Travel Industry Update
February 10, 2021

Delta to Block Middle Seats on Planes Through April

• Delta Air Lines is extending its middle seat blocking policy for another month, through April 30, amid continued travel concerns during the pandemic.
• Atlanta-based Delta, the only U.S. airline with such a seat blocking policy to limit capacity on all flights, had previously had the limits in place through March 30.
• The airline says its customers feel the extra space "provides more peace of mind," according to chief customer experience officer Bill Lentsch. The company hopes the strategy will help it gain customers, particularly for spring travel.

Air Canada cuts 1,500 more jobs and cancels 17 more routes

• Canada's biggest airline has informed 1,500 of its workers that they'll soon be out of jobs as a result of new travel restrictions and a dramatic reduction in demand for flying.
• The airline will "temporarily reduce its unionized workforce by 1,500 people and by an as-yet-undetermined number of management positions," Air Canada told CBC News.
• The move comes on the heels of a decision last week to temporarily shut down all Rouge flights, which resulted in the loss of 80 jobs.

EasyJet calls on UK to outline path out of pandemic restrictions

• The British government needs to set out how it will unwind coronavirus border restrictions to give people the confidence to book flights after it introduced quarantine hotels, the head of easyJet said on Wednesday.
• Johan Lundgren told a CAPA Live online aviation conference they had seen early indications of demand for summer holidays at the big traditional resorts and the industry could enjoy a successful holiday period if the vaccine programme works, particularly on variants of the coronavirus.

Airport Workers in San Diego Demand Gov. Newsom Put Them on Vaccine Priority List

• When California Gov. Gavin Newsom recalibrated the vaccine distribution hierarchy last week to an age-based approach, certain essential workers suddenly found themselves further back in the line than before.
• That's a problem for custodians at California's airports, said Christian Ramirez, a policy director for SEIU United Service Workers union. On Thursday, Ramirez and about 40 other members of the union rallied in shifts at San Diego International Airport and held a memorial for uncounted airport workers who have died during the pandemic.
• "A large number of (these) workers have been infected at the airport," Ramirez said. "It's an extra level of anxiety and stress. Many live in ZIP codes devastated by the pandemic."
• Ramirez said that the essential airport workers who fell off the vaccine priority list include janitors who clean and sanitize airport terminals every day and who come in contact with thousands of passengers in the process.
• "We're essential when they need us, but when we need them we're an afterthought," he said.
• It's unclear how many airport workers have died of COVID. The Transportation Security Association has said 6,461 federal employees tested positive for COVID-19 and 14 have died during the pandemic.
• Last week Newsom lifted California's stay-at-home order, which meant restaurants could again open for outdoor dining. Along with the move came new guidance on vaccine eligibility.
• For now eligibility is tiered starting with people age 65 and older, who will be followed by teachers, farmers and first responders. The round after that, however, will target the next age group and will not expand to essential workers in manufacturing, transportation or commercial workers as was previously planned.
• As California struggles to deliver limited doses of the vaccine, concerns over inequities persist. Ramirez said airport workers and their families are at higher risk now than before the change in priorities.
• "The vast majority of our members in San Diego live in communities south of the 94, where we're seeing utter devastation," Ramirez said. "Many live paycheck to paycheck. They're eager to get the vaccine as soon as possible."

COVID-19 Related Tourism Industry Losses in 2020 Topped $750 billion

• New research suggests the top 50 countries supporting the global tourism industry have lost an estimated $753.6 billion due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.
• Overall, the numbers are “likely to be far higher.”
• According to hotel room offer platform Hoo, international tourism receipts fell to $548.9 billion in 2020, a drop of 57.9 percent from the $1,302.5 billion recorded the previous year. In total, data shows the industry lost $753.6 billion in tourism revenue last year.

Legislation gives hope to California theme parks

• Introduced by Democratic assembly member Sharon Quirk-Silva (D-Orange County) and Republican assembly member Suzette Valladares (R-Los Angeles/Ventura counties), the measure would permit parks to open when their home county reaches Tier 3, or moderate levels of Covid-19, as opposed to the currently required Tier 4, or minimal levels of coronavirus.
• At press time, there was no information as to when the legislation would be put to a vote.
• Erin Guerrero, executive director of the California Attractions and Parks Association, said in a statement that the association "deeply appreciates" the legislation.
• California theme parks have been lobbying for permission to open for months, often citing successful operations in Orlando as proof they can operate safely amidst the pandemic.
Cruise Lines Once Again Extend Sailing Start-Up Dates

- Canada's Transport Minister Omar Alghabra said Thursday that all cruise ships carrying 100 or more people will continue to be prohibited from operating in Canadian waters until Feb. 28, 2022, citing the risk they pose to the country's health-care systems. Ships carrying more than 12 people also are still banned from entering Arctic coastal waters.
- Meanwhile major U.S. cruise lines, including Carnival Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Disney Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International and Princess Cruises, have pushed their return to sailing to the spring, with the earliest trips scheduled from March 31. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lifted its no-sail order for ships operating in U.S. waters on Oct. 30, 2020, and went on to state that before resuming service, cruise lines must meet the requirements of its Conditional Sailing Order. The regulations detail a phased return to the seas designed to mitigate the risk of spreading Covid-19.