



TravelRepublic.co.uk most user-friendly travel agent site in the uk: webcredible research

TravelRepublic.co.uk has been named the most user-friendly travel agent website in the UK, beating the likes of lastminute.com, Travelocity, Thomas Cook and Expedia, in new research from user experience consultants Webcredible.

Travel Republic knocked last year's winning travel agency Expedia into second place and was found to be the fourth most user-friendly site overall, behind airline sites British Airways, easyJet and Virgin Atlantic respectively.

Webcredible's annual 'Online Travel Usability' report investigates the usability of 20 travel websites in the UK, evenly split between travel agents and airline carriers. Scores are assigned to the websites based on a pre-specified list of guidelines including: "Provide an effective calendar," "Allow flexibility when completing the first step" and "Provide clear flight confirmation page." (See additional information at the bottom of the release for full list)

Travel Republic managing director Paul Furner said: "We are delighted to be the highest ranked travel agent website in Webcredible's annual Online Travel Usability report. To score above the industry giants such as Expedia, Thomas Cook and lastminute.com is a great achievement by our in-house IT team.

"However, there is never a moment to rest in this market. We have a number of exciting technology innovations under way which should help us further improve the customer experience."

Webcredible is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and respected user experience consultancies in the UK. Director Trenton Moss said: "Increasing the usability of a travel website will increase the success users have in finding and booking flights – it's as simple as that. Improved usability will also lead to an increase in loyalty and return site visitors, and an improvement in the perception of the online and offline brand. Usability is particularly important for those travel brands that rely entirely on their online channel to sell their products and services."

Comments within the report specifically praised Travel Republic for having "a clear and well-organised results page which sorted flights by price. It also provided a quick overview of the best available fares per airline by highlighting

flight prices that included baggage.” It also commended the site for “a good range of options to sort search results which was displayed prominently right above the long list of search results.”

Moss added: “Usability is essential so that site visitors can find the flights they’re looking for quickly and intuitively. A poor user experience could lead to customers going elsewhere and could also make customers reluctant to complete other transactions online, such as checking in online.

“The online travel market is highly competitive with many companies offering the same flights and packages at similar prices, and if customers find one site difficult to use, they will often seek out a competitor.”

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www.webcredible.co.uk
- To download the full report go to: <http://www.webcredible.co.uk/user-friendly-resources/white-papers/travel-usability-2010.pdf>

Additional information:

Travel agent website usability result:

Travel agent website	Total score	2009 score
Travel Republic (www.travelrepublic.co.uk/)	73	-
Expedia.co.uk (www.expedia.co.uk)	68	70
Travelocity (www.travelocity.co.uk)	68	65
Ebookers (www.ebookers.com)	65	56
Opodo (www.opodo.co.uk)	64	62
Travelbag (www.travelbag.co.uk)	63	54
Netflights (www.netflights.com)	62	56
Lastminute (www.lastminute.com)	62	59
STA travel (www.statravel.co.uk)	56	58
Thomas Cook (www.thomascook.com)	47	47
Average score	62.8	58.7

What the researchers looked at:

Webcredible analysed the websites of 20 UK online travel agents and airline carriers in April 2010.

Each website was evaluated against 20 best practice guidelines and assigned a score of 0 to 5 for each guideline, with 5 being the maximum. With 20 guidelines in total, websites were assigned a total Web Usability Index rating out of 100.

The guidelines against which Webcredible benchmarked the 20 travel sites were:

Flight search

1. Provide a clear and well designed 'first step' of the booking process
2. Offer functionality to aid the booking process
3. Provide an effective calendar
4. Allow flexibility when completing the first step

Search results and flight summary

5. Provide a clear results page
6. Allow sorting & manipulation of the results
7. Make pages "share friendly"
8. Support comparison shoppers
9. Display the full price (or an estimate) as early as possible
10. Make it easy to refine the search or look for another flight
11. Provide information on each airport
12. Use a clear flight confirmation page

Booking pages

13. Provide a contact number through the booking process
14. Use appropriate up-selling
15. Display a clear progress bar
16. Ensure your flight cancellation/change rules are clear and findable

Errors and error handling

17. Provide a clear error summary
18. Ensure all errors are clearly highlighted next to the individual form fields
19. Provide explicit instructions on how to correct errors
20. Ensure the system is able to cope with common errors