

## Take-Off

Are your seat-belts fastened? I'm your pilot and I'm taking you on holiday, and it's going to be an exhilarating, if sometimes bumpy ride. We'll be meeting all kinds of people, from fly-by-nights and multi-millionaires to reps, tour managers and the people who try to help when a holiday goes wrong. But that won't happen to us, of course!

This is your story too, whether you're going to lie in the sun on a package holiday or do something more cultural on an escorted tour. During this trip you're going to change completely from someone rather shy and pale-skinned, who's never been abroad before, to the outgoing, suntanned man or woman of the world that you always wanted to be. Instead of eating fish and chips or pie and mash, you'll be dining on seafood paella or moussaka, and you'll be washing it down with lots of different wines rather than beer or lemonade. And when you get home, your tastes and outlook on life will be changed forever.

The holidays we take reflect the people we are – or aspire to be. The image of package holidays dating from the 1960s means many people turn up their noses at the thought of it, and don't always realise they're on a package when they're relaxing in some distant part of the world, or sightseeing in a vibrant city. There's a serious side to this too as the package is now threatened as never before, and we don't enjoy the same level of security on a do-it-yourself holiday.

But let's leave that till later. It's the early 1950s and we're off to sunny Spain. It's going to take four hours to get there because this plane can't fly over the Alps and has to take the long way round, and we'll have to stop to re-fuel. When we get there no-one will speak English, and as we don't speak any foreign languages we'll have to point at things. We might be going camping or to a small hotel but don't worry – bigger hotels with private bathrooms are coming, and that's something we don't all have at home.

All set? Then hang on tight and Let's Go!

# PART ONE: PACKAGE HOLIDAYS

## Chapter One

### 1950-1965: The Pioneers

How did package holidays get started? There are various claims to have been the first, but the most persuasive is by a Russian émigré called Vladimir Raitz who started Horizon Holidays in 1950. The attraction was not only sun ... but meat. In the long years of austerity after the Second World War food rationing meant meat was off the menu on most days, unless you were on a Horizon holiday to a campsite in Corsica.

Another of the pioneers, Travel Club of Upminster, chose Switzerland as its first post-war holiday destination in 1947 because it was a land of plenty. Its founder, Harry Chandler, wrote: 'I painted a glowing picture of what Switzerland was like – plenty of food, shops full of goods, virtually pre-war conditions and a complete contrast to England at that time with its shortages, electricity cuts and hard times.'

But while Travel Club's customers faced a gruelling journey by cross-Channel ferry, and then by train through war-torn France, Horizon pioneered a concept that soon became the norm for package holiday operators. It chartered a series of weekly flights, with fixed holiday durations of seven or fourteen nights by the beach. Whether Raitz really was the first will probably never be known for sure, as Thomas Cook – which shied away from mass tourism until much later – had advertised an eight-week series of summer charter flights to Cannes in the South of France more than a decade earlier. Holiday prices including all meals were from £15/5/- (£15.25) staying at the Hotel Londres, about £900 in today's money. Even Thomas Cook can't be sure those flights actually operated, however. The year was 1939 and Europe was on the brink of war.

The package holiday pioneers were a mixture of astute businessmen who spotted that air travel was about (literally) to take off, and amateurs who liked taking holidays themselves and rather fancied having a go at organising them. But whoever they were, the challenges were immense. There might have been plenty of aircraft around to charter, many of them converted from military use after the war. But a strict licensing regime was in place to protect airlines such as British European Airways (BEA), a predecessor of British Airways, which

operated regular scheduled flights. Air travel was a luxury and way beyond the pocket of the average person.

But there was pent-up demand to travel abroad, as Britain's economic prospects started to improve and some people wanted to revisit the places they had served in during the war, or on National Service. Until now, the vast majority of people who went on holiday abroad went for the experience, to better their minds. A few wealthy people might have gone to the grand hotels of Europe to enjoy the sea or a few rounds of golf, but the idea of going abroad primarily to soak up the sun – with an adventure in food, drink and possibly romance thrown in – was beyond most people's pockets, and imaginations. People went to the British seaside for that, and Butlin's – whose first holiday camp opened at Skegness in 1936 – offered a kind of holiday package. But people often didn't see the sun, and the food and drink were the same dull fare as at home. As for romance, the saucy seaside postcard nudged, winked but often didn't deliver.

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Vladimir Raitz was working for the Reuters news agency in London, when his own holiday to Corsica in 1949 involved an almost 48-hour journey in each direction, by train through France then a six-hour ferry trip from Marseille to Calvi. He had the idea of setting up a holiday company but wanted a better experience for his customers – and that meant flying. But this was before the jet age, and larger aircraft that would transform the economics of holidays by air. The workhorse of the skies was the Douglas DC-3, later known as the Dakota, which first entered service in 1936. It stood on the tarmac at an angle of about 30 degrees, meaning anyone sitting towards the front faced a steep climb up the aisle from the door at the rear – enough to make some passengers feel sick even before getting airborne! Raitz saw an opportunity, but he hadn't reckoned with officialdom.

The licensing rules stated that package holidays could not be sold for less than the normal return air fare, which was £70 to Nice in the South of France, the nearest airport to Corsica served by BEA. Horizon wanted to charge less than half that, £32/10/- (£32.50) for a week all-in (£1,025 in today's money), including camping, all meals and unlimited wine – a stark example of how expensive air travel was in 1950. The licensing authorities said no, but in the

end it agreed as long as Horizon sold only to members of a club, in this case students and teachers.

Horizon's first flight took off in May 1950, with a target of 350 passengers to break even during sixteen weekly flights. With a top speed of 170 mph, the trusty DC-3 reached Lyon in three hours where it had to refuel. Six hours after leaving Gatwick – 'there was hardly another plane on the tarmac', Raitz related – the group arrived in Calvi to be greeted by the municipal band. He may not have realised it at the time, but the package holiday age had begun.

Why would people who could afford to travel by air in these early days want to stay in a campsite rather than a hotel – with only a 'primitive open air dining room' and sanitary block? Cost was one consideration, but another was that there were few affordable hotels of good standard in coastal resorts. Raitz had also checked out Mallorca, which would soon become a mainstay of the package holiday business, but found only a few old hotels and deserted beaches. Corsica it was, then, and Horizon's first holidaymakers had a great time although the company lost money in the first season.

By 1952 the red tape had been eased, the students and teachers restriction no longer applied, and the stage was set for growth not only by Horizon, but some of the larger travel companies of the time. But the restriction on package holiday prices not undercutting the regular air fare remained for about twenty years, as state-owned airlines were protected by their governments. In 1952 Horizon started flying to Mallorca despite objections from BEA, and by the end of 1953 it had made enough money to contemplate serious expansion with flights added to the Costa Brava in northern Spain, and Sardinia, with many other destinations under consideration. 'When I went to Menorca there was just one hotel,' recalled Raitz. 'When I first went to Benidorm there was just one hotel owned by the Mayor – everything was virgin territory.'

Thomas Cook was well established but its main focus was escorted tours, air, rail and sea tickets, and foreign currency. Other major travel companies of that time included Sir Henry Lunn and the Polytechnic Touring Association, which could both trace their roots to the nineteenth century as organisers of travel for health, sport and education. When they merged in the 1960s to create Lunn Poly, it established a name that lasted half a century as the largest chain of retail travel agents in the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1953 a major new competitor to Horizon emerged, to focus on beach holidays as well as escorted tours. Universal Sky Tours, later simply Skytours, fought many battles with the licensing authorities, and had to fly to Mallorca via Maastricht in Holland, with some other flights operating from Blackbushe airport in Hampshire so not to compete in BEA's catchment area around London. The founder of Universal Sky Tours was a mercurial character called Ted Langton, who had made his name running coach tours before the war and now wanted to take advantage of the many aircraft available for charter.

*'The age of mass holiday travel by air was dawning.'*

Those early charter flights were often hair-raising, with safety concerns meaning that some airlines were stripped of their operating licences. Delays caused by faulty equipment were commonplace, and accidents occurred although few were fatal. Noisy, unpressurised aircraft such as the DC-3 offered a very uncomfortable ride in bad weather and could not fly at high altitude, meaning they had to go 'the long way round' to avoid the Alps. When the pressurised, 32-seat Vickers Viscount aircraft was introduced in 1953, powered by turboprop rather than piston engines, Harry Chandler's Travel Club of Upminster switched from rail tours to flying. 'I was able to write in my brochure lyrical accounts of travelling on a Viscount, describing how you could actually balance a halfpenny on the table in front of you as the aircraft sped through the skies at 300 mph,' he wrote. 'Such simple explanations as this, I felt sure, convinced many people that flying was comfortable and safe. The age of mass holiday travel by air was dawning.'

Travel Club was still focusing on mountain resorts rather than sunshine holidays, booking passengers on scheduled airlines such as BEA, Air France and Swissair rather than taking on the much greater risk of chartering its own flights. Its first charter, with Swissair, came in 1956 – allowing a dramatic cut in prices, but risking financial collapse if the holidays failed to sell.

'We had forty-four seats on the aircraft, a 44-seater coach to carry out the transfer from Basle to Seefeld, and eighty-eight beds in the Hotel Karwendelhof,' recalled Chandler. 'With a combination like that, anything over a 90 per cent load factor meant that we could not fail. We did not fail, and I decided then and there that charter flights were, to quote Lord Thomson, a "licence to print money".'

Expansion to Italy and Spain followed, and in 1960 Chandler took another big step forward and claimed a travel industry ‘first’ by chartering a jet aircraft – an Air France Caravelle. The French-built aircraft was faster than turboprops and could carry eighty passengers, and Travel Club squeezed two daily return flights out of it – from Heathrow to Basle and later from Heathrow to Perpignan. Flights were on Saturdays, when the aircraft would otherwise have been idle, so prices were keen. This established another pattern which tour operators used for decades, while today low-cost airlines can often squeeze in three return trips.

Few tour operators relied only on sunshine holidays, one reason being a shortage of hotels and another being that many people also wanted to fly to enjoy mountain resorts and cultural tours. When another new company, called appropriately Wings, was set up by the Ramblers Association in 1956, it hedged its bets. It sold holidays to resorts in the Alps, plus coach tours of Spain and Italy, in addition to the sunshine resorts of Palma, Mallorca and Laigueglia in Italy.

### **Eyewitness: Stewart Wild**

He first came to Clarksons Tours during school holidays in 1959 as a 16-year-old office boy, joining full-time in 1968. He was a director by the time of Clarksons’ catastrophic collapse in 1974, and later joined a management team for American Express tour operations.

*‘Clarksons started as a respected shipbroker and air freight company, but then it was asked to arrange an air charter to the World’s Fair in Brussels in 1958 where people had a great day out for £5, flying in a DC-3 from Southend to Ostend. Tom Gullick had joined the company from the Navy when he was twenty-seven, and by 1960 he was operating day and weekend trips by air for groups to the Dutch bulbfields, Paris and the Rhine Valley. 1964 was our first summer operating to Spain and I worked as a rep. Clients paid 27 guineas (£28.35) for a week’s full board at the Centrico Hotel in Calella, Costa Dorada, but flew only as far as Clermont Ferrand in France on a 40-seat Viking operated by Autair. Passengers then faced an overnight coach trip to Narbonne in the south of France for an early breakfast, where we met passengers coming home from Spain and swapped over all the luggage. It then took five hours on country roads in a Spanish coach across the border to Calella. The overall journey time from Luton airport to the hotel by plane and coach was not far short of twenty-four hours, but passengers never complained.*

*‘Tom Gullick's philosophy was to research what people were prepared to pay, and make the costs fit to offer unbeatable value. He would say to a hotel: “If you give me a low-price deal, I will guarantee that your beds are always full and extend your season as well.” Our customers were generally young singles and couples without children, and for many it was their first holiday abroad.*

*‘That same year, 1964, Tom sent me on a scouting mission to Mallorca. My job was to see what was going on in Arenal – which tour operators were using which hotels, and how successful they were. I was there the day that Fiesta Tours went bust – people were sitting on their suitcases in their hotel lobby wondering who was going to help them. Package holidays made foreign travel very affordable and brought that experience to the masses at a time when few people spoke a foreign language, and few Europeans spoke English. But there wasn't any protection when a company like Fiesta went bust, and this was the start of legislation and co-operation among tour operators to protect customers' money and safeguard the reputation of the industry.’*

Companies such as Wings grew rapidly despite the continuing licensing restrictions. In its second season, 1957, Wings had to put a leaflet into its brochure announcing the cancellation of holidays to Portugal because BEA had objected. Wings had planned two-week holidays costing 49 guineas (£51.45). BEA's return fare to Lisbon, not including any hotels or meals, was £54/18/- (£54.90 –about £1,225 in today's money.) Inevitably, however, the scheduled airlines hit back. By 1959 BEA was offering seat prices on less busy Viscount flights that could match charter prices, with none of the risk faced by travel firms chartering their own aircraft. On the other hand, charter flights became more comfortable and reliable as aircraft such as Viscounts, Britannias, DC-6s and DC-7s were retired by national airlines in favour of the latest models, joining charter fleets. But even aircraft such as these were small and slow compared to what was coming only a decade later. The 75-seat DC-6, for example, took five hours to reach Palma, Mallorca including a technical stop en route.

Spain did not dominate the package holiday business until the 1960s, and charters were hopping all over the Mediterranean to places including Sardinia, Perpignan (South of France) and Tangier in Morocco. The allure of some places was so great that people would travel a long way overland to get there, either all the way from England or from the nearest airport on the Continent. One

example was the Istrian coast, now in Croatia but then in Communist Yugoslavia (also see Chapter Six).

Christopher Lord's first job in travel was as a Wings rep in Lovran, along this coastline, in 1956. He had finished National Service and got the travel bug, while his brother Basil was a rep working for another company, Swans, just up the coast in Opatija. To get there and back involved a three-night train journey in each direction, but the following year, with a third brother called Stephen, they took a holiday in Opatija and planned their own tour operation, Lord Brothers.

*'We ran two-week holidays costing 48 guineas (£50.40) from a grand sounding address at Warwick House, Wimbledon. In fact it was our council flat.'*

'Italy was the major holiday destination at that time, as Spain hadn't got off the ground and France was too expensive,' recalls Christopher Lord. 'Our first customers were professional people, as we advertised exclusively in the *Sunday Times*. Yugoslavia was unbelievably cheap with good food and wine, and interesting excursions. I was dazzled by the place – the sights, the sounds and the smells. It was 1958, and we ran two-week holidays costing 48 guineas (£50.40) from a grand sounding address at Warwick House, Wimbledon. In fact it was our council flat.'

But instead of the arduous train journey, Lord Brothers chartered a DC-3 from Blackbushe airport to Graz in Austria, with the final leg by coach still taking twelve hours. 'It was all part of the fun in those days, but of course it wouldn't be acceptable now,' says Lord. 'Even the flight to Graz took five hours, non-stop if you were lucky but depending on tail winds.'

Another boost to tour operators at around this time was an increase in the overseas travel allowance from £10 to £25, with the cost of hotels, meals and resort transfers having to be accounted for on the infamous V Form. Currency restrictions, imposed after the war in a bid to redress the UK's Balance of Payments deficit, lasted until the late 1970s but were gradually eased. The licensing regime was also eased when the Air Transport Licensing Board started work in 1961, still protecting scheduled airlines but with a more liberal attitude. Britain was increasingly prosperous, with TVs starting to appear in living rooms and the war becoming a distant memory. In one of the most quoted political speeches of modern times, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan claimed in 1957 that 'most of our people have never had it so good'.

‘Our major competitors were Wings, Horizon and Yugotours, but on a personal level we were all very friendly and often shared charter flights,’ continues Lord. ‘Vladimir Raitz, and Ernest Welsman of Wings, were honourable men who didn’t resent competition, and would even give us advice. There was more than enough demand for all of us to do well. By 1961, when we were also selling holidays to Italy, Spain, France and Greece, Lord Brothers was profitable and people had the impression we were wealthy young men. But when customers started turning up and looking askance at our council flat, we decided we had to open an office and that was in Regent Street.’

By then it was chartering Viscount aircraft from British United Airways, run by Freddie Laker who became a household name in the 1970s when he launched cheap transatlantic flights called Skytrain. Laker started as an aircraft trader who made money during the Berlin airlift of 1948-49, and also operated the Channel Air Bridge carrying drivers and their cars to the Continent. Eventually Laker was to take over Lord Brothers, but the brothers ran it for ten years.

‘By 1960 we had a licence to print money, as we had so much cash on deposit with people paying us twelve weeks in advance, when we didn’t have to pay the airline or hotels until close to departure,’ says Lord. ‘The hotels were glad of our business, and our clients tipped well. Our first flights to Mallorca were in 1960, and word spread quickly that it was an unspoilt holiday paradise. There weren’t enough hotels, but as we had so much cash we started paying people up-front to get more hotels built.’

*The word gay had nothing to do with sexual orientation in those days, and when companies such as Lord Brothers stated in their brochures that ‘Opatija is always very gay at night’, they meant it was lively.*

Other tour operators with equally modest beginnings included Gaytours, soon to become big out of Manchester, a Blackpool company whose niche was organising end-of-season holidays for the town’s legions of seaside landladies, who were flush with cash by September. The word gay had nothing to do with sexual orientation in those days, and when companies such as Lord Brothers stated in their brochures that ‘Opatija is always very gay at night’, they meant it was lively.

Some idea of the heady excitement of that era comes in *Unfinished Journey*, the autobiography of another package holiday pioneer, Aubrey Morris (1919-

2008), a London taxi driver whose love of travel started when he took his cab on holiday to France and Italy. The man who would become the first boss of Thomson Holidays left school at fourteen and was a lifelong Socialist, witnessing the infamous 'Battle of Cable Street' in London's East End in 1936, when 300,000 protestors turned back a march by Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

In 1956 he set up Riviera Holidays, offering rail-based packages to the South of France. He knew nothing about the travel business and retained his cab driver's badge, selling mainly to other drivers and social clubs. But he learned that the vast majority of bookings were taken in the three weeks after Christmas, and one day in late December 1958 he was driving his cab down Piccadilly in London at five in the morning, when he saw a queue outside the Universal Sky Tours office.

'I was amazed; it was just after 5 a.m. but already there was a queue of people stretching around the block and further, waiting for the office to open at 9 a.m.,' he recalled. 'Excited, I drove down to Wilton Street by Victoria station where I saw a similar group of people waiting for Martin Rooks (another pioneering company) to start taking bookings. Eventually I worked my way back towards our office to find no queue, just one lady with a copy of our leaflet and a deposit. I dealt with the booking and sat there all morning receiving neither a phone call nor a visit. And, into the bargain, I lost a valuable day's work! It was a disaster.'

Little did he know that Riviera would soon become a competitor to Universal Sky Tours, and that the two would become the first tour operators bought by media conglomerate Thomson in 1965. Riviera developed a niche organising trips for fans of Tottenham Hotspur to watch their team play in Europe, but by 1961 it started selling package holidays. It soon abandoned its South of France roots to concentrate on Italy, mainly the Adriatic resorts of Rimini and Cattolica.

Other companies that started packages by air and coach in the early 1960s included Global and Cosmos, while Leroy Tours started in the 1950s. Lewis Leroy, known as 'the man in the beret', owned a hotel in Dover where coach groups would stay before joining a ferry, and the chef knew how to cook only one dish on the menu as no-one ever stayed more than one night! But none of

these companies was as big as ‘Captain’ Ted Langton’s Universal Sky Tours which had grown rapidly by 1960, challenging Horizon as market leader.

Morris describes Langton as ‘the archetypal buccaneering entrepreneur’, the most influential and innovative of his era. In 1962 Langton set up his own charter airline, Euravia, buying 97-seat Constellation aircraft and basing them at Luton airport, a ground-breaking move at that time. By 1964 he had replaced them with Britannia 102s, known as the ‘whispering giants’. Britannias were now being retired by scheduled airlines in favour of jets, and when available to charter airlines they brought further economies of scale to drive down holiday prices. Euravia then took the name Britannia, later becoming the UK’s leading charter airline, the name lasting for over forty years. Universal Sky Tours built its own hotels including the Arenal Park in Mallorca, and invested in others such as the 900-bed Taurus Park on the Costa Brava, one of the first giant holiday hotels.

### **Eyewitness: James McWilliam**

He set up Dixon Travel in Glasgow in 1952 and helped create Caledonian Airways. McWilliam turned 100 in 2014.

*‘I grew quickly by arranging coach tours to Blackpool and around Scotland, at a time when no-one owned a car. Ostend was considered a faraway place and that was the first foreign holiday I organised. As a travel agent I started booking flights to America and Canada, as people were emigrating from the Greenock and Port Glasgow areas in droves.*

*‘By the 1970s package holidays had become very popular and I took over a company called Sunseeker, and I also had a partnership with Vale of Leven Travel Agency for a tour operation called Volta Dixon. We operated some of the first holiday flights to the Mediterranean from Edinburgh and Aberdeen, whereas Thomson Holidays was well established in Glasgow. Edinburgh wasn’t interested in holiday flights at first, while Aberdeen, despite the oil boom, didn’t even have Customs or security. I was told I was mad to start selling Mallorca from Aberdeen, but it worked.*

*‘I also brought people into Scotland from the US on an airline called British Eagle, and in 1961 I met a pilot called Adam Thomson who wanted to set up a Scottish airline with a Scottish bank account. I took him unannounced to the Royal Bank of Scotland and told them we wanted to start an international*

*airline. They looked at us incredulously but told us to draw up a business plan, and we went back later that day where I put in £60 to form the company, and that's how Caledonian Airways started. Lots of local traders chipped in and we soon had £4,000. Our first flight was from Prestwick and I was involved in that airline for more than twenty years.*

*'In 1970 we took over British United to become British Caledonian, the largest independent airline in Britain, and we acquired a tour operation called Blue Sky and some resort hotels including two in Cala Millor, Mallorca. Gatwick became its main base and we fed a lot of traffic into Gatwick from Scotland. British Caledonian retained its Scottish identity right up until 1987 when it was taken over by British Airways.'*

Despite larger aircraft such as the Britannia, flying was still very expensive – especially at weekends, when most people wanted to travel, as fixed one- or two-week holiday periods used to be the norm in most jobs. As late as 1962, Swans was advertising rail travel to countries as far away as Spain and prices for Mallorca make an interesting comparison. Two-week holidays by air cost from £40/14/- (£40.70), but increased to £43/14/- (£43.85) at weekends. The equivalent holiday by rail cost from £30/16/6d (£30.82½), but you spent only ten rather than fourteen nights in your hotel as it took nearly forty-eight hours in each direction to get to and from Mallorca!

*'At seven thirty in the evening some half a dozen German men were blocking the doors to the dining room, and were actually manhandling the British clients away.'*

The British weren't the only ones starting to colonise parts of Spain. Even back then some resorts were developed to cater for British tastes while others concentrated on Germans or Scandinavians, who were also keen to escape the northern European climate. But when the British and Germans were mixed up in the same hotel there could be trouble, with memories of the war all too keen for some people. Vincent Cobb, who worked for Gaytours, witnessed this himself when investigating complaints that the well-organised Germans were 'posting sentries' at the dining room door. 'It did not take long for fights to break out, despite warnings from us to the hoteliers,' he wrote in *The Package Tour Industry*. 'At seven thirty in the evening some half a dozen German men were blocking the doors to the dining room, and were actually manhandling the British clients away. Suddenly the Brits reacted and a fight broke out. It was

bloody and quite vicious, and didn't stop until I persuaded the hotel owner to call the Guardia Civil.'

Horizon, meanwhile, was growing rapidly and trying to stay ahead of its increasing number of competitors by finding new destinations. It was the first tour operator to discover Menorca, in 1956, but Ibiza had to wait for the simple reason that it didn't have an airport. Horizon also started to develop the Costa del Sol. Raitz commented that there was no problem getting a licence to fly to Malaga as no-one had ever heard of it! Such places could still be considered exotic in the 1950s/early 1960s, and Raitz liked to be photographed with celebrities or glamour girls. Package holidays were becoming sexy.

But there were rogues around too, and the media began to report cases of people fleeced of their money or left stranded abroad when a company went bust. Although airlines had to apply for licences on tour operators' behalf, there was no requirement for holiday companies to safeguard people's money. The collapse of Fiesta Tours in July 1964 hit the headlines as it happened at the height of the summer season. TV crews turned up outside Fiesta's London headquarters to film its boss being confronted by angry crowds, and the travel industry launched a rescue mission.

ABTA (originally the Association of British Travel Agents, now simply ABTA – The Travel Association) had been set up in 1950, but didn't include any tour operators until 1959. It co-ordinated the rescue, with Travel Club's Harry Chandler persuading other companies to follow his example by giving Fiesta customers any empty seats on his flights, with Fiesta's owner stumping up £7,500 of his own money. The rescue was a success, the reputation of package holiday operators was saved, and thoughts turned to preventing a recurrence of this situation in future.

While all this was happening another tour operator was beginning its rapid growth, which would see it overtake Horizon and Universal Sky Tours to become the biggest kid on the block by the late 1960s. In 1958 it was running day trips to the Dutch bulbfields for £6, and Tom Gullick, its driving force, said: 'My happiest moment was standing at Rotterdam airport at the end of the day, watching the buses return from the bulbfields with the Dakota DC-3s lined up waiting to take our customers home. They were so happy because they had never believed they could afford to go abroad.'

By 1964, Clarksons was operating packages to Spain and gaining a reputation for 'pile them high, sell them cheap' marketing tactics that made a holiday in the sun affordable. A competitor, Ken Swan of Swans Tours, described Clarksons as 'incredibly cheap and cut-throat. Although a lot of people travelled with Clarksons who couldn't otherwise have afforded it, Clarksons cut corners and I'm afraid standards dropped.' Like Fiesta before it, the collapse of Clarksons ten years later was a turning point in consumer protection, but by then the package holiday had truly come of age.