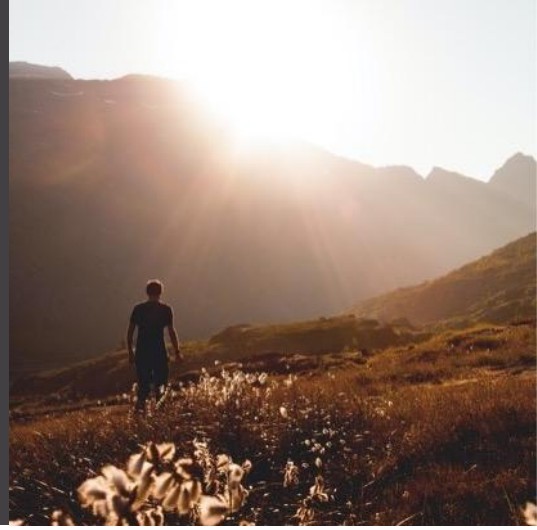


WEEKLY BRIEFING

31 May 2024



ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Donald Trump found guilty on all counts in ‘hush money’ trial

Former US president Donald Trump has hit out after being convicted on all 34 counts of falsifying business records in his historic criminal trial in New York. He called the verdict a "disgrace" and attacked Judge Merchan, who presided over the case. This is the first time a former or serving US president has been convicted of a crime and comes as he seeks a second term in office campaigning to defeat Joe Biden in November's election. Due to be sentenced on 11 July, the ex-president could face prison, though legal experts have said a fine is a more likely outcome as a first-time offender. Trump will still be able to run for president, despite the convictions, as nothing in the US Constitution prohibits a convicted criminal from holding office. However, if re-elected president, Trump would not be able to pardon himself, as that power lies with the New York governor when it comes to charges brought by state, rather than federal, prosecutors.

Hundreds of homes get ‘do not drink water’ warning

Over 600 households in a Surrey village have been warned of drinking tap water following tests carried out by Thames Water after a previous fuel leak. The water company stated the advice was issued as a precautionary measure to properties in Bramley, where residents have been concerned for several months regarding a spill from a petrol station. Tests showed "concerning results" in three areas, said Thames Water, with "elevated" levels of hydrocarbons, which are found in petrol. Residents resorted to buying bottled water from local shops on Friday morning as the notice was "quite worrying for people" said one resident. Bottle banks have been set up outside Bramley library and at Artington Park-and-Ride.

UK house prices in surprise rise in May

UK house prices returned to growth in May after rising by 0.4%, according to Nationwide. The building society stated that the average house price reached £264,249 this month, compared to £261,962 in April, though mortgage rates in the UK have been comparatively high due to the Bank of England not forecasting to cut interest rates as quickly or as steeply as initially predicted at the beginning of this year. Sarah Coles, Head of Personal Finance at Hargreaves Lansdown, stated

that high house prices are a barrier for many buyers because "when coupled with higher mortgage rates, the monthly payments are pushed out of reach". But she said: "Buyers are pushing through... The easing of inflation, coupled with robust wage growth, and relatively low levels of unemployment, mean people are feeling more secure." The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that average pay, excluding bonuses, rose by 6% between January and March.

TRADE UPDATE

New US and Canada brand Journeyscape to launch to the trade this summer

Journeyscape, which will be based at JLA's west London office, will go on sale through agents on 15 July its launch. Head of Product Stuart Whittington said Journeyscape would be able to draw on JLA's nearly 45 years' experience operating tailor-made and small escorted group tours to Central and South America. "With the launch of Journeyscape, we're bringing our expertise, philosophy and passion to the US and Canada," he added. Journeyscape will offer more than 60 "inspiring and authentic" journeys in North America, spanning self-drives, escorted tours and cruises. Focuses include North American culture, heritage and popular culture, as well as the region's landscapes and wildlife.

Heathrow urges use of e-gates amid latest Border Force strike

Heathrow has urged passengers to use self-service e-gates this weekend due to a Border Force strike at the end of the English half-term holidays. The three-day walkout by more than 500 officers from today (Friday) follows action taken on 29th April - May 2nd. The latest action came as the TUC has launched a petition to tell senior managers at Heathrow that Border Force officers deserve a "fair roster". It highlights how "Border Force Officers at Heathrow are responsible for admitting travellers into the country, and for detecting and preventing possible security risks.

Hilton boss reveals how 'sleep tourism' is changing its luxury hotels

Hilton Hotels and Resorts has invested in the concept of sleep wellness as more luxury travellers look for holidays that leave them feeling rested and rejuvenated. Hilton Hotels and Resorts has developed a strategy around enhancing the 'sleep wellness' of its guests, in response to what it sees as a rising trend of 'sleep tourism' in luxury travel. The global hospitality company says it is committed to giving clients the best possible shut-eye, following recent research showing rest to be a primary driver for people of all generations to take holidays. Hilton has since launched a number of initiatives across its 22 hotel brands and more than 7,500 locations around the world, all designed to upgrade guests' sleep experience so that they can get the most out of their stay. This consideration over sleep wellness is filtering into the heart of Hilton's guest rooms, which have been designed to combat many of the sleep 'disruptors' of today's modern society.

Global airline passenger demand rose 11 percent in April, IATA reveals

Global airline passenger demand grew by 11 percent last month over April 2023, data released by IATA ahead of its annual meeting in Dubai has shown. This outstripped the 9.6 percent year-on-year rise in total capacity to give a monthly load factor up one percentage point to 82.4 percent. International demand rose 15.8 percent while domestic demand was up by 4 percent. IATA Director General Willie Walsh said: "Passenger demand has been growing for 36 consecutive months. "As we enter the peak northern summer travel season, there is every reason to feel optimistic for a strong summer with airlines offering a wide range of travel options." He added that 97 percent of passengers asked in a IATA recent survey said they were satisfied with their last flight. "Every part of the travel value chain needs to be focused on maintaining that," Walsh added. The IATA passenger survey also revealed 88 percent agree that 'air travel makes my life better.'

AIRLINE UPDATE

American Airlines - American Airlines is to rethink its controversial new distribution capability (NDC) policy after suffering a drop in sales from the trade. Chief Executive Robert Isom told an investor conference on Wednesday that the sales strategy would be revamped after generating less revenue than expected from travel agencies and business travellers.

British Airways - British Airways has relaunched a codeshare partnership with China Southern Airlines, offering passengers the chance to "mix and match" between the carriers to best suit their needs. There are 32 flights a week between London and five Chinese cities - Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan and Zhengzhou.

Qatar Airlines - Twelve people have been hurt after a Dublin-bound Qatar Airways flight was hit by turbulence on Sunday 26 May. The incident happened during the food and drink service onboard flight QR017, which landed in Dublin shortly before 1pm. Six passengers and six members of crew were injured, eight of whom required hospital treatment, the BBC reports. Qatar Airways told the broadcaster "a small number" of passengers and crew sustained minor injuries and were receiving medical attention. It added an internal investigation was underway.

Singapore Airlines - Singapore Airlines flight 'plunged 178ft in less than five seconds' when hit by turbulence. The Singapore Airlines flight that encountered severe turbulence dropped 178ft in less than five seconds, according to the findings of a preliminary investigation. The Transport Safety Investigation Bureau in Singapore said the aircraft on a flight from London pitched up and down under the force of air currents while passing over Myanmar at 37,000ft.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Jet2 - A 300,000-capacity ski programme for winter 2025-26 has gone on sale by Jet2.com from 10 UK airports. The company will operate to Chambéry, Geneva, Grenoble, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Lyon, Turin and Verona, giving access to the French, Austrian, Swiss and Italian Alps, as well as the Tyrolean mountain region. The ski flights will be available from Belfast International, Bristol, Birmingham, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Leeds Bradford, Glasgow, Manchester, Newcastle and Stansted from December 2025.

Newmarket Holidays - Escorted tours specialist Newmarket Holidays has expanded its range of African safaris with its first tour in Tanzania, its first dedicated tour in Botswana, and two new luxury South African itineraries. Richard Forde, head of trade sales and partnerships, said: "We're thrilled to expand our award-winning African Safari Collection with some great value, exclusive tours that give travel agents new options for their customers. Safaris have been incredibly popular over the past 12 months, so we're sure these new options will prove a big hit with the trade."

Not Just Travel - Not Just Travel says its sales are running more than a third ahead of the same period of last year, with average booking values on the up too. The homeworking and franchising firm said sales were 40 percent ahead of last year, with average booking values also "well ahead". Bookings have continued to grow beyond the traditional peak sales period, with consultants generating record sales in April and May - a typically quieter period post-Q1.

SOCIAL UPDATE

TikTok launches creator management dashboard

TikTok has introduced a new dashboard, called TikTok Studio, where content creators will be able to manage their online profile, including video uploads, editing, performance analytics and more, in one place. The new platform is an updated version of TikTok's Creator Center, which enables creators to manage their presence on desktop. This dashboard will allow seasoned creators, businesses and brands, and smaller creators, to easily manage their online presence, while making access to TikTok's monetisation programmes simpler.

Instagram to introduce access to new features

Instagram is launching an 'early access to features' menu item which can be found in settings on the app. This would allow users to sign-up to beta test upcoming projects and new updates. It's likely this new feature will be a part of the Meta Verified subscription, which gives paying users access to exclusive features, to drive sign-ups with the promise of early access to features regular users won't be able to use.

MICE UPDATE

AMEX GBT forecasts substantial increase in internal meetings

AMEX GBT's 2024 Meetings and Events Forecast captures insights from more than 500 business professionals worldwide. With 82 percent of respondents expressing high levels of confidence for the future, it's clear that meeting professionals are optimistic about the growth of in-person gatherings. Organisations are responding to the emerging challenges of declining employee engagement in a world of hybrid working. Internal meetings and events are now seen as critical tools to support staff training, reduce burnout and increase alignment with business objectives.

LIGHTER NOTE

Zoo welcomes Arctic fox cubs for the first time. Eight cubs, also known as kits, were spotted emerging from an underground burrow at Dudley Zoo last week. See more [here](#).

Also, only two weeks to go until the first game of the Euros!