

Outlook for Travel to Britain

- Due to the favourable exchange rate, lower prices now offered by all Britain operators for their 2010 programmes and widespread media coverage on how affordable London and Britain now are, we expect a positive trend for holiday travel to Britain in the next months and the popular Easter period. Business travel is also expected to slowly pick up again in line with the recovery of the Swiss economy.

Britain in the News

- The flooding in the Lake District received widespread media coverage in Germany. As it happened off-season this is unlikely to have caused any damage to visits to the area from Switzerland.
- Several articles appeared in the press highlighting various incidents when tourists were asked by the police to show or delete pictures or films they had taken of popular tourist sights. The articles questioned whether Britain is still a tolerant place and whether the anti-terrorism act is going too far.

General Market Mood

- A referendum at the end of November showed a clear majority of participants voting against the future construction of any new minarets in Switzerland, a vote which has been criticised as xenophobic inside and outside of the country and is expected to affect inbound tourism negatively (traveltribune 49/09)
- The economy pulled out of recession in the third quarter of 2009 growing by 0.3%. Despite rising unemployment (4.2% in November), private consumption was still robust, growing 0.6% in quarter 3, while exports also recovered and the financial services sector grew again after six quarters of contraction.

Consumer Behaviour

- According to a panel of Swiss travel experts, the coming years will be challenging for the Swiss travel industry: Tour operators are becoming more and more similar, travel agencies are losing to the internet and the crisis is a further strain. They characterise the Swiss market as a mature market with people with high travel experience and spending power, but stagnating travel intensity. However, since the Swiss are one of the European countries with the fastest growing population, this will have a positive influence on the medium term travel market. (schweizer touristik Nr21, 25/9).
- 75.5% of the Swiss population are internet users, up by 168.9% compared to 2000 (Internet World Stats 11/2009) showing that this medium is becoming increasingly important in all areas of life.

Media Matters

- The free daily newspaper News was withdrawn due to too strong competition in the Swiss market. Three free daily newspapers; 20 Minuten, Blick am Abend and 20 minutes remain.
- The three biggest paid Swiss newspapers Blick, Tagesanzeiger and NZZ had to undergo a facelift in order to attract the younger target group.

Routes and Fares

- Ryanair is axing all routes from/to Basel Mülhausen (including flights to London Stansted) because the airport was not prepared to lower fees. (travel tribune 46/09)

- From 10 January Swiss will be increasing the number of daily flights from Geneva to London Heathrow from four to six, and are using larger aircraft. Overall Swiss now operate 25 daily flights from Switzerland to London (10 from Geneva, 13 from Zurich and 2 from Basle).
- Baboo Airlines, a Geneva based airlines, started daily flights from Geneva to London City Airport in November
- easyJet to start a new route from Zurich to Manchester (daily flights) at the end of March.
- Falcontravel (part of M-Travel Switzerland and Switzerland's leading Britain operator) will be resuming a weekly charter flight from Zurich to Inverness again from May to September 2010 and continue operating a weekly charter from Zurich to Newquay.
- Booked one month in advance Zurich – London Heathrow British Airways CHF159 (£95) o/w, Zurich – London Luton easyJet CHF40.45 (£24)

Business Tourism

- M-Travel Switzerland will be taking over the business travel specialist BTA Travel on 1st January 2010. M-Travel's business travel unit FCm First Business Travel will be integrated into BTA Travel over the next months. As a result M-Travel will be one of the leading business travel provider in Switzerland.

Leisure Travel Trade

- Swiss travel agent's turnover was down 12.5% in the period January to October 2009. October, however, was a very good month and turnover increased by 18.2% compared to the same month last year.
- As in most other European markets Swiss booked their holidays extremely late this year. The trade is expecting a similar trend for 2010.
- Britain operators in Switzerland had a mixed year suffering to some extent from uncompetitive annual prices calculated in the autumn of 2008 when the GDP was still considerably stronger. For 2010 they lowered prices by around 5%.

Competitor Activity

- The Austrian Tourist Board started an extensive campaign in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (including full page ads, PR, DM, co-operation with Deutsche Bahn, e-marketing, social media marketing) stressing Austria's cultural heritage (Österreich Werbung) and trying to attract a more culturally minded crowd in the winter, thereby increasing competition with British city destinations.

VisitBritain Activity Update

- Media, consumer, travel trade, and business tourism newsletters.
- Group Press Trip: England/Sherlock Holmes in October.

Upcoming activity

- Joint Cities Campaign with easyJet.
- Online campaign as part of the Sherlock Holmes film launch with Sonntagszeitung as media partner.

Who's in Town?

- Nothing to report for October to December.