

IN 2024, EUROPEAN AIRPORTS EXCEEDED 2019 AIR TRAFFIC



According to a statement from Airports Council International (ACI) Europe, European airports welcomed more passengers in 2024 than in 2019, marking the first time this has happened since the health crisis.

Last year, "European airports finally exceeded their pre-COVID-19 passenger volumes, with over 2.5 billion travelers," the association reported, citing provisional data.

This represents a 7.4% increase year-over-year and an increase of 1.8% compared to pre-pandemic levels. ACI Europe, which represents over 600 airports across Europe and extends to Central Asia and Israel, highlighted that international air travel was the primary driver of this recovery, with an increase of 8.8% over the previous year. Conversely, domestic travel remained 6.3% below 2019, with ACI Europe noting "a partial modal shift towards train travel" in some countries.

Multi-speed Recovery

ACI Europe Director General Olivier Jankovec noted that the rebound in the European airline sector has occurred "despite a sharp rise in ticket prices, a strained supply chain, sluggish economic growth, and geopolitical tensions."

Mr. Jankovec described the recovery as "multi-speed," with low-cost carriers and the airports that serve them emerging as the primary beneficiaries.

Airports in Albania, which have experienced significant tourism growth in recent years, have seen their air traffic more than triple, increasing by 220% since 2019. Following Albania is Uzbekistan, with an increase of 186%, and Kazakhstan, a 74.7% rise. These two countries are benefiting from a shift in traffic to Russia due to the sanctions imposed after the war in Ukraine.

Air Traffic in German and French Airports Down

Turkey stands out as one of the fastest-recovering air traffic markets within ACI Europe, experiencing a growth of 23.1% since 2019. Italy follows closely with a 17% increase, while Spain has seen a 13% rise, benefiting from a rebound in tourism.

In contrast, airports in Germany have experienced a significant air traffic decline, with a 16.6% drop over the past five years, and France has also experienced a decrease of 3%, mainly due to a sharp decline in domestic demand.

In 2024, London Heathrow remained the leading airport in Europe regarding passenger numbers, with 83.9 million travelers. It was followed by Istanbul, which saw an increase of 16.9% since 2019, totaling 80.1 million passengers. Paris Charles de Gaulle ranked third, with 70.3 million passengers, 7.7% lower than pre-COVID levels. Amsterdam Schiphol came next with 66.8 million passengers, just ahead of Madrid at 66.1 million.

However, the Belgian NGO Transport & Environment report warns that the growth in air traffic may make the sector's decarbonization efforts difficult. It is estimated that fuel consumption at European airports will rise by 59% by 2050. It makes implementing green technologies to reduce the sector's emissions increasingly challenging.

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