

HOLIDAY TRENDS 2009

Submitted by: TUI UK

Monday, 29 December 2008

Research carried out in November by Thomson (<http://www.thomson.co.uk>) and First Choice (<http://www.firstchoice.co.uk>)¹, illustrates that Brits no longer consider their summer holidays a luxury, but a necessity, with 88% of those surveyed willing to cutback in other areas rather than forego their annual holiday.

With Britain experiencing the coolest start to winter in over 30 years², thoughts are now turning to sunnier climes and as we gear up towards January and the traditional peak booking period, Thomson and First Choice Customer Director Tim Williamson, answers some questions regarding travel in 2009.

Why are holidays (<http://www.thomson.co.uk>) being seen as necessity rather than luxury? How has this trend occurred?

We have some of the longest working hours in Europe - the harder people work, the greater the need to get away from it all, not just to recharge the batteries, but also to spend quality time with their families.

What does this research mean for the holiday industry?

As parent-company TUI's recent results show, the merged company has performed well in its first year of operation. Although we can't comment on behalf of the entire industry, from our perspective, customers indicate that they still want to go away. In addition, and in light of the demise of XL and Zoom, more and more customers are aware of the value of going on holiday with a financially robust company such as Thomson (<http://www.thomson.co.uk>) or First Choice (<http://www.firstchoice.co.uk>), where holidays are protected under the Government backed ATOL scheme.

What kind of holidays will Brits be looking for in 2009?

For both Thomson and First Choice we're expecting the top short haul destinations for summer 2009 holidays (<http://www.thomson.co.uk>) to be the Balearics, Mainland Spain, the Algarve, Italy and Madeira. For mid haul, Greece, the Canaries, Turkey, Cyprus and Egypt look set to top the list and further afield Mexico, Florida, Dominican Republic and Cuba.

Are there any particular holiday packages (<http://www.thomson.co.uk/package-holidays.html>) which will be more popular? Why is this so?

We've seen an increase in customers booking all-inclusive holidays for 2009. All-inclusive holidays enable customers to budget in advance: all their food, drinks and entertainment are included in the initial cost, so they can go on holiday with a budget for any extras firmly set. Also destinations such as Sharm El Sheikh and Turkey continue to offer excellent value for money.

Will some more unusual holiday destinations become an emerging holiday destinations?

As market leaders, we strive to offer our customers new and exciting destinations not previously offered as a package holiday destination. For example for Thomson in 2009, we're introducing Cuba, Barbados and the Samana region in the Dominican Republic.

On the holidays themselves, are people likely to sacrifice on certain luxuries on holiday to go to more exotic destinations?

Our research shows there are many other 'luxuries' customers will forfeit back home in order to keep their 2 weeks in the sun – whether that be their gym membership or weekly takeaway.

How can people go on holiday feeling safe in the knowledge that they won't be affected by airline collapse?

The simple answer is to book with a company that is ATOL bonded, such as Thomson and First Choice. Booking a package holiday with us means that whatever happens your money is safe under a Government backed scheme, which it isn't if you book direct with a scheduled or low cost carrier. That guarantee, coupled with the company's most recent financial results, which illustrate its current strong financial position, is aimed at reassuring customers during a period of uncertainty following the demise of XL and Zoom. All customers booking a flight on Thomson Airways are covered under the government backed ATOL scheme, meaning that customers can book in the knowledge that their money is safe.

Thomson & First Choice Top 5 tips for 2009 holidays:

- 1) Book early. There may well be less holidays for next year and as highlighted in Which? research earlier this year³, consumers should book early for choice and the best prices
- 2) Consider a long haul holiday. There are some fantastic deals available for holidays to Mexico, Florida and the Dominican republic, and with Thomson Airways offering a standard seat pitch of 33" – more than any other UK airline – and a premium seat of 36" - for a fraction of the price of scheduled airlines - customers will travel in comfort arriving refreshed and raring to go
- 3) Book an all-inclusive holiday. Return flights, in-resort transfers, food, drink and entertainment at the hotel will be included, making it easier to budget whilst overseas
- 4) Choose a resort with lots of entertainment and activities onsite. First Choice Holiday Villages are perfect for families with activities such as high-ropes, swimming and soccer lessons all available at each property and for adults, Thomson's exclusive Sensatori resorts in Crete and Mexico offer customers the opportunity to do as much or as little as they please
- 5) Opt for 10 or 11 nights as opposed to 14 - meaning you'll only need to take a week off work, but still have enough time to relax

Fantastic savings:

Up to £200 off Thomson holidays per booking for Summer 2009 departures Seven nights in Costa

Blanca staying at the 4T Hotel Flamingo Oasis

(<http://www.thomson.co.uk/destinations/europe/spain/costa-blanca/benidorm/hotels/hotel-flamingo-oasis.html>)

on an all inclusive basis, departing from Bristol Airport on 2 May 2009.

Including flights, transfers, all taxes and charges and based on two adults sharing.

Was £595 per person

Now £495 per person

Total saving: £100

Massive faraway shores savings, with Premium flight upgrades available from just £99.

Seven nights in Jamaica, staying at the 4T Clubhotel RIU Negril

(<http://www.thomson.co.uk/destinations/caribbean/jamaica/jamaica/negril/hotels/clubhotel-riu-negril.html>)

on an all inclusive basis, departing from Birmingham Airport on 26 May 2009.

Including flights, transfers, all taxes and charges and based on two adults sharing.

Was £1005 per person

Now £889 per person

Total saving: £116

Fantastic savings - Up to £200 off First Choice holidays per booking for Summer 2009 departures

Seven nights in Ibiza staying at the 4 Sun Bahia

(<http://www.firstchoice.co.uk/holidays/ibiza-holidays/san-antonio-bay/bahia>) on a self catering basis,

departing from Luton Airport on 6 May 2009.

Including flights, transfers, all taxes and charges and based on six adults sharing.

Was £195 per person

Now £135 per person

Total saving: £60 per person

Cost cutting Caribbean deals, with Premium flight upgrades available from just £99.

Fourteen nights in the Dominican Republic, staying at the 3 Sun Holiday Village Golden Beach

(<http://www.firstchoice.co.uk/holidays/dominican-republic-north-holidays/playa-dorada/holiday-village-golden-beach>)

on an all inclusive basis, departing from Manchester Airport on 18 May 2009.

Including flights, transfers, all taxes and charges and based on four adults sharing.

Was £889 per person

Now £775 per person

Total saving: £114 per person

PLUS

Low deposits

Thousands of free child places

No flight supplements

Financial protection on all First Choice Package Holidays via the ATOL scheme

-ends-

Notes to editors:

¹ See separate release “Holidays still a priority in 2009”,

<http://www.thomson.co.uk/editorial/press-centre/2008/holidays-still-a-priority-for-british-consumers.html>

² Met Office, 12th December 2008, www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/2008/pr20081212.html

³ Which? ‘Booking 2009 holiday now could save £1000’ – research distributed 1st September 2008

For media enquiries: pressoffice@thomson.co.uk, pressoffice@firstchoice.co.uk