

Thomas Cook Collapsed, Other European Airlines on Brink

A sad story of Thomas Cook: *being reported only for the sake of reporting.*



Its official now. By 23 September 2019, the 178-year-old company, Thomas Cook (TCG.L) along with a trio of subsidiary airlines has collapsed. Its stores across Northamptonshire have shut their doors. Thomas Cook branches in Weston Favell and Northampton's Abington Street have also closed for good. Two travel stores in Kettering in Lower Street and at Asda, stores in Wellingborough's Swansgate Centre and Corporation Street in Corby have also closed.

Hitherto known as a travel giant, its thousands of employees have been rendered jobless. This includes about 1,000 workers at their nearby Peterborough HQ.

Today, the grand old travel firm finds itself being put into compulsory liquidation. A weekend of frantic talks could not save Thomas Cook. Tens of thousands of its holidaymakers have been left in the lurch around the globe.

The closure of Thomas Cook and the subsequent cancellation of all its flights has forced the launch of an operation by the Government and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). It is one of the largest repatriation in recent British history. This has been codenamed Operation Matterhorn.

This repatriation is hugely complex and the CAA and the government are working around the clock to support the Thomas Cook customers. All such passengers currently overseas who are booked to return to the UK over the next two weeks will be brought home as close as possible to their booked return date by providing new flights to return to the UK.

A CAA spokesman clarified:

“The Government and the Civil Aviation Authority are now working together to do everything we can to support passengers due to fly back to the UK with Thomas Cook between September 23 and October 6. Depending on your location, this will be either on CAA-operated flights or by using existing flights with other airlines.

If you are already abroad you will find all the information you need about your arrangements to get home on this website. If you are due to depart from a UK airport with Thomas Cook Airlines, please do not travel to your UK airport as your flight will not be operating and you will not be able to travel.

These repatriation flights will only be operating for the next two weeks (until October 6). After this date you will have to make your own travel arrangements. From a small number of locations, passengers will have to book their own return flights.”

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Virgin Atlantic is one of the airlines taking part in the CAA scheme. A Virgin Atlantic spokesperson stated: “We’re sorry to learn that Thomas Cook has ceased trading earlier today and recognise the impact on its customers and staff in the UK and abroad. Virgin Atlantic is working closely with the CAA to repatriate Thomas Cook customers impacted in Cuba, Jamaica and the United States, to ensure they will be able to complete

their journey as planned. We have allocated available space on our scheduled flights, and are also providing special flights to repatriate Thomas Cook passengers abroad.”

Similarly, a representative for the easyJet airline stated: “We are sorry to see the news about Thomas Cook and appreciate the anxiety that their customers will be facing now. easyJet is working with the CAA to provide a fully crewed A320 aircraft to support the repatriation efforts over the coming days.”

Besides, British Airways is also offering flights for Thomas Cook passengers returning to the UK from destinations like New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Cancun.

Aviation analysts observe that the strains that sank Thomas Cook weigh on other European airlines as well. Several such companies are struggling with similar problems.

Two small operators, Aigle Azur and XL Airways, are before the French bankruptcy courts today. The list of similar bankruptcies is long: Monarch, Air Berlin and Alitalia failed in 2017, Primera and Cobalt in 2018, and Germania, Flybmi and Iceland’s WOW so far in 2019.

Today in aviation sector, there is very little left for cheer. Larger European carriers are not immune from the threat of collapse. Regional operator Flybe’s sale to a Virgin Atlantic-led consortium just managed to avoid its closure. Third-ranked low-cost operator Norwegian Air (NWC.OL), which has bled cash while making inroads in the transatlantic market, somehow managed to get a reprieve from creditors last week, postponing repayment on \$380 million in debt for up to two years.

Customers can find out how to book on to the repatriation flights through the CAA website: www.thomascook.caa.co.uk.

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