

WEEKLY REPORT

23 September 2022



COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing for COVID-19 has decreased by 13.2% between 19 and 23 September. The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 increased by 12.7% in the last seven days from 17 September to 23, but the number of deaths within 28 days of positive test results has fallen by 24.3%. As of 21 September 69.4% of people aged 12 and over in England have received their first booster or third vaccination. The autumn COVID-19 booster is being offered to those at high risk of the complications of COVID-19 infection in preparation for the winter.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Chancellor cuts income tax and stamp duty in bid to boost growth

Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng has outlined a series of tax cuts and economic measures in the massive shake-up of the UK's finances. The chancellor has announced the basic rate of income tax will be cut from 20p to 19p from April next year, Kwasi Kwarteng said the 1p tax cut people pay on earnings would benefit more than 31 million people. The chancellor also announced in his mini-budget that he would abolish the UK's 45% highest tax band for people who earn more than £150,000 per year. He said high tax rates "damage Britain's competitiveness" and reduce incentives for new businesses. The measures are being seen as a major change of direction for the government under new Prime Minister Liz Truss.

Nation says farewell to Queen Elizabeth II

The Queen's state funeral took place on 19 September at Westminster Abbey, with the King and members of the Royal Family leading a procession of her coffin through London - and then to Windsor as thousands lined the route. She was then buried next to her late husband Philip in a private ceremony. Tens of thousands of people travelled to both London and Windsor to be a part of the service, with 26.2 million people tuning in to watch across the UK.

The owner of multi-billion dollar clothing firm Patagonia has given the company away to help fight climate change

Mountaineering and responsible business legend Yvon Chouinard announced this week that he and his family have donated their shares to two new entities: Patagonia Purpose Trust and the Holdfast Collective. The charitable trust, which holds 2% of the company and all of its voting rights, will guard the organisation's mission. The Holdfast Collective meanwhile, which will hold the remaining 98 per cent of the stock, is a not-for-profit that is dedicated to preserving nature and battling the environmental crisis. Every dollar of profit that is not reinvested back into Patagonia will be distributed as dividends to these new entities and then used to protect nature and biodiversity, the company says. It expects to pay out roughly \$100m (£87m) annually.

Bank of England indicates UK already in recession

Bank of England hikes interest rate as it indicates UK is already in recession; government hints energy support for schools, hospitals, and care homes could continue beyond six months.

Queen Elizabeth II statue in Trafalgar Square gets MPs' support

Calls for the Queen to be honoured with a statue on Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth have been met with widespread support in the House of Commons. Former minister Sir John Hayes presented the idea which was received with great responses from other MPs. The Tory MP said Queen Elizabeth II, who died aged 96 on 8 September, deserved a "fitting national memorial". He added: "For me, a statue on the final plinth on Trafalgar Square would be ideal." The central London landmark has been home to a rolling commission of artworks since 1998.

TRADE UPDATE

Agents must work harder on making clients' travel plans more sustainable

Travel advisors and luxury travel providers should be working harder together to make an impact on clients' awareness of travelling sustainably, as the topic continues to rise up the agenda. "Travel designers play a pivotal role – we are in such a powerful potential position because we can send clients to places that are really going to make a difference," said Henry Comyn, co-founder of The Conscious Travel Foundation. Comyn added he appreciated how overwhelming it can seem as a small business to know where to start in the world of sustainability but said one of the reasons the Foundation had been started in 2020 was to help smaller travel companies focus on what they could do, with a vision that all businesses should have a positive impact environmentally.

Heathrow strike vote threatens half-term transatlantic trips

Dozens of transatlantic services at Heathrow could be disrupted during October half-term if a new strike vote is successful. The Unite union is balloting United Airlines members at Heathrow on whether they want to strike over pay and concerns around outsourcing. The ballot is open and will run for three weeks until 11 October. If successful, Unite could – at the very earliest – call a strike starting 25 October. Unite warns that if members back industrial action, it could impact up to 18 flights a day from Heathrow. Unite is also balloting American Airlines members at Heathrow on strike action; a successful vote could impact more than 20 daily AA departures.

Spain scraps COVID-19 health control form

Spain has eased some of its COVID-19 entry rules just a few days after extending its vaccination and testing requirements until November. Travellers will no longer have to complete Spain's health control form or show the Spain Travel Health QR code at their arrival or departure airport.

Agents are using GDSs more now than they did prior to the pandemic, new research has revealed

Half of all agents in a poll run by MarketCast said they were using the legacy systems more than before - the survey found 60% of agents now logged onto a GDS more than four times a day and that surprisingly, GDS usage was growing at a much faster pace than other online booking tools or websites. The survey highlighted that marketers have to keep in mind that travel agents have also experienced shifts and have new needs, as clients need increasing support to research, book, and readjust plans as needed.

AIRLINE UPDATE

JetBlue - JetBlue introduces trip-planning app, Troupe, for leisure groups to plan and coordinate their travel. The app aims to simplify the process of getting everyone in the group to agree to aspects of their shared travel journey. The creation of Troupe is part of the brand's investment in vacation services following the relaunch of JetBlue Vacations in 2020 and the launch of Paisly in 2021.

TUI Group - Tui Group has revealed summer 2022 selling prices across all its markets are up 18% on 2019, with winter up 26%. Tui said summer 2022 sales across the UK, Germany and the Netherlands had now reached 12.9 million bookings, with sales currently at 91% of summer 2019 levels. Tui also said winter 2022/23 bookings were at an early stage and predicted a programme "close to normalised pre-pandemic levels."

WizzAir - WIZZ are on track to become a 500-aircraft airline group by 2030 while also reducing CO2 emissions by a further 25%. The airline announced that it is set to acquire 75 new Airbus A321neo aircraft.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

EasyJet Holidays - EasyJet holidays expects to record profits of in excess of £35 million this year and will target 30% customer growth in 2023. The operator said its growth was evidence of it capitalising on EasyJet's European leisure network, generating "strong and growing returns". It added it was "uniquely positioned", owing to its 95% variable cost base, to "take market share" from other tour operators.

InsideJapan Tours - New bookings for InsideJapan Tours trips exceeded 2019 levels in August after the Japanese government peeled back more of the country's long-standing COVID-19 border restrictions. Several of the remaining restrictions, including a daily entry cap and pre-travel tourist visa application, will be removed next month, which InsideJapan co-founder Simon King described as "the final barrier" to a full resumption of international tourism to Japan.

The Travel Corporation - The Travel Corporation's tour brands - Trafalgar, Contiki, Luxury Gold and Insight Vacations - are adding new indigenous travel experiences to existing itineraries in North America and Australia to support and promote tribal tourism. The brands will incorporate educational experiences that highlight indigenous cultures of the destinations visited, immersing guests in activities that focus on traditions that have been passed down through generations.

SOCIAL UPDATE

YouTube outlines new monetisation programme for Shorts creators

As part of its broader push to dominate short-form video development, YouTube has announced that it is going to present extra direct monetisation choices for Shorts creators. In early 2023, creators who reach 10 million Shorts views over 90 days can apply to earn money through YouTube's Partner Programme. Creators will earn 45% of the money generated from ads which run between videos. Revenue from those ads will be pooled at the end of the month and each creator will be paid based on their share of total Shorts views. This is a huge investment into Shorts, which YouTube says is now logging over 30 billion views with 1.5 billion logged in users a month.

MICE UPDATE

Meeting planners 'more optimistic', despite rising costs

The latest Meetings Industry Pulse Survey by Northstar Meetings Group and Cvent indicates that more than 60% of meeting planners are increasingly optimistic about the recovery of events, despite facing challenges. This is a marked increase from the results in June of a similar survey, at which time less than half responded that they were more optimistic. Additionally, the survey found that 85% of planners were noticing a 'material impact' on their events because of rising costs and more - 30% compared to 24% last time - were increasing prices to offset these costs. Other concerns included airline pricing and service, travel and meeting budgets, hotel staffing, and the impact of geo-politics, all of which have risen or stayed roughly the same in the last six weeks.

LIGHTER NOTE

Badly injured fox nursed back to health in a garden tent in Glasgow. [Here.](#)