

# AAPA sees recovery for international passenger markets in 2022



International passenger demand rose by 439% for 2022, says AAPA

According to preliminary traffic results for 2022 released by the [Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines](#) (AAPA), international passenger markets are recovering after more than two years of prolonged lockdowns and strict border control measures.

In 2022, Asia-Pacific airlines carried a combined total of 105.4 million international passengers, compared to the 17.4 million passengers recorded in 2021. By December, international passengers carried climbed to 47.5% of pre-pandemic levels, a significant improvement from the 7% recorded in January.

Measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPK) terms, international passenger demand rose by a strong 439% for the year. After accounting for a 144% expansion in available seat capacity, the average international passenger load factor jumped 39.9 percentage points higher to average 72.8% in 2022.

In contrast to the recovery in passenger markets, international air cargo demand weakened in 2022 and continued to face multiple challenges. A steep increase in inflation, a strong US dollar and the tightening of monetary policy across economies led to a slowdown in global economic activity.

Pandemic-related lockdowns in China and the Russia-Ukraine war also aggravated prevailing supply chain disruptions.

Against this background, international air cargo demand recorded an 8.2% decline in 2022, following from a robust 20.3% annual increase in 2021. Offered freight capacity expanded by 2.2%, as robust recovery in commercial passenger operations led to a gradual increase in available bellyhold space. As a result, the international freight load factor declined by 7.5 percentage points to average 66.6% for the year.

"2022 marked the start of a long-awaited recovery in international travel markets as governments across the region eased travel restrictions over the course of the year in a bid to welcome back visitors," Subhas Menon, AAPA Director General, said in a press release. "The release of pent-up travel demand drove a 507% annual increase in the number of passengers carried for the year. However, demand in 2022 averaged just 27% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels, underscoring the significant progress still required towards full recovery. Reflecting falling export orders alongside worsening business and consumer sentiment, international air cargo markets weakened after a relatively steady start to the year."

Looking ahead, Menon said, "The outlook for 2023 is broadly positive, notably for passenger travel. The recovery of passenger demand is expected to progress further in the coming months, driven by strong appetite for travel. In particular, the recent easing of travel restrictions in China will further fuel demand, although the re-imposition of testing requirements for inbound travellers by some governments may somewhat slow down recovery in the shorter term. Asian airlines continue to work closely with regulators, airports and other stakeholders to serve the travelling public and deliver a seamless, safe and sustainable experience."