



PRESS RELEASE
30 October 2008

Travel Counsellors reports rise in late holiday bookings

One of the UK's leading independent travel companies, Travel Counsellors has seen a change in its customer booking trends this year, with a significant rise in customers booking their holidays later than ever before.

The company, who has over 700 home-based travel agents throughout the UK and a further 300 agents operating overseas, reported a 25% increase in customers booking and departing in the month of September compared to the previous year. The average booking value in September was £1,789, a 4% increase on the previous year.

Further to this Travel Counsellors also reported a 20% decrease in customers booking their holidays for September four to six months in advance compared to the previous year.

These figures show that, despite the current economic climate, people are still travelling, but are just booking later than in previous years. This was also reflected in the company's departures for September and October, with departures up by 6% and 11% respectively.

Travel Counsellors' Managing Director Steve Byrne comments; "Our figures show that people are still booking to go away, but a greater proportion of customers are holding off booking until closer to the time they want to travel. In the current economic climate people are being more careful and are more inclined to commit to a holiday closer to departure, rather than booking months in advance. Our figures show that, despite reports of doom and gloom, people still want and need to take their annual holiday."

Despite the change in booking patterns customers' choice of holiday destination appear relatively unchanged, with the most popular holiday destination for the month of September being Tenerife, the same as last year. The second most popular choice of Egypt also remained the same, with the only variation being third place, which in September was Cyprus, unlike the previous year when people chose Turkey as their third most popular holiday destination.

He adds; "Another key reason for this sales increase, alongside the later booking patterns, is that customers want to get value for money. By booking through an independent agency such as Travel Counsellors they have a much more varied choice of holidays that can suit every budget and requirement."

The company has also seen its sales go from strength to strength following recent supplier collapses within the travel industry, with customers realizing the value in booking with agents who can offer complete financial protection and customer service in today's uncertain market. An example of this is the recent collapse of airline XL in September, in which thousands of customers in the UK lost their money after booking directly with the airline.

As Travel Counsellors is one of the few travel companies in the industry to operate a financial trust, a unique financial guarantee that covers absolutely everything the customer books via their Travel Counsellor including hotels, low cost airlines, scheduled flights and car rental, it means its customers can be sure when they hear news about a travel failure, such as that of XL, that they will not have lost their money for their flights. As a result the company saw its UK sales jump by 11% in the seven days following the XL collapse, compared to the week before, with many customers who had booked directly with XL re-arranging their travel through Travel Counsellors.



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About Travel Counsellors: Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel companies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2007) of £212 million, a 21% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 1,000 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 200 staff at the company's head office in Bolton. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Australia, Canada and the US. In the UK Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account which guarantees a 100% refund in the event that a supplier collapses. Travel Counsellors was the winner of the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2003-2008, the technology category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards and was voted Travel Agent of the Year by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited in 2006 & 2007.

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