Thomson Announces Sri Lanka as New Research Reveals Boom in Long Haul Holidays

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- *New research shows people are more willing than ever before to travel further afield in search of the perfect holiday, with 3 in 4 (77%) happy to travel nine hours or more to reach their dream destination*
- *89% of those surveyed now travel long haul at least once every five years, with 1 in 5 (21%) travelling long haul every year for their holiday*
- *Research comes as Thomson and First Choice announce new long haul destination, Sri Lanka on the 787 Dreamliner*

Long haul holidays are fast becoming the preferred choice for many British holidaymakers as new research from holiday brands, Thomson and First Choice reveals that more people than ever before are prepared to go the distance to find their dream destination. Travelling for nine hours or more is now considered par for the course for many Brits (77%) as they seek more adventure and cultural diversity from their holidays.

With a rise in travel as a whole in recent years and four in ten adults (40%) saying they travel far more now compared to 10 years ago*, the nation is becoming much more ambitious with its choice of destinations. Thomson and First Choice have seen a 350% increase in long haul passengers in the last 10 years, with a staggering 800% increase in family bookings alone, leading to the addition of exciting destinations such as Costa Rica and Thailand. Today a new long haul destination joins the travel brands' ever increasing long haul portfolio – Indian Ocean gem, Sri Lanka from winter 2016 travelling on the 787 Dreamliner from London Gatwick airport.

The boom in the number of long haul customers is supported by the new research which shows 89% of those surveyed now travel long haul at least once every five years and a further 1 in 5 (21%) travel long haul every year on holiday.

Whilst two week durations remain the most popular, increasingly British holidaymakers are jetting further afield for just 10 or 11 nights in search of better weather (53%), cultural diversity (52%), beautiful beaches (42%) and more adventure (38%). This combination of factors resulted in 65% of those asked saying their long haul holidays were the most memorable and that they felt more adventurous (36%) than on a short-haul holiday (9%).

Thomson and First Choice's most popular long haul destinations for 2015 also reflect customers' desire to explore different corners of the world. New destinations such as Mexico's Pacific Coast, Mauritius and Thailand have appeared in the top ten long haul destinations for 2015, compared to 10 years ago when destinations such as the Dominican Republic and Florida dominated bookings.

Revolutionary new aircraft like the Boeing 787 Dreamliner are also having an impact on the decision to go long haul. Of those surveyed, one in three (34%) said the introduction of these new aircraft has inspired them to go further afield on holiday.

Managing Director of TUI UK & Ireland, Nick Longman, said:

“At Thomson and First Choice, we've seen growth in demand for long haul holidays increase over the last 10 years and have responded with the introduction of state-of-the art aircraft and exciting new destinations like Mauritius, Mexico's Pacific Coast and Cuba. More families than ever before are now choosing to go further afield in search of their dream destination – 800% more than ten years ago.

“With more and more people holidaying more than once a year, a long haul adventure combined with a relaxing short-haul break is proving, for many, the ideal combination.

“We continue to focus on growing our long haul portfolio and are pleased to introduce Sri Lanka for winter 2016 today. With more exciting long haul destinations in the pipeline we expect to see this trend continue as British holidaymakers look to visit new places they may never have been to before.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

*Research conducted on 2,000+ adults by Onepoll for Thomson and First Choice in September 2015.

**Statistics from Thomson and First Choice booking data, comparing figures between 2005 and 2014.

For more information or imagery please contact pressoffice@thomson.co.uk or 01582 644626.

Sri Lanka

Thomson and First Choice have today announced the addition of new long haul destination, Sri Lanka, for winter 2016.

Served by a weekly, direct Thomson Airways 787 Dreamliner flight from London Gatwick airport, customers will be able to book two 'tour and stay' options – a seven night Discover Sri Lanka tour or a four night Highlights of Sri Lanka tour. These will be teamed with stays at hotels including the Riu Sri Lanka and Club Hotel Dolphin, as well as products from Thomson's Scene, Platinum and Small and Friendly collections and First Choice's Premier collection.

The flight time between London Gatwick and Colombo on the Thomson Airways 787 Dreamliner is 11.5 hours.

About Thomson

Thomson, part of TUI UK & Ireland, is one of the UK's most well-known holiday brands, delivering unique and modern holiday experiences for its customers every year.

Flagship properties include; nine Sensatori hotels across Jamaica, Crete, Tenerife, Mexico, Turkey, Egypt, Ibiza and Cyprus – these hotels give customers a luxury holiday experience, featuring world class spas and gourmet dining; Thomson's Couples Resorts (Thomson's Sensimar from summer 2016) offering stylish hotels in beach front locations exclusively for adults and Thomson's Family Resorts (Thomson's Family Life from summer 2016), which have been designed for families with younger children, featuring excellent kids' clubs giving parents a care-free, relaxing holiday.

Thomson is the sister company of First Choice, both using Thomson Airways to take over 5.2 million people on holiday each year.

TUI UK & Ireland is a member of TUI Group.

About Thomson Airways

Thomson Airways, the airline for Thomson and First Choice, is the UK's third largest airline and is a member TUI Group.

With a fleet of 62 aircraft consisting of Boeing 737, 757, 767 and 787, Thomson Airways serves 20 UK airports taking over five million customers away each year and operates to over 88 destinations in 30 countries.

The airline was the first UK operator of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

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