

Client: **BlueSky Travel Systems**  
Media: **Travel Weekly**  
Date: **20/07/2007**

## ANALYSIS

Thomas Cook has begun the roll-out of one of the biggest IT projects in the industry's history, described as the Holy Grail of dynamic packaging. **Ian Taylor** reports on I-Tour.

# BLUESKY THINKING

The IT engineers behind the reservations system introduced at Thomas Cook Signature this month believe the project puts the group at least 12 months ahead of its rivals.

Aimed at standardising booking technology across the company over three years, the I-Tour platform will be extended to the former MyTravel operations as well as across Thomas Cook's European businesses. But its developers believe it could go further and become the technology of choice for the industry.

The system is the product of the €100 million Globe Project and was developed by Manchester-based Bluesky Travel Systems. German travel technology firm Partners Software provides the consolidated fares and some of the back-office functions.

**"The technology is easy to use. Agents could be booking holidays within 10 minutes"**

Technology giant IBM is overseeing the infrastructure, roll-out, processing and planning, and Thomas Cook's own portal provides the front end, seen by staff.

When the roll-out is complete, I-Tour will sit across all the group's brands, giving every agent and operator access to the same inventory. Until now, for example, Thomas Cook Signature could only tailor-make itineraries with seats on scheduled flights.

The new system will offer seats on Thomas Cook Airlines and rival charters, on British Airways and



Developers of the I-Tour system believe it could become the booking tool of choice for the whole industry

other 'legacy' carriers, and on the low-cost airlines, together with rooms, hire cars and holiday services. Agents will be able to put together and instantly price any combination.

Bluesky was set up by a number of former MyTravel staff who wrote the software for the original Airtours' booking system in the 1980s.

When the company tendered for the contract last year, sales director Nick Fowler said: "No one was close to the functionality Thomas Cook required. There was a gap and we closed it. They want one system across all their offices to deliver the business model to fit each country."

Fowler added: "The technology is easy to use. Agents could be booking holidays on this within 10 minutes."

The group's mass market businesses will begin to move to I-Tour in the middle of next year. But the next

part of the roll-out will be in continental Europe in early 2008. Bluesky managing director Mark Fallon describes the launch at Thomas Cook Signature as a milestone.

He said: "There are other systems

that provide solutions for small-volume players, but we don't think anyone else can provide the resilience necessary for the high-end tour operator. There is almost nothing I-Tour can't do with product."