

Air Passenger Market Analysis

December 2022

The year ends on a strong note for the global industry

- In 2022, air passenger traffic gained momentum globally and recovered substantially from 41.7% of 2019 revenue passenger-kilometers (RPKs) in 2021 to 68.5% in 2022.
- Domestic RPKs recovered to 79.6% of pre-pandemic passenger traffic in 2022 and grew 10.9% year-on-year (YoY) from 2021 levels. International RPKs recovered to 62.2% of 2019 traffic and grew 152.7% YoY from 2021 levels.
- Industry-wide RPKs increased by 39.7% YoY in December and reached 76.9% of pre-pandemic levels for the same month. Compared to December 2021, domestic passenger traffic grew 2.6% while international traffic grew 80.2%.
- Monitored domestic markets continued to show resilience and steady traffic levels. International passenger traffic within and between the Asia Pacific region and the rest of the world also continued to show positive trends.
- Total domestic ticket sales have seen an uptick over the month of January 2023. This positive development is mainly attributable to China PR reopening. On the other hand, international ticket sales have caught up to domestic in terms of recovery to 2019 sales volumes.

	RPK, 2022 % change versus		ASK, 2022 % change versus		PLF		
	2019	2021	2019	2021	2022 level	%-pt versus 2019	%-pt versus 2021
TOTAL	-31.5%	64.4%	-28.1%	39.8%	78.7%	-3.9%	11.8%
Africa	-31.3%	84.9%	-31.8%	51.8%	72.3%	0.5%	12.9%
Asia Pacific	-55.6%	34.0%	-49.4%	16.8%	71.8%	-10.1%	9.2%
Europe	-22.2%	100.2%	-18.4%	66.8%	81.2%	-4.0%	13.5%
Latin America & Caribb.	-14.2%	62.7%	-12.9%	54.6%	81.3%	-1.3%	4.0%
Middle East	-25.9%	144.4%	-25.2%	67.0%	75.4%	-0.7%	23.9%
North America	-11.3%	45.5%	-9.9%	28.5%	83.5%	-1.3%	9.8%

Positive trend remained strong throughout 2022

Over the course of 2022, global air passenger traffic gained momentum and recovered substantially as travel restrictions were taken down and passengers expressed a very strong willingness to travel. Passenger traffic recovered from 41.7% of 2019 volumes in 2021 to 68.5% in 2022.

At the industry level, passenger demand was met by offered seat capacity in 2022, as available seat-kilometers (ASKs) recovered to 71.9% of 2019 levels, while maintaining industry-wide passenger load factors of 78.7%. Passenger load factors for 2022 were only 3.9 percentage points (pts) below the load factors achieved before the pandemic in 2019. Similar observations can also be made at the regional level.

Globally, domestic operations ramped up quicker than international as domestic travel policies offered more certainty to passengers. Despite the setbacks caused by lingering travel restrictions, international traffic

took off significantly in 2022 wherever these restrictions were taken down. As a result, international RPKs surged from 26.8% of 2019 levels in 2021 to 62.2% in 2022.

Airlines faced uneven outcomes in 2022. North American carriers led the industry by achieving close-to pre-pandemic passenger traffic levels with total RPKs 11.3% under 2019 volumes, followed by Latin American and European carriers at 14.2% and 22.2%, respectively, below 2019 levels.

Over the past year, re-openings in many economies of the Asia Pacific region allowed for passengers and airlines to return to the skies, greatly accelerating traffic growth in both domestic and international markets. While performed RPKs in 2022 were 54.4% under the levels of 2019 for this region's airlines, the recent developments related to the reopening of international travel in China PR give a positive outlook for the months to come.

Air passenger market overview - December 2022

	World share ¹	December 2022 (% ch vs the same month in 2019)				December 2022 (% year-on-year)			
		RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt) ²	PLF (level) ³	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt) ²	PLF (level) ³
TOTAL MARKET	100.0%	-23.1%	-22.1%	-1.1%	81.1%	39.7%	23.0%	9.7%	81.1%
International	58.0%	-24.9%	-25.2%	0.3%	82.0%	80.2%	47.8%	14.7%	82.0%
Domestic	42.0%	-20.1%	-16.8%	-3.3%	79.6%	2.6%	-2.5%	3.9%	79.6%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2022

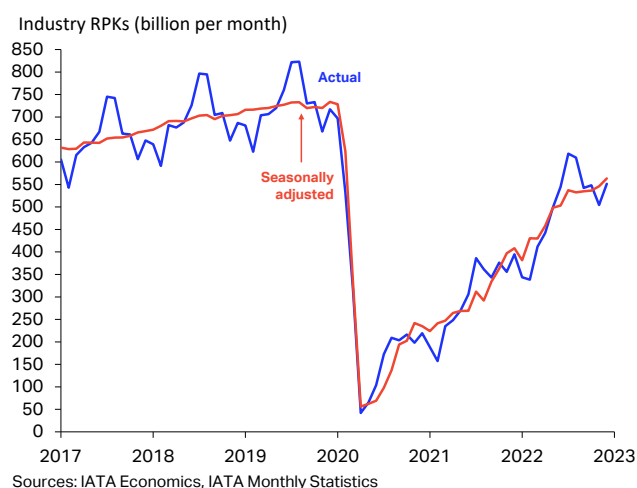
²Change in load factor vs same month in 2019

³Load factor level

The year ends on a strong note for the global industry

In December, industry-wide RPKs grew by 39.7% YoY and stood at 76.9% of December 2019 levels (**Chart 1**), a 2ppts increase from the month prior. Following the seasonal drop in demand of November, the month of December usually presents higher passenger traffic due to the year-end holidays. In seasonally adjusted terms, global RPKs grew by 3.1% from November and 5.0% from October 2022, signaling sustained momentum globally.

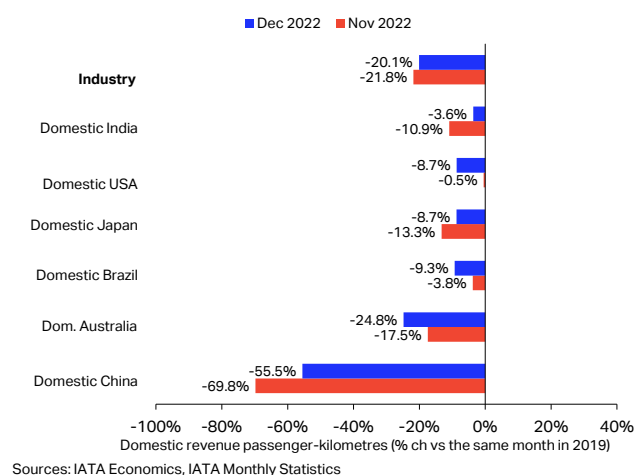
Chart 1: Global air passengers, RPK billion



Global passenger load factors (PLF) remained close to pre-pandemic levels this month with only 1.1ppts down on December 2019 levels at 81.1%. The aggregate load factor for domestic and international markets reached 79.6% and 82.0%, respectively.

Early signs of recovery for China's domestic markets, stable outcomes for other monitored markets

Chart 2 – Domestic RPK growth (airline region of registration basis), YoY% change versus 2019



In December, industry-wide domestic markets steadied. Total domestic RPKs grew 2.6% while ASKs contracted by 2.5% YoY. In [China PR](#), domestic traffic has shown signs of recovery once again, now sitting 55.5% under December 2019 levels, a substantial uptick from the previous month (**Chart 2**).

The [US](#) domestic market demand remained strong in December and throughout the year. RPKs reached 94.1% of 2019 traffic in 2022 and the month of December fell 8.7% short of December 2019 traffic levels.

In [Brazil](#), domestic traffic was close to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 with RPKs totaling 94.6% of 2019 levels. December 2022 RPKs were 9.3% lower than December 2019 RPKs.

[India](#) saw domestic RPKs increase substantially in 2022 with concerns of new Covid-19 outbreaks fading away. Domestic RPKs for 2022 accounted for 85.7% of 2019 levels while December 2022 stood 3.6% below traffic for the same month in 2019.

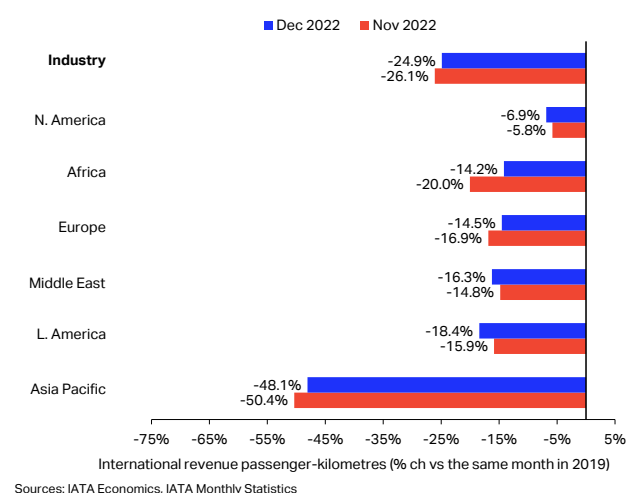
In [Japan](#), domestic traffic quickly rebounded in 2022 and achieved 74.1% of the recovery to 2019 levels. December RPKs for the domestic market were 8.7% under those of December 2019. [Australia](#) experienced a similar rebound, with RPKs recovering to 81.2% of 2019 levels, a substantial 42.8 ppts increase from 2021.

Insufficient data prevent us from reporting on developments in Russia's domestic market.

International passenger traffic recovered substantially in 2022

In 2022, international passenger traffic more than doubled with 152.7% YoY growth. All regions experienced strong growth propelled by pent-up demand for air travel and easing restrictions globally. In December 2022, international RPKs tracked 24.9% under the same month in 2019 and conserved momentum with steady performance from all regions (**Chart 3**).

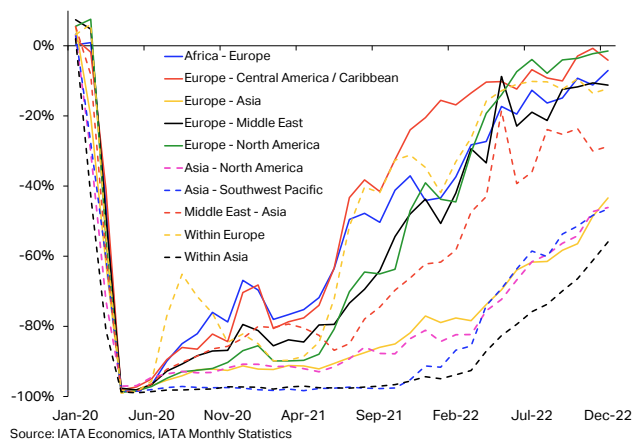
Chart 3: International RPK growth (airline region of registration basis), YoY% change versus 2019



Airlines of the [Asia Pacific](#) region continue to display the highest YoY growth rates. In December, international RPKs increased 302.7% YoY.

International traffic within Asia maintained its growth momentum this month and increased to 44.1% of December 2019 levels. Although, different route areas between this region and the rest of the world present uneven levels of recovery, a strong positive trend persisted until the end of 2022 (**Chart 4**).

Chart 4: International RPKs, YoY% change versus 2019 – Top 10 route areas in 2019, ranked by performed traffic volume ¹



In **Europe**, international RPKs performed well and grew by 46.5% YoY and are now 14.5% under December 2019 RPKs.

Latin America has seen 37.0% YoY growth in international RPKs while **North America** posted 61.3% YoY growth. December 2022 RPKs were 18.4% and 6.9% below December 2019 levels for Latin American and North America, respectively.

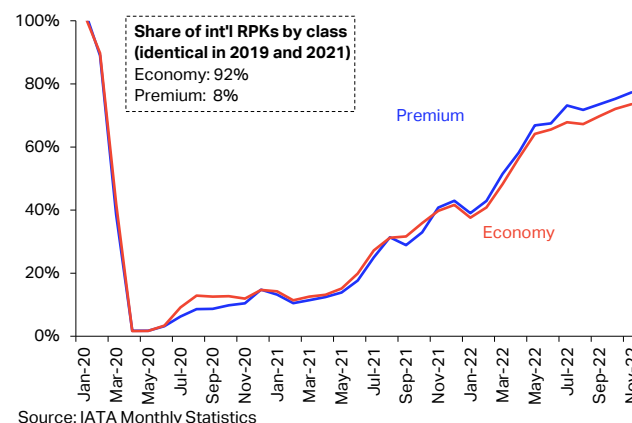
Middle Eastern carriers recorded 69.8% YoY growth this month and international RPKs are now 16.3% under pre-pandemic levels. For **African carriers**, international RPKs grew by 118.8% YoY, positioning the latest results 14.2% under December 2019 levels.

Aligned recovery for Premium and Economy

Recovery trends for traffic in the **Premium and Economy cabin classes** remain broadly aligned. Economy class RPKs – which include premium economy (and accounts for 92% of total RPKs) – reached 73.6% of their November 2019 level in November 2022. Premium RPKs – which capture travel in first and business class cabins – fared nearly as well at 77.3% of November 2019 level (**Chart 5**).

Chart 5: International RPKs by cabin class

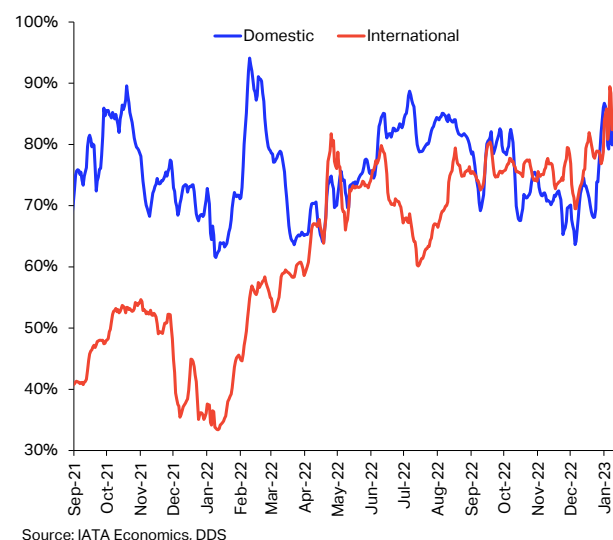
International RPKs, % of the same month in 2019



International and domestic ticket sales align

Domestic ticket sales in 2022 have roughly followed a sideways trend while international ticket sales began to rise over that year (**Chart 6**). The most recent data show an uptick in domestic ticket sales in January 2023, mainly attributable to the domestic China PR market reopening. Meanwhile international ticket sales have caught up to, and maintained their recovery with, domestic ticket sales.

Chart 6: Passenger ticket sales, Domestic and International, YoY% versus 2019



Get the data

Access data related to this briefing through IATA's Monthly Statistics publication:

www.iata.org/monthly-traffic-statistics

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¹ Chart 4 has been updated due to a statistical revision

Air passenger market in detail - December 2022

	<i>World share</i> ¹	December 2022 (% year-on-year)			
		RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt) ²	PLF (level) ³
TOTAL MARKET	100.0%	39.7%	23.0%	9.7%	81.1%
Africa	2.1%	108.0%	72.5%	13.1%	76.9%
Asia Pacific	22.4%	63.3%	31.9%	14.8%	77.2%
Europe	30.4%	38.8%	18.9%	11.9%	83.6%
Latin America	6.4%	16.2%	20.0%	-2.6%	78.5%
Middle East	9.8%	65.1%	35.9%	14.1%	80.0%
North America	28.8%	18.4%	11.8%	4.7%	84.2%
International	58.0%	80.2%	47.8%	14.7%	82.0%
Africa	1.8%	118.8%	77.5%	14.5%	76.8%
Asia Pacific	8.9%	302.7%	153.5%	30.2%	81.5%
Europe	26.4%	46.5%	23.1%	13.3%	83.4%
Latin America	2.8%	37.0%	39.9%	-1.7%	79.0%
Middle East	9.4%	69.8%	38.8%	14.7%	80.2%
North America	8.7%	61.3%	37.5%	12.3%	83.6%
Domestic	42.0%	2.6%	-2.5%	3.9%	79.6%
Dom. Australia ⁴	1.0%	72.7%	19.5%	25.1%	81.6%
Domestic Brazil ⁴	1.5%	-5.7%	0.3%	-4.9%	77.4%
Dom. China P.R. ⁴	6.5%	-26.4%	-27.4%	0.9%	64.3%
Domestic India ⁴	2.0%	12.9%	0.9%	9.4%	88.9%
Domestic Japan ⁴	1.2%	23.9%	5.5%	10.6%	71.5%
Domestic US ⁴	19.2%	4.3%	2.2%	1.7%	84.3%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2022

²Year-on-year change in load factor

³Load factor level

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Africa	2.1%	-12.2%	-17.4%	4.6%	76.9%
Asia Pacific	22.4%	-43.5%	-40.2%	-4.4%	77.2%
Europe	30.4%	-13.5%	-14.0%	0.6%	83.6%
Latin America	6.4%	-10.5%	-6.2%	-3.8%	78.5%
Middle East	9.8%	-16.0%	-18.9%	2.7%	80.0%
North America	28.8%	-8.2%	-6.9%	-1.3%	84.2%
International	58.0%	-24.9%	-25.2%	0.3%	82.0%
Africa	1.8%	-14.2%	-19.3%	4.6%	76.8%
Asia Pacific	8.9%	-48.1%	-47.9%	-0.2%	81.5%
Europe	26.4%	-14.5%	-14.3%	-0.3%	83.4%
Latin America	2.8%	-18.4%	-15.5%	-2.9%	79.0%
Middle East	9.4%	-16.3%	-19.2%	2.9%	80.2%
North America	8.7%	-6.9%	-5.7%	-1.1%	83.6%
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Domestic India ⁴	2.0%	-3.6%	-4.5%	0.8%	88.9%
Domestic Japan ⁴	1.2%	-8.7%	-10.8%	1.6%	71.5%
Domestic US ⁴	19.2%	-8.7%	-7.0%	-1.6%	84.3%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2022

²Year-on-year change in load factor

³Load factor level

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²Change in load factor vs same month in 2019

³Load factor level

RPK, 2022 % change versus

ASK, 2022 % change versus

PLF

	2019	2021	2019	2021	2022 level	%-pt versus 2019	%-pt versus 2021
TOTAL	-31.5%	64.4%	-28.1%	39.8%	78.7%	-3.9%	11.8%
Africa	-31.3%	84.9%	-31.8%	51.8%	72.3%	0.5%	12.9%
Asia Pacific	-55.6%	34.0%	-49.4%	16.8%	71.8%	-10.1%	9.2%
Europe	-22.2%	100.2%	-18.4%	66.8%	81.2%	-4.0%	13.5%
Latin America & Caribb.	-14.2%	62.7%	-12.9%	54.6%	81.3%	-1.3%	4.0%
Middle East	-25.9%	144.4%	-25.2%	67.0%	75.4%	-0.7%	23.9%
North America	-11.3%	45.5%	-9.9%	28.5%	83.5%	-1.3%	9.8%
INTERNATIONAL	-37.8%	152.7%	-35.0%	85.2%	78.5%	-3.5%	21.0%
Africa	-34.1%	89.2%	-34.5%	51.0%	71.7%	0.4%	14.5%
Asia Pacific	-68.2%	363.3%	-65.2%	129.9%	74.0%	-6.9%	37.3%
Europe	-24.5%	132.2%	-19.8%	84.0%	80.6%	-5.0%	16.7%
Latin America & Caribb.	-26.9%	119.2%	-26.3%	93.3%	82.2%	-0.6%	9.7%
Middle East	-26.5%	157.4%	-26.0%	73.8%	75.8%	-0.5%	24.6%
North America	-20.9%	130.2%	-17.7%	71.3%	80.8%	-3.2%	20.7%
DOMESTIC	-20.4%	10.9%	-15.7%	4.3%	78.9%	-4.7%	4.7%
Africa	-13.8%	66.7%	-14.5%	56.2%	75.5%	0.7%	4.8%
Asia Pacific	-40.3%	-8.4%	-29.4%	-10.6%	70.4%	-12.7%	1.6%
Europe	-3.1%	4.6%	-6.7%	1.0%	85.1%	3.2%	2.9%
Latin America & Caribb.	-0.5%	35.0%	1.6%	33.7%	80.6%	-1.7%	0.8%
Middle East	-10.0%	14.0%	-4.0%	-7.5%	68.6%	-4.6%	13.0%
North America	-6.3%	25.5%	-5.8%	15.4%	84.7%	-0.4%	6.8%
DOMESTIC MARKETS							
Dom. Australia	-18.8%	111.7%	-17.7%	63.1%	79.7%	-1.1%	18.3%
Dom. Brasil	-5.4%	29.9%	-1.2%	31.8%	79.2%	-3.5%	-1.2%
Dom. China PR	-54.4%	-39.8%	-40.9%	-35.2%	65.3%	-19.3%	-5.0%
Dom. India	-14.3%	48.8%	-8.1%	30.1%	81.4%	-5.9%	10.2%
Dom. Japan	-25.9%	75.9%	-11.5%	43.4%	61.8%	-12.0%	11.4%
Dom. United States	-5.9%	23.7%	-5.2%	14.0%	84.7%	-0.6%	6.7%

Note: the total industry and regional growth rates are based on a constant sample of airlines combining reported data and estimates for missing observations. Airline traffic is allocated according to the region in which the carrier is registered; it should not be considered as regional traffic. Historical statistics are subject to revision.

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