

THE ADVANTAGE TRAVEL PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHES THE 'FLEXI PLEDGE – BOOK WITH CONFIDENCE' CAMPAIGN

A summer campaign designed to increase flexibility for consumers booking summer holidays this year

Strictly embargoed until 00.01 6 August 2020

The Advantage Travel Partnership, the UK's largest independent travel agent and travel management company (TMC) consortium, today launches 'The Flexi Pledge – Book with Confidence' campaign designed to encourage more operators to offer greater flexibility this summer and give consumers a renewed confidence to book.

Advantage is calling for the industry to commit to a '48-hours Flexi' policy for consumers to change a booking at no fee when their holiday is impacted by new Government advice. In tandem, the Consortium is lobbying the UK Government to provide the industry with 48-hours' notice when it deems destinations on the quarantine-free list need to be removed due to a rise in COVID-19 cases.

Since the announcement last week of Spain being taken off the Government's quarantine-free list and the subsequent FCO advice amended to advise against non-essential travel, the industry has experienced a surge in cancellations and a marked decline in consumer confidence to book. After a significant period of stagnation during months of lockdown, this recent development is a further blow to an industry struggling to survive further highlighted by this week's job losses and store closures.

In response to a critical decline in consumer confidence, Advantage has undertaken a full audit of its supplier partnerships including airlines, hotels, tour operators and ground transportation in-order to analyse their flexible booking policies. Findings have been mixed and options for consumers vary radically according to confusing terms and conditions depending on a number of factors including timeframes and charges to change a booking.

Julia Lo Bue-Said, CEO The Advantage Travel Partnership said: "This is a make or break moment in time for the travel industry. There is clearly a huge degree of flexibility available, but consumers just don't know about the options. We need to come together to communicate to consumers that there are flexible options that won't dent their pocket. We are issuing a rally call today for all travel suppliers, whether they are focused on leisure or business travel, to consolidate and simplify their flexibility policies. We want to speak as one industry and say to the consumer we are on your side and we have upped our game to make it easier and stress free to change your booking should your destination become unavailable due to COVID-19 issues."

She goes onto say: “We believe if consumers had 48-hours’ notice to change their booking to an alternative destination or time they would be more inclined to retain their booking instead of cancelling. Equally, if the UK Government commits to providing the industry with 48-hours’ notice instead of 4-hours the industry will be infinitely better equipped to engage with clients to satisfy their re-booking requirements and retain that all important booking for this year.”

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For further information about Advantage Travel Partnership please contact (bgadvantage@finnpartners.com)

Note to editors: Advantage Travel Partnership is the UK’s largest independent travel agent and travel management company partnership. Advantage leisure and business travel agents who are part of the group are each independently owned, but as a collective they produce over £4.5bn of travel sales each year, making members experts in every aspect of the travel industry.