

WEEKLY BRIEFING

25 August 2023



ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Women's World Cup 2023: Spain defeat England to win the Women's World Cup 2023

England's wait to win a first Women's World Cup title continues after Spain deservedly triumphed in the final in Sydney. The Lionesses, looking to become the first England senior side since the men's team in 1966 to win the World Cup, suffered heartbreak after being outplayed by a Spanish side full of flair and creativity. England's players fell to their knees in tears at the final whistle as Spain celebrated inside their penalty area after dealing with a final corner kick in the 14th minute of nerve-wracking stoppage time. England manager Sarina Wiegman, who has now lost two successive World Cup finals, introduced Lauren James and Chloe Kelly at half-time but Spain maintained control despite the Lionesses' best efforts.

88 UK deaths linked to Canada 'poison seller'

Eighty-eight people in the UK died after buying a poisonous substance from a seller in Canada, the National Crime Agency (NCA) has said. The NCA says it cannot confirm the chemical was the direct cause of the deaths in the UK but is investigating potential criminal offences. British police have been making welfare visits to hundreds of addresses to trace buyers across the country. Kenneth Law was arrested in May and is accused of assisting suicide in Canada. Mr Law, 57, is thought to have run a number of websites selling equipment to assist suicide.

UK faces 'heightened recession risks' as interest rates bite

The UK economy is on course to shrink between July and September and could tip into recession, a closely-watched survey suggests. The S&P Global/CIPS UK Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) found that rising interest rates and weaker household spending led to a sharp drop in demand for goods and services in August. On the upside, economists said that the PMI figures, which measure the health of an economy, showed that the Bank of England's efforts to tame inflation were beginning to work. Interest rates currently stand at 5.25% following a succession of increases since late 2021 when it was close to zero.

Walkout by senior NHS doctors continues as pay dispute shows no sign of ending

A walkout by senior NHS doctors in England continues on Friday 25 August as the Government shows no sign of backing down in the bitter row over pay. The strike by British Medical Association consultants began at 7am on Thursday 24 August, with NHS chiefs warning patients would face “severe delays” as a result. Consultants will be operating on a “Christmas day cover” basis – meaning emergency care will still be provided – until 7am on Saturday 26th August.

TRADE UPDATE**Canadian Wildfires force cancellations**

Canadian tourist train Rocky Mountaineer has been forced to cancel services on one of its routes due to wildfires in British Columbia. Seven departures between August 20 and August 27 on the service between Vancouver and Banff/Lake Louise will not operate. The decision follows the province of British Columbia announcing a state of emergency order on Saturday in response to the blazes. The order – running until September 4 – restricts people from staying in hotels for non-essential purposes in several communities to accommodate residents evacuated from nearby areas.

Virtuoso surveys where the affluent will be travelling this year

Global luxury travel network Virtuoso revealed a survey of when, where and how the affluent are travelling for the remainder of 2023. The results were shared at luxury travel’s leading event, the 35th annual Virtuoso Travel Week, taking place from August 12-18 in Las Vegas. In the first half of 2023, Virtuoso reported a 69 percent uptick in sales versus 2019 numbers, with hotel and cruise segments leading the way, up 173 percent and 122 percent respectively. Luxury hotels in the U.S. have seen a 57 percent increase compared to 2019, while luxury international hotels have soared to a 58 percent uptick. Future leisure travel sales leading into 2024-2025 are equally strong.

Gatwick strike threat lifted after accepting pay rise

Ground handlers at Gatwick Airport have called off their strike this weekend after agreeing a new pay deal. Workers for Red Handling, a third-party supplier, will receive a 14% pay rise, improved overtime rates and better sick pay. They have since cancelled strike action planned for the Bank Holiday, which would have hit more than 200 flights operated by Delta Air Lines, Norse Atlantic, Norwegian, Delta, TAP Air Portugal and Saudi.

Dubai hails strong visitor numbers from UK and Ireland

Dubai has reported strong visitor numbers in the first half of the year, with a 10% year-on-year increase in travellers from the UK and Ireland. Between January and June, 555,000 tourists from the UK and Ireland visited Dubai, showing the Emirate is “steadily advancing towards its goal of becoming the world’s most visited destination”, the tourism board said. Overall, Dubai welcomed a total of 8.6 million in the first six months of the year, which was up from 7.1 million in the same period in 2022.

Trade joins Which? in urging powers for CAA to fine airlines

Rishi Sunak is being urged by an industry group to beef up the powers of the Civil Aviation Authority to fine airlines for flouting flight cancellation, delay and refund rules. The Association of Independent Tour Operators, Advantage Travel Partnership, plus OTAs loveholidays, On the Beach and Thomas Cook have joined consumer champion Which? to call for action in a letter to the prime minister. Others signing the letter include the bosses of Explore, Riviera Travel, and Ramblers Walking Holidays.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Easyjet - EasyJet has started selling flights to Cairo for the first time, with a route from Luton launching in October marking their 157th destination. Three flights a week will operate to the Egyptian capital throughout the year, starting on October 31. Ali Gayward, easyJet’s UK country manager, said: “We are delighted to be launching flights for the very first time to Cairo which further strengthens our unrivalled short-haul network from the UK and this continues to demonstrate our confidence in the resilient strength of demand for travel from the UK.”

Ryanair - Ryanair has vowed to challenge “high fare” Scandinavian carriers by opening a second base in Denmark. The Irish no-frills giant is to base two aircraft at Copenhagen airport to expand its network to 24 routes this winter with the addition of services to Dusseldorf, Faro, Paris and Warsaw. Ryanair is currently the third largest airline operating from the Danish capital’s airport, carrying 2.3 million passengers a year, and also operates from Billund.

Jet2 - Jet2.com and Jet2CityBreaks have expanded their winter city breaks programmes for 2024/2025, with nine destinations on sale. Flights are available from Birmingham, East Midlands, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford, Manchester, Newcastle and London Stansted. The programme covers Athens, Barcelona, Budapest, Krakow, Paris, Prague, Rome, Vienna and Venice. There are additional services to Athens from Birmingham, Barcelona from Leeds Bradford, and to Rome from Stansted.

Services will operate year-round to these destinations from the three bases. Jet2 will offer over 600,000 seats to city break destinations in winter 24/25, 10% more than this coming winter.

AerLingus - Aer Lingus has announced a new direct service to Denver, Colorado and the re-launch of its Minneapolis-St. Paul route, both taking off from Dublin as part of its summer 2024 programme. These routes will bring the total number operated by the airline between Ireland and North America to 18. Flights to Minneapolis-St Paul commence on 29 April 2024, increasing from four flights a week to a daily year-round service from October 2024. The Dublin-Denver flights, which will also operate four times a week, will begin on 17 May 2024.

Emirates - Emirates has claimed one of its busiest summers ever by carrying more than 14 million passengers. Average seat load factors exceeded 80% across the Gulf carrier's global network between June and August. Forward booking trends show "unabated demand" for international travel. Top inbound markets to Dubai this summer included the UK, India, Germany, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Egypt and Kuwait. More than a quarter (35%) of visitors to Dubai travelling on Emirates were families, staying an average of over two weeks

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Monarch Holidays OTA - Further details of the planned relaunch of the Monarch brand have been disclosed this week. A representative of Daniel Ellingham, who announced himself as the Chairman of the new Monarch Board earlier this week, said the company aims to launch Monarch Holidays as an online travel agent by late 2023. He said an airline bearing the Monarch name will launch next year but did not say which month. Monarch 'will likely' focus on destinations in North Africa, Italy and on Gibraltar, using Airbus A320 aircraft he said, but declined to disclose further details.

Tui - Tui will bolster its trade engagement team in preparation for its "biggest summer season" in 2024. Five trade relations manager roles have been created, with staff based in Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Midlands, the north and the south of England. A training delivery manager role will also be recruited. The 14-strong team will work with independent agents to boost product knowledge across the business. Tui's decision to strengthen its trade team follows the company's announcement it is seeking increased sales through independent agents.

Kuoni - Kuoni has added accommodation options on Aruba for the first time as part of an expanded Caribbean and Mexico collection. The 2024 programme aims to appeal to a broad range of customers, "with couples, honeymooners and multigenerational families in mind", the operator said. Aruba has been introduced to the collection with six hotels, ranging from all-inclusive resorts to boutique adult-only options. Kuoni has suggested Aruba is a "perfect" twin-centre option with Antigua or the US, and itineraries can be designed to combine destinations.

Loveholidays OTA - Loveholidays has denied its major shareholder is planning to sell the business for around £900m, which was reported by Sky News. The new outlet said it had heard from 'city sources' that private equity firm Livingbridge, which owns a large chunk of the online travel agent, was looking to auction it off in the first half of 2024. Sky News said its sources had indicated that plans for a refinancing 'were now evolving into a sale' as early as the second quarter of next year. One insider told the publication that, based on current earnings of around £65m, Loveholidays would fetch about £900m.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Threads web app launches

Meta has launched the Threads web app, which allows users to post, view and interact with posts via a PC. Whilst Threads' usage has decreased since its launch, the initial buy-in suggests that there is an interest in a Twitter alternative. Some of the first adopters of Threads were journalists, who have been alienated by X. A Threads web app will allow them to keep an active Threads feed open on their computer, which may prompt more posting the app and migration away from X.

BeReal seeks to renew interest with new feature

Interest in BeReal, which focuses on authentic content, has declined over the past few months, but in an effort to reignite enthusiasm in the app, BeReal has broadened its 'Friends of Friends' Feed which will give users the option to share their photos to a wider audience and provide a greater capacity for interaction. This option is intended to help connect people with other users that they know. The app will also be adding additional innovations including pinned posts, mentions and enhanced friend recommendations.

MICE UPDATE

Revenue per delegate increases as lead times get longer

The Business of Events, a think tank for the UK and international events sector, has reported a 22 per cent increase in the revenue per delegate for conferences and meetings, reaching £137.85 from the previous quarter's £112.95. This increase has driven the average revenue per delegate to £125.40 in the first half of the year, surpassing the prior annual averages of £108.96 in 2021 and £104.78 in 2022. June's confirmed events closely mirrored the peak of November 2022 and matched March's figures, emphasising the recurring pattern of the third month proving the strongest. While inflation slightly eased to 7.9 per cent in June, it has not translated to reduced event costs. Energy price hikes have particularly affected the sector, amplifying cost pressures for commercial venues that lacked the same level of government support as individuals. Amidst this backdrop, the average lead time for conferences and meetings in Q2 2023 increased to 80 days from Q1's 64 days. Though only a fractional rise from Q2 2022's 77 days, this underlines the departure from the pre-pandemic trend observed in 2019 and short lead times remain.

LIGHTER NOTE

Insect feared extinct in Britain making a comeback

The tiny river fly is making its comeback in Britain, thanks to pioneering work by conservationists. Read more [here](#).