

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

25 November 2022

## COVID 19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 continues to fall across the United Kingdom. As restrictions no longer apply the number of people testing is also decreasing week on week as millions of people book to receive their autumn booster and flu vaccines.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Nurses to strike for two days before Christmas**

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has announced strike action to take place on 15 and 20 December in what is set to be their biggest walkout in NHS history. Nurses across England, Wales and Northern Ireland will still provide emergency care, though routine services will be affected. This comes after ministers would not reopen talks regarding pay, but the government said the 19% pay rise demanded was unaffordable. RCN general secretary Pat Cullen said: "Ministers have chosen strike action...Nursing staff have had enough of being taken for granted, enough of low pay and unsafe staffing levels, enough of not being able to give our patients the care they deserve." Under trade union laws, the RCN will still ensure life-preserving care is provided during this time.

### **Cost of living crisis may hit the high streets this Black Friday**

As the UK approaches its first festive season with no COVID-19 rules for three years, the number of Christmas shoppers hitting the high streets this year is expected to be up on 2021's numbers. However, with prices rising at their fastest rate in 41 years, experts have warned of tighter purse strings leading to lower profits compared to 2021. It is expected that footfall at shops across the UK will still be below pre-pandemic levels, and those shoppers who do venture out will be looking for a hard bargain.

### **UK to send 24 ambulances to Ukraine**

UK foreign secretary James Cleverly travelled to the Ukrainian capital on Thursday where he announced that the UK will send 24 ambulances to the war-stricken country, along with a further 11 emergency vehicles in an emergency package to aid Ukraine's defence efforts against Russia's invasion. It will also include three million pounds in funding to help with the rebuilding of infrastructure, such as schools and shelters, that have been destroyed since the start of the war. Mr Cleverly said that, with winter setting in, Russia would aim to "break Ukrainian resolve through its brutal attacks on civilians, hospitals and energy infrastructure". The UK is also currently supplying Ukrainian troops with specialist winter equipment which includes heavy duty sleeping bags and mats, heated accommodation and clothing for the cold weather.

## **TRADE UPDATE**

### **Off-season holidays becoming more popular among travellers**

Off-season travel is becoming increasingly popular with British tourists as destinations look to combat over-tourism in peak months. A recent survey carried out by Virtuoso found that the majority of travellers said they'd be willing to visit a popular destination during the off-season. The surge in bookings this summer has some destinations, like Italy, concerned about the effects of overtourism, and as a result, travel professionals are urging visitors to travel in the low season.

### **Business travel making steady recovery, Advantage report says**

The Global Business Travel Review, produced by Advantage Travel Partnership, concludes the global industry will recover to 55% above 2020 this year and reach 82% above 2021. Data revealed the average transaction value this year to date is at 12.4% higher than in 2019. Trip duration has also increased as companies look to maximise value and travel more sustainably, with the average trip now more than seven days, compared to 4.57 days in 2019. The research found booking horizons had changed, with longer lead-in times indicating more confidence that travel plans will not be disrupted.

### **Airports to scrap hand luggage liquid rules by 2024**

UK airport security restrictions on liquids and laptops in hand luggage could be scrapped as soon as 2024 thanks to new technology, according to reports in the national press. The government is said to be considering plans to implement 3D scanning technology - similar to CT scanners used in hospitals - to provide a clearer picture of a bag's contents. The potential move comes in a bid to alleviate congestion during the security process in UK airports, and an announcement from ministers is due before Christmas.

### **Google data highlights growing interest in blended trips**

According to new research from Google, consumers are prioritising booking travel experiences and are embracing blended trips to have those experiences. In a new study from the search engine giant, consumers say they are more open to blended travel - the combination of business and leisure travel - with 74% of business travellers saying they find the idea appealing. 33% of business travellers say they would be motivated to go on a blended trip because it makes business trips more fun, while 33% say it gives them the opportunity to get to know places they wouldn't otherwise visit.

## **AIRLINE UPDATE**

**Aer Lingus** - Aer Lingus reveals their number of flights to the United States has increased 236% since U.S. borders reopened 12 months ago. The number of available seats is also up by nearly 90,000 when comparing November 2021 with the same month in 2022. In November 2021, the IAG airline operated just six routes to the U.S. - by next summer, the Irish carrier will operate 16 routes, including launching a new service from Dublin to Cleveland, Ohio.

**Jet2** - An investment bank has labelled Jet2 plc its "top pick" in travel after the airline and operator posted strong half-year results, indicative of a healthy rebound from the pandemic. Stifel praised the brand's business practice during the pandemic, stating "the business model has proven resilient, with positive recognition for managing customer expectations, cancellations and refunds".

**Latam** - In partnership with Delta, Latam will begin a thrice-weekly service between Los Angeles and Sao Paulo on 1st July. The route is the first new service the carriers have announced under their joint venture approved in late September. It will also be the lone nonstop service connecting Los Angeles to Sao Paulo. The new route comes on top of frequency additions between the U.S. and South America that Delta and Latam have recently announced.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

**Elegant Resorts** - Elegant Resorts has unveiled its first dedicated agents' portal following feedback from trade partners. The portal is in its initial phase of development and will include all the operator's offers available to download in white label format for agents to display or share with clients. It will also provide access to all current booking incentives and promotions available to agents.

**G Adventures** - G Adventures has invested in Brisbane-based tree-planting start-up Reforest. The platform will allow travellers to have their own trees planted in communities reliant on environmental preservation, and give them access to data measuring the positive impact of their contributions. G Adventures founder, Bruce Poon Tip, said the investment reflected growing demand from travellers to ensure their journeys "have a meaningful impact".

**Intrepid Travel** - Intrepid Travel has recorded its biggest global sales day in its 33-year history. The bumper booking day was recorded on Tuesday 22 November, during the operator's annual Cyber Sale. "This is an incredible result and shows travel really is back, for good", said Intrepid's general manager, Hazel McGuire, "there's huge demand for sustainable, experience-rich travel" she added.

## SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Musk's plans for Twitter are slowly becoming clear**

There have been significant developments at Twitter in recent weeks as Musk's takeover is finalised. The much publicised \$8 verification plan has been delayed as the platform is still trying to establish processes to better combat impersonation. Additionally, the envisioned Content Moderation Council that would consist of experts, academics and civil rights leaders who deliver rulings on content decisions, now won't have the final call on significant decisions. Furthermore, in light of Twitter's workforce being reduced by 64%, Musk has said that this will be the end of cuts for now with the company hiring new sales and engineering staff in lower cost markets. Lastly, this week, Musk told employees that he was exploring building Crypto payments into the platform which could be part of a plan to introduce streamlined payments on Twitter.

### **New report looks at how teens use social apps**

A recent study by Pew Research has shown that Teen users view social platforms as having a generally positive impact on their lives and relationships. 8 in 10 teens believe that social media makes them more connected with friends whilst 71% say it allows them to have a place to be creative. Additionally, 67% feel that the platforms provide them with a support network that can help them through difficult times.

## MICE UPDATE

### **ExCeL to continue expansion programme after completion of first phase**

London's largest event venue reports it is on course to expand its venue facilities by a further 25%, having completed the first phase of its major expansion project. Further expansion at ExCeL London will create additional state-of-the-art ICC convention facilities, exhibition halls and conference rooms, together with outdoor spaces. The 25% increase in meetings facilities, to 125,000sqm, will help keep London at the forefront of the global events industry. Within the new event space there will be 12,000 sqm of exhibition space on the ground floor, integrated into the existing venue. This will be complimented on the upper level with high-end convention space, modern meeting rooms and catering facilities.

**LIGHTER NOTE**

A mother chimpanzee had an emotional reunion with her newborn baby after giving birth via emergency C-section at Sedgwick County Zoo in Kansas. Watch the sweet video [here](#).