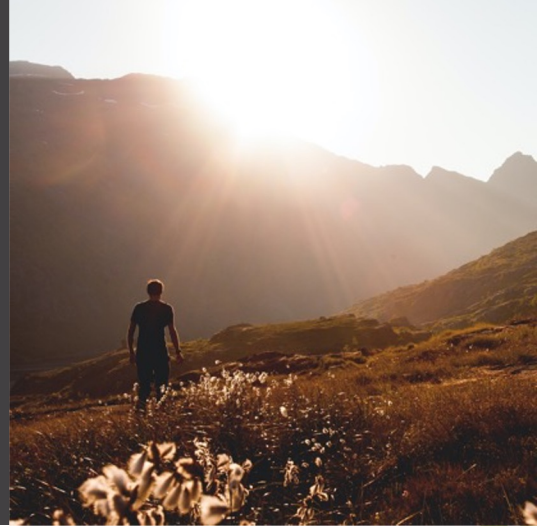


WEEKLY REPORT

30 September 2022



COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing for COVID-19 has increased by 12.1% between 23 and 30 September. The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has increased by 42.4% in the last seven days from 23 to 30 September, however the number of deaths within 28 days of positive test results has fallen by 2.3%. As of 25 September, 69.4% of people aged 12 and over in England have received their first booster or third vaccination. The autumn COVID-19 booster is being offered to those at high risk of the complications of COVID-19 infection in preparation for the winter.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Bank of England: How the central bank is supporting the economy

The Bank of England stepped in to calm financial markets after steep falls in the value of the pound and a surge in the UK's borrowing costs. The Bank will start buying government bonds at an 'urgent pace' to help restore 'orderly market conditions' following the value of the pound rising 1.4% against the dollar to \$1.08. The news comes after the currency hit a record low on Monday 26 September following the chancellor's mini-budget, which pledged \$45bn worth of tax cuts, funded by borrowing, as part of a plan to boost economic growth.

Cost of living: Milk and cake prices rise, but fruit gets cheaper

Food prices rose at their fastest rate on record in September, with products such as milk and cakes getting more expensive, British Retail Consortium says. Food price inflation jumped from 9.3% last month to 10.6%, according to the BRC-NielsenIQ price index. However, long spells of sunshine have helped to bring down the price of fruit such as strawberries and blueberries.

Queen's cause of death given as 'old age' on death certificate

Queen Elizabeth II died of 'old age' according to her death certificate, which has

been released by the National Records of Scotland. The certificate records the Queen died at 15:10 on 8 September in Balmoral Castle, at the age of 96. Princess Anne is recorded as the person providing the information about the Queen's death. The doctor who certified the death at Balmoral in Aberdeenshire was Douglas Glass, who Buckingham Palace says was an 'apothecary to the Queen'.

Hundreds queue up as Windsor Castle opens for first time since Queen's death

Thursday 29 September was the first opportunity the public have had to view the Queen's final resting place and see the ledger stone in the George VI memorial chapel which is inscribed with her name.

King Charles III: Coins to enter circulation, Royal Mint confirms

Coins featuring the portrait of King Charles III will enter circulation in the UK, it has been confirmed. The King will replace his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, to become the first king on British coins since 1952. The Royal Mint, based in Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales, said all coins bearing the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II would remain legal tender. The date the coins will enter circulation, and images of them, are yet to be released.

World Cup COVID rules announced as Denmark unveil black kit in protest over Qatar human rights

The tournament has attracted controversy since Qatar was awarded the event by FIFA the world football governing body, in 2010. Qatar has faced ongoing criticism over its human rights record, with organisations including Amnesty International accusing it of failing to protect migrant workers. Teams have now rallied against the regime in Qatar, with Denmark unveiling a black kit protest over human right violations. Hummel, the supplier, shared the kit on Instagram along with the caption: 'Black. The colour of mourning. The perfect colour for Denmark's third shirt for this year's World Cup.'

TRADE UPDATE

Four Seasons To Enter Cruise Market With New Luxury Yacht Division

Hotel chain Four Seasons has announced plans to enter the luxury cruise market with the launch of a new yacht division. Four Seasons Yachts expects the delivery of its first vessel from Fincantieri Shipyard in 2025. The order includes the option for two additional vessels and amounts to €1.2 billion. With its inaugural journey anticipated for late 2025, the first vessel will be 207 metres long and 27 metres wide with 14 decks. It will offer nearly 50% more living space per guest than currently available. The vessel's 95 rooms will feature a network of joining suite combinations creating "villa-like" residences and each suite will offer floor-to-ceiling windows and access to terrace decks. The Four Seasons Yacht will also offer a full-service spa,

salon, and wellness programme; a pool deck which can transform into an outdoor theatre and a marina. Further details will be revealed in the build up to the vessel's planned launch.

Canada To Scrap All Remaining COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Next Month

Canada will scrap all of its remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions, including those affecting cruise passengers, next month. From 1 October, all testing, quarantine and isolation requirements will cease for all arrivals, regardless of their citizenship and vaccination status. Transport Canada is also removing its travel requirements, meaning travellers will no longer have to wear masks on trains and aircraft, although these continue to be recommended. Cruise passengers, meanwhile, will no longer be required to undergo pre-boarding tests, be vaccinated or use the ArriveCAN app. The Canadian government confirmed the decision to ease its COVID-19 rules on Monday 26 September, citing the latest evidence and available data on COVID-19, which it said suggested Canada had "largely passed" the peak of the Omicron wave, as well as "operational considerations" and the epidemiological situation both in Canada and internationally. In addition, the government pinned its decision on Canada's high rate of vaccine uptake, lower rates of hospitalisation and death, and the availability of COVID-19 booster jabs, rapid tests and treatments.

Movies And TV Are Playing A Lead Role In US Tourism

US travel bosses have credited the power of film and TV with driving visitation to their destinations. In a panel discussion during this week's Brand USA Travel Week in Frankfurt focusing on big and small screen highlights, several state tourist boards highlighted the effectiveness of both timeless movies and smash-hit television series. Visit Fort Worth president and CEO Robert Jameson explained how the establishment of a Fort Worth Film Commission in 2015 had so far generated \$300 million of revenue and created more than 17,000 jobs. He said: "There's no doubt that the making of 1883, our first major TV series, drove millions of dollars of economic worth," adding: "Our blog dedicated to the 1883 filming locations is the number-one most-visited blog on our website."

Consumer desire to cruise 'exceeds 2019 levels', Clia reports

Desire to book a cruise among UK passengers exceeds levels from three years ago, according to the latest Clia data. The trade association reported 90% of passengers who have cruised in the past six months want to sail again. Around 85% of respondents who have previously cruised say they intend to cruise again – up 6% from 2019. In total, 4,000 domestic and international travellers were polled for the survey across eight markets including the UK, the US and Australia. Andy Harmer, Clia UK & Ireland managing director, said: "This year has been enormously encouraging for cruise and it's heartening to see demand for a holiday at sea is set to continue."

Marella Cruises to scrap pre-departure testing

Marella Cruises is to remove all pre-departure testing from 1 October. The line – part of the Tui Group – confirmed it would follow local guidance in all destinations its ships visited. Currently under Greek law all cruise passengers must be tested by a medical professional at the port terminal prior to boarding a ship. Therefore, passengers aged two and over, sailing from Corfu, must complete an antigen test the day before boarding the ship. Passengers must show their test result certificate when arriving at the ship to check-in.

Ryanair pledges to create 2,000 new jobs in Ireland by 2030

Budget carrier Ryanair has committed to invest billions in its Irish operations over the next eight years, creating more than 2,000 new jobs in Ireland by 2030. Eddie Wilson, chief executive, said the new roles would be for pilots, cabin crew, engineers and IT developers. The carrier also aims to increase its annual passenger numbers to and from Ireland by 50% over the same period, rising from 20 million to 30 million. More than €20 billion will be spent on new aircraft, and a €50 million training centre for pilots and cabin crew will be established in Santry. An €8 million engineering excellence centre will open in Dublin, and €10 million will be invested in a maintenance hangar in Shannon.

Post-Brexit border checks mean Eurostar capacity is 30% lower

Eurostar's peak capacity is 30% lower than before Brexit because of additional border checks required for British travellers. The cross-Channel train operator is also facing "unique impacts" on its finances as a result of the pandemic, and a struggle to recruit engineers. The challenges were detailed by Jacques Damas, outgoing chief executive of Eurostar, in a letter to Huw Merriman MP, the chair of the Transport Select Committee. Commenting on post-Brexit border checks, Damas wrote: "Since around 40% of our customers are UK nationals, this has resulted in a significant increase in the processing times at stations. The stamping of British passports by continental police adds at least 15 seconds to individual passengers' border crossing times."

AIRLINE UPDATE

Aer Lingus - Aer Lingus is to launch its first Dublin-Cleveland flight next summer, with connections from nine UK airports. The new four-times-weekly service, which will become the only direct European service to the Ohio city when it commences on 19 May 2023, marks the carrier's 15th transatlantic route from Ireland. UK-based passengers will be able to connect from London Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol, Southampton and Leeds Bradford Airports, with fares leading in from £249 each way.

Air Mauritius - Air Mauritius has expanded its winter schedule with an extra London Heathrow flight, citing "strong demand for travel". It means the carrier will operate five times a week to and from London Heathrow from mid-November to early March next year. Initially scheduled to run from 13 December to 10 January for the "Christmas peak," this will now operate from 14 November to 7 March 2023, sales manager UK and Ireland Allan Owen confirmed on Tuesday 27 September. The additional flights will depart Mauritius on Mondays, with returns the following day. Air Mauritius will operate the route using an Airbus A350 aircraft.

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic is joining the SkyTeam alliance as its only UK airline member and the first new member welcomed into the airline group for eight years. The move from early next year enhances the alliance's transatlantic network and services to and from London Heathrow and Manchester airports. It builds on the carrier's transatlantic joint venture with Delta Air Lines and Air France-KLM, each an already long established SkyTeam member. The four partners are co-located at London Heathrow Terminal 3, alongside existing SkyTeam members Aeromexico and China Eastern. Work on interlining and integration of Virgin has been ongoing for a year so customers can take advantage of the alliance when it goes live in January 2023.

Bamboo Airways - Bamboo Airways will add the Vietnamese destination of Ho Chi Minh City to its network from Gatwick in December 2022. Tickets have gone on sale for the weekly year-round service which will start on Wednesday 7 December. Passengers will be able to connect onwards from Ho Chi Minh City with Bamboo Airways to destinations across Vietnam, as well as Australia, Singapore and Thailand. The Vietnamese carrier will be launching its first route from Gatwick on 30 October, with a weekly flight to the capital of Vietnam, Hanoi.

Delta - Delta Air Lines is expanding its transatlantic network next summer with three additional UK routes. Gatwick gains a daily year-round service to New York JFK from 10 April 2023 as part of an increased schedule from the US hub. Daily year-round flights between London Heathrow and Los Angeles return on 25 March for the first time since 2015. A five times a week summer seasonal service from Edinburgh to Atlanta starts on 25 May 2023, reviving a route not operated since 2007.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Jet2 Holidays - Capacity to Greece by Jet2.com and Jet2holidays is being raised to 1.3 million seats for next summer. Three new routes have been introduced – Bristol-Chania, East Midlands-Santorini and Stansted-Athens, with the Greek capital confirmed as a year-round destination. Frequency is increased to destinations such

as Corfu, Rhodes and Skiathos as part of the programme now on sale. The expansion after a record number of flights and holidays this summer includes an extension of the season to include Easter trips to Rhodes and Halkidiki in April 2023.

Saga - Saga's travel arm is introducing a tailor-made initiative as it seeks to capture a larger share of a market estimated to total 52 million trips a year. 'Experienced gap year' trips, multi-generational holidays and premium jet tours are among the new developments as part of a digital transformation. Destinations across Asia and the United Arab Emirates went live on Tuesday 27 September and more will be added over the next three months. The disclosure came as Saga Group expects continued recovery in its cruise and travel businesses as it reported a return to underlying profit in the first half of the year.

EasyJet holidays - EasyJet holidays has put winter 2023-24 packages on sale, with trips available until the end of March 2024. The operator is featuring more than 30 destinations, ranging from European Christmas markets or winter-sun resorts in Egypt, Cyprus and the Canary Islands. City break destinations include Paris, Rome, Amsterdam and Reykjavik..

National Holidays - National Holidays has brought out a two-day coach break to see the Abba Voyage concert in London. The coach operator is offering accommodation at the four-star Crowne Plaza Hotel in London Docklands, with coach transfers to the purpose-built arena. The concert shows the four members of the famous pop group appear as digital avatars, brought to life using the latest motion-capture technology. The coach breaks, which include tickets to the show, also offer time for shopping and sightseeing in the capital.

Wendy Wu Tours - Wendy Wu Tours is adding extra capacity to all its Japan tours next year and in 2024 as it reports tours selling out "as soon as they go on sale". The operator is looking to add around 60 departures to existing Japan tours for spring and autumn 2023 and overall expects to carry 55% more passengers next year than in 2019. Its flagship tour, Japan Uncovered, will see the biggest capacity growth. The move follows the lifting of entry restrictions for Japan, with the restoration of visa-free travel from 11 October 2022 and the removal of its inbound capacity cap on daily arrivals and relaxation of border controls. The tour operator reported "an unprecedented surge" in late sales for this autumn to Japan as well as for tours in March and April 2023, with enquiry levels to the call centre and agent website up 170% in September compared with the previous month.

Abercrombie & Kent - Abercrombie & Kent has said trade sales are increasing "month-on-month" with 30% of this year's bookings coming from new-to-brand

agents. The luxury tour operator hosted 45 trade partners at an event in London on 22 September where attendees were invited to speak to product representatives from across its brands, which also include Cox & Kings and Sanctuary Retreats. Five agents at the event won places on Abercrombie & Kent fam trips to South America, Europe, India, Asia and the Middle East.

SOCIAL UPDATE

TikTok announces update to its video descriptions

TikTok is giving users more room to explain their content and connect with interested users. It has expanded the post description field from 300 characters to 2,200 which is an increase of 730%. The 'searchable' element is the key focus. Using its highly attuned, personalised, algorithmic approach, TikTok will refine and showcase relevant search matches to each users' interests.

TikTok's BeReal clone app is now available outside the US

'TikTok Now', a separate app to TikTok, which is based on BeReal, has now launched outside of the U.S. The app sends daily prompts to post a 'Now' clip showing what users are up to at a random time in a bid to be more authentic. In the U.S., TikTok Now has been launched as a feature within the main TikTok app, but it's not the case further afield yet.

MICE UPDATE

Event attendee numbers above pre-COVID-19 levels, says EDGE Venues

The latest Meetings Industry Pulse Survey by Northstar Meetings Group and Cvent indicates Corporate event attendee numbers and average event values are back above pre-COVID-19 levels, according to EDGE Venues. The venue sourcing platform also revealed it has seen a 25% increase in platform users and a 25% uplift in venue searches in Q3 compared to Q2.

The EDGE team delivered the results alongside market insights and user trends from its recently published Business Intelligence Report at its annual Business Insights Event earlier this month. Booking trends of corporate buyers and agents were compared to pre-COVID-19 levels and illustrated increased event attendee numbers and average event values.

LIGHTER NOTE

Pine marten spotted in London for the first time in 100 years

A pine marten, a small mammal, has been spotted in London for the first time since the 19th century, raising hopes for the critically endangered species. [Here](#).