

Strict embargo until midnight Thursday, November 29

DRAFT MEDIA STATEMENT

OPODO OPENS FOR BUSINESS IN GERMANY

Opodo.de – first in a series of planned websites for key European markets

Berlin, November 30 2001 - Opodo, the new online travel company backed by nine of Europe's leading airlines (Aer Lingus, Air France, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Finnair, Iberia, KLM and Lufthansa) today launched its first website service offering an extensive choice of special low Opodo fares for German travellers.

According to Opodo CEO Giovanni Bisignani "Opodo's infrastructure will provide airlines with a low cost means to fill seats and allow travellers access to some of the lowest fares in the German market - quickly and easily. Historically high distribution costs have always been a challenge for airlines. Now, more than ever, the airlines are turning to low cost distribution channels such as www.opodo.de."

Opodo is launching in Germany with over 150,000 special fares to the most popular destinations for German travellers.

In addition to thousands of special fares, Opodo provides a choice of 480 airlines; 54,000 hotels; 23,000 car hire locations and travel insurance.

Lufthansa Vice President Direct and Online Sales Volker Huber said: "Opodo will set a new standard in the online-travel industry, with its comprehensive product-offering and excellent customer service. Launching in Germany first shows the importance of the German online-travel market and is the first step to expand in to the European market."

Opodo is focused on becoming the leader in online travel in Germany by 2004 and will be unrivalled in terms of value for money, ease of use and customer service. Opodo's launch partners will cover more than 80 per cent of available air capacity in Germany.

"It's a win-win situation," Mr Bisignani said. The airlines win by having a new cost effective vehicle to move inventory. German travellers win through Opodo's ability to secure new and low offers for it customers.

"Opodo is launching at a key time to capitalise on a major growth market in Europe and in particular Germany. Web-based leisure travel sales are set to increase in value by ten-fold within the next five years¹. Germany has already experienced an amazing 86 per cent increase in online sales, comparing January 2001 to January 2000.²

Opodo Country Manager Frank Riecke said Opodo will be one of the first online travel services specifically built to cater for the individual needs of German travellers.

"Opodo spent many months speaking with German travellers and is delivering a specially tailored site to put the customer in control, giving them the tools, the information and the inspiration to go where they want, when they want and how they want," Mr Riecke said. "The market may be complex but the answer is simple. Opodo.de will reflect the local culture, travel patterns, language – even preferred payment methods – as the answer to online travel frustrations."

Opodo will have a customer service and fulfilment centre in Berlin staffed by travel experts with 24/7 website support and booking facilities.

Following Germany, Opodo will launch in the UK and France early next year, and throughout Europe during 2002 and 2003.

Last week, the European Commission announced that it intends to give clearance to Opodo on the basis that it complies with European competition rules.

For more details see www.opodo.de

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Notes to editors

Key features of Opodo.de are:

- 40,000 pages of useful expert information integrated with special fares covering 1,700 destinations, including interactive maps, guides and daily weather updates - all on an easy to view and use site – covering more than 80 per cent available capacity in every market.
- Can book and fly the same day
- Reserve flights for up to 24 hours
- Don't have to register to use
- Can request your preferred seat on booking
- Advanced search capability – by destination or holiday themes
- Hundreds of thousands of maps to find specific locations anywhere in the world
- Guides to 180 of the world's busiest airports
- Quick search tool gives time-sensitive consumers speedy access straight to booking
- Explore the World – provides consumers with the tools and inspiration
- Highlights 10,000 key tourist attractions around the world

Superior Customer Service

Opodo will set new levels in customer care and attention.

- Real travel experts on hand to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week to offer advice and information.
- We openly show our customer service contact details and welcome calls.
- For Germany, our customer centre is based in Berlin to provide local insight.
- No time limits on providing the advice you need.
- Gain advice by communications from phone, post, email, facsimile plus special call back service

State of the art technology

- Opodo's has built its own technology platform to limit site and traffic problems – making it quick, easy and reliable
- 24,000 hours of testing of opodo.de
- 30 German volunteers spent 3 months providing full-time feedback about the site

Online travel market

In Europe, the trend of booking travel online is set to experience major growth.

Already more than 126 million people are on-line across Europe, with travel and leisure accounting for 26 per cent of the total ecommerce market.

Analysts Forrester forecast that on-line travel sales will grow from 4.5 billion Euros to as high as 38.7 billion Euros by 2006, with early signs showing speedy recovery since September 11.

German Market

Germany is the leading travel market in Europe.

¹ Germany and UK currently dominate travel online with over 60 per cent of all European internet bookings.

² Online leisure travel sales in Germany alone will grow from just under EUR 1 billion to a staggering EUR 10.1 billion within the next five years.

Analysts F.U.R. stated that 2.6 million Germans had used the Internet to book a holiday trip either entirely or partly in January 2001 - a staggering 86% increase over the 1.4 million reported 12 months earlier.

- 73% of Germans online, surf the web more than once a week.
- Jupiter figures show Germans use internet more per month than any other country (approaching to 500 minutes per month).

Top 10 destinations for German travellers (incl. Charter):
Mallorca, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich, Istanbul, Vienna, Brussels, Gran Canaria.

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