

News Release



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STRANDED TURTLES FLY TO FREEDOM

Thomas Cook Airlines transports rescued turtles to new life in Gran Canaria

Two rare stranded loggerhead turtles that were rescued from a popular surfing beach in Devon within the same week, have finally been set free after five months of rehabilitation. The turtles were transported by Thomas Cook Airlines from Gatwick Airport to their new home in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, on Monday 23rd June.

Named Dink and James, the turtles measure 28cm and 61cm long respectively. According to the Newquay Blue Reef Aquarium, where they were nursed back to health, it is likely that they were born on a beach in the USA or Mexico and somehow, perhaps following a severe storm, were pushed further and further north, with their journey ending on the south coast of England.

Most turtles are cold-blooded and, as James and Dink headed towards the UK coast, the colder waters would have initially stopped them feeding and eventually led them to become unconscious. James was in a critical condition when he was first found and was treated for dehydration, hypothermia, and various fungal and bacterial infections. Dink too, required specialist care from the dedicated aquarists at Blue Reef. They will now be released in Gran Canaria as it is the nearest place where they can be released to join their native area.

Joanna Wild, Ground Services Director at Thomas Cook Airlines, said: "We're very pleased to be able to play a part in helping these beautiful turtles on their long journey back to freedom. It's fantastic to know that not only were hundreds of passengers on this flight about to embark on a sun-filled holiday, but also, that two turtles were taking a journey of a different kind."

Matt Slater, Blue Reef Curator, commented: "We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Thomas Cook Airlines and PBS International Freight, who have been instrumental in assisting in the final leg of the rehabilitation of James and Dink. These turtles have been through such an ordeal, but fortunately, their flight to freedom has been wonderfully smooth."

Pet shipping company, PBS International, is based at Gatwick Airport and issued customs documents to enable to transfer of the turtles from the UK to Gran Canaria.

Loggerhead turtles can reach lengths in excess of a metre. They are carnivorous feeding on crabs, shellfish, mollusks and jellyfish. Their main nesting sites are in Oman in the Middle East and Florida in the US. They are rare in UK waters but their numbers, along with other warm water species do seem to be on the rise.

Thomas Cook Airlines carries hundreds of domestic pets abroad every year. In May alone, more than 80 animals were transported. Most are cats and dogs, although birds, guinea pigs, rabbits and Koi Carp have also taken to the skies with the airline.

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