

Passenger recovery accelerates in February

- IATA

Air travel posted a strong rebound in February 2022 compared to January 2022, as Omicron-related impacts moderated outside of Asia, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has revealed.

The war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, did not have a major impact on traffic levels, said IATA.

The figures below refer to year-on-year traffic comparisons, instead of comparisons with the 2019 period, unless otherwise noted. Owing to the low traffic base in 2021, some markets will show very high year-on-year growth rates, even if the size of these markets is still significantly smaller than they were in 2019, IATA said.

Total traffic in February 2022 (measured in RPKs) was up 115.9% compared to February 2021. That is an improvement from January 2022, which was up 83.1% on January 2021. Compared to February 2019, however, traffic was down 45.5%.

February 2022 domestic traffic was up 60.7% compared to the year-ago period, building on a 42.6% increase in January 2022 compared to January 2021. There was wide variation in markets tracked by IATA. Domestic traffic in February was 21.8% below the volumes of February 2019.

International RPKs rose 256.8% versus February 2021, improved from a 165.5% year-on-year upswing in January 2022 versus the year-earlier period. All regions improved their performance compared to the prior month. February 2022 international RPKs were down 59.6% compared to the same month in 2019.

Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General, said: "The recovery in air travel is gathering steam as governments in many parts of the world lift travel restrictions. States that persist in attempting to lock-out the disease, rather than managing it, as we do with other diseases, risk missing out on the enormous economic and societal benefits that a restoration of international connectivity will bring."

February 2022 (% year-on-year)	World share ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt) ²	PLF (level) ³
Total Market	100.0%	115.9%	68.4%	15.4%	69.8%
Africa	1.9%	60.2%	33.1%	11.0%	64.8%
Asia Pacific	27.6%	42.9%	31.9%	4.8%	62.9%
Europe	24.9%	232.8%	136.1%	20.9%	72.1%
Latin America	6.5%	100.5%	75.1%	10.0%	79.5%
Middle East	6.5%	194.1%	80.9%	24.9%	64.8%
North America	32.7%	134.9%	69.1%	20.9%	74.5%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2021 ²year-on-year change in load factor ³Load Factor Level

Source:

International passenger markets

European carriers saw their February traffic rise 380.6% versus February 2021, an improvement on the 224.3% increase in January 2022 versus the same month in 2021. Capacity rose 174.8%, and load factor climbed 30.3 percentage points to 70.9%.

Asia Pacific airlines had a 144.4% rise in February traffic compared to February 2021, up over the 125.8% gain registered in January 2022 versus January 2021. Capacity rose 60.8% and the load factor was up 16.1 percentage points to 47.0%, the lowest among regions.

Middle Eastern airlines' traffic rose 215.3% in February compared to February 2021, well up compared to the 145% increase in January 2022, versus the same month in 2021. February capacity rose 89.5% versus the year-ago period, and load factor climbed 25.8 percentage points to 64.7%.

North American carriers experienced a 236.7% traffic rise in February versus the 2021 period, significantly increased compared to the 149% rise in January 2022 over January 2021. Capacity rose 91.7%, and load factor climbed 27.4 percentage points to 63.6%.

Latin American airlines' February traffic rose 242.7% compared to the same month in 2021, well up over the 155.2% rise in January 2022 compared to January 2021. February capacity rose 146.3% and load factor increased 21.7 percentage points to 77%, which was the highest load factor among the regions for the 17th consecutive month.

African airlines had a 69.5% rise in February RPKs versus a year ago, a big improvement on the 20.5% year-on-year increase recorded in January 2022 compared to the same month in 2021. February 2022 capacity was up 34.7% and load factor climbed 12.9 percentage points to 63%.

2022 vs 2019

The accelerated growth recorded in February 2022 compared to a year ago is helping passenger demand catch up to 2019 levels, IATA said.

Total RPKs in February were down 45.5% compared to February 2019, well ahead of the 49.6% decline recorded in January versus the same month in 2019. The domestic recovery continues to outpace that of international markets.

Said Walsh: "As the long-awaited recovery in air travel accelerates, it is important that our infrastructure providers are prepared for a huge increase in passenger numbers in the coming months. We are already seeing reports of unacceptably long lines at some airports owing to the growing number of travelers. And that is even before the surge of Easter holiday travel in many markets next week. The peak Northern summer travel season will be critical for jobs throughout the travel and tourism value chain. Now is the time to prepare. Governments can help by ensuring that border positions are staffed adequately and that background security checks for new staff are managed as efficiently as possible."