



TRAVEL NEWS



Surge in French holidays

■ The enduring appeal of France, coupled with unrest in popular holiday destinations in the Middle East, as well as the ash cloud disruption, has seen an increase in British and French holidaymakers alike choosing l'Hexagone as their destination of choice this year.

According to new figures from the Office for National Statistics, the number of UK residents travelling abroad between February and April increased 6% year on year, and France appears to be benefiting from this trend.

Kate Stinchcombe-Gillies, of Holiday Lettings, says: "France is currently experiencing an 11% increase in demand year on year. The south of France is stealing much of the glory as usual. Antibes and Cannes have seen an 8% increase in enquiries."

And Owners Direct has observed a huge hike in bookings. Marketing manager Angela Southall says: "Owners Direct has seen a significant increase in enquiries for villa and other accommodation rentals in France over the past 12 months – with this time in 2011 being up 30% on the same period for 2010.

"Popular regions remain the same with Paris, Nice and Morzine being the top three. Paris is popular year round, with Nice favoured in July and August and Morzine in the winter months for skiing breaks.

The areas with the biggest year on year rise in demand include Provence, Aquitaine and Normandy. A week's self-catering in a villa in Normandy with Owners Direct would cost about £400."

These increases are further good news for those with holiday letting accommodation in France. The country was once again the world's top tourist destination in 2010 with 78.95 million foreign tourists. www.holidaylettings.co.uk www.ownedirect.co.uk www.statistics.gov.uk

■ In Paris, Ryanair has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with COMAC (Commercial Aircraft Corp of China) to participate in the development of the COMAC C919 aircraft for Ryanair. This aircraft would be designed to carry up to 200 passengers and is anticipated to be available from 2018. Ryanair states that the use of this new aircraft would enable the airline to lower costs and lower fares for its passengers across Europe. www.ryanair.com

■ Eurostar has launched the next phase of its environmental programme, Tread Lightly. Demonstrating a "commitment to champion the switch to more sustainable modes of transport" and "cement the operator's reputation as the greenest option for short-haul international travel in Europe", the programme includes a target to reduce CO2 emissions per traveller journey by 35% by 2012 (having already reached the original target of 25%), and to reduce carbon emissions across the remainder of its business by 25% by 2015. www.eurostar.com