WEEKLY REPORT

MMGY
Weekly Report for UK & Ireland
5 September 2025

TRADE UPDATE

'Late late' sales still commanding sizeable share of current business
Mass-market travel agents say "late late" sales are continuing to enjoy a sizeable share of post-school holidays business, driven by value offers and discount codes from major tour operators. Despite most schools restarting this week, the trade said demand remained strong for September and October breaks but also reported rising enquiry levels for winter and next summer.

Seaside Travel social media manager Katelyn Cook noted "We are definitely still in the lates market but September is holding a higher price point" and mentioned clients were willing to pay more for a holiday which represented good value for money and also pointed to a "big increase" in last-minute, long-haul bookings. Meanwhile Advantage Travel Partnership reported that more than 40% of travel booked last week through the consortium was for departures in the next two months, with prices "slightly down" year on year.

Source: [Travel Weekly]

Esta fee increase to start on September 30
The Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (Esta) fee for visitors heading to the US will increase at the end of September. The US Congress approved a legislative package in July that includes a hike in the fee from $21 to $40 for travellers applying under the Visa Waiver Program. At the time, the US Travel Association criticised the fee hike and a funding cut to Brand USA. The Esta is mandatory for travellers entering the US under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and is valid for two years. The new fee equates to a $10 (£7.43) processing fee and a $30 (£22.30) authorisation fee. If a Brit's application is denied, they will only need to pay the $10 (£7.43) processing fee.

Source: [Travel Weekly]

Half of travellers are aware of new EU travel rules, says ABTA study
Only just over half of people are aware of the new EU new border rules set to take effect in October, new data from ABTA has revealed. The EU Entry/Exit System is scheduled to begin on October 12, almost a year after its original planned launch date, and will be phased in over a six-month period through to mid-April 2026. EES will require non-EU travellers to register their fingerprints and submit to a biometric facial scan the first time they travel to an EU destination after the launch. While ABTA's data shows awareness of EES has grown from 44% last year to 51%, and rising to 61% among those people who have been on holiday over the 12 months, the association has warned the industry still faces a "communications challenge" ahead of the launch.
To help members prepare, ABTA is holding a video conference call with the UK government's Cabinet Office and the association's experts to go over the changes, on September 9.

Mark Tanzer, ABTA chief executive, said: "We are very supportive of the EU adopting a phased introduction of the new scheme. Launching a new digital border system in 29 countries is no mean feat, and doing it over a six-month period should allow the system to bed in whilst minimising impact on travellers. It also takes the pressure off peak travel periods, such as October half-term and Christmas."

Source: [TTG]

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL & SOCIAL UPDATE

Trump asks US Supreme Court to overturn trade tariffs ruling
US President Donald Trump has appealed to the US Supreme Court to overturn a federal appeals court ruling that declared most of his broad "liberation day" tariffs on imports illegal. The court found that Trump had overstepped his authority by using a 1977 emergency law to justify tariffs ranging from 10% to 50% without congressional approval. Trump's administration is pushing for a fast-tracked review, warning that the ruling could undermine trade deals and damage the US economy. If the decision stands, it could significantly lower US tariff rates and lead to billions in repayments, while also impacting American brands facing backlash abroad.

Source: The Guardian

Rival Heathrow bidder in talks with foreign airports to run new terminal
Hotel tycoon Surinder Arora is proposing a rival £25bn expansion of Heathrow Airport, including a shorter third runway and a sixth terminal, and is in talks with top global airport operators - such as Singapore's Changi, Dubai Airports, and Dublin's DAA - to potentially run the new terminal. This would introduce competition at Heathrow, which is currently solely operated by Heathrow Airport Limited with its own plans for a £50bn expansion. Changi is the frontrunner due to its global reputation, but Arora remains open to other experienced international partners as part of his vision to transform Heathrow into a more efficient and hospitality-driven hub.

Source: The Telegraph

Tax the rich to thwart Reform, TUC chief urges Labour
Trades Union Congress (TUC) chief Paul Nowak has urged Labour to adopt higher taxes on the wealthy, banks, and gambling to win back voters leaning toward Reform UK. A TUC poll found that 74% of those who voted Labour in 2024 and are now leaning toward Reform backed these taxes, as did 84% of former Conservative voters who switched to Labour. Nowak cited Spain's wealth tax as a successful model and proposed additional measures like equalising capital gains with income tax and introducing a windfall tax on banks. His comments come ahead of the TUC's annual conference, while Labour's Chancellor Rachel Reeves is expected to outline tax plans in the autumn budget on 26 November.

Source: Sky News

Restored Big Ben tower up for architecture award
The £80m restoration of London's Big Ben, officially known as the Elizabeth Tower, has been nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize, the UK's top architecture award. It is one of six shortlisted projects, including the London College of Fashion's new campus, AstraZeneca's Cambridge research centre, and innovative housing projects in south London and Hastings. The Stirling Prize, awarded by the Royal Institute of British Architects, recognises the most significant building of the year based on design, innovation, and impact on the built environment.

Source: BBC

AIRLINE UPDATE

Etihad Airways - Etihad Airways has reported a record profit of £228 million in its strongest half-year performance to date. The airline said profit after tax rose 32% for the first six months of 2025 compared with the same period last year. It attributed the growth to "vigorous customer demand, productivity and efficiency gains: as well as improved yields across its passenger and cargo businesses. Total revenue was up 16% year on year, reaching £2.7 billion, with passenger revenue up 16%, and cargo revenue up 9%. The airline has added more than 20 aircraft in the last 18 months bringing the total to more than 100 in the fleet.

Source: [Travel Weekly]

Jet2 - Jet2 has trimmed the number of seats for this coming winter season, saying it is operating in a "less certain consumer environment", with "limited visibility" over forward bookings. The group issued its first update since early July this morning in a statement ahead of its AGM, in which it said bookings are moving 'closer to departure'. The airline hasn't confirmed where the 2025/26 capacity cuts have been made.

Source: [Travel Gossip]

Norse Atlantic - Norse Atlantic Airways has reported growth in passenger numbers and load factor for August. The Norwegian-owned carrier saw a load factor of 95% last month, up from 87% in August 2024. It carried 208,153 passengers across its network and charter operations, up 9% year on year. Bjørn Tore Larsen, chief executive of Norse Atlantic, attributes the strong passenger growth to their "data driven market strategy, supported by modern aircraft and great staff providing excellent travel experiences."

Source: [Travel Weekly]

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Advantage Travel Partnership - The Advantage Travel Partnership has reported a strong summer performance with sales growing by 13%, despite a 3% drop in the number of family travellers. Commercial director John Sullivan, who shared the consortium's trading data for 2025, said summer departures had risen by 7%, adding that the fall in the number of families could be linked to the cost-of-living crisis as well as households' low-interest fixed-rate mortgage deals ending. The average length of stay this summer increased to 9.8 days, up by 1.5 days compared with last year, while the number of all-inclusive bookings grew to 45%, up from 40% last year, amid growing demand for "convenience, value and stress-free planning".

Source: Travel Weekly

Celebrity River Cruises - Celebrity River Cruises says demand for its inaugural sailings was so high that it closed its early registration just six minutes after it opened. The cruise line had invited people to pay a £400 fully refundable deposit from 2pm yesterday to secure one of its 2027 cruises, however registration closed early due to 'unprecedented demand'. Celebrity River Cruises claims it will 'transform' river cruising in Europe with the launch of its two ships. The line will operate 33 cruises during its inaugural season.

Source: Travel Gossip

Dertour - Dertour UK has pledged all 11 tour operators in its enlarged portfolio will continue as independent brands as it looks to "evolve and grow" following the completion of its Hotelplan acquisition. The deal to buy four out of five units of the Hotelplan Group from Swiss retail cooperative Migros, announced in February, has been finalised following approval by the Swiss Competition Commission. The UK arm of Dertour Group now comprises 11 specialist businesses. Explore Worldwide, Inghams, Inntravel and Santa's Lapland have joined existing UK brands Kuoni, Carrier, CV Villas, Journey Latin America, Jules Verne, Kirker and Solmar Villas.

Source: Travel Weekly

Dnata - Dnata Travel Group is looking into putting its four UK leisure brands up for sale, including trade-only operator Gold Medal, OTA Travel Republic, UK high street agency chain Travelbag and flight comparison operation Netflights. It is not immediately clear whether a sale would include dnata's other trade-facing brands in the UK (Pure Luxury, Incredible Journeys and Cruise Plus). In a statement provided to TTG, dnata said: "Dnata Travel Group has started a process to explore strategic options for four UK-based leisure brands Gold Medal, Netflights, Travelbag and Travel Republic. The move is part of a broader strategic effort to align the group's portfolio with its long-term business priorities and evolving market dynamics."

Source: TTG

MEDIA & SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram is growing at 10x the rate of Facebook in the EU
According to Meta and its latest EU performance updates, Instagram is growing at 10x the rate of Facebook in the EU, with Facebook's total EU usage coming in at 263.6 million monthly active users between January and June 2025, and Instagram reaching 281.8 million in the same period.

Source: Social Media Today

MICE UPDATE

The Power of Events hits Bath and Bristol and heads for The O2
The Power of Events has confirmed the expansion of its UK Schools Engagement Programme into the Bath and Bristol region, alongside plans for a London launch event this autumn. The not-for-profit organisation, founded in 2023 to champion greater understanding and recognition of the UK events industry, has already connected more than 106,000 young people with the sector in its first academic year. The Bath and Bristol expansion will see ambassadors visit schools from later this year, with the goal of reaching more than 10,000 students in the region within 12 months. Industry professionals are being invited to volunteer as ambassadors via the programme's dedicated portal, committing as little as an hour to share insights and career pathways into the events world.

Source: M&IT Magazine

LIGHTER NOTE

The Northern Lights have been dancing across UK skies this week
They were caused by a strong solar storm, and stargazers across the UK have taken epic photos from northern Scotland all the way down to Kent.

Source: BBC