

WEEKLY REPORT

23 December 2022



COVID-19 UPDATE

People with a confirmed positive test result for COVID-19 have largely increased in England by 28.8% over the past week according to the latest NHS data. Hospital admissions have also risen by 36.3%.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Eurostar strike called off but trains still cancelled over Christmas

Security staff working on Eurostar have cancelled planned strikes this week – although the train company is still running a revised timetable over the next few days because of wider industrial action. They had been due to walk on 22 and 23 December, but Eurostar said it had put provisions in place to ensure its services weren't affected by that particular strike. However, the operator will still be running a revised timetable on 23 and 24 December because of national strike action that will affect crew availability and opening hours on the UK railway network.

Fresh disruption warning ahead of Border Force strikes

A senior Border Force official has warned airline and port passengers to prepare for disruption over the Christmas period because of strikes by staff. The walkouts were announced by the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union and will start on Friday 23 December. Border Force and the government said they have undertaken “extensive” planning to “minimise” the disruption this action will cause.

Government awards £165m to support SAF goals

Five companies have been awarded a share of the government's £165 million Advanced Fuels Fund as it continues to strive to make the UK a “global leader in sustainable aviation fuels”. The successful projects include SAF plants in Teesside, Immingham and Ellesmere Port, which will convert everyday household and commercial waste, such as black bin bags, into sustainable jet fuel.

Foreign office confirms new rules for visits to Croatia from 1 January

The Foreign Office (FCDO) has updated its travel advice for Croatia, which is joining the Schengen area on 1 January 2023. It is warning Brits that from next year, any time spent in Croatia will count towards the maximum time they're allowed to spend in the Schengen area without a visa. Travellers visiting Croatia and other Schengen countries without a visa need to ensure their visit is within the 90-day limit. Visits to Schengen countries within the previous 180 days before travel count towards the 90 days.

Festive season flights remain 14% down on pre-Covid levels

Flight departures from UK airports this festive season have reached 86% of pre-pandemic levels, new data reveals. More than 5.5 million seats are available, equating to almost 31,000 departures between 21 December and January. The number of departing flights are up by a third from the festive period last year, but UK airport departures this Christmas remain 14% down compared to the same period in 2019 when there were 36,138 departing flights, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

European airports push back COVID-19 recovery forecast to 2025

A full recovery in European air passenger travel has been pushed back by a year to 2025. European airports trade body ACI Europe issued a revised passenger traffic forecast showing that volumes in 2023 are set to fall to 9% below pre-pandemic 2019 levels. This means a return to levels seen before COVID-19 will not occur in 2024 as previously forecast in May. Continued geopolitical tensions and the war in Ukraine will keep impacting several markets and dominate "downside risks". Deteriorating macro-economics and inflationary pressures are also set to weigh on demand, with air fares having increased sharply throughout the final two quarters of the year. Higher regulatory costs will also result in sustained inflationary pressures on air fares.

TRADE UPDATE

Border Force strikes 'to affect up to 1.8 million passengers'

Almost 1.8 million air passengers could be affected by Border Force strikes over the festive period, an aviation analytics specialist has suggested. Cirium estimates that between 23-26 and 28-31 December, the airports affected by industrial action are scheduled to see a total of 8,910 arrivals – equating to 1,789,448 seats. Friday 23 December will be the busiest day for arriving flights at Birmingham, Glasgow and Gatwick while Friday 30 December will be the busiest at Manchester, Cirium estimates. In total, Heathrow is set to see a maximum of 915,365 arriving passengers during the strike days while Gatwick and Manchester airports can expect a maximum of 421,745 and 265,847 arriving passengers respectively.

Five million Brits to travel abroad over Christmas, Abta predicts

An estimated five million passengers are set to travel abroad over the Christmas and New Year period, according to new data from Abta. The association has also tipped Friday 23 December to be the busiest day for departures and Christmas Day to be the quietest. Abta members have reported strong demand for winter sun trips to the Canary Islands, Spain, Turkey, Portugal and Egypt, as well as Jamaica, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Dubai and Mexico. Ski resorts in France and Switzerland are the most popular choices among customers and agents have reported strong demand in the first full winter sports season after three years of Covid-19-induced travel restrictions. The most sought-after overseas city break destinations this year include New York, Paris, Amsterdam and Dublin. A predicted 640,000 passengers are set to depart from Stansted, 470,000 from Luton, 500,000 from Manchester, 175,000 from Bristol and hundreds of thousands through Gatwick.

Clia to host first-ever parliamentary event for agents

Clia has announced plans to host its first-ever parliamentary event for travel agents, which will give the trade an opportunity to speak with MPs and new tourism minister Stuart Andrew. The event, which will be held next year, will also allow the trade to hear how they can continue to "play a crucial industry role". The announcement comes as the organisation highlights the trade initiatives and activities that it has planned for next year as 2022 draws to an end. Other plans for 2023 include the launch of a series of "boot camp" webinars in January, which will cover member cruise lines' main Wave activity, as well as new ships, itineraries and experiences. The organisation will also host its annual RiverView conference in Vienna next March, as well as its flagship conference in Southampton in May.

Eurostar security staff cancel strike action

Eurostar security staff have cancelled strike action planned for Thursday 22 December following an improved offer. The Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union said the walkout by members working on the Eurostar security contract for Mitie has been called off after the company made an improved pay offer of more than 10% and a raise of nearly 30% for the lowest paid. The union said it has also secured guaranteed hours on permanent shift patterns and employees who work flexibly will be offered choices which suit their individual requirements.

The company has also agreed to look at the discretionary sick pay policy clause to ensure employees have a review before any decision is made on whether it is payable.

ATOL releases 'biggest-ever' peaks booking campaign

ATOL is launching a campaign to remind consumers of the importance of booking a financially-protected package holiday in its "biggest-ever" peaks booking

campaign. The 'holiday booking boogie' campaign, which encourages consumers to do a dance when organising their next overseas holiday, runs until the end of January to raise awareness of the ATOL brand. Run by the Civil Aviation Authority, which oversees the ATOL financial protection scheme, the campaign is predicted to reach up to 25 million people during the traditional peak booking period. It will feature three videos, each with people dancing in their own homes to celebrate having just booked their next holiday and knowing their break is protected by the ATOL scheme. For the first time, advertising will run on AdSmart from Sky to get access to millions of Sky and Virgin homes in a bid to target the right audience for the campaign's key messages. The campaign will also run on digital channels including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Spotify and content will run across ATOL's own social media channels.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Ryanair – Ryanair is to operate a new route from Cardiff to Belfast as part of its summer 2023 schedule. The domestic route will be served twice a week from April. One-way fares start at £29.99.

Ryanair – Ryanair will operate two new routes to Porto in summer 2023. From April, three weekly flights will be operated from Bristol while a Leeds-Porto service will be operated twice weekly. To coincide with the announcement, Ryanair has launched a seat sale on summer 2023 fares, with tickets available from £29.99.

Wizz Air - Wizz Air has expanded its UK network with new routes from Luton airport and Gatwick. Bydgoszcz and Lodz in Poland are being served from Luton while Gatwick has gained flights to Grenoble and Verona. The flights have started ahead of Christmas, with Grenoble being operated on a winter seasonal basis for winter sports enthusiasts. Lodz and Verona are served three times a week with Bydgoszcz and Grenoble twice a week.

TAP Air Portugal - TAP Air Portugal will return to pre-pandemic flight levels in summer 2023 by operating 17 additional flights to the Americas. The airline said it was raising capacity "in line with customer demand", which will see an additional 10 flights per week operated to the US. TAP will operate 14 flights per week to Boston, 10 to Miami and Washington, and 5 to Chicago and San Francisco. It will also operate an additional 6 weekly flights to Brazil, with 20 flights to São Paulo, 7 to Belo Horizonte, 6 to Salvador and Brasília, and 4 to Belém. TAP said it also wants to improve connectivity between Portugal and Venezuela, and will increase flights from Lisbon to Caracas from 2 to 3 flights per week. The airline said the growth in transatlantic flights from Lisbon is "critical", adding it has "further plans" for its Porto hub "in the pipeline".

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

easyJet Holidays – easyJet holidays has begun its peaks campaign with a discounting message for trade sales of more than £700. The package holiday provider's Big Orange Sale has gone live, with savings of up to £300 on all holidays booked up to 11pm on 31 January. Agents can discount by £300 for spends reaching £3,000 and by £150 for sales totalling £1,500. A discount of £100 applies when clients spend £700. To access this, a code, ORANGESALE, must be inputted when booking through the operator's new trade portal. An easyJet spokesperson said this would allow agents to price-match direct bookings. The operator also has a range of agent incentives including competitions on its Facebook page. These include a daily giveaway and a weekly holiday prize. The operator will also crown a Final Perfect Peaks winner, who will receive a luxury holiday for two. easyJet holidays' programme will offer more than 5,000 hotels across more than 500 destinations until the end of summer 2024.

Jet2Holidays – Jet2holidays' new Express Transfers service has gone live, meaning customers arriving in a number of resorts are guaranteed to be the first, second or third drop-off on their arrival transfer at the start of their holiday. The service has gone live in approximately 100 hotels across destinations such as the Canary Islands, the Balearics, Turkey, Croatia, Greece, Portugal, Madeira, Bulgaria and Cyprus. The new offering also means customers will be one of the final three pick-ups on their departure transfer back to the airport at the end of their holiday. The launch of the new service was announced last month by Zoe Towers, head of product at Jet2holidays, during the company's annual conference for independent travel agents. Express Transfers is included as standard when customers or independent travel agents book a hotel featuring the service.

Tauck – Escorted touring specialist Tauck recently hosted two training programmes in Jordan and Canada for a number of UK, US, Canadian and Australian travel agents. The two programmes, one held between 1-9 December in Jordan and the other in Alberta in October, combined classroom instruction with opportunities to experience activities, cultural discoveries and hotel properties that Tauck operates. Topics covered ranged from Tauck's history to its present day product portfolio, which includes land tours, European river cruises, small-ship ocean cruises, and Tauck Bridges family journeys. Other sessions focused on techniques for selling Tauck and sales and marketing resources available to advisors.

Classic Collection – Classic Collection has released a 324-page Summer 2023 print brochure ahead of peaks, with 40 new properties in key destinations. The programme features more than 350 properties in 15 short-haul destinations across

11 countries, with flights from 26 UK airports. The new brochure highlights 177 hotels particularly suited to families, 63 all-inclusive options, 51 adult only hotels, 35 boutique properties and 19 properties where Michelin-starred dining is an option. Among the new inclusions is Villa Leblanc on Menorca, while the Costa del Sol features luxury additions such as La Zambra, SO Sotogrande Resort and METT Hotel & Beach Resort Marbella. In the eastern Mediterranean, the operator has introduced Cap St Georges and City of Dreams in Cyprus, alongside Stella Island Luxury Resort & Spa in Crete and Kouros Hotel & Suites on Mykonos. E-brochures are downloadable at classic-collection.co.uk while printed brochures can be ordered through Tradegate.

Icelolly.com - Holiday comparison website icelolly.com has unveiled a TV advertising campaign aiming to encourage consumers to book 2023 holidays using cost-effective tools. Broadcast across ITV's network from Boxing Day, the advert shows a couple searching the internet for their perfect holiday. After they hit the search button, several ice cream vans arrive on their doorstep each promoting different holiday destinations causing confusion. An icelolly.com ice cream van then appears displaying the best deals from popular holiday providers, making their choice easier. Icelolly.com said the advert is part of a wider multi-million pound campaign to bring attention to the importance of using holiday comparison sites as a way for consumers to lock in value for money deals.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Twitter bans links to other social platforms

Twitter has announced that, while it recognises that its users are active on other platforms, it will no longer allow linking out to these apps as it believes that this creates free promotion of competitor channels. Additionally, third party link aggregators such as linktr.ee, which are often used in users' bios, have also been banned. However, linking out to certain platforms like YouTube, Pinterest, Reddit, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and TikTok is still allowed, despite banning others like Facebook and Instagram.

TikTok tests horizontal, full-width video display

TikTok is testing a new YouTube-style horizontal full-screen display option for videos. For users that have this option available to them, there is a 'Full Screen' button which prompts users to turn their phone landscape, creating a full screen display. Also this year, TikTok has tested Instagram style still image carousel posts and 'TikTok Now' which is similar to BeReal's posting style. This shows that the platform is diversifying what it offers its users in an effort to keep them from using other apps instead.

MICE UPDATE

ExCeL ends 2022 with highest number of event launches

For 2022, ExCeL London venue is reporting its highest number of new event launches since 2017. Despite not hosting events for the first six weeks of 2022 due to the pandemic, the carbon neutral venue hosted 16 brand new shows – in addition to a further dozen relocated from other venues – on its way to a total of 350. This is a demonstration of the returning demand for face-to-face events.

LIGHTER NOTE

Quarrelling penguins, an apparent hungry hippo, grinning triggerfish and jumping squirrels were all winners in the annual Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards, which has announced its 2022 winners. Learn more [here](#).