# THE REAL RECOVERY OF LONG-HAUL TRAVEL?

The global epidemic is no longer a significant concern for travel and healthcare systems, leading to a resurgence in tourism. This is primarily due to the high demand for short and medium-haul trips. After a long hiatus, long-haul travel is slowly approaching pre-pandemic levels. Although the World Health Organization has downgraded the COVID situation and ended the global state of emergency, the World Tourism Organization predicts a full resumption of travel in 2023. Some areas are still experiencing significant declines, such as the Asia-Pacific region, which is only at 54% of its pre-pandemic activity. However, there has been an upward trend in recent times. According to OAG, a specialist in aerial data, the summer of 2023 will almost resemble that of 2019, with 90.7% of pre-pandemic air travel activity. Europe is expected to have a flight program that is only 6.2% lower than in 2019, while North America will be 4.3% lower.

The slow reopening of Asia is the main reason why there is still a large gap between the number of flights in 2019 and the projected numbers for 2023. In China, less than half of long-haul services have resumed. Although no major regional market has fully recovered from the impact of Covid-19, the Middle East is the closest, with almost 80,000 scheduled flights (-0.8% compared to summer 2019). Additionally, Africa's East and West areas are seeing a slight increase in long-haul services. However, flight schedules are still significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, primarily due to Northeast Asia (-33.8%) and Southeast Asia (-11.6%). The southwestern part of the Pacific is also experiencing a sharp decline of -15.3%.

Long-haul traffic is experiencing a recovery with the resumption of routes between Europe and North America. According to OAG, transatlantic routes dominate the ten most significant pairs of long-haul airports this summer, accounting for 60%. During the upcoming summer season, the route between John F. Kennedy International Airport and London Heathrow Airport will have the highest number of scheduled movements, increasing by 13.6% compared to 2019. In addition, the International Airport in Los Angeles to London route will have a 37% increase in trends compared to 2019. The line between John F. Kennedy International Airport and Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport will have a 45.2% increase in movements compared to 2019.

Introducing these two low-cost options led Delta Airlines and Air France to increase their flights by more than 50% to maintain competitiveness on a profitable route. However, there may be potential long-term setbacks, such as discontinuing Alitalia's Miami - Milan Malpensa route, SAS's Stockholm - Los Angeles service, and Virgin Atlantic's decision to no longer operate on the Manchester - Las Vegas route.

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