

January international passenger traffic increased 5.4 percent

By **Wendy Morley** on March, 10 2015 | International News



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has released January 2015 figures, which show an increase of 5.4% January 2015 over 2014 for international travel. All markets were up with the exception of Africa. Load factors slipped slightly to 78.0%, a drop of 0.5%.

Middle East carriers had the strongest year-over-year traffic growth in January at 11.4%. Markit's measures of business activity in non-oil sectors in the region's economies continue to show improvement, suggesting Middle Eastern economies are comparatively well-placed to withstand the plunge in oil revenues. Capacity rose 13.3% and load factor dipped 1.3 percentage points to 79.7%.

Latin American airlines' traffic rose 5.6%. Capacity rose 5.1% and load factor climbed 0.4 percentage points to 81.2%, highest among the regions. While growth in the Brazilian economy has stagnated, regional trade volumes have continued to improve in recent months.

European carriers' international traffic climbed 5.0% in January compared to the year-ago period, which was the largest increase among the three biggest regions. Capacity rose 4.6% and load factor rose 0.3 percentage points to 77.7%. Air travel growth in Europe reflects robust travel on low-cost carriers as well as on airlines registered in Turkey which is helping to overcome some of the impact on travel of the ongoing economic weakness in the region.

Asia-Pacific carriers recorded an increase of 4.7% compared to January 2014, which is below the 2014 annual trend of 5.8% expansion. In addition, the seasonally adjusted level of traffic has been broadly flat over the past five months. The timing of the Lunar New Year in mid-February (one month later than in 2014) also impacted the results. Capacity rose 5.8%, pushing the load factor down 0.8 percentage points to 77.6%.

North American airlines saw demand rise 2.7% in January vs one year ago. While this was the weakest traffic growth for all regions save Africa, the US economy is a stand-out performer among developed economies. Capacity rose 3.8%, pushing down load factor 0.9 percentage points to 79.5%.

African airlines saw January traffic slip 0.7% compared to January 2014. The weakness in international air travel for regional carriers is not thought attributable to the Ebola outbreak. Rather, it appears to reflect negative economic developments in parts of the continent including Nigeria, the continent's largest economy, which is suffering from the collapse in oil prices. With capacity up 0.7%, load factor fell 1.0 percentage point to 68.1%, the lowest among the regions.