

Information for Thomas Cook customers and staff

I have received this letter from the Secretary of State for Transport:

Dear John

The Thomas Cook Group has confirmed to my Department that it has ceased trading and been placed into compulsory liquidation. I am writing to set out the steps the Government is taking to support passengers and staff affected, and where your constituents can find further information if needed [see Annex below].

I recognise that this is a distressing situation for all involved, and I would like to assure you that the Government is committed to supporting those affected, including by providing repatriation flights free of charge. We have been contingency planning for some time to prepare for this scenario. The Government and UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have run similar operations in the past and will be working hard to minimise disruption for passengers and assist Thomas Cook's staff.

Despite the preparations and previous experience, the task before us represents the largest peacetime repatriation undertaken by the UK Government – more than 150,000 Thomas Cook customers are currently abroad. Some disruption and delay is inevitable and we ask for understanding, particularly for the Thomas Cook staff who, together with UK Government staff either in place or en route, are working to ensure the safe return of customers.

All Thomas Cook flights have now been cancelled and the CAA and UK Government are working together to get passengers home as close as possible to their planned date. Normally, the CAA's responsibility for bringing passengers back would extend only to customers whose trips are covered by the Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL) scheme, with the costs of assisting those passengers falling to the Air Travel Trust Fund (ATTF).

However, due to the unprecedented size of this operation there is insufficient capacity in the commercial aviation market to enable all of Thomas Cook's non-ATOL passengers to get home on other airlines. Some passengers would have to wait for a week, or longer, and many would suffer financial and personal hardship while they waited for an available flight with another airline. With tens of thousands of passengers abroad and with no easy means of returning to the UK, **I have therefore instructed the CAA to bring home without charge all those currently abroad and due to return to the UK.**

Our advice to passengers at this stage is to be patient and follow the guidance given by the CAA. **People should complete their holidays** and, in most circumstances, will not be flown home ahead of their scheduled return date. **A small number of passengers may need to book their own flight home and reclaim**

the costs. Passengers should check the dedicated website for more information – thomascook.caa.co.uk

The decision by the Thomas Cook Group's board will be deeply upsetting for their employees. DWP's **Jobcentre Plus** Rapid Response Service is there to help workers get back into employment. The Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Managers across the UK are ready to engage with the administrators to get started on this vital work. In the event of any redundancies, there are special arrangements for employees who are owed redundancy pay and notice pay by their insolvent employer: the Redundancy Payments Service in the Insolvency Service can pay statutory amounts owed to the former employees from the National Insurance Fund. Further information on pension questions can be found below. A cross-government Task Force is also being established to address the impact on employees and local communities (more detail will be shortly available)

Finally, I want to address directly the issue of the cost of this operation. The operation is modelled on the successful repatriation of passengers after the collapse of Monarch Airways. The final cost of that operation to taxpayers was about £50m. The repatriation effort for Thomas Cook is about twice the size. It has also been suggested in the press that the Government could have avoided the collapse with a bailout of up to £250m for the company and its shareholders. This was simply not the case, with no guarantee that such an injection would have secured the future of the company.

Should your constituents have any further questions, please direct them towards the CAA website (thomascook.caa.co.uk) in the first instance. Colleagues are also welcome to contact me with any questions.

Yours ever,
Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

ANNEX: Information for Thomas Cook customers and staff

Thomas Cook customers (including with those with flights, hotels or both) The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Department for Transport (DfT) have put in place an emergency plan to help Thomas Cook customers return to the UK – flights will be free of charge (or can be claimed back) while additional hotel costs, in the event of a departure delay, can be claimed on insurance. If Thomas Cook customers do not have insurance or are covered by ATOL, a hardship fund will be accessible to cover these costs in reasonable cases.

- Thomas Cook customers seeking information on their flights and on other issues should visit the dedicated website at thomascook.caa.co.uk – the best and quickest way to get information and access the helpline.
- British nationals overseas who require specific consular assistance, for example if they have a medical condition or issues with their travel documents, will be referred to consular staff from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Contact details for UK embassies and consulates can be found through <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>

- Wider consular assistance offered by the Foreign Office is set out in our guide to Supporting British nationals abroad:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>

Passengers arriving back in the UK on special repatriation flights:

The CAA will attempt to fly people to the airport they had originally booked. This will not always be possible and in such cases the CAA will arrange onward transfer the customers original return destination in the UK. MHCLG will work with local authorities and their Local Resilience Forums to provide welfare support for passengers requiring this, for example, if they arrive at anti-social hours.

For more information see thomascook.caa.co.uk

People booked and about to travel with Thomas Cook?

People in the UK should not go to the airport – there will be no further outbound Thomas Cook flights for passengers. In these cases, ATOL-protected trips will be refunded in line with the scheme. For those who do not have ATOL cover, they may be able to recover the cost of their holiday through their own credit or debit card company, or some travel insurance policies. Passengers should also contact their travel company to see if they can change their holiday or claim a refund. More information is available on the dedicated CAA website.

Thomas Cook Staff

The Government's Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Service stands ready to help people find a new job as soon as possible by offering tailored support. A Department for Work and Pensions's Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Service Team will be live across the UK and ready to begin working with administrators as soon as possible.

A cross-government Task Force is also being established to assist the staff and high-streets affect.

Staff with specific employment questions (including pensions) should visit thomascook.caa.co.uk or <https://www.ppf.co.uk/>

Customers with a future booking

For those who've booked holidays, hotels, flights or other services, they should visit thomascook.caa.co.uk for information on options to seek refunds.

Contact number

The **CAA's website is the best 'source of truth'** during this operation (thomascook.caa.co.uk). The CAA's call centre for Thomas Cook customers can be contacted as follows:

- Phoning from the UK (reduced rate): 0300 303 2800

- Phoning from overseas: +44 1753 330 330