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Recovery of aviation has begun:

11.1 million passengers used Hamburg Airport

More than double the number of passengers from the previous year, around 36 percent less than in the pre-coronavirus year 2019 / Continued demand growth anticipated in northern Germany despite difficult situation

The recovery of air travel has begun: After two weaker coronavirus years, 2022 brought with it the long-anticipated upturn – and it was much stronger than expected. Within one year, the passenger volume at Hamburg Airport more than doubled, from 5.3 million (2021) to around 11.1 million passengers in 2022. New challenges made the path out of the coronavirus trough more difficult: first the difficult flight operations situation and personnel shortages across the industry, and then the energy crisis. Despite inflation, reservations remain stable in northern Germany. Hamburg Airport anticipates slight growth in passenger figures and the flight network for the new year.

Passenger figures double within one year

By the end of the year, around 11.1 million passengers passed through Hamburg Airport, more than twice as many as in the previous year (2021: 5.3 million passengers; 2019: 17.3 million). Although the traffic figures are still some 36 percent below the levels seen in 2019, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the recovery has begun in aviation. As forecast, there was an upturn in passenger volume from Easter onwards, and it was significantly stronger than expected. Passenger numbers rose from 682,000 in March to 1.22 million in July, the busiest travel month during the summer holiday period. With 1.23 million passengers, October became the strongest month yet since the pandemic began, bringing more records the airport's way: The autumn school break saw the busiest day since the arrival of coronavirus, with almost 50,000 passengers, and the busiest week.

With around 91,760 take-offs and landings, the total number of aircraft movements in 2022 rose by 71 percent over the previous year (2021: approx. 69,500 take-offs and landings; 2019: approx. 155,200 take-offs and landings). The average number of passengers per flight in 2022 was 121, compared to an average of 100 in 2021 and 124 in 2019, before the pandemic. Compared to the previous year, 2021, the load factor for aircraft at Hamburg Airport rose by 10 percentage points to 76 percent (2021: 66 percent; 2019: 77.5 percent). The average number of seats per flight grew from 152 (2021) to 160, compared to 159 in 2019.

New challenges posed by unexpected high demand

The high increase in passenger numbers presented the aviation industry with a great challenge in 2022, and air travel was affected throughout Europe throughout Europe. All involved came up against the limits of available resources. The aviation industry is like a huge machine, where one cog turns the next. If there is a jam in one place, this affects all the processes that follow. The impact was also felt at Hamburg Airport at times, despite the thorough preparations the airport had undertaken in collaboration with all service providers and system partners.

“It is very much in the interest of the industry that things are more reliable and predictable again next summer. We will need to regain the trust of passengers and prove that air travel is convenient. And yet we face the ongoing difficulties resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. The war in Ukraine and energy supplies are additional incalculable factors that make it difficult to plan. On top of this we have the extremely challenging labour market situation,” says Michael Eggenschwiler, CEO of Hamburg Airport.

Outlook for 2023: Positive traffic development – challenging circumstances

Based on current forecasts, Hamburg Airport anticipates 13.8 million passengers for the coming year, equivalent to around 80 percent of the level seen in 2019. Compared to 2022, this would represent growth of 24.4 percent. The positive trend is also reflected in airline timetables: For summer 2023, eight airlines have already added nine destinations to their schedules, including Graz (to be served by Eurowings) and Kutaisi (served by Wizz Air), destinations that have never before been served non-stop from Hamburg Airport. Connections are also being resumed to attractive destinations such as Geneva (SWISS) and Bilbao (Vueling). Frequencies are also being successively

expanded, meaning quicker and more reliable connections to the most important holiday and business destinations across Europe.

“Traffic figures from the past year allow me to look forward with confidence. The reservations situation for the next season is already very good, and people want to travel by air – despite high inflation. This development is also reflected in the airlines’ route networks. Completely new routes make the range of services on offer from Hamburg even more diverse, and popular connections are coming back,” says Michael Eggenschwiler, CEO of Hamburg Airport.

Photo credits:

Aircraft on the apron: Hamburg Airport / Oliver Sorg

Hamburg Airport Helmut Schmidt lettering: Michael Penner

Passengers in the terminal: Hamburg Airport / Oliver Sorg

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