

WEEKLY BRIEFING

24 February 2023

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Keir Starmer unveils Labour's five missions for the country

Sir Keir Starmer has outlined the five 'missions' he will put at the centre of his party's offer to voters at the next election. The five missions, which Sir Keir said would form "the backbone of the Labour manifesto and the pillars of the next Labour government", include; securing the 'highest sustained growth' in the G7 group of rich nations by the end of Labour's first term, making Britain a 'clean energy superpower' by 2030, improving the NHS, reforming the justice system and raising education standards.

UK edges further away from recession as families' economy and inflation outlook brightens

Another brighter than expected set of economic numbers released today indicate the UK has a chance of avoiding a much-tipped recession this year. Consumer confidence climbed faster than forecast to minus 38 points this month, up seven points from minus 45 points in January, according to research firm Growth for Knowledge's index. Despite the shock upturn, confidence is still running at historically low levels after rebounding from the lowest reading ever when Liz Truss took charge of the country in September.

Christian Atsu found dead after Turkey earthquake

Footballer Christian Atsu has been found dead under the rubble of his home almost two weeks after the Turkey earthquake, his agent has confirmed. The Ghana international, age 31, had spells with Premier League sides Everton, Chelsea and Newcastle. Atsu had been missing since the 6 February quake.

TRADE UPDATE

Majority plan overseas holiday this year despite economic challenges, poll finds

Consumers remain optimistic about the possibility of a holiday abroad this year despite the current economic challenges, a new poll shows. They do however remain cost conscious, with 40% considering self-catering or bed and breakfast options (28%) and 21% planning to go all inclusive. The study of 2,500 people by travel money firm eurochange found that 96% plan to travel overseas in the next year with the remaining minority intending to at some stage before 2025. The findings come against a backdrop of the lasting impact of the pandemic, a looming recession and the rising cost of living and support industry but reinforces travel industry indicators of strong levels of bookings during the January-February peaks.

'Bucket list' holiday bookings more than triple since the pandemic, Not Just Travel finds

'Bucket list' holidays have become more frequent since the pandemic, Not Just Travel has found, as its agents report "milestone" trip bookings have more than tripled in popularity. Citing a change in priorities since Covid as the reason for the uptick in desire, Not Just Travel co-founder Steve Witt (pictured) said milestone holidays have risen from 10% of bookings in 2019 to 35% this year. He said customers have gone from only booking a bucket list holiday occasionally to booking one every year or every few years.

Adventure sector to enjoy 'roaring '20s' as sales boom

The adventure travel sector looks set to enjoy a "roaring '20s" period, with demand soaring for this style of travel for 2023 and 2024. Data specialist Spike Insight told delegates at Adventure Travel Networking 2023 that adventure operators had reported an overwhelmingly positive start to the year. Director Roy Barker presented findings from a survey of 100 adventure suppliers, which showed group tours have seen the greatest resurgence this year, with more than a third of companies (36%) identifying this as their fastest growth sector. Solo travel has also seen growth but was the fastest-growing sector for only 13% of companies. Walking holidays have proven to be the most popular activity, followed by iconic bucket list experiences.

BP Travel Marketing reports continued demand for holiday brochures

BP Travel Marketing has reported continued growth in demand among travel agents for tour operators' brochures during this year's peak season. The brochure distribution and travel marketing company said trade orders for brochures in January were 20% up on January 2022. The number of brochures dispatched to agents in January was up by 34%. The company, which witnessed a 130% jump in trade orders for brochures once Covid restrictions eased in February last year compared with December 2021, said the growth in demand reflected the continued bounce back in the package holiday sector.

The Travel Industry Awards by TTG returns for 2023

The most prestigious awards in travel are back – as TTG Media proudly announces the return of The Travel Industry Awards by TTG, in association with new headline partners Gold Medal, Pure Luxury, Cruise Plus and Incredible Journeys. With several new features, this year's programme will once again recognise the brands and individuals who have raised the bar, stood out from their competitors, and strived to work smarter, better and fairer over the past 12 months.

AIRLINE UPDATE

United Airlines - United Airlines has improved its family seating policy to make it easier for children under 12 to sit next to an adult in their party for free, including customers who buy Basic Economy tickets. The US carrier said the new policy is thanks to investments in a new online seat map feature that dynamically finds available adjacent seats at the time of booking. Customers travelling with children under 12 will start to see more adjacent seat options immediately and the complete policy change will go into effect in early March.

easyJet - easyJet will add an eighth aircraft to its Belfast base this summer to support the launch of two routes to the Mediterranean. An additional Airbus A320 aircraft will join the airline's fleet as easyJet prepares to operate flights to Antalya in Turkey and Rhodes in Greece this summer.

Wizz Air - Low fares carrier Wizz Air has signed an agreement for the supply of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) from 2025 as part of its drive to decarbonise its operations. The Memorandum of Understanding gives Wizz Air the opportunity to purchase 36,000 tons of SAF from Helsinki-based Neste for the supply across the airline's route network in Europe and the UK.

Qantas - Prototypes of the first and business cabins on Qantas aircraft that will fly non-stop from Australia to London and New York from late 2025 have been unveiled. Its 12 Airbus A350s will be configured to seat 238 passengers to provide more space compared to the 300-plus capacity specified by other carriers. The aircraft will have six first suites in a 1-1-1 configuration and 52 Business Suites in a 1-2-1 configuration. They will also feature a wellbeing zone for all passengers, which will be unveiled alongside the 40 premium economy seats and 140-capacity economy cabin in the coming months, according to the carrier.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Flight Centre - Flight Centre Travel Group delivered higher than expected profits in the half year to December 2022. The Australian company reported an almost A\$280 million turnaround from a A\$184 million loss in the same period a year earlier.

Jet2 - Jet2 and Jet2holidays has raised early season capacity by a further 10,000 seats just weeks after expanding its summer programme. More flights and holidays have been added to the Canary Islands, the Balearics, Cyprus, Portugal and mainland Spain from five UK airports. Extra services have been laid on to Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Larnaca, Majorca, Tenerife, Faro and Malaga between March and May in response to customer demand for early summer sun.

Classic Package Holidays - The first printed brochure has been published by Classic Collection Holidays' trade-only brand Classic Package Holidays to further enhance its trade support. The publication is being made available to 700 travel agents via Tradegate and includes £59 low deposits. The new brochure features 12 short-haul and 10 long-haul destinations with a choice of 18 airlines flying from more than 30 UK airports. The programme covers 170 properties in destinations including Spain, Turkey, Greece, North Africa, US, Mexico, Caribbean, Dubai and the Indian Ocean.

Booking.com - Booking Holdings generated \$17 billion in revenue in 2022 as profits soared to more than \$3 billion year-on-year. The owner of Booking.com had gross travel bookings of \$121.3 billion for 2022, an increase of 58% from the previous year. Total revenues for 2022 were \$17.1 billion – the company's highest-ever level and 13% higher than pre-pandemic 2019.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Meta begins testing a paid Verification Scheme

Meta has started testing a paid verification programme, similar to Twitter's \$8 option. The scheme is called 'Meta Verified' and will provide a verified badge on Instagram and Facebook, which has been authenticated with government ID. It also includes account protection and support as well as increased visibility and reach. The programme will cost \$11.99 a month for web and \$14.99 a month for iOS and Android. Gradual testing will begin in Australia and New Zealand with the intention for it to be rolled out to the rest of the world soon.

Instagram introduces new 'Channels' feature

Instagram has launched 'Instagram Channels', a brand-new broadcast chat option that is effectively a group messaging function, allowing users to stay up to date on specific interests. Users will be able to join a channel, which will be added to their Instagram direct chat list and then be able to read and react to the chat. This move is in line with the trend of people using the app more for private messaging than for posting content to feeds and stories. This feature is currently available to selected users and is intending to be rolled out to Facebook and Messenger as well.

MICE UPDATE

Mia research reveals positive sector recovery

The Meetings Industry Association's (mia) latest research has revealed that a third of organisations within the sector started the year with more confirmed bookings for 2023 than they did in 2019. In its latest survey of 126 event venues and suppliers, the association found that two-thirds (66%) of organisations have forecasted more revenue for the year ahead compared to 2022. Despite this signal of sector optimism for the year ahead, the research also reveals the estimated value of cancelled business as a result of recent rail strikes to exceed £337m for the sector, while over £550m of business has been postponed. Due to the rise of energy costs, over three-quarters (76%) are said to have increased their prices by an average 13% to mitigate increased operating costs in the last six months. Beyond financial forecasts, the insight on staffing highlights the sectors' ongoing recruitment challenge as 53% of organisations claim to be understaffed, almost half (47%) have had to reduce their service, with almost eight in 10 (79%) currently advertising live vacancies.

LIGHTER NOTE

Critically Endangered Dancing Lemur Born in UK is 'Landmark Moment for Species' After Parents Sent From US Zoo. Read more [here](#).