

INSIGHTS: TRANSATLANTIC REBOUND

What you need to know

October 2021

From [November 8, 2021](#), foreign national traveling to the U.S., who can provide proof of vaccination and a negative result from a COVID-19 test taken during the 72 hours before departure, may enter the country without the need to quarantine. Travelers must be fully vaccinated with a vaccine approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or the World Health Organization.

The new rules apply to both international air and land travel to the U.S.

The U.S. government initially announced its intentions on [September 20, 2021](#). The prospect of a relaxation of restrictions on foreign travelers sparked a boom in travel bookings even before the exact date of the changes had been announced. And airlines were already responding with expanded schedules. Here's what you need to know about the traveler and airline responses.

Traveler response

Reproducing a chart from *Business Travel News* (Figure 1) that has since been removed, it's clear that U.K.-U.S. bookings at U.K. travel agency Travel Counsellors had already been trending higher from the middle of the year, but they received extra impetus from the initial announcement made by the U.S. government in September. By [mid-October](#), bookings were **550%** higher than they had been at the start of 2021.

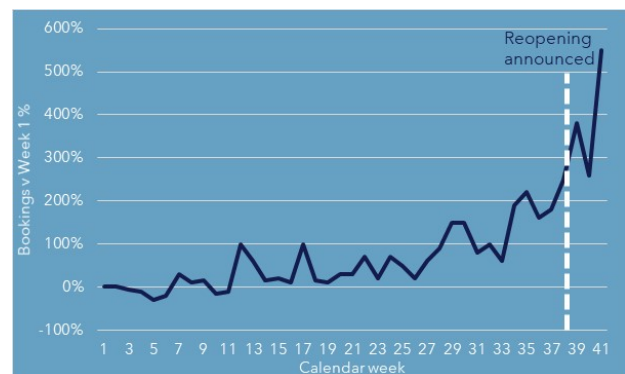
During the first two weeks of [October](#), Reed & Mackay North America saw the volume of U.K.-U.S. air bookings rise by **76%** compared to the first two weeks of [September 2021](#).¹ And it expects this to increase further now that the exact date for reopening has been confirmed.

In an earnings call on October 13, 2021, [Delta Air Lines'](#) president Glen Hauenstein noted a **sixfold** increase in bookings for European flights in [November](#) and [December](#) following the initial announcement.

JetBlue Airways, a recent new entrant in the transatlantic market, claimed a significant number of international bookings because of the news.

In the U.K., Virgin Atlantic reported a **600%** increase in bookings to the U.S. in the week following the announcement.²

Figure 1: Surge in U.K.-U.S. bookings at Travel Counsellors



¹ [BTN](#), Oct. 15, 2021

² [BTN](#), Oct. 4, 2021

How airlines have responded

Air France

Progressive expansion of U.S. capacity

Air France plans to progressively increase capacity once the restrictions are lifted in November, and by **March 2022**, it expects to be operating **90%** of its pre-pandemic capacity to the U.S.³ It will add frequencies to Los Angeles, Miami and New York and increase the size of aircraft on existing routes. A **thrice-weekly** Paris-Seattle service commences on **December 6**.

Despite the positive news from the U.S., Air France is reserving most of its expansion for long-haul markets in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

British Airways

U.S. routes restart ahead of plan

British Airways responded to the announcement by bringing forward the planned restart dates for a number of its U.S. destinations.⁴

Services to Austin and San Diego restarted in **October**. Baltimore, Las Vegas, Orlando and Tampa are due to be restored in **November**, with Nashville and New Orleans following in **December**.

The airline is also increasing frequency on a number of existing routes, most notably New York JFK, with an extra daily flight added in **November** and a further three daily flights added in **December**, bringing total service in this market to **eight** daily flights. Elsewhere, service to Denver, Philadelphia and Phoenix will be increased to daily, while Dallas and Miami will be served double-daily from **November**.

These changes will increase weekly flights to the U.S. by **42%** between October and December (Figure 2). The growth in available seat capacity could be much higher, as British Airways will also up-gauge some flights to Los Angeles and Miami to Airbus A380 operation.

Figure 2: British Airways' U.S. network



Delta Air Lines

Boston expansion

Delta Air Lines has refrained from announcing a wholesale expansion of its transatlantic operation, focusing instead on the development of its operations at a single U.S. gateway: Boston.⁵ A **summer 2022** expansion will include new thrice-weekly services to Athens and Tel Aviv from the end of **May**.

United Airlines

Transatlantic expansion planned for 2022

United Airlines appears to have adopted a more measured approach in the timing of its transatlantic response. It seems prepared to wait until **spring 2022** before adding **five** new transatlantic destinations to its network.⁶ These are focused on Newark, with new **thrice-weekly** services to Bergen, Palma de Mallorca and Tenerife, and daily flights to Ponta Delgada in the Azores. Arguably there's a leisure focus in this

³ [BTN](#), Oct. 13, 2021

⁴ [British Airways](#), Oct. 6, 2021

⁵ [Delta Air Lines](#), Oct. 3, 2021

⁶ [United Airlines](#), Oct. 14, 2021

expansion. The airline will also start [thrice-weekly](#) services from Washington, D.C. to Amman, Jordan.

In anticipation of a resurgence in demand, United is also expanding services to some European destinations already on its network. There will be new [daily](#) flights from Denver to Munich, Chicago to Milan and Washington, D.C. to Berlin, while extra daily flights will operate from Newark to Dublin and Rome.

Its European expansion will also include the inauguration of routes whose original launch was interrupted by the pandemic. These include daily services from Newark to Nice and from Chicago to Zurich during [April 2022](#), and the addition of a second daily Newark-Frankfurt service.

Virgin Atlantic

More routes resume in October and November

In response to the easing of restrictions, Virgin Atlantic announced the resumption of more transatlantic services. Flights from London Heathrow to San Francisco restarted on [October 2](#) (although these would have been planned before the announcement), with daily Las Vegas and Orlando services set to follow during [November](#).

The airline will also launch transatlantic services from Manchester, with flights to New York and Orlando starting in [November](#), and to Atlanta in [December](#).

Note

The information presented in this report represents the latest view as at October 18, 2021. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the correctness, completeness or topicality of this article and do not accept any liability for any damage or loss as a result of the use of the information contained within this article.

Do you have questions or comments regarding this report?

Please email mike.eggleton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.