

This month's 'Movers and shakers' focuses on the people who exert influence on the travel industry. For information on protecting your holiday booking, see p78

High-flyers in the travel world

MOVERS AND SHAKERS



THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION
Stephen Kaufer
Tripadvisor founder

When Stephen Kaufer started planning a family holiday, he became so frustrated at the lack of accessible, independent information that he got the idea of starting a website.

The American businessman went on to co-found what has become the most popular travel-review website.

Tripadvisor and its related sites offer independent reviews and advice from travellers on hotels, destinations and attractions.

Today, it has more than 15 million reviews and opinions.

Kaufer, now the president and CEO of TripAdvisor, says that the site allows 'travellers to cut through the marketing hype and clutter and get the whole truth in an easy-to-use format'.



THE BUDGET FLIGHT KING
Michael O'Leary
CEO, Ryanair

The outspoken and larger-than-life Ryanair boss is without a doubt one of the most high-profile figures in the airline industry. He's had spats with everyone, from his competitors to airport regulators and the EC.

But Michael O'Leary is above all a shrewd businessman who has transformed the European flight scene and turned the carrier into one of the world's most well-known airlines.

He started his career as a tax accountant before joining Ryanair in the late 1980s and importing the no-frills approach made so successful by Southwest Airlines in the US.

This year, Ryanair is predicted to carry more than 50 million passengers and it says that numbers may rise to as many as 82 million a year by 2012.



THE CRUISE CHIEF
David Dingle
CEO, Carnival

David Dingle is a key player in the world of cruises, which have enjoyed a resurgence in recent years. The number of Britons taking cruises has doubled in a decade and is set to hit 1.5 million this year.

Dingle is managing director and CEO of Carnival UK, which has brands including P&O Cruises, Cunard and Ocean Village.

He joined P&O Cruises in 1978, and has been responsible for expanding the P&O Cruises fleet, which now includes Ventura – the biggest cruise ship built for the UK market.



THE PACKAGE HOLIDAY BOSS
Andy Cooper
Director general, Federation of Tour Operators

Andy Cooper is head of the FTO, which represents the UK's largest tour operators. It has helped bring improvements to foreign holidays, particularly in health, safety and hygiene. In July, it merged with the UK's other leading travel trade association, Abta, with Cooper becoming its head of development.



THE CAMPAIGNER
Tricia Barnett
Director, Tourism Concern

Tricia Barnett is director of a charity that campaigns against exploitation in tourism. It works to ensure tourism helps local people – such as fighting for the rights of trekking porters in the Himalayas, Kilimanjaro and Machu Picchu. It fights rights abuses and helps tourists make informed choices. She is a trustee of the Travel Foundation, which works with industry to make all travel operations more sustainable.

The way we were

25 years ago, November 1983

We watched TV for between three and four hours a day on average (more than any other Western European country), despite there being just four channels.

Three quarters of people were unhappy

with Channel 4 – which had been broadcasting for a year – more than any other channel. By 2007, we had many more channels, but still watched for just under three and a half hours a day, on average.



50 years ago, autumn 1958

Massage creams, plastic suits and slimming pills that contained laxatives were among the methods of losing weight that we said were a waste of time.

We warned that drugs that increase metabolism

may in fact be 'quite unpleasant'.

On the plus side, we said that starch-reduced bread rolls, such as Figgerolls, might help because they had less carbohydrates than ordinary rolls.

Dad smelt gas in daughter's bedroom after new boiler put in When service breaks down

UTILITIES

Imagine being left without heating or hot water in the depths of winter, when your boiler breaks. Then imagine it taking several attempts over three months to get a working boiler.

That's exactly what happened to the Browning family, who contacted us in frustration at the problems they had.

Tim and Catherine Browning paid British Gas more than £11,000 to fit a new boiler and hot water system in December 2007.

By February, the couple's hot water was extremely hot. British Gas engineers visited twice to try to sort out the problem. The second time they had to disconnect the boiler due to it being 'immediately dangerous'.

A new boiler and pipes were installed by 12 March. On 15 March, Tim smelt gas in the bedroom of their daughter Lyra.

Tim called the National Grid, which confirmed the leak and ordered the boiler shouldn't be used. British Gas soon fixed the leak and the boiler has worked fine since then.

Catherine wrote to British Gas to complain about the problems,



Catherine Browning with Lyra in the bedroom where gas was smelt

which included periods when they had no heating or hot water.

When she received no reply, Which? got in touch on her behalf.

A British Gas spokesman said it had no record of the letter. He added: 'Unfortunately, some of the parts from the boiler manufacturer were faulty, so we've undertaken remedial work free of charge to rectify them. We've apologised for the inconvenience and have agreed to refund £800 as a gesture of goodwill.'

Tim said: 'Our confidence in the service provided by British Gas is by now destroyed.'

British Gas is the biggest boiler servicing provider in the UK.

We received 243 complaints about the company in the past year (August to August), more than any firm apart from BT.

These complaints ranged from disputes about billing to issues over repairs.

ONLINE

We have information on the best boiler servicing contract for you, plus Best Buy boilers

www.which.co.uk/advice/buying-a-boiler-servicing-contract

WHICH? SAYS

Our lawyer Peter McCarthy tells you how to avoid problems with boiler services

Before work starts, ensure your contract gives a fixed price and details all the work that's going to be done.

Work must be carried out using 'reasonable care and skill' – under the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982. If it's not, the trader will be in breach of contract so ask them to put the problems right free of charge.

If the problems aren't resolved, collect evidence, including photographs and keep all documents.

Give the trader one last chance to solve the problems and say you'll take them to the small claims court if they don't. See *Which?* July 2008, p18 – or www.which.co.uk/scc – for more advice on doing this.



Green car advice

The *Which? Complete Guide to Greener Driving* is on sale in Asda, Borders, Sainsbury's, Tesco and WH Smith, at £6.99, with tips on saving money and fuel, and reviews of the UK's 100 cars with the lowest CO2 emissions. To buy a copy at £5.99, call 01992 822800 and quote GDRIVM.



Financial protection

While savings of up to £50,000 (£100,000 in joint accounts) are now protected if a bank goes bust – following changes to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme – we're concerned that in some instances this protection only covers your savings with a banking group – not with each individual banking brand within that group. To check how your bank is protected, See www.which.co.uk/protect_yoursavings for more information.

Laser treatment

The government stopped plans to deregulate lasers used in cosmetic procedures such as skin treatments from 1 October, after campaigning by Which? and industry members. Our health campaigner Jenny Driscoll said thousands more people could have been needlessly harmed if the plan had gone ahead. Visit www.which.co.uk/laser for our guide to this area.



News direct to you

You can get daily consumer news stories direct to your desktop by subscribing to the Which? news RSS feed. Visit www.which.co.uk/newsfeeds to sign up and learn more about RSS feeds.