

PRESS RELEASE

Feb 14 2006

Travel Counsellors sees big shift in booking patterns

Travel Counsellors has seen a big change in what its consultants are booking compared to last year, reflecting the continuing trend away from traditional package holidays and towards more tailor made holidays.

During January the value of accommodation only bookings has increased by 70%. In January 2005 accommodation only sales accounted for 7% of all bookings, compared to 10% in January 2006.

Scheduled and consolidated airfares booked through Travel Counsellors increased by 43%. These fares accounted for 19% of sales in January 2005, compared to 22.5% of overall sales in January 2006.

Travel Counsellors' sales overall increased by 19% during January. Discounts during the month were down 22% on last year, with commission up by over a quarter (26%). The average booking value increased by 4% from £1,592 to £1,694.

In total bookings through the company's dynamic packaging system, Phenix, accounted for 10% of its sales during January and the company expects this figure will significantly increase as the year progresses. By using Phenix, its Counsellors can not only choose exactly the right holiday components for the customer, but also select their own mark up – offering them the opportunity to earn significantly more than is possible by booking a package through one of the big four tour operators.

This explains why even though Travel Counsellors' sales overall increased by 19% during January, its proportion of bookings to the big four remained static. As a proportion of sales this represented a decrease - accounting for 14.1% of sales during January 2006, compared to 17.7% during the same month last year. The fastest growing market was the luxury sector where sales have increased by 112% year on year. Managing Director Steve Byrne points out: "There are lots of individual tour operators who are keen to support us and work with us and who we are doing significant amounts of business with."

Personal Travel Counsellor Jan Marshall, based in Barnsley, made the most bookings of any Counsellor on the Phenix dynamic packaging system during January amounting to almost £50,000 in sales. Explaining why she is such a fan of Phenix Jan said: "The system is absolutely brilliant. It saves so much time because it just allows you to compare all the accommodation and flight options at a glance. I am a great believer in tailor making a holiday for your client and never automatically going for a package anyway, it just gives you so much control over the booking."

Currently over 400 Counsellors have been trained in Phenix using live meeting software. All the company's Counsellors will have received full training in the system by the end of the month.

Managing director Steve Byrne says: "We are seeing a quite remarkable shift in booking patterns and it is amazing how quickly our agents are getting to grips with the new technology and to get the best deal and choose the best options for their customer and also boost their own earnings potential in the process. We have eight full time developers doing nothing but work on Phenix. The system is already good and will only get better and that can only be good news for both our customers and our Counsellors in both the UK and overseas."

Spain continued to be the top destination booked by Travel Counsellors during January, followed by Egypt, Greece, Dubai and Cyprus in second, third, fourth and fifth place respectively. Turkey, which had been the company's second most popular destination during January 2005, fell to sixth place. Nine of the top ten destinations from last January remain in the top ten for January 2006, the only new entrant being Italy which was Travel Counsellors' ninth most booked destination last month - knocking Barbados out of the company's top ten list.

ENDS



EDITOR'S NOTES: Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel agencies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 312005) of £150 million, a 17% increase year on year. Founded by chairman David Speakman in 1994 it currently has over 570 travel consultants nationwide who work from home with the support of over 110 staff at the company's head office in Bolton, Greater Manchester. During 2005 it also expanded into Southern Ireland, where it now has 15 consultants and the Netherlands, where it has seven consultants to date. Travel Counsellors prides itself on the exceptional levels of personal service it offers its clients, a fact that was recognised in 2003 when it received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise. Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account, administered by the Barclays Bank Trust Company, which guarantees a 100% refund in the event that a supplier collapses.

For further information contact:

Helen Furnivall, public relations manager

Travel Counsellors PLC, Travel House, Churchgate, Bolton BL1 1TH.

www.travelcounsellors.com

Tel: 01204 536047

E-mail: helen.furnivall@travelcounsellors.com