.

FLORIDA: THE ULTIMATE FAMILY DESTINATION?

So often the family’s first long-haul trip, Florida keeps kids (and adults) of all ages coming back time and again. 77% of Florida package holiday bookings for this summer are families, and there is more to it than theme parks. Head of long-haul holidays, Jill Thompson, shares a few tips:

When to go:
Peak time to travel is Easter and summer holidays. Summer is hot and humid; winter is mild; spring and autumn are warm but not humid.

Where to stay:
Decide what’s important to you. You can be in the heart of everything and close to the parks, or live like a true Floridian in a gated community or in a house by the lake. If you stay in a theme park hotel you get early hours access to make the most of the rides.

Getting around:
Car hire is definitely recommended. You can use resort shuttles, Uber, local cabs, and there’s a Trolley Bus on International Drive, but no one walks anywhere. If you see a pedestrian, they’re probably British.

Park life:
You can’t leave anything to the last minute – there are nine parks, including Disney, Universal, and four water parks. Plan which you want to see and pre-book your tickets. The advance ticket deals are some of the best out there. Once in the park you should start at the furthest point from the entrance and work your way back to really make the most of every second.

Or if you’re avoiding the parks:
Classic American sporting events such as Major League football, soccer and baseball provide entertainment for all the family but make sure to book in advance as tickets sell out quickly. Or there are airboat rides through the Everglades, outer space experiences at Kennedy Space Center or a twin centre break at Tampa, Key West or Miami for the beaches.
CHAPTER 5

DOLLARS, EUROS AND SENSE

One in five Brits believe the amount of money we spend on holiday contributes to the memories we create abroad. So, how can we improve our approach to finance in order that we don’t return with a holiday hangover? Take the advice of our money experts and renowned psychologist, Dr Jane Cox.
HOLIDAY MODE

NOUN 1. A STATE OF MIND THAT OCCURS UP TO THREE WEEKS PRIOR TO A HOLIDAY

2. THE MOMENT ABROAD WHEN WE REALLY START TO RELAX, SWITCH OFF AND ENJOY OURSELVES

A holiday high is something that can last long after we return from the sun, but research suggests it actually starts before we leave.

Early-onset holiday mode can kick in up to three weeks before departure, leading to a carefree attitude and a feeling of escape.

Late-stage holiday mode occurs up to 36 hours beforehand, as the relief of downing tools and anticipation of the sun on our face takes us to a mild state of euphoria.

A surprising side effect of holiday mode is that it can make us more productive at work. Psychologist Dr Jane Cox believes that “for many, a holiday is an incentive to get work done as quickly as possible, so they can go abroad with a clear desk and clear mind, safe in the knowledge the relief of downing tools and anticipation of the sun on our face takes us to a mild state of euphoria.

Almost four in ten (39%) don’t worry about spending abroad instead, we focus on the memories we are making with nearly half of us more laid back about our finances on holiday than when we are at home.

Says Dr Cox: “We all want to enjoy ourselves on holiday and a certain amount of flexibility will add to the pleasure.

‘Even the most disciplined allow themselves to bend the rules abroad. We know holidays are a time when we will eat and drink a bit more than usual and spend money that we normally wouldn’t on activities we wouldn’t normally try.

‘It’s beneficial to take a break from the discipline that we use to make sure our lives run smoothly. It is also important that the money you spend abroad doesn’t become a burden you bring home with you. Ideally, you should have a contingency pot for spontaneous spending but this should be part of your overall budget. Don’t forget this is real money and those same bills still await you at home!”

So the temptation is there to unwr, let go and spend more freely on holiday - backed up by the justification that spending (within reason) on holiday is good for us. On the next page, Thomas Cook Money shares some tips to ensure you embrace holiday mode without it eating too far into the household budget.

FUND YOUR HOLIDAY MODE

One in five (22%) Brits believe the amount of money we spend on holiday contributes to the memories we create abroad. According to Dr Cox: “Brits let go of the rules and embrace the moment when they go on holiday, knowing that very often this is what will create the unforgettable and memorable moments, and help them have the most fun.”

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ASK THE EXPERT

One in four (22%) travellers don’t budget for holiday spending, so we asked the team behind Thomas Cook Money’s new pre-paid travel money card - Lyk - how to spend wisely abroad.

1. GET THE WHOLE FAMILY INVOLVED

Get your kids thinking about their holiday spends too. If their pocket money almost doubles when on holiday (see Holidy Mode in numbers), how can you get them to help with saving before a holiday in a fun and engaging way? Keep your eyes peeled for some exciting new features coming to Lyk this summer to help everyone make the most of planning for holiday spends.

2. SORT HOLIDAY SPENDS NOW

People tend to use their disposable income for holiday spends and leave organising holiday money to the last minute. Consider getting a pre-paid holiday money card a few months ahead of your holiday and start to load it with savings; this will help build up a contingency budget for those spontaneous holiday spends.

3. AVOID EXCHANGE BUREAUX

Never change money at the airport, where exchange rates are worst. Exchange bureaux in resort are scarcely any better. Take some cash, a credit card that doesn’t charge for foreign transactions and an appropriate pre-paid travel money card such as Lyk.

4. BE CAREFUL WITH CAR HIRE

Many car hire firms don’t accept prepaid cards. Even if they do, it’s worth keeping in mind that if you use your card, the deposit will be blocked on the balance of the card for up to 14 days after the car is returned and you won’t be able to spend those funds. Use a credit card instead for car rental but be sure it doesn’t charge you extra for transactions abroad.

5. ALWAYS PAY IN LOCAL CURRENCY

When you pay by card, many retailers will ask if you’d like to use local currency or sterling. Always choose the local currency to avoid dynamic currency conversion (DCC). DCC lets local banks and retailers choose their own exchange rate for your transaction. This will often be worse than prevailing market rates.