

IATA finds passenger demand recovery continued in 2022



Globally, full year 2022 traffic was at 68.5% of pre-pandemic (2019) levels

The International Air Transport Association ([IATA](#)) has announced that the recovery in air travel continued in December 2022 and for the full year.

According to a February news release, total traffic in 2022 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 64.4% compared to 2021. Globally, full year 2022 traffic was at 68.5% of pre-pandemic (2019) levels. December 2022 total traffic rose 39.7% compared to December 2021 and reached 76.9% of the December 2019 level.

International traffic in 2022 climbed 152.7% versus 2021 and reached 62.2% of 2019 levels. December 2022 international traffic climbed 80.2% over December 2021, reaching 75.1% of the level in December 2019.

Domestic traffic for 2022 increased 10.9% compared to the prior year. 2022 domestic traffic was at 79.6% of the full year 2019 level. December 2022 domestic traffic was up 2.6% over the year earlier period and was at 79.9% of December 2019 traffic.

“The industry left 2022 in far stronger shape than it entered, as most governments lifted COVID-19 travel restrictions during the year and people took advantage of the restoration of their freedom to travel. This momentum is expected to continue in the New Year, despite some governments’ over-reactions to China’s re-opening,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director General.

International Passenger Markets

Asia-Pacific airlines posted a 363.3% rise in full year international 2022 traffic compared to 2021, maintaining the strongest year-over-year rate among the regions. Capacity rose 129.9% and the load factor climbed 37.3 percentage points to 74.0%. December 2022 traffic rose 302.7% compared to December 2021.

European carriers' full year traffic climbed 132.2% versus 2021. Capacity increased 84.0%, and load factor rose 16.7 percentage points to 80.6%. For December, demand climbed 46.5% compared to the same month in 2021.

Middle Eastern airlines saw a 157.4% traffic rise in 2022 compared to 2021. Capacity increased 73.8% and load factor climbed 24.6 percentage points to 75.8%. December demand climbed 69.8% compared to the same month in 2021.

North American carriers reported a 130.2% annual traffic rise in 2022 compared to 2021. Capacity increased 71.3%, and load factor climbed 20.7 percentage points to 80.8%. December 2022 traffic rose 61.3% compared to the year-ago period.

Latin American airlines posted a 119.2% traffic rise in 2022 over full year 2021. Annual capacity climbed 93.3% and load factor increased 9.7 percentage points to 82.2%, the highest among the regions. December demand climbed 37.0% compared to December 2021.

African airlines' annual traffic increased 89.2% in 2022 versus the prior year. Full year 2022 capacity was up 51.0% and load factor climbed 14.5 percentage points to 71.7%, the lowest among regions. December 2022 traffic for African airlines rose 118.8% over the year-earlier period.

India's full year domestic traffic rose 48.8% versus 2021, reaching 85.7% of the 2019 level.

Japan's domestic RPKs rose 75.9% in 2022 and were at 74.1% of the 2019 level.

 IATA's report on Domestic Passenger Markets in 2022

The Bottom Line

“Let us hope that 2022 becomes known as the year in which governments locked away forever the regulatory shackles that kept their citizens earthbound for so long. It is vital that governments learn the lesson that travel restrictions and border closures have little positive impact in terms of slowing the spread of infectious diseases in our globally inter-connected world. However, they have an enormous negative impact on people's lives and livelihoods, as well as on the global economy that depends on the unfettered movement of people and goods,” added Walsh.