



THOMAS COOK OFFERS FREE CANCELLATIONS TO TOURISTS HEADING FOR TURKEY

News / Airlines



Thomas Cook is offering free holiday cancellations to customers due to fly out to Turkey on Sunday following the failed military coup in the country. But other operators, including British Airways, Thomson and First Choice said flights were returning to normal following temporary cancellations.

According to the Association of British Travel Agents (Abta), 50,000 British holidaymakers are currently believed to be in Turkey. The country was rocked on Friday and Saturday by violence in Istanbul and Ankara, which claimed more than 250 lives. Most of the holidaymakers are staying in coastal resorts several hundred miles from the cities where the violent coup was suppressed.

Abta said the situation remained fluid and urged travellers to follow the latest Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice. The FCO said the situation in Turkey appeared to be calming but added: "The security environment, however, remains potentially volatile. Following earlier disruption, flights to and from airports in Turkey are returning to normal, although some disruption remains."

It told travellers to "avoid public places, in particular demonstrations, and remain vigilant. Take sensible precautions if you are in the vicinity of any military or security forces." The FCO said the

coastal resorts “do not appear to be significantly affected at present”, but there was evidence there had been violence in Marmaris, one of Turkey’s south-western coastal resorts.

Tim Trott, a British tourist, told the BBC he had seen a helicopter “pushing down air-to-ground fire” on a nearby location where the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was believed to have been staying. He said there had been armed soldiers in the hotel lobby. “No one I am speaking to is looking to venture out,” he said. “Most of the Turkish contingent [who were staying in the hotel] have now gone.”

Thomson and First Choice said they would be running all of their flights on Monday as normal to the resorts of Bodrum, Antalya, Izmir and Dalaman. “All flights departing on Monday 18 July 2016 are operating as normal,” a spokeswoman said. “We are continuing to closely monitor the situation, together with the relevant authorities. The safety and security of our customers and crew is our highest priority and we follow the advice of the UK government and the FCO.”

Thomas Cook had been advising customers to “stay in their hotels until further notice”, but a later statement from the company – which offers holidays to places such as Marmaris, Bodrum and Antalya – said: “Our flight and holiday programme is operating as normal and our staff on the ground in resort tell us that everything is calm and customers are enjoying their holidays.”

British Airways on Sunday was due to run two of its three scheduled flights to Istanbul, following earlier cancellations, but said they might be subject to delays. “We continue to keep our flights to Turkey under review and we recommend that customers check ba.com for the latest information,” a spokesman said. “The safety and security of our customers and crew are always our top priority and we would never operate a flight unless it was safe to do so.”

An easyJet spokeswoman said the airline did not expect any changes to its schedule, while Turkish Airlines advised passengers to check the latest flight information for cancellations.

The attempted coup came after many tourists had already abandoned plans to holiday in Turkey this year. In May, Thomas Cook said summer holiday bookings to Turkey had slumped. Last year it accounted for 23% of the tour operator’s bookings but this had fallen to 5% even before the weekend’s violence.

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