

WEEKLY REPORT



MMGY
Weekly Report for UK & Ireland
08 August 2025

TRADE UPDATE

Booking.com CEO Highlights AI's Role in Holiday Planning

Booking Holdings CEO Glenn Fogle says AI is revolutionising how customers book holidays, allowing them to search in natural language “just like talking to a human travel agent.” He pointed to Booking’s AI Trip Planner as an example, making it easier for travellers to find their ideal trip. While acknowledging that AI will replace some jobs, he stressed its transformative potential. On overtourism, Fogle said decisions should be left to governments but supported ideas such as higher costs or lottery systems to limit visitor numbers at certain attractions, such as Dubrovnik’s Old Town or the Pantheon, while keeping access fair for all.

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

Premium Air Travel Outpaces Economy Growth in 2024

In 2024, global premium air travel grew slightly faster than economy, with international premium seat sales up 11.8% compared to 11.5% for economy meaning six out of every 100 international passengers flew in First, Business, or Premium Economy. Europe remained the largest premium market, with 39.3 million passengers, while Asia Pacific recorded the fastest growth at 23%. Overall, worldwide airline passenger numbers rose by 10.7%, with the UK, now the third-largest aviation market, up 7.3% to 261 million passengers. The US retained the top spot with 876 million passengers, followed by China with 741 million, up 18.7% year-on-year.

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

US Tourism demand has withstood Donald Trump's return

Six months into Donald Trump’s second presidency, fears of a “Trump Slump” in tourism have yet to materialise, at least in the UK market. Despite concerns about his polarising leadership, UK visitor numbers to the US rose by 2.1% in the first half of 2025 to 1.85 million, although June saw a slight 1.1% dip. However, much of this travel was likely booked before his return to office in January. Elsewhere, key European markets have shown declines - Germany down 9%, France 8%, and the Netherlands 5%, while Italy and Spain bucked the trend with increases of nearly 9% and 2.2% respectively. In total, the US saw a modest 0.3% year-on-year rise in arrivals from its top 20 international markets, reaching 11.56 million. With the 2026 FIFA World Cup on the horizon, the US remains in the global spotlight, but industry watchers caution that political uncertainty could still impact future sentiment.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

New Coalition Urges End to International Visitors Fee Ahead of Mega-Events

The US Travel Association, along with a new coalition called America's Sports and Travel Mega Event Coalition (ASTMEC), is urging the government to scrap the \$250 ‘visa integration fee’ for international visitors from non-Visa Waiver countries. The coalition, formed to support major events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, believes the fee will deter millions of visitors and negatively affect the projected \$100 billion economic boost from these events. ASTMEC plans to work with federal and local leaders to modernise visa and entry systems, upgrade airports, and improve security to ensure the events are successful and deliver a seamless experience for visitors.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL & SOCIAL UPDATE

Storm Floris: Thousands left without power after UK battered by 100mph winds

Storm Floris, described as the most damaging summer storm in recent memory, has left tens of thousands of households in northern Scotland without power, with winds exceeding 100mph and widespread disruption to travel. Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks have restored power to 50,000 properties, but around 22,000 remain affected as engineers, supported by helicopters, continue to assess damage and provide community support. The storm caused over 100 rail incidents, ferry cancellations, and severe flight disruptions, including diversions and turnbacks at Aberdeen Airport.

Source: [The Independent](#)

Interest rates cut to lowest level in more than two years

The Bank of England has cut interest rates from 4.25% to 4%, the lowest in over two years, to support a weak economy despite inflation still running at double its target. Governor Andrew Bailey called the move “finely balanced” and signalled any further cuts would be gradual. The change will lower borrowing costs, saving some mortgage holders around £40 a month, but will reduce returns for savers. Inflation, expected to peak at 4% in September, is being pushed up by labour costs, wage rises, and global supply issues, while the jobs market shows signs of slowing.

Source: [BBC News](#)

US tariffs will mean 70,000 fewer jobs created in Irish economy, Department of Finance warns

The Irish Department of Finance has warned that new US tariffs of 15% on EU exports could mean 56,000-70,000 fewer jobs created in Ireland over the next five years, with economic activity projected to be 1.5% lower than without tariffs. While much of the EU-US deal’s detail is still to be finalised, including possible exemptions for key Irish sectors like pharmaceuticals and semiconductors, any tariffs from US national security investigations will be capped at 15%.

Source: [The Irish Times](#)

Clampdown on social media ads for Channel crossings unveiled

The UK government has announced plans to make advertising Channel crossings or fake passports on social media a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in prison, aiming to crack down on smuggling gangs who use online platforms to lure migrants into dangerous journeys. Research shows around 80% of small boat arrivals to the UK this year used the internet to connect with agents, and officials hope the new offence, part of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, will give police stronger powers to disrupt their operations.

Source: [Sky News](#)

AIRLINE UPDATE

Alaska Airlines

Alaska Airlines is set to make its UK debut in spring 2026 with the launch of a daily London Heathrow to Seattle route, pending regulatory approval. Tickets will go on sale this autumn, with the service adding a new option for UK travellers heading to the US Pacific coast. While British Airways, Delta, and Virgin Atlantic already operate on the Seattle route, Alaska's entry will provide greater connectivity, particularly for cruise passengers using the city as a key embarkation point. Though named after America's northernmost state, Alaska Airlines is headquartered in Seattle and operates major hubs across Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Portland, making it a significant player on the West Coast. The new route forms part of the carrier's wider expansion strategy following its acquisition of Hawaiian Airlines, which brought with it a fleet of long-haul Boeing 787s. These aircraft will service the London route and feature a refreshed Alaska Airlines livery, though the Hawaiian brand will continue to operate separately.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

Norse Atlantic

Norse Atlantic Airways achieved a strong 94% load factor across all flights in July, marking its ninth consecutive month above 90%. Passenger numbers rose by 15% year-on-year to 203,712, with notable increases in both scheduled services and leased charter operations. The airline's data-driven strategy continues to yield results, despite ongoing challenges with air traffic control and airport congestion affecting punctuality — only 70% of flights departed within 15 minutes of their scheduled time. Meanwhile, Norse is leasing Boeing 787s to Indian carrier IndiGo ahead of new Heathrow–India routes launching in October.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Riyadh Air

Riyadh Air has signed a global distribution agreement with Amadeus. The strategic partnership will give Saudi Arabia's new national carrier access to one of the world's largest networks of travel sellers, supporting its ambitious growth plans. By joining the Amadeus Travel Platform, Riyadh Air will connect with travel agencies and sellers in more than 190 countries, ensuring its offers are accessible to travellers worldwide.

Source: [Breaking Travel News](#)

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Intrepid Travel

Intrepid Travel has launched six new immersive itineraries across northern and central Asia, marking its largest expansion in the region to date. Destinations include China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, with experiences ranging from yurt stays in Kyrgyzstan to reindeer herder expeditions in Mongolia.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Mercury Holidays

Mercury Holidays has launched three new brochures covering escorted tours, cruises, and multi-centre holidays, with some trips available through to 2027. The brochures introduce 10 new itineraries across destinations such as Tunisia, Puglia, the Balkans, and a combined India & Sri Lanka tour. River and ocean cruises are now featured in a single brochure, with discounts available on river cruises until 30 September. Additional savings are offered for 2025–2026 escorted tours, with 2027 tours held at 2026 pricing. New multi-centre holidays include Tanzania and Thailand, while a 17-day Australia & New Zealand cruise has also been added.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Premier Travel

Premier Travel is expanding its high street presence by acquiring three former Baldwins Travel branches in Maidstone, Uckfield, and Tonbridge. The stores, set to reopen under the Premier Travel brand by late August or early September, will be staffed by the original Baldwins employees. Managing Director Paul Waters emphasised the move as a commitment to preserving personal service, local expertise, and strong industry relationships, while also reinforcing Premier's dedication to investing in high street travel. Rebranding and in-branch updates are currently underway.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram launches new features

Instagram has introduced three new features aimed at boosting engagement and discoverability. The first is Reposts, allowing users to share public Reels and feed posts. These will appear in a dedicated tab on their profile and in friends' feeds, marked with a purple repost icon, giving brands and creators greater visibility and reach. The second feature is 'Friends Map', a live map showing the real-time location of opted-in friends, along with any location-tagged content such as Reels, Stories, Notes, and posts offering a more immersive way to explore content. Lastly, the new Friends tab in Reels highlights public videos that a user and their friends have interacted with, helping surface relevant content and drive further engagement.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

MICE UPDATE

New 'toolkit' to help associations reduce food waste at events

A newly launched toolkit from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), developed in partnership with food-waste consultancy LightBlue, aims to help association event planners significantly reduce food waste and promote sustainable gastronomy at their events. The toolkit outlines how food waste can occur at every stage of an event - from overproduction during preparation, to plate waste during service, and spoilage post-event. It offers practical solutions such as improved forecasting, live cooking stations, staggered servings, and culturally sensitive strategies that frame waste reduction as ethical hospitality. To support implementation, the toolkit encourages associations to include food-waste management in their RFPs, ask venues about donation strategies, and track key metrics such as total food consumed, donated, repurposed, and sent to landfill.

Source: [Association Meetings International \(AMI\)](#)

LIGHTER NOTE

Two of six Shetland ponies that went missing from a national park have been reunited with their owner after being found by a member of the public. Read more [here](#).