

Belgium

Key Market Message

The National Bank of Belgium released flash estimates in late April for the first quarter economic performance. This showed gross domestic product falling 1.6 per cent quarter-on-quarter on a seasonally and calendar adjusted basis. This came after a 1.7 per cent decline in the final quarter of 2008.

Year-on-year, the GDP was down 3 per cent in the first three months of the year, far worse than the one per cent slump witnessed in the previous three-month period, which was revised from a 0.8 per cent fall estimated earlier.

With the global downturn hitting Belgium's export-driven economy, the first quarter performance showed that the country had officially entered recession. However recent industry feedback has stated that while bookings were slow at the beginning of the year, business now seems to be getting back to normal. This is reflected in the in Belgian arrivals to Australia in March, returning to the same level as in 2008 and an increase in April after a 15 per cent decrease in February 2009 albeit off a small base.

Source: <http://www.fxstreet.com/news/forex-news/article.aspx?StoryId=b425e6a8-becb-4ff7-b7ce-b7d62dc26881>

1. Key Market Results and Achievements

- The *Australia the movie* DVD was launched on 9 April 2009 in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. Tourism Australia partnered with Aussie Tours, Qantas and Twentieth Century Fox in an online campaign to promote the launch as well as Australia as a destination.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of Belgian agents joining the Aussie Specialist program due to a travel agents' incentive being run in conjunction with Antipodes Voyages and Tourism Australia, targeting the Belgian travel trade. A competition was held whereby one agent who became an Aussie Specialist during the launch had the chance to win a trip to Australia.
- Two Belgian travel agents joined Corroboree Europe 2009 in May along with 305 other agents from UK, Europe and South Africa. Two Belgian Product Managers attended the New Product Workshop in London in April.

2. Australian Travel Market

2.1 Market performance

- Belgium arrivals in March were 1,200, unchanged relative to March 2008. In the year ending March 2009, there were 13,700 arrivals, also unchanged relative to the previous 12 months.
- Belgium arrivals in April were 1,000, an increase of 24 per cent relative to April 2008. For the four months to April, visitor arrivals were 4,300, an increase of three per cent relative to the same period in 2008. For the year ending April 2009, there were 13,900 arrivals, an increase of two per cent relative to the previous 12 months.

2.2 Airline Issues/Changes

- Qantas has had some specials rates in the market of €499 (excl. taxes) in February and March (approximately €899 including taxes) and, for April and May €560 excluding taxes (approximately €1000 including taxes).

2.3 Trade Information Summary (including Business Events)

- As at April 2009, there were 77 qualified Aussie Specialists in Belgium with a further 129 in training.

3. Current and Upcoming Activities in Market

3.1 PR and Consumer:

Dates	Project / Event	Partners
21- 22 March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maasmechelen Village Promotion: Australia was promoted at the shopping centre on the weekend to 25,000 consumers. The promotion also included a one month publicity campaign prior to the event.	Gazelle World Wave, Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland, various Australian products
5 April- 30 June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online movie promo to promote <i>Australia the movie</i> and Australia as a destination. Utilising the Twentieth Century Fox / Tourism Australia online banner. A trip to Australia was raffled to consumers.	Aussie Tours, Tourism Australia, Qantas, Twentieth Century Fox

3.2 Trade Marketing:

Dates	Project / Event	Partners
13 March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Winner of the ASP program launch promotion in Belgium drawn in partnership with Antipodes Voyages.	Tourism Australia, Antipodes Voyages
31 March- 1 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Product Mission- 2 Belgium Product	Tourism Australia,

Dates	Project / Event	Partners
2009	Managers attended this event in London.	STO's
April – May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email campaign (4 dedicated e-newsletters) to 3,000 Belgian travel agents. 	Gazelle World Wave, Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland, various Australian products
April – May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia window display promotion at Kinrooi and Maaseik Trends Travel agencies in Belgium. 	Gazelle World Wave, Tourism Australia,
30 April – 13 May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Belgium travel agents attended Corroboree Europe 09; a total of 307 Aussie Specialists from the UK/IRE/Nordic, Europe and South Africa flew to Australia thanks to our partnership airline Qantas, and joined one of 22 itinerary options prepared and hosted by Australia's State and Territory Tourist Organisations (STOs) across Australia. Immediately following the famil, all agents travelled to Hamilton Island in the Whitsundays, to participate in workshops with 136 Australian tourism sellers to develop product and destination knowledge. 	Qantas, Hamilton Island, all STOs

4. Media Environment

- None to report (Tourism Australia does not have a PR agency in Belgium)

For more information on Tourism Australia's publicity, International Media Hosting Program (IMHP) and results, please visit www.publicity.australia.com

Alternatively for general media information visit www.media.australia.com

5. General Travel Outlook

5.1 Political and Economic Outlook

- The central bank announced in a first estimate that Belgium's economy contracted by 1.6 per cent in the first three months of 2009 from the previous quarter as the country officially entered recession. The slump brought the contraction in the Belgian economy over one year to three per cent. In the final quarter of 2008, the economy shrank 1.7 per cent from the previous quarter and one per cent over one year as the country suffered its worst slump since 1980. With the global downturn hitting Belgium's export-driven economy, the first quarter performance showed that the country had officially entered recession, which economists generally define as two consecutive quarters of contraction.

Source: AFP/Expatica 5 May

- Fortis Bank, the former Belgian banking arm of stricken financial group Fortis, reported a loss of €20.6 billion (US\$27.5 billion) for 2008 owing to the group's break-up and losses on toxic assets. As part of a bailout of the group, the Belgian

state took over Fortis Bank and is now in the process of selling a 75 per cent stake to French banking group BNP Paribas. Fortis Bank is the biggest bank in Belgium.

Source: *AFP/Expatica 15 April*

5.2 Outbound Travel

- According to a recent survey by Max Management, 4.2 million Belgian internet users (15 to 65 years old) bought a travel related product online in 2008, representing a substantial increase from 3.4 million users in 2007. During the six months of the research in 2008, 37 per cent of respondents had made an online travel reservation, compared to 29 per cent in 2007. 66 per cent of these booked brands they already knew and almost a third booked through unknown travel websites.

Some other findings from the survey:

- 67 per cent of the online buyers would do another booking within the year.
- The internet surfing consumer is searching for price and product information and expects special offers and discounted prices online.
- Interaction seems to be an important issue. The consumer wants to give his/her opinion about the offered products and appreciates honesty and transparency.

Source: http://maxmanagement.typepad.com/emarketing/2009/04/online-travel-in-belgi_per centC3_per centAB-de-cijfers-van-2008.html , accessed 28 May 2009

- In a trading statement, TUI Travel has reported that of all its European businesses Belgium is the only region to see long-haul bookings increase, with a rise of two per cent over the past eight-week period to mid-May 2009.

Source: http://www.traveldailynews.com/pages/show_page/30951-TUI-Travel:-Long-haul-demand-defies-swine-flu , accessed 28 May 2009

- The Moroccan 'Office de Tourisme du Maroc' has been active in the Belgian market, with the "Experts du Maroc" training program and an agents training roadshow in April in three Belgian cities, Gand, Anvers and Brussels in April 2009.

Source: http://www.freesun.be/news/index.php/en-2009-le-programme-des-experts-du-maroc-continue_per centC2_per centA0 , accessed 28 May 2009

6. Next 90 Days

Belgium						
START DATE	END DATE	MARKET	PROJECT/EVENT	TARGET AUDIENCE	LOCATION	PARTNERS
15 June	19 June	Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATE: Two Belgium companies will attend ATE in Melbourne, giving them the opportunity to meet with Australian sellers and gain valuable information to help increase sales to Australia. 	Trade	Melbourne	Various