



Sitecore  
**Case Study:**



## Thomas Cook Travel Group – This Billion Dollar Travel Leader Chooses Sitecore to offer a Personalized Travel Experience

### Summary

Thomas Cook Travel Group, a leading international leisure travel group, manages a portfolio of strong brands worldwide, most with their own websites. Thomas Cook has worked with Sitecore in the past to improve their online presence with sites including Neckermann.nl, vrijuit.nl, and more than 1,000 other co-branded sites. When the focus of their online innovation turned to their main ThomasCook.be site, they once again chose Sitecore to help them meet their goals.

### Challenge

Thomas Cook Travel Group is a leader in the Belgian travel industry. The company represents a tour operator (Neckermann, Thomas Cook and Pegase), a travel distribution network (Neckermann Vakantiewinkels & Thomas Cook Travel Shops) as well as an airline company with one million passengers a year.

The Thomas Cook website used to be a classic tour operator website. As the online travel sector is changing ever more rapidly and since Thomas Cook decided to fundamentally increase the share of e-commerce in its multi-channel approach, the company decided to transform its online presence into a more useful travel portal, uniquely combining an online travel agency with updated content, an interactive community and targeted advertising. In addition, Thomas Cook wanted to offer customers the possibility to find all the necessary information in one place, instead of

having to conduct extensive searches on multiple and inconsistent sites.

### Solution

Thomas Cook Travel Group chose The Reference, a Sitecore partner, to help them strengthen their internet presence with a strong focus on quality of service, experience and inspiration. Three key objectives for the project were:

1. to position Thomas Cook as the undisputed leader in “e-leisure” travel;
2. to raise online bookings by a considerable margin by 2010;
3. to significantly increase the “ticket only” (no hotel booking) share in online bookings.

### Thomas Cook Travel Group Site

[www.thomascook.be](http://www.thomascook.be)





*“Going on holiday is entering a world of emotions with lots of content. For the Thomas Cook website, I needed to find a CMS that most of all managed to bring the content to life. Or to paraphrase Mark Twain: I have found out that there ain’t no surer way to find out whether you like a CMS or hate it, than to travel with it.”*

**—Peter van der Steen,  
e-Commerce Manager,  
Thomas Cook  
Travel Group**



*“We turned the Thomas Cook web site into a travel 2.0 portal, and Sitecore allowed us to do this in an extremely elegant and flexible way.”*

**—Anja Cappelle,  
Managing Director,  
The Reference**

[www.sitecore.net](http://www.sitecore.net)

For this project, The Reference selected Sitecore as their content management solution of choice. Thomas Cook has had success with Sitecore in the past, and they knew it would allow them to reach their goals. Because of Sitecore’s architecture, flexibility, and extensibility, it allowed The Reference to seamlessly add the following features to the site:

- **Personalization:** The new Thomas Cook website puts a strong emphasis on content personalization through user preferences, including “My Profile”, “My Travel Agent” and “My Brochure”. For example, the “My Brochure” feature allows users to build their own catalogue by collecting favorite destination items in a single repository. In addition, the website uses Google AdSense to provide targeted and useful advertising to the site visitors.
- **Social Networking:** ThomasCook.be has become a “social travel” networking platform. Travelers can write reviews of their trips and let other members comment and rate them. They can also upload and rate travel pictures. Members can pinpoint visited, booked, favorite places, and “visit” destinations on the world map using Google Maps.
- **Online Travel Agent (OTA) concept:** The OTA is the travel shop within the portal. This online travel shop enables the customer to search, browse and book in an easy and custom-friendly way a set of trips based on several criteria, such as location, name, etc.
- **Newsletter & RSS:** The Reference implemented the Sitecore Newsletter Module, and an HTML newsletter is sent on a regular basis to registered members. In addition to the newsletter, ThomasCook.be also provides an RSS-feed delivering the latest Thomas Cook news.

- **Travel agents, tour operators and airline companies:** Site visitors can search for travel agents based on a set of preferences, such as location, name, specializations and opening hours. They can also find out which tour operator or airline company offers trips or flights to particular locations.
- **Ogone implementation:** Ogone is the European leader in online payment processing systems. The Reference successfully implemented the Ogone solution to process the transaction between the end user and the back-office of Thomas Cook.

## Result

The new site went live in May 2008, and Thomas Cook has been able to effectively connect the four major stakeholders in the travel industry—tour operator, online travel agent, consumer and advertiser—to provide their customers with a genuine win-win situation on an innovative platform.

According to Anja Cappelle, Managing Director of The Reference, “We truly enjoyed the challenge of putting all of our skills together to not only create a positive user experience, but to optimize the conversion ratios of this website, as online bookings are of utmost importance to Thomas Cook. We turned their website into a travel 2.0 portal, and Sitecore allowed us to do this in an extremely elegant and flexible way.”

## Technology Description

Solution Special Ingredients:

*Omniure for web analytics*

*Ogone for online payment processing*

*Google Maps*

*Google AdSense for online advertising*

*dtSearch and the dtSearch Sitecore module for global site search*



Sitecore’s Web Content Management System (CMS) and portal software solutions enable companies to deliver compelling web experiences. Sitecore’s award-winning CMS software makes it easy for businesses to create and keep up-to-date dynamic, full featured Web sites of all types. Sitecore’s industry leading flexibility and scalability allows companies to better leverage their content to improve customer experience and drive business growth.

Thousands of public and private organizations, including national governments and Fortune 500 companies utilize Sitecore solutions for their Web sites. These organizations have created and now manage over 5,000 dynamic Web sites with Sitecore including Microsoft, Sara Lee, Siemens, Toshiba, Omni Hotels, Computer Associates, WebTrends and Atlanta Falcons. Sitecore has offices and representatives in more than 50 countries around the world.

**Sitecore**  
[www.sitecore.net](http://www.sitecore.net)

**Thomas Cook Travel Group**  
[www.thomascook.be](http://www.thomascook.be)

**The Reference**  
[www.thereference.be](http://www.thereference.be)