

Joined at the HIP

The world's leading international leisure travel company enjoys a special relationship with Boeing—and its jets

By Marcy Woodhull

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— Chris Browne, managing director of Thomson Airways



When Europeans consider a holiday, whether it's a luxury cruise, Antarctic expedition or anything in between, chances are they turn to TUI Travel or one of its subsidiaries for a comprehensive package that not only takes them where they want to go but also takes care of all their needs when they get there.

Operating in 180 countries and headquartered in the United Kingdom, TUI Travel is the world's leading international leisure travel company, offering every sort of vacation a consumer can dream up.

Heavily concentrated in Europe, TUI Travel serves more than 30 million customers a year in 27 key markets. The only leisure travel firm listed on the

London Stock Exchange, the company employs 49,000 people.

The TUI Travel umbrella includes seven airlines, all of which operate Boeing airplanes. In the U.K., one its largest markets, the company operates under the Thomson brand, offering every facet of a vacation, including air transportation on Thomson Airways.

“A traveler's holiday starts the moment they step on the airplane,” said Chris Browne, managing director of Thomson Airways, the U.K.'s largest charter airline and third-largest airline.

Fundamental to the company's continued success, Browne said, is its relationship with Boeing.

“We are joined at the hip,” she said.

Thomson Airways operates 737 and 757 Boeing airplanes and has ordered the 787 Dreamliner.

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TUI Travel was an early customer for the 787 and has 13 Dreamliners on order for four of its seven airlines: Thomson Airways; TUIfly Nordic, representing the Scandinavian region; Jetairfly, based in Belgium; and Arkefly in the Netherlands. Other airlines operated by TUI Travel are Corsairfly in France; Jet4you.com in Morocco; and TUIfly Germany.

Browne said she has been a fan of the

787 since it was on the drawing board and that it offers unrivaled qualities and will be less expensive to operate. “With higher fuel costs, it is even more compelling to have the 787,” she said.

TUI Travel also is launch customer for Boeing's GoldCare maintenance, repair and support services program for the 787.

“We've put our faith and trust in Boeing with the 787 and that Boeing is the best one to look after the aircraft,” Browne said.

TUI Travel's standards for customer service, value and responsibility push its suppliers, including Boeing, to perform at their highest levels, according to Debra Santos, Boeing sales director for the group.

“TUI Travel values are all about the customer,” Santos said. “They deliver the best

possible product to their customers, and our products are a means to do this. They work extremely hard, always try to find a way and have very high expectations. If we didn't always deliver the highest-quality products, they would not work with us.”

That working-together collaborative spirit, Santos said, results in benefits for both companies.

“They made a commitment with the 787 and have stayed with us,” Santos said of TUI Travel. “They look to Boeing for lifelong products and services with the 787 and GoldCare.”

Successful partnerships mean understanding each other's business, Browne added.

“Boeing understands our business

better than anyone else,” she said. “We're a holiday carrier, not a scheduled carrier, and that is a big difference.” ■

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: A 787 Dreamliner, shown here in Thomson livery.

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PHOTO: Chris Browne, managing director of Thomson Airways, at last year's Farnborough International Airshow in the United Kingdom. STEVE DUNLOP