

Strong int'l traffic propels continuing air travel recovery

A Monitor Report

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Geneva : The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced that air travel resumed its strong recovery trend in April, despite the war in Ukraine and travel restrictions in China. This was driven primarily by international demand.

Total demand for air travel in April 2022 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) was up 78.7 per cent compared to April 2021 and slightly ahead of March 2022's 76.0 per cent year-over-year increase.

April domestic air travel was down 1.0 per cent compared to the year-ago period, a reversal from the 10.6 per cent demand rise in March. This was driven entirely by continuing strict travel restrictions in China, where domestic traffic was down 80.8 per cent year-to-year. Overall, April domestic traffic was down 25.8 per cent versus April 2019.

International RPKs rose 331.9 per cent versus April 2021, an acceleration over the 289.9 per cent rise in March 2022 compared to a year ago. Several route areas are actually above pre-pandemic levels, including Europe - Central America, Middle East - North America and North America - Central America. April 2022 international RPKs were down 43.4 per cent compared to the same month in 2019.

"With the lifting of many border restrictions, we are seeing the long-expected surge in bookings as people seek to make up for two years of lost travel opportunities. April data is cause for optimism in almost all markets, except China, which continues to severely restrict travel. The experience of the rest of the world is demonstrating that increased travel is manageable with high levels of population immunity and the normal systems for disease surveillance. We hope that China can recognise this success soon and take its own steps towards normality," said Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA.

"With the northern summer travel season now upon us, two things are clear: two-years of border restrictions have not weakened the desire for the freedom to travel. Where it is permitted, demand rapidly is returning to pre-COVID levels," said Walsh. "However, it is also evident that the failings in how governments managed the pandemic have continued into the recovery. With governments making U-turns and policy changes there was uncertainty until the last minute, leaving little time to restart an industry that was largely dormant for two years. It is no wonder that we are seeing operational delays in some locations. In those few locations where these problems are recurring, solutions need to be found so passengers can travel with confidence," concluded Walsh.

