

International travel set to recover fully by 2025 - GlobalData

International departures will reach 68% of pre-Covid-19 levels globally in 2022 and are expected to improve to 82% in 2023 and 97% in 2024, before making a full recovery by 2025 at 101% of 2019 levels, with a projected 1.5 billion international departures.

However, the trajectory for the recovery in international departures is not linear across regions or countries, according to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

Hannah Free, Travel and Tourism Analyst at GlobalData, said: "International travel from North America had shown improvement in 2021 as international departures grew by 15% year-on-year. The US rose to become the world's largest outbound travel market in 2021. In 2022, outbound departures from North America are projected to reach 69% of 2019 levels, before making a full recovery by 2024, at 102% of 2019 levels, ahead of other regions.

"International departures from European countries are expected to reach 69% of 2019 figures in 2022. As travel confidence rebuilds, the intra-European market is expected to benefit, driven by preferences for short-haul travel.

"However, travel recovery must contend with inflation, rising costs of living, and the war in Ukraine. By 2025, international departures are projected to be 98% of 2019 levels. Geographically, the war has not spread beyond Ukrainian borders. However, Russia was the world's fifth largest outbound travel market in 2019, while Ukraine was the twelfth. Going forward, limited outbound travel from these countries will hinder Europe's overall tourism recovery."

Asia Pacific is expected to lag in terms of recovery. Outbound departures from the region will only reach 67% of 2019 levels in 2022, owing to the relatively slower removal of travel restrictions, and the propensity for renewed domestic restrictions during Covid-19 outbreaks. Once the region's and the world's largest outbound travel market, China is not showing any signs of relaxing its strict border measures in the short term. In 2021, international departures from China were just 2% of 2019 levels.

Free concluded: "While global international travel is set to recover to pre-pandemic levels by 2025, tourism demand may look quite different. From two years of very limited travel, several long-term shifts and short-term trends have emerged. Consumers are now more likely to pursue authentic experiences, demand personalized travel offerings, blend business and leisure travel, and be more conscious of their overall environmental impact. There is still a long way to go to reach a normal situation. However, a potential full recovery by 2025 at the latest gives good reason for the travel and tourism industry to be optimistic for the future."