

Thomas Cook customers fly home after firm collapses

The first of 155,000 British tourists are being flown back home after UK-based travel agent Thomas Cook collapsed on September 23.

The UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is co-ordinating the repatriation after the tour operator ceased trading with immediate effect.

Thomas Cook's administration puts 22,000 jobs at risk worldwide.

CEO Peter Fankhauser said the collapse was a "matter of profound regret".

Thomas Cook, whose roots go back to 1841, ceased trading after last-ditch talks to raise fresh funding failed.

The BBC understands the government was asked to fund a bailout of £250 million (US\$310 million), which was denied.

Some 16,000 holidaymakers were booked to come back on September 23, and authorities hope to get at least 14,000 of them home on chartered flights, the BBC reported.

The CAA has chartered 45 jets to bring customers home from locations including Central America and Turkey. It will fly 64 routes on Monday in an undertaking called Operation Matterhorn.

Operators including Easyjet and Virgin have supplied some aircraft, with jets coming from Malaysia.

All Thomas Cook holidays are cancelled and customers must seek compensation via the government's ATOL scheme, or from their credit card or insurance companies.