

# WEEKLY REPORT

10 September 2021



## HB HIGHLIGHTS

As we wait with bated breath for transatlantic borders to reopen and ahead of IPW and Brand USA Travel Week 2021, Tom Garzilli, chief marketing officer at Brand USA spoke to Robin Searle from Travel Weekly about how they continued to support their U.S partners and the travel trade during this challenging time as well as looking forward to a brighter future. The full interview can be read [here](#).

Staying in North America, Canada opened its borders to vaccinated travellers this week. Ontario was in the spotlight of the travel pages with the PR team securing some fantastic coverage. *i news* and [i news online](#) ran a piece on Ontario's Icewine following a press trip to the province last year whilst *The Sun* and [The Sun Online](#) showcased Ontario as the perfect place to experience Canada's wildlife.

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The UK has seen a rise in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the last seven days. There has also been a small increase of 2.9% in the number of patients being admitted to hospital having tested positive for COVID-19. The UK vaccination roll out has also continued with 88.9% of the UK population over the age of 16 having had at least one dose of the vaccine and a further 80.4% having had both. Professor Dame Sarah Gilbert, the lead scientist for the AstraZeneca vaccine, said there is evidence of "strong maintenance" of immune response in vaccinated people when asked whether booster vaccines will be necessary.

In England, compulsory COVID-19 and flu jabs for frontline NHS and care workers are being considered in a government consultation. Plans are already in place to make it mandatory for care home workers in England to be fully vaccinated but some unions and care organisations have warned that making the jabs mandatory

will lead to staff shortages. Health secretary, Sajid Javid, is urging all health service workers to get both jabs to protect vulnerable patients. Currently about 88% of NHS trust staff have received two COVID-19 doses of the vaccine.

In Wales, the number of people being admitted into hospital with COVID-19 is rising but the Welsh government has advised that there are no plans for a "firebreak" lockdown. Last October, people were told to stay at home and pubs, restaurants and non-essential shops were ordered to close as Wales entered a 17-day firebreak lockdown. The Welsh government has said they will continue to closely monitor the public health situation and review the COVID-19 regulations every three weeks. There are currently very few COVID-19 restrictions in Wales however, people are still being urged to work from home where possible.

The Scottish parliament has voted in favour of introducing COVID-19 vaccination certificates for entry to nightclubs and other events, the nation becoming the first in the UK to adopt such a measure. The new pass, which will come into force on 1 October, is aimed at slowing the rise in the number of coronavirus cases blamed on the new school term, and also at avoiding the reintroduction of new pandemic restrictions, Scotland's health minister said before the vote in Edinburgh. "We do not want to re-impose any of the restrictions that have been in place for much of this year as we all know how much harm they have caused to businesses, to education and to people's general well-being. But we must stem the rise in cases," Humza Yousaf, member of the Scottish Parliament, said.

Northern Ireland has seen a relaxation of COVID-19 rules as of 10 September. The number of people allowed indoors in domestic settings has risen from 10 to 15 from four households and table service rules have been lifted for pub and restaurant customers indoors and outdoors. However, social distancing measures of 1 metre remain in place in indoor settings and nightclubs are not allowed to reopen.

In Ireland, as of 8 September, there had been a total of 6.9 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine administered. 3.5 million people have received their first dose with 3.48 million people being fully vaccinated. Ireland's Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly announced that the National Immunisation Advisory Committee has recommended a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for residents aged 65 years and older living in long term residential care facilities and for those aged 80 years and older living in the community. The booster dose can be given after a minimal interval of six months following completion of the primary vaccination schedule.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Numbers on furlough scheme drop to new low**

The number of people on furlough has continued to fall, with young people leading the way, latest figures show. At the end of July, 1.6 million people were still on furlough, the lowest level since the start of the pandemic and 340,000 fewer than a month earlier. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 11.6 million workers have benefited from the government programme, which is due to be wound up at the end of this month. At the peak of the pandemic in May last year, nearly nine million people were on furlough.

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM UPDATE

### **Gatwick opens consultation on northern runway plans**

Gatwick has begun a public consultation on plans to bring its northern runway into service use alongside its main runway. The proposed plans would allow the airport's existing northern runway to be brought into routine use for departing aircraft, by repositioning its centre line 12 metres north to enable dual runway operations. Gatwick says the northern runway could be operational by summer 2029.

### **Government commits to Heathrow expansion**

The Department for Transport has reiterated its view that the south east of England needs additional airport capacity, and that this would be best met by a third runway at Heathrow. In a response to requests for a review of government policy, the Department for Transport's Airport Policy Division said transport secretary Grant Shapps, "has decided that it is not appropriate to review the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) at this time".

### **Consumers on both sides of Atlantic turning to travel agents**

Increasing numbers of consumers in the UK, the US and Canada are turning to travel agents amid the complex web of COVID-19 travel regulations, say trade associations. Senior figures from agency associations in the UK, US, Canada and Europe joined a Facebook Live debate to discuss a united approach to lobbying and share their experiences of resuming leisure travel. Research by ABTA in July showed that holidaymakers are 25% more likely to book a holiday with a travel professional now than before the pandemic. Consumers are seeking more security and expertise, as well as the protection offered by agency bookings.

**Covid risk on flights 'less than 0.1%' when passengers test negative in advance**

The risk of exposure to COVID-19 when flying after all passengers test negative 72 hours in advance is less than 0.1%, a study of transatlantic service by Delta Air Lines has shown. The research examined data from almost 10,000 passengers on Delta's COVID-19 tested flights between New York and Atlanta to Rome. It found that a single COVID-19 molecular test performed within 72 hours of departure could decrease the rate of people actively infected on board to a level that is significantly below active community infection rates.

**UK-Spain is world's busiest air route this month**

New figures from Official Airline Guide show 3.2 million seats available between the two countries this month, up 2.5% since August, but down more than 38% compared to September 2019. Capacity just outstrips US-Mexico at 3.16 million. The next biggest UK market is to Greece, with 1.3 million seats, down 4.8% on September 2019 but up slightly on last month.

**AIRLINE UPDATE**

**Air Canada** - Air Canada resumed passenger flights between Heathrow and Calgary International Airport on Wednesday (September 8) with a three-times weekly non-stop service. The outbound service from London will operate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, with the return service from Calgary on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

**easyJet** - easyJet confirmed plans to raise £1.2 billion to accelerate recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. easyJet also revealed it recently received and rejected an unsolicited takeover approach from an unnamed bidder. UK domestic capacity in August was at 105% of 2019 levels with a load factor of 82%, while intra-EU capacity was at 81% of 2019 levels with a load factor of 85%, "demonstrating the strength of the group's UK domestic and intra-EU flying schedule". Fourth quarter capacity is expected to be at 57% of equivalent 2019 levels, a "significant increase" over the previous three months when easyJet flew 17% of third quarter 2019 capacity. Looking into the first quarter of the 2022 financial year, the carrier expects to fly up to 60% of the equivalent 2019 capacity with a continued focus on profitable flying.

**Norwegian Air** - Norwegian Air has expanded the autumn route network following increased demand. The move follows increased carryings in August. The number of

future bookings has continued to rise in line with an expanding route network as more people are fully vaccinated and EU/EEA countries accept international Covid certificates for travel, according to the budget carrier. August passenger numbers were up one and a half times the same time last year at 790,220 as capacity more than doubled year-on-year. The August load factor of 72.6%, was up ten percentage points compared with last year.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

**Thomas Cook** – Thomas Cook has marked its first anniversary with a new slogan that nods towards its predecessor. The online brand has reworked the famous “Don’t Just Book It, Thomas Cook it” phrase into a new slogan, “Love It, Book It, Thomas Cook It”. Thomas Cook launched in September 2020 following China’s Fosun Tourism Group’s acquisition of the collapsed former Cook brand and its digital assets in November 2019.

**Travel Counsellors** – The chief executive says now is a “great time for customers to book holidays”, reporting a plethora of competitive prices in the market and “momentum” building on sales. Steve Byrne told a *Travel Weekly* webcast that the homeworking group’s leisure sales are at 75-80% of pre-pandemic levels. Byrne said: “Flight prices are super-competitive and there is availability. Compared to where we were two or three months ago, and last year, you’re seeing really positive demand for Spain and other European hotspots. He added: “It’s better than expected, but still way below what we would have wanted compared to two years ago – but bookings, for the remainder of this year and next, are starting to pick up really solidly.”

**TUI** - Europe’s biggest tour operator has committed to refunding all customers whose holidays were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic by the end of September. Tui said all refunds will be issued by 30 September after being investigated by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the competition watchdog.

## SOCIAL AND DIGITAL UPDATE

### Twitter launches test of ‘Communities’

Twitter has announced a live test of its new ‘Communities’ option, which will enable

users to share tweets with selected groups of users in the app, as opposed to publicly broadcasting all of their tweets with all of their followers, all of the time. Communities provides a dedicated, topic-based space to share and discuss relevant tweets, with users able to choose a specific community to tweet their message into from the composer. All active communities will be searchable in the app, and will also be accessible via a new tab at the bottom or sidebar (desktop).

## MICE UPDATE

### **UK Government publishes outline of event insurance scheme**

The Government has published an outline of the rules for its Live Events Reinsurance Scheme, which was announced on 4 August. The £750m scheme offers cost indemnification if an event has to be cancelled, postponed, relocated or abandoned due to new UK Civil Authority restrictions in response to Covid-19. It will run to 30 September 2022 with a review point in Spring next year. Cover will be available to purchase through participating insurers. All live events including music festivals, conferences and business events are eligible to purchase the cover, which will be available alongside standard commercial events insurance.

## LIGHTER NOTE

British teenager Emma Raducanu reaches the US Open final. See [here](#).