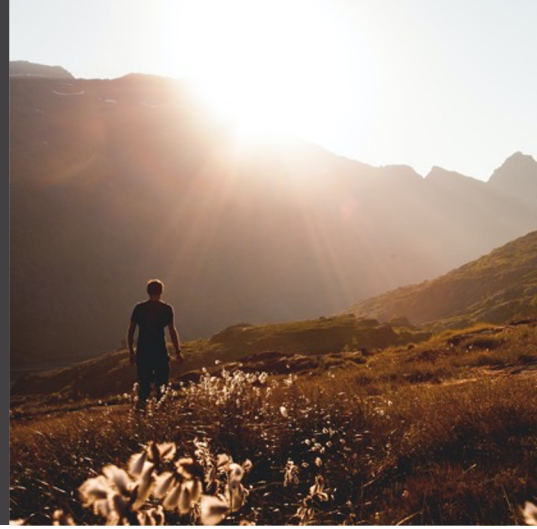


WEEKLY REPORT

16 December 2022



COVID-19 UPDATE

COVID-19 infection cases in UK hospitals have risen by 22% this week according to the latest NHS data. A number of specialists and experts in the field of infectious diseases and viruses including professor Mark Woolhouse from the University of Edinburgh are calling for people to get the latest booster jab ahead of the Christmas period where people are likely to come into close contact with potentially vulnerable relatives.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Christmas travel warning as road workers to strike at same time as rail walkouts

Travellers have been told to brace for more Christmas chaos after road workers announced 12 days of strikes to coincide with rail walkouts. National Highways employees who operate and maintain roads in England, will take part in a series of staggered strikes from 16 December to 7 January, the PCS union said.

British nurses launch historic strike, as pay and staffing crises threaten the NHS

Nurses across much of the UK launched a historic strike on Thursday, as they walked out of hospitals and onto picket lines after several years of falling pay and declining standards left the country's nationalised health care system in a state of crisis. As many as 100,000 members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) – the UK's biggest nursing union – are taking industrial action in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the latest in an unprecedented wave of strikes that has swept Britain this winter. It is the largest strike in the RCN's 106-year history.

Bank of England raises interest rates to 3.5% - The highest rate in 14 years

The Bank of England raised interest rates by half a percentage point to 3.5% - the highest rate in 14 years. The Bank expects the economy to shrink by 0.1% in the final quarter of the year, compared with previous expectations of a 0.3% fall. This rise means people on a typical tracker mortgage will pay about £49 more a month while homeowners with a standard variable rate mortgage face a £31 jump.

TRADE UPDATE

Heathrow ground handlers call off strike action after 'last ditch peace talks'

Eleventh hour talks halted the first of Heathrow ground staff's two planned strikes. The first strike was planned to happen from 4am on Friday 16 December, the second strike is still set for Thursday 29 December until early on New Year's Day. 400 Menzies ground handlers reversed their decision to strike after Menzies improved their pay offer. The second strike is likely to affect carriers in Heathrow Terminals 2, 3 and 4. These include: Air Canada, American Airlines, Lufthansa, Swiss Air, Air Portugal, Austrian Airlines, Qantas, Egypt Air, Aer Lingus and Finnair. This action would coincide with parallel strike action by Border Force officials, who plan to walk out from 23-26 December and again over 28-31 December.

Airports to axe 100ml rule for liquids in hand luggage by June 2024

The UK government has set a deadline of June 2024 for airports to install new security technology so hubs can scrap the 100ml rule on liquids in hand luggage. It means passengers will be able to leave liquids and large electrical items in their cabin luggage as they pass through security checks. The Department for Transport said the changes will make travel easier for passengers and enhance safety, as security staff will have more detailed images of what people are carrying. The Government laid new legislation on Thursday (December 15) which will make it easier to streamline the processes that apply to UK airports in the future.

Holiday bookings on the rise compared to this time last year, American Express poll shows

Almost two-thirds of adults in the UK are already planning their overseas trip for 2023, according to new research by American Express. This time last year, 50% of people were planning holidays at this time compared to 61% this year. The American Express poll of 2,000 adults found that a quarter are booking in advance to take advantage of deals while 36% want to secure hotels, flights, and excursions before they get booked up. More than a quarter (27%) are also eager to book their holidays to give them something to look forward to during the winter. A similar number are still booking holidays to catch up on those missed during the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, beach holidays topped the list of holiday types for 2023 (44%), followed by city breaks (37%) and multi-destination trips (13%), while 3% are planning volunteering excursions. Spain remains the UK's most popular destination followed by Italy and France. For those choosing to stay in the UK next year, the Lake District is the favourite (13%), followed by Cornwall (12%), and London (12%).

Advantage highlights uptick in festive long-haul trips

The Advantage Travel Partnership saw an increase in long-haul festive holiday bookings this year despite concerns over UK Border Force strikes over Christmas.

of uncertainty" brought by international travel restrictions and closed borders, demand for long-haul flights is "slowly but surely" returning. New York, Dubai, Cancun, Jamaica and Orlando came out as the top five long-haul destinations booked by Advantage members. However, despite early booking enthusiasm, the excitement of a winter escape has been dampened by fears of cancelled flights due to planned Border Force strikes between 23-26 and 28-31 December. Despite the concerns, Advantage chief commercial officer Kelly Cookes is hopeful any disruption caused by the walkouts will be minimised before the Christmas holidays start.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Tui - Tui aims to increase the diversity of its pilots with the launch of a new training programme. In its first year, the Multi-Crew Pilot Licence (MPL) cadet programme will train 30 pilots over an 18-month period, beginning with ground training, followed by basic flying and then advanced flying. Tui will not require candidates to pay any upfront training costs, as it aims to reduce barriers to entry for candidates unable to pay the fees.

WizzAir - WizzAir has started serving Jordan with three flights a week from Luton airport. One-way fares to Amman start at £36 with flights operating on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The latest addition follows the launch of four new routes from Luton to Prague, Sharm El Sheikh, Tallinn and Hurghada. The budget carrier now runs a network of more than 80 routes from the airport, where it is the largest operator.

Cathay Pacific - Cathay Pacific's November traffic figures continued to reflect "encouraging signs of recovery" for the airline and the Hong Kong international aviation hub. The group carried 526,827 passengers last month, an increase of 652% compared with the same month last year, but still almost 80% down against the pre-pandemic level in November 2019. The passenger load factor increased by 51.7 percentage points year-on-year to 78.5%, while capacity was up by 127%, but remained 73.1% below November 2019 levels.

Loganair - Loganair's first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training programme begins next month for all staff members. The UK regional carrier's new £300,000 training initiative is part of its recently launched "Flying's For All" strategy. Employees will spend an average of three hours away from the business examining EDI cases, learning about protected characteristics and rehearsing real life scenarios. The training will be delivered in person by the airline's HR team at the company's head office in Glasgow and across its network to ensure every individual can complete the course. New recruits to the business will receive the training as part of their induction and an advanced version of it will be introduced in 2024.

United Airlines - United Airlines will upgrade aircraft used on London-New York flights following a big new order with Boeing. The carrier has agreed a firm purchase of 100 Boeing 787s, with an option for 100 more, which it claims is the largest-ever order for long-haul aircraft by any US airline. Deliveries will begin from 2024 and many will be used to replace Boeing 767s which operate the bulk of the airline's Newark flights from Heathrow, but will be phased out by 2030. Older Boeing 777s, which also operate United's London flights, will be replaced by 787s. As well as benefits to passengers, a carbon reduction of "up to" 25% per seat is expected.

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic is receiving government funding to run the first net zero transatlantic flight from the UK next year. A Boeing 787 Dreamliner will fly from Heathrow to New York solely powered by sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). The flight will be net zero thanks to SAF and biochar credits. SAF is made up of waste oils and fats, such as used cooking oil, and biochar credits enable the storage of carbon from the atmosphere. When fully replacing kerosene, SAF can slash lifecycle carbon emissions by more than 70%. The government will introduce a SAF mandate requiring at least 10% of jet fuel to be made from sustainable sources by 2030. This flight will help gather the data needed to support work to test and certify higher blends of SAF by exploring how operational efficiency improvements, flight optimisation and carbon removals can contribute to achieving net-zero flights. SAF could create a UK industry with an annual turnover of £2.4 billion by 2040, supporting up to 5,200 jobs by 2035, according to government estimates.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Ramblers Holidays and Adagio - Ramblers Holidays and sister brand Adagio plan to build ties with more travel agents as demand for walking holidays increases post-COVID-19. Currently the trade accounts for around 5% of sales, with bookings through a range of Aito agents and Hays Travel. Agents are paid between 10% and 13% commission. Managing director Kevin O'Regan said the company recognised agents as an important link for holidaymakers who enjoy walking and want to tap into the spike in interest following the pandemic. Ramblers set up its sister brand Adagio around a decade ago to target the more mature market and those seeking walks at a slower pace.

easyJet holidays - easyJet holidays has launched a new trade portal, saying it offers a more intuitive, user friendly experience for agents. The site follows feedback from trade partners and has more images and signposting. There is also a new calendar function to search for the cheapest stay at some hotels. The portal includes availability up to autumn 2024 and to mark the launch, easyJet holidays is offering agents an extra incentive, with all bookings made from 13-15 December earning £10 a time. The operator is also running a series of competitions over the

coming weeks. This started on 15 December with a competition on the brand's agent Facebook page, giving four agents the chance to win £250 in vouchers.

Intrepid - Intrepid Travel is set to offer more than 100 global indigenous experience holidays in 2023. The move comes after the B-corp operator joined the reconciliation movement in Australia in 2018, partnering with First Nations groups to build travel experiences, report on progress and raise awareness through tourism. Since 2020, the company has added indigenous tourism experiences to Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Africa among other destinations around the globe. Among the 100 experiences are several new offerings for 2023, including a Mayan village medicinal garden visit and textile weaving workshop on Intrepid's Real Central America itinerary. On the Premium Mexico Yucatan Highlights trip, groups can meet and tour the farm of a native Mayan family, followed by a hands-on cooking class before coming together to enjoy a traditional meal.

Jet2holidays - Jet2holidays have launched fully escorted tours to Turkey's historic Anatolia region as part of their Discover More collection. The tours will take in a wide range of the destination's attractions including visits to three Unesco World Heritage sites. Seven-day Treasures of Turkey packages are on sale now, and include flights, four-star half-board accommodation, a 22kg hold luggage allowance, transfers from Antalya and English-speaking expert guides. Departures are available from next April through to the end of October 2023 and 2024 from all 10 of Jet2's UK bases. Jet2 describes Discover More as a "new and growing range" of holidays and breaks designed for those looking for adventure, history, culture and scenery. The airline and operator said the new product had been designed to meet increasing demand from customers looking for more "discovery-based" experiential holidays.

Premier Holidays - Premier Holidays has revealed its 2023/2024 Australia and New Zealand brochure, introducing 27 new tours, 82 new hotels and 103 new experiences. The operator, which has been developing the new product over the past three years in line with agent feedback, has introduced new holidays which promote sustainability and allows clients to "enjoy authentic and unique" experiences. Accommodation options include Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary; Sanctuary by Sirromet in Mount Cotton; Paperbark Camp in Jervis Bay; and PurePods in New Zealand. The brand will also offer a new Safari Camp overnight tour in Darwin and a four-night Larapinta Trail Walking Tour in Alice Springs.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Meta adds Instagram audience targeting for Facebook and Instagram ads

Up until now, it has only been possible to create a custom audience of users

' Facebook followers, but not Instagram audiences. Meta is currently rolling out the capacity to run ads on Facebook and Instagram that target a user's Instagram followers. This new option, which will be managed within the campaign setup, will give brands a whole new audience to consider in their promotional process.

Young users are increasingly turning to TikTok for news

The influence of TikTok is further growing, with it now being identified as a key source of news and information for younger audiences. A report by Reuters Institute showed that 15% of 18-24 year olds use TikTok for staying informed about the news. Furthermore, it is 'internet personalities' (36%) and 'ordinary people' (23%) that are the primary source of news on this channel, as opposed to mainstream media channels, indicating that this audience may have a distrust in mainstream outlets.

MICE UPDATE

How work from home culture is impacting events

With the adoption of flexible working practices more common, the working from home culture is impacting event trends according to Athena, a Leicester based events venue. Event planners may need to offer more incentives to encourage delegates to leave their home offices, particularly as they encounter higher travel and accommodation costs. The rise in remote working and fragmented workforces has also led to a greater demand for fun and celebratory awards that recognise and reward people and products, and unite teams. Finally, working from home has made people more selective about which events they attend. Event planners have also had to be more mindful of employees' personal time and work-life balance, which has led to some events being organised within working hours.

LIGHTER NOTE

The oldest animal in the world celebrated another trip around the sun, as he turned 190 years young on December 4th. Read more [here](#).