

Your Year at ABTA

2017-18





The year in review

I am sometimes asked how we ensure that ABTA maintains its appeal in an ever-changing world of travel, where customers are choosing to book and buy travel arrangements in so many different ways.

The answer lies in ABTA's ability to evolve with the industry, and adapt to the needs of Members, while staying true to the core purpose and values that have underpinned the success of the Association for many years.

This is a task that keeps us on our toes, every year.

I am pleased to say in the past year, the collective turnover of ABTA Members has now reached more than £37billion, which is encouraging for two reasons.

First, it demonstrates that travel businesses are continuing to be successful, despite the uncertain political and economic environment. That's not to say it hasn't been tough: the failure of Monarch Travel Group alone last October gives ample evidence of this. And it will continue to be tough: all of the economic indicators point to a squeeze on consumer spending power which makes for a difficult trading environment for travel businesses.

Second, it demonstrates that ABTA is truly representative of that evolving industry. In the past 12 months, we have welcomed 46 travel companies into Membership. We have also welcomed 33 new industry Partners into our Partner scheme.

ABTA's annual Member survey is one of the important ways that we gain feedback to ensure we are focusing on the right things, and to measure progress. I am pleased to say that we received a record number of responses to the survey this year, from across our membership. This report highlights some important areas of progress.

It's been a year of huge regulatory change for the travel industry with the introduction of GDPR, the Payment Services Directive 2 and Package Travel and ATOL reform, among other initiatives. And of course there is much more to come in the next 12 months, not least on Brexit negotiations.

ABTA's role is to ensure we get to the heart of these changes, consult with Members, ensure the industry's voice is heard in Government and inform Members about what these changes may mean for their own businesses.

This has required a huge effort involving teams from across the organisation and it will continue to be a priority for us moving forward.

For nearly two years, ABTA has been working with legal and government decision-makers to tackle the increasing problem of fake holiday sickness claims. In June last year, we launched our consumer-facing Stop Sickness Scams campaign, with the support of ABTA Members, to take this initiative to another level, highlighting the issue through national and social media. And I'm pleased to report that as a result of this work, we are beginning to see real progress on this important issue.

And finally, each year, you tell us that our work to promote the benefits of booking with an ABTA Member is of vital importance, and we have responded to this with several high-profile "Travel with confidence" marketing campaigns, which you can read about in this report.


Mark Tanzer
Chief Executive



Travel with confidence

Our campaigns

A priority for ABTA is to show consumers and business travellers why booking with an ABTA Member is important – highlighting the benefits a Member provides and why customers can book and travel with confidence when they see the ABTA logo. Each year we build on this by running advertising and PR campaigns aimed at explaining the offer of support, protection and expertise which ABTA membership brings. This year's Member survey shows that promoting the benefits of booking with an ABTA Member is considered to be a number one priority.

The impact of our customer campaigns is measured through the annual ABTA consumer survey and also through our survey among buyers of business travel. This year, we increased consumer recognition of the logo to 74% with notable increases in people positively associating ABTA with values such as reassurance, quality, safety and expertise. Around two-thirds of people think less positively of companies that are not ABTA Members.

Phase one of our Travel with confidence 2017-18 campaign launched at the end of December. A targeted digital campaign reached the 55+ and family markets, by partnering with influential parenting site 'Made for Mums' and advertising on The Telegraph online, and broader social platforms. The campaign has had strong engagement to date, reaching almost 1.5 million consumers. The second phase of the campaign targets younger travellers (18-34 year olds) and those that book business travel.

"Our Travel with confidence campaign has reached 1.5 million consumers to date"

To warn people about fake holiday companies, ABTA has run its annual holiday booking fraud campaign in partnership with the City of London Police and Get Safe Online.

2018's campaign highlighted the latest statistics on the number of people affected by holiday booking fraud and provided tips about how to avoid being defrauded, including emphasising the importance of checking for an ABTA logo and booking with a reputable travel company. This campaign was very successful, we had coverage across all mainstream media outlets.

In early 2018, ABTA was voted a "Business Superbrand" for the twelfth consecutive year and a "Consumer Superbrand" for the second year in a row. These are the clearest possible endorsements for the enduring strength of the ABTA brand as a badge of quality and assurance for the travelling public.

Customer support

Travel with confidence is also about the advice and support we offer to Members' customers and the dispute resolution service we provide to help resolve complaints where customers and Members may have a disagreement. Our customer support team received more than 17,000 calls this past year, varying from advising on the Ryanair flight

cancellations and Monarch airline failure, to providing accurate advice on what they need to do if they wish to pursue a complaint.

Customer claims

Although the past few years have seen relatively low numbers of travel businesses failing, we have seen some large failures, including All Leisure Holidays Ltd and Monarch Holidays Ltd. These events are where ABTA's claims handling services are extremely important to customers. An estimated £6.25 million has been paid since January 2017 from over 3,000 claims, demonstrating the value of ABTA financial protection.



This year's Travel with confidence campaign strapline "we're with you every step of the way" highlights the benefits of booking with an ABTA Member.



- UK General election
- Formal Brexit negotiations with the EU get underway

June 2017



- Government announces a crackdown on false holiday sickness claims
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) changes level of advice for Tunisia

July 2017



- Over-tourism protests in Mallorca and Venice
- Air Berlin collapses

August 2017



- ABTA launches Stop Sickness Scams campaign to tackle false gastric illness claims, backed by Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson
- ABTA's Travel Matters conference



- Counter Terrorism Police in association with the Foreign Office and ABTA, launch "Run Hide Tell", a video outlining what people should do if caught up in an attack abroad



- 'Make Holidays Greener' – ABTA's sustainability campaign with Travelife and over 100 beach cleans organised by the travel industry

Industry support

ABTA has been leading the industry's response to the challenges presented in the last 12 months, including flight disruptions and the biggest airline failure in recent history, natural disasters and terrorist incidents; supporting our Members to respond effectively and swiftly to these crises, and providing accurate and timely information to media and to customers.

Guidance

The 2017 ABTA Member survey reports that the operational support ABTA provides to Members in the event of a crisis, as well as clear, effective communication with the media and customers, are two of the things they value most from their ABTA membership. With a range of large incidents last year, this support proved crucial.

One example was ABTA leading the industry's response to the series of hurricanes that affected tourist destinations in the Caribbean and North America last September. ABTA provided operational support to Members during an exceptionally challenging and complex situation. We provided advice through abta.com and social media channels to customers in affected areas and for those due to travel imminently to the destinations. We also ensured the media had accurate information by issuing statements and conducting broadcast interviews.

ABTA's operational bulletins have kept Members informed 24/7 about emerging issues across the world. Our destinations team circulated over 1,600 bulletins featuring more than 1,800 events, including changes to FCO advice, severe weather warnings, political upheaval and terrorist activity. We have conducted hundreds of interviews and given responses to major issues and crises on behalf of the industry during the past year.

Claims

The pipeline financial protection ABTA provides is one of the services greatly valued by Members and, unfortunately, the industry experienced significant travel company failures last year where this protection proved vital. The collapse of Monarch Travel Group was the largest British airline failure in history. We received hundreds of Member and customer calls, providing guidance and supporting the claims process, as well as providing facts, perspective and advice to the national media.

Business support

It's been an unprecedented year for regulatory change. We have provided the latest information and guidance on Package Travel Regulations, GDPR and the Payment Services Directive 2 to help Members understand the impact on their businesses, as well as a number of other ongoing issues. ABTA guidance is available in the Member zone on abta.com and we provided regular updates at our regional business meetings and other ABTA and wider industry events. Our teams have been on hand to deal with over 15,000 Member queries this past year – offering advice and support where needed.

We also provided a range of free to attend events for Members – such as the Brexit Breakfast Briefing in March and our twice-yearly roadshow of regional business meetings – all in addition to providing written guidance and updates via the Member zone.

“Our free events are developed to keep Members informed about hot topics, travel trends and regulatory changes.”

ABTA tourism accommodation health & safety technical guide 2017

ABTA is committed to continually improving health and safety within the tourism accommodation sector, through collaboration with our Members and working with a team of health and safety specialists.

Following an extensive review, the updated version of the Tourism Accommodation Health & Safety Technical Guide 2017 was published in October. It was translated into eight languages, in addition to English, all of which are available to Members.

World events



- ASA Council ruled a holidaysicknessclaims.co.uk YouTube ad must be taken down
- Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit, severely affecting parts of the Caribbean



- Monarch Travel Group failure and ABTA issues guidance to Members
- Government launches a call for evidence on holiday sickness claims

September 2017

October 2017

November 2017

ABTA Highlights



- ABTA leads the response to the wave of hurricanes in the Caribbean



- ABTA CEO calls for a review into airline insolvency protection after the collapse of Monarch
- The Azores hosts the Travel Convention and ABTA release 2017 Holiday Habits Report



- ABTA releases “Travelling together: The value of UK outbound tourism”, which looks at the economic value of UK outbound travel to the EU
- ABTA launches new edition of the Tourism Accommodation Health & Safety Technical Guide



"The ABTA Tourism Accommodation Health & Safety Technical Guide 2017 is the benchmark in the tourism industry. I would encourage everyone in the hospitality industry to use it – having a trusted point of reference and a broader understanding on duties of care is key in growing tourism and helps build traveller confidence in destinations they wouldn't have previously considered."

Jean-Marc Flambert, Vice-President of Sales and Marketing in UK & Europe, Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority

ABTA education hub

ABTA worked with leading training experts and ABTA Members in the development of the new Travel Consultant Apprenticeship, launched last year. In autumn 2017, we launched a new education hub on abta.com including an e-learning "Knowledge zone", aimed at supporting staff learning and development in the travel industry. The ABTA Knowledge zone provides insightful and practical information to staff on a range of relevant topics. Two new training modules, All About ABTA, and FCO travel advice, and two refreshed modules, Every child, everywhere and Accessible Travel Made Easy, have been introduced to date.

Counter terrorism awareness training

Following the launch of our counter terrorism awareness training in association with the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), ABTA has been running free to attend training sessions for Members this year.

The aim of the training is to highlight some of the key elements that ABTA Members may wish to consider as part of their business continuity plans concerning the threat of terrorism, together with measures they could introduce within their own businesses for staff in the UK and overseas.

"Our new online Knowledge zone aims to support our Members staff with e-learning opportunities."

How to get the most out of your membership



Training seminars and workshops:

As well as our twice yearly regional business meetings, we run in-depth training seminars and workshops on a range of important travel issues.



Stay informed:

By registering on abta.com for the Member zone you'll be able to access regularly updated travel guidance and information as well as details of new services and offers from ABTA Partners. You can sign up to ABTA Today, our weekly newsletter too.



Operational bulletins:

Sign up to ABTA's operational bulletins via the Member zone. This service keeps you informed of the latest worldwide incidents that may impact your business, including out-of-hours crisis support.



December 2017



- ABTA launches online education and careers hub and online 'Knowledge zone aimed at Members' sales staff
- ABTA launches 2018 Travel with confidence campaign
- ABTA launches 2018 Travel Trends report



January 2018



- PSD2 comes into law preventing companies from passing on credit or debit card charges

- ABTA writes to the Treasury Minister calling for an urgent review of the UK card payments market
- ABTA calls on MPs to support cold calling ban in the fight against false gastric illness claims



February 2018



- Package holiday flights to Tunisia start again

- ABTA launches Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice online training for Members

Voice of the industry

The last 12 months have shown how important it is to have a strong voice representing the industry. We are an authoritative voice among UK and destination governments, business groups and authorities, as a result of the strong evidence-based approach and broad industry perspective we bring.

Stop Sickness Scams

ABTA has made it a priority to help stamp out fraudulent holiday sickness claims through a range of lobbying and communications work. With the support of Members, our Stop Sickness Scams campaign has achieved real progress in tackling some of the root causes behind the 500% rise in claims, which has cost the wider industry tens of millions of pounds.

Thanks to these efforts, the Government has now committed to bringing sickness claims abroad in line with the fixed costs regime for personal injury claims in the UK. And under the Financial Claims and Guidance Bill, claims management companies (CMCs) will be banned from cold calling people about holiday sickness claims. These are big achievements for the campaign and we expect them to make a real difference to the number of claims travel companies and holiday firms receive. We will continue to monitor this issue and pursue changes to provide further protection from these false claims.

Credit card charges

ABTA has been vocal in highlighting to Government and regulators, both publicly and privately, the detrimental effect the ban on passing on credit and debit card fees will have on the travel industry, particularly travel agents. ABTA continues to lobby the Government and regulatory authorities to take action to help bring these costs down.

Package Travel Regulations and ATOL reform

Following years of review and revision at European and UK Government level, the new Package Travel Regulations will come into force on 1 July. ABTA has played a leading role in consulting with Members on proposed changes, and in representing their views to Government. We have also been active in sharing Members' views on ATOL reform highlighting what this change means for the industry and lobbying to make important changes.

Airline insolvency

The Government's choice to repatriate all customers following the collapse of Monarch – whether they had ATOL protection or not – showed the inconsistencies and flaws in the existing protection scheme.

ABTA publicly highlighted these points and called for a review into airline insolvency – which the Government has since announced. We are working to make sure the voice of the industry is heard in this debate, along with the travelling public.

Brexit

Our aim is to maintain ABTA as the voice of the industry on Brexit, by publishing evidence-based reports on the value of UK outbound travel to the EU, and by communicating the priority issues for the travel industry and the travelling public.

These reports have helped to make the case to officials in Brussels, destination governments and the UK Government about getting a Brexit deal which supports travel. We have also convened industry debate and discussion by holding an event with 150 leaders from the sector, and worked to maintain consumer confidence by offering comment to the media.

Air passenger duty

ABTA is one of the founding members and a leading voice in the Fair Tax on Flying campaign as we work with industry partners in seeking a 50% cut in APD. We were encouraged that the Government listened to the issues raised by the campaign when it chose to freeze APD for economy flights in the 2017 Budget.

Good connectivity and economical air travel will be important when Britain leaves the EU, and we are working hard with our partners to put this case to Government.

World events



- Extreme weather causes flight cancellations

March 2018



- The Government publishes the new Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations (PTR)

April 2018



- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force

May 2018

ABTA Highlights



- Brexit Breakfast Briefing event
- ABTA signs up to the Roundtable for Human Rights in Tourism



- ABTA welcomes closure of legal loophole which gave rise to fake sickness claims
- ABTA partners with the City of London Police to launch campaign to tackle travel fraud



- ABTA supports Members with support on GDPR and PTR with guidance notes and webinars



Sustainable Travel Seminar –6th July 2017



Complaints handling workshop –Manchester October 2017



ABTA Regional meeting South West – March 2018

ABTA on the road

In recent years, ABTA has been improving and increasing our face-to-face engagement with Members, as well as providing more learning and training opportunities. Our programme of events now consists of a combination of free and paid-for events, all developed in the interests of supporting Members.

Regional business meetings

More than 500 Members and Partners came to ABTA's 22 free-to-attend regional meetings last year. The regional meetings cover a wide-range of relevant topics, led by senior members of the ABTA team, and also provide an opportunity for Members to network with colleagues and peers in their locality.

In what has been a year of significant regulatory change for the industry, these meetings were an opportunity to gain insight and practical advice on subjects such as new Package Travel Regulations, data protection regulation and credit and debit card charges.

Conferences and events

Over 2,000 people attended ABTA's seminars and conferences in the last 12 months. ABTA's optional, paid-for events are a chance for more in-depth learning and training at a competitive price, ensuring Members have access to high quality, development opportunities. ABTA launched 14 new events this year, with excellent feedback from delegates.

Following further Member feedback, we are holding more events outside of London, including Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Glasgow.

Industry events, exhibitions and conferences

ABTA's experts have been providing advice at industry events on issues such as the changes to GDPR and Package Travel Regulations. We've also hosted an ABTA stand at high profile travel shows such as the Business Travel Show and World Travel Market. We have presented at each of our 12 Partner universities and two colleges during the year across the country as a commitment to help educate the next generation about the industry. Lecturers and students have also benefitted from attending our regional business meetings and building links with ABTA Members in their regions.

"Over 2,000 people attended ABTA's seminars and conferences in the last 12 months"

The Travel Convention

The 2017 Travel Convention was held in The Azores, where the theme was "The Next Chapter". Speaker topics included 'The future for cruise', 'The political landscape' and 'A world of emerging technologies'. This year's convention will be in Seville and will take place from 8-10 October.



ABTA's chairman Noel Josephides gives his closing speech at the Travel Convention 2017 in the Azores.

Travel Brit Awards

We continue to support the Travel Brit Awards – the only award ceremony celebrating agents working in domestic tourism. The award category 'Best use of ABTA Branding' is open to all Members to enter.

Some upcoming events for Members and Partners. Sign up at abta.com/events

EVENT	LOCATION	DATE
Delivering Customer Service Excellence	London	17 May
Advanced Travel Marketing	Manchester	24 May
Solo Travel Conference	London	21 June
Cyber Security and Fraud in Travel	London	20 June
Future Talent in the Travel Industry	London	3 July
Communicating FCO and other Travel Advice to Customers	Manchester	11 July



DID YOU KNOW...

75%

of people expect their holiday company to be a member of ABTA

76%

of people feel more confident booking a holiday with an ABTA Member

63%

of people feel less positively about companies that are not ABTA Members

68%

of people feel that ABTA's help and advice in the event of a crisis is essential



ABTA was voted a consumer Superbrand in 2018



Register online: abta.com/memberzone

Key contacts

Membership administration

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Questions and changes relating to your membership.

Financial protection

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Information on financial protection and accounting procedures.

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