

Dubai International Airport shows strong recovery

During the historically challenging year of 2020, which had within it a notably difficult second quarter, Dubai International Airport (DXB) has announced a positive second half.

The total number of travelers passing through the airport was down 70 percent overall from 2019 at 25.9 million, but the second half showed clear signs of recovery. December exceeded expectations, with 2.19 million passengers.

The year's closing data showed "a noted recovery in many areas." The return to global markets was thanks in part to the strength of Dubai's airlines Emirates and flydubai, and in part to international airlines showing confidence and coming back into the region.

"In the past year we have witnessed the most difficult circumstances the travel industry has ever faced," says Paul Griffiths, CEO Dubai Airports. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt not only in our sector, but across the entire world. These DXB passenger traffic figures are reflective of that testing environment, but also come with an element of hope and confidence.

"An integral part of recovery for the travel and tourism industry is rebuilding the confidence of travellers, and one way to do this is through a vaccination programme, similar to what is currently being carried out by the UAE Government. This, along with technology that will allow for seamless and contactless travel, will once more encourage people to get on a plane. In addition, we have transformed our DXB and DWC cargo operations.

"As an intercontinental hub we are well positioned to support the distribution of vaccines from the countries manufacturing them, to the world. Looking forward, we are confident of a steady, but optimistic outlook. We are constantly monitoring future schedules and bookings, working with airlines on their plans to return to DXB and new routes to be introduced. This will allow us to ensure we have sufficient capacity and operational capability available to support as the recovery gains pace."



Paul Griffiths, CEO Dubai Airports, said the positive DXB passenger traffic figures come with an element of hope and confidence

Key facts and figures

During the first quarter of 2020, DXB saw a drop in airport travelers of 20 percent to 17.8 million customers. The second quarter, with the global shutdown, was much worse. April saw commercial flights come almost to an entire halt, as directed by the UAE Government. Over subsequent months, repatriation flights from DXB and DWC were among the few allowed on the tarmac. These flights permitted more than 500,000 travellers to return to their home countries.

UAE airspace was officially reopened toward the end of June, with travel to Dubai for tourism permitted from 7 July 2020. Flight movements and passenger figures then increased significantly through the end of the year.



Dubai International Airport (DXB) showed positive recover signs in the second half of 2020, with December's numbers higher than expected

Recovery

The recovery now appears strong. Now 142 destinations are served from DXB, showing a 60 percent recovery in destinations served. These destinations are located in 80 markets, which is an 85 percent market recover, and traveled by 56 airlines, a 75 percent recovery on number of airlines flying to and from the airport. New political alliances also improved recovery, with flights to and from Israel.

The top destination country remains India, with traffic for 2020 reaching 4.3 million. Second is the UK, with 1.89 million customers. Pakistan pulls up in third with 1.86 million customers. Other destination countries of note include Saudi Arabia, with 1.45 million customers in 2020.

The top three destination cities were London (1.15 million customers), Mumbai (772,000), and New Delhi (722,000).

Operational efficiency

Airline partners Emirates and flydubai both played a pivotal role in the recovery efforts, along with the Dubai National Air Transport Association (dnata) and all official entities that making up the aviation community in Dubai.

Partners in the retail, service, restaurant and beverage areas showed incredible strength and resilience throughout this time. Difficulties can strengthen partnerships, and this was the case here, Contract extensions with existing companies such as Travelex, new innovation from long-term partners JCDecaux, and new agreements with leading Dubai hotel group Jumeirah demonstrate confidence in the future of DXB.

The Dubai Health Authority was also an important aid in this recovery as it reacted quickly to the ever-changing environment and needs of the Emirate. COVID-19 PCR test facilities were quickly set up in DXB for arriving customers, making the movement of tourists and returning residents more efficient and safe.