

BY THE NUMBERS

IATA reports slower air traffic growth in May, as fewer travelers in and to the U.S. affect overall numbers

Air travel demand growth was uneven in May, reports the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Globally, the industry reported 5% growth with Asia-Pacific taking the lead at 9.4%. North America, however, reported a 0.5% decline, led by a 1.7% fall in the US domestic market.

While severe disruptions in the Middle East in late June challenged air travel in some regions, IATA Director General Willie Walsh confirmed that consumer confidence appears to be strong with forward bookings for the peak Northern summer travel season giving good reason for optimism.

Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), was up 5.0% compared to May 2024.

International demand rose 6.7% compared to May 2024. Capacity was up 6.4% year-on-year, and the load factor was 83.2% (+0.2 ppt compared to May 2024). This is a record load factor on international flights for May.

International passenger markets

International RPK growth reached 6.7% in May year-on-year, reports IATA. However, traffic expansion on most key international routes to the Americas slowed in May, apart from Transatlantic with a modest 2.5% year-on-year increase.

North American carriers saw a 1.4% year-on-year increase in demand, by far, the slowest of all the regions. **Latin American airlines** saw an 8.8% year-on-year increase in demand. Capacity climbed 11.0% year-on-year.

Asia-Pacific airlines achieved a 13.3% year-on-year increase in demand; **European carriers** saw a 4.1% increase, **Middle Eastern carriers** saw a 6.2% increase, and **African airlines** saw a 9.5% increase in demand. Africa-Asia is the fastest-growing international corridor, with an expansion of 15.9%, reports IATA.

Domestic passenger markets

Domestic RPK rose 2.1% over May 2024. All regions showed growth albeit down from April, except for North America. The decline in North America was due to the United States, where IATA cites an economic slowdown and reductions in government travel.

North America carriers saw an increase in April after traffic decline in February and March, but returned to negative territory in May with a 0.5% YoY drop in RPK.

All other regions posted growth in May,

The passenger traffic carried by Asia Pacific airlines grew 9.4% YoY in May, the highest among all regions. This traffic accounted for around 60% of the total global net increase in RPK in May. Chinese domestic travel growth accelerated, as it has been doing every month since March.

RPK of European airlines expanded 3.4% YoY and represented 20% of global RPK growth. Together, carriers from Asia Pacific and Europe contributed 80% of the net increase in global passenger traffic in May.

Also notable is Brazil's strong growth, on the back of unbroken expansion since January 2023. Domestic traffic in Brazil had achieved YoY increases every month since January 2023 and the 18.3% gain in May was the highest for this period. This was also the strongest performance among all major domestic markets. Brazil saw an impressive 15.7% YoY increase in domestic capacity which supported the growth in demand in May.



Peace Arch Duty Free sets record with \$170,000 cognac sale

In what it calls "a remarkable display of resilience" amid ongoing challenges with traffic and sales, Peace Arch Duty Free has achieved a record-breaking milestone, selling a 6L bottle of Louis XIII Cognac for CAD \$170,000—the highest-value single-item sale in the shop's history.

This landmark purchase reflects a growing shift in customer demographics, with increasing demand from affluent Asian and South Asian travelers residing in the United States, says the company. These customers are actively seeking rare and premium spirits, including exclusive cognacs and single malt whiskies.

"We're seeing a clear trend toward luxury purchases," said Peter Raju, President of Peace Arch Duty Free. "This sale underscores the need to expand our high-end selection to meet the evolving tastes of our international clientele."

In anticipation of improved U.S.–Canada trade conditions and resolution of existing tariff issues, Peace Arch Duty Free is poised to move forward with a CAD \$5 million renovation project. The plan calls for a full modernization of the store, located on First Nations land, to bring it in line with global retail standards.

Upgrades will include enhanced retail technologies, expanded product offerings, and an emphasis on attracting prestigious international brands. The transformation aims to position Peace Arch Duty Free as not only the largest border duty free shop in North America, but also the most luxurious.



Nigel Keal re-elected as President of ETRC; association unveils economic impact study



ETRC Managing Board: Pedro Castro, Vice-President External Affairs; Piret Mürk-Dubout, Vice-President Maritime Affairs; Nigel Keal, ETRC President; Nina Semprecht, Vice-President PR & Communications; Philippe Margueritte, Vice-President Brands.

The European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC) has reelected **Nigel Keal** as President of the association for a one-year term. Keal was elected by a unanimous vote by the members of the association at the Annual General Meeting held in Brussels last week.

"It is an honor to serve as president of ETRC where we endeavor to continuously enhance member services," said Keal. "It is also my ambition that ETRC will continue acting as a platform to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the future of travel retail towards building a stronger travel retail ecosystem, including the upcoming study on business models due to be launched in September," he said, thanking the members of ETRC for their trust and acknowledging the support of the Managing and Supervisory Boards."

In addition to President Nigel Keal, the Managing Board is currently composed of:

Pedro Castro, Vice-President External Affairs – Global Public Affairs Director, Avolta; **Philippe Margueritte**, Vice-President Brands - President, Tax Free World Association (TFWA); **Piret Mürk-Dubout**, Vice-President Maritime Affairs - Member of the Management Board at Tallink Grupp/VD Tallink Silja AB; **Paul Neeson**, Vice-President Aviation Affairs - Director Retail, ARI Ireland; **Nina Semprecht**, Vice-President Communications and Public Affairs - Director Corporate Communications and External Affairs, Gebr. Heinemann.

ETRC also announced that it has launched a new study commissioned from global advisory firm interVISTAS on the *Economic Impact of Duty Free and Travel Retail in Europe*. The study pinpoints the role of the Duty Free and Travel Retail sector on the European travel and tourism industry and the European economy as a whole.



ETRC President
Nigel Keal

Key findings from the study indicate that:

European duty free and travel retail sales have witnessed notable growth and recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic, totalling €21 billion in 2023.

It is estimated that 74% of European duty free and travel retail sales occur in the aviation channel (predominantly airports), compared to 54% globally.

Duty free and travel retail sales activities in Europe are estimated to directly support 61,900 jobs which generate €7.7 billion in GDP (Gross Domestic Product). When considering indirect and induced effects on employment, the industry is estimated to support a total of 136,400 jobs in Europe.

A copy of the full report can be downloaded from the ETRC website: www.etrcc.org



Starboard appoints Anthony Richards to elevate retail experiences

Starboard Group has appointed former Effy Jewelry executive Anthony Richards as Vice President of Retail Experience & Sales Optimization, effective July 7. In this newly created role, Richards will lead the creation and execution of "innovative, multisensory retail experiences at sea, creating unforgettable destination-oriented experiences that delight shoppers and drive conversion and loyalty," says the company.

Reporting directly to Starboard President and CEO Lisa Bauer, Richards will lead the Sales Operations team and work closely with the company's General Managers and SVP of Luxury and Resorts to accelerate Starboard's retail transformation strategy.

In his new role, Richards will help drive Starboard's retail transformation strategy by creating and executing immersive retail and entertainment experiences that captivate shoppers and drive revenue growth across all touchpoints. He will collaborate closely with Starboard's various teams to execute strategies that elevate retail performance and drive customer loyalty.

Richards most recently served as Vice President of Cruise Operations at Effy Jewelry, where he oversaw talent acquisition and cruise operations across the brand's onboard retail presence. Prior to that, he led retail and port revenue initiatives at HFG Media and Royal Media Partners. Richards began his career as a Cruise Director with Royal Caribbean.

TSA forecasts record pax volumes over the Independence Day holiday

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is preparing for record passenger volumes at U.S. airport security checkpoints nationwide during the Independence Day holiday period.

TSA anticipates the busiest travel days will occur from June 29 through July 5.

The peak travel day of the holiday weekend is expected to be Friday, July 4, with TSA screening an estimated 2.82 million individuals. The agency forecasts that they will process approximately 17.7 million during the seven-day travel period.

The 2.82 million travel figure expected on Friday would surpass the current single day travel record recorded on Friday, June 16, when TSA screened nearly 2.8 million passengers. The peak Independence Day holiday travel day in 2019 was Sunday, July 7, where TSA screened 2.79 million passengers.

2026 APTRA Conference to partner with Bangalore International Airport Limited

APTRA has announced the return of its India conference series, to be held March 25-27, 2026 with Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) as the host partner at Kempegowda International Airport.

The 2026 conference will be APTRA's third consecutive detailed convention on the India travel retail market and the influence of India as a crucial source market for global tourism.

The APTRA India Conference 2026 will be open to the travel retail industry with further details to be announced.

In keeping with APTRA's not-for profit status, tickets for the event will be priced to cover costs. Interested parties are invited to contact events@aptra.asia

The Boolchand Group debuts HEYDUDE in the Caribbean with new store in Aruba



The gala ribbon cutting that officially opened the first HEYDUDE shoe store in the Caribbean in Aruba on June 26. Photo courtesy of The Boolchand Group.



The Boolchand Group has officially opened the doors to its first HEYDUDE footwear store in Aruba, marking a significant expansion milestone for the lifestyle footwear brand. The Aruba opening, which took place last week, positions the longstanding Caribbean-based company as a key player in regional retail innovation.

With over 90 years of industry experience, The Boolchand Group's partnership with HEYDUDE aims to introduce a globally recognized brand known for its lightweight and casual footwear.

Originally founded in Italy in 2008 and now part of the Crocs Inc. family, HEYDUDE is one of the fastest-growing footwear brands worldwide.

"Bringing HEYDUDE to Aruba is a meaningful milestone for our family," said Ravee R.B. Nandwani, Director of The Boolchand Group. "For decades, we've proudly served Caribbean shoppers with a diverse selection of trusted name-brand products. We're excited to continue that tradition by bringing one of the world's lightest and most comfortable footwear brands - HEYDUDE - to our customers."

The store quietly opened early in June, building anticipation for a festive Grand Opening held on June 26th. A private VIP preview welcomed guests with island-inspired bites, music, and opening remarks from The Boolchand Group executives, HEYDUDE brand representatives, and the TortugAruba Founda-

tion, a local sea turtle conservation group invited by The Boolchand Group as part of their ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability support.

To mark the launch, the store is running a special activation through the end of July offering a raffle ticket for a daily draw to win a free pair to anyone who visits the HEYDUDE store and tries on a pair of shoes.

The new store is located at L.G. Smith Boulevard 100 (Aruba Made building).

The Aruba store is the first of several planned openings and will act as a flagship for the brand in the Caribbean. As HEYDUDE's exclusive distributor in the region, The Boolchand Group aims to bring the brand's distinctive product offerings to new markets.

Alongside the Aruba opening, The Boolchand Group has also launched a second HEYDUDE store in St. Thomas. These developments mark the beginning of a regional initiative that includes future plans to expand HEYDUDE's availability through both multibrand retail outlets and standalone stores, according to the company.

Founded over 90 years ago, The Boolchand Group is a family-owned business with operations across the Caribbean. The company specializes in retail, distribution, and real estate, and continues to evolve as a leading regional player in lifestyle and consumer goods.

Heineken expands draught beer training program to cruise



Bartenders onboard Royal Caribbean's Allure of the Seas show off their "Certified Pourer" awards after mastering Heineken's draught pouring quality ritual during the Heineken Passion & Quality Training program.

Heineken Global Duty Free is accelerating its draught beer training program for Cruise partners, with consumer-focused quality a key component in its growth strategy.

Participating cruise lines include Carnival, Celebrity, Costa, Holland America, MSC, Princess, P&O, and Royal Caribbean.

The Heineken Passion & Quality Training program has been developed to address the dynamics of the on-board draught experience, where speed of service is a priority. Launched in the EU in 2023, the training program has doubled year on year, with more than 1,000 crew members trained to date.

The expanded 2025 program welcomes another 1,500 bar personnel across training programs in Europe and Mexico to complete the Heineken draught pouring quality ritual. The company says the ritual epitomizes the principles of former Heineken president, Freddy Heineken, who said "The only reason to order a second beer is the quality of the first."



Led by the best draught masters from the Heineken Experience in Amsterdam, the training takes place in the onboard bars so that crew are in their natural working environment with familiar set-up and equipment. The on-shore program includes Athens, Barcelona, Civitavecchia, Cozumel and Southampton and is part of the Heineken global quality commitment to ensure Heineken consumers enjoy the best possible experience in bars on land and at sea.

Christian Klimpke, Global Account Manager Cruises, Heineken Global Duty Free, commented: "Quality is at the heart of Heineken wherever we operate, and crew engagement is fundamental to the success of our Cruise business. Our focus on quality extends beyond the beer to the people entrusted to fill the glass. The Cruise training program has been highly successful, and is very popular with bar teams who become valued Heineken ambassadors. The training helps busy onboard bars to better meet the expectations of guests, driving results for our Cruise partners and Heineken, but also increasing guest satisfaction too."

Graduates of the Heineken program onboard Carnival's Island Princess.

Ambassador Cruise Line expands partnership with Harding+ with new *Renaissance* contract



Harding+’s new retail program onboard the *Renaissance* cruise ship features fashion and beauty, duty free, holiday essentials and high-end retailers such as Pandora and Swarovski.

Ambassador Cruise Line has awarded Harding+ the onboard retail contract for *Renaissance*, the newest addition to the Ambassador fleet following its merger with Compagnie Française de Croisières (CFC) earlier this year. The merger created a quality European affordable cruise line.

The Group operates a fleet of three small-to-mid-sized vessels incorporating Ambassador’s *Ambience* and *Ambition* and CFC’s 1,200 guest-capacity *Renaissance*, which is fully refurbished following recent multimillion-euro investments, including enhanced space for retail.

Both the Ambassador and CFC vessels will continue to offer a traditionally British or French product offering to their respective markets, with each brand retaining its unique national identity.

Harding+ has been working in partnership with Ambassador since 2021. As Ambassador expands its operations to welcome predominantly French guests sailing across Europe and the Caribbean, Harding+ will bring its tailored retail expertise to this new market and ship, bringing it in line with the retail offering on board her sister ships in the fleet.

The new *Renaissance* contract builds on the established retail offering already in place on board *Ambience* and *Ambition*. As with

all Harding+ partnerships, the execution will be guest-centric in its planning, focused on wants, needs and deep understanding of the guests traveling and the destinations being served.

For *Renaissance*, this will mean a larger team dedicated to providing a personalized shopping experience and a focus on luxury-end beauty brands, fine jewelry collections and destination-inspired collections that bring a sense of place to every sailing.

Renaissance will feature four key retail spaces on board, each designed to enhance the guest experience. These include a 132 sqm accessories boutique showcasing leading brands such as Pandora and Swarovski; a 15 sqm exclusive fine jewelry boutique; a 30 sqm spirits and tobacco store; and a 20 sqm holiday essentials shop.

Latest retail tech onboard

Renaissance will be the first ship to launch with the full suite of Harding+’s stock integrity project integrated from the outset. From the moment stock is received on board, every item will be digitally processed and labeled using Harding+’s latest handheld technology, delivering greater accuracy and enhanced operational efficiency.

While Harding+ brings global cruise retail expertise, the business has been a trusted specialist in the UK cruise market since the late 1980s - a strength that underpinned the original partnership with Ambassador in 2021. The company’s deep understanding of UK guest preferences has shaped the retail strategy onboard, including the successful introduction of Pandora across the fleet, which will now also feature on board *Renaissance*.

“Relationships and shared goals are at the heart of all we aim for to make every cruise better,” says Harding+ CEO Chris Matthews. “Extending a long partnership into new ship opportunities is always a great feeling and a testament to the work of all our teams in delivering consistently strong work.

“Working with a strong sense of French culture when it comes to *Renaissance* and its guests is a positive challenge, and as everything we aim for in our modeling is bespoke for any ship in question, a comfort zone too in finding and curating exactly the right range and offer to engage.

“This partnership is a strong example of combining global capability with localized insight to land real impact and commercial results,” said Matthews.

Bob McGowan, Chief Experience Officer, Ambassador Cruise Line, added: “We pride ourselves on creating ‘Ambassador Moments’ on every sailing, which are designed to make the guest experience extra special. Our retail offering plays as much a part in this as the amazing entertainment, outstanding cuisine and exceptional service our guests enjoy while in our care.

“Following a period in dry dock earlier this year, we took the opportunity to enhance the retail space on board *Renaissance* to offer our guests a broader choice of merchandise options during their sailing.

From fashion and beauty to duty free, holiday essentials and high-end retailers such as Pandora, whose products have proved popular with guests on board *Renaissance*’s sister ships, *Ambience* and *Ambition*, Harding+’s expertise, and our strong long-term working relationship, means our retail proposition will land perfectly for the needs and expectations of our French guests as part of an elevated shopping environment,” commented McGowan.

Pernod Ricard GTR launches Absolut Haring Artist-Edition



Pernod Ricard Global Travel Retail has released the Absolut Haring Artist-Edition, the second in Absolut's Artist Edition series.

Available exclusively in global travel retail for the next three months, the Absolut Haring Artist-Edition is a celebration of the iconic artist Keith Haring, who had a deep connection with the brand.

Nearly forty years ago, at the recommendation of his friend Andy Warhol, Keith Haring became the second artist to reimagine the Absolut bottle, following Warhol himself. He created four works, each placing the bottle's silhouette center stage and the chosen *Absolut Haring* piece became part of the 1986 Absolut campaign. The artwork featured Haring's unmistakable red lines and a joyous crowd of dancing figures set against a bold yellow canvas, offset by the blue of the Absolut logo.

The Absolut Haring Artist-Edition transforms the original painting into a piece of 3D kinetic art, says the company. With Haring's signature on the shrink sleeve, the design features dancing figures in red, yellow, and the Absolut blue. A hand-drawn take on the Absolut medallion – featuring founder L.O. Smith, is around the neck of the bottle.

Absolut has always believed that art should be open, joyful, and for everyone," says Deb Dasgupta, VP Global Marketing, Absolut Vodka. "Keith Haring's work radiated that belief—full of energy, color, and hope. With Absolut Haring, we're inviting a new generation to celebrate that spirit. It's a vibrant reminder that creativity can inspire, uplift, unite, and open minds.

"This is a joyful moment for Global Travel Retail," says Liya Zhang, VP Global Marketing at Pernod Ricard GTR.

"Following the incredible reception of the Absolut Warhol limited-edition last year, we're thrilled to now celebrate Keith Haring, a visionary whose work resonates deeply with today's travelers. The energy and color of the bottle speaks to a new generation looking for creativity in every moment, and inspiration in every journey. As Haring said, art is for everybody."

To celebrate the new limited edition, Absolut has created the Absolut Haring Fizz, a signature cocktail that nods to the artist's globe-trotting adventures across Asia and his deep love for New York. The golden yellow hue mirrors the original artwork with crisp apple, zesty orange, toasted sesame, and a kick of ginger, all shaken together.

Victorinox' new Altmont Modern collection blends business with leisure needs for young professionals



Victorinox has launched the Altmont Modern collection of travel essentials, which has been designed to target the evolving needs of the modern young professional, says the company.

The collection combines modular functionality, optimized storage with enhanced security features and are made from recycled materials.

Designed to move seamlessly from business to personal travel, the collection focuses on efficient internal organization that meets "bleisure" (business-leisure) needs, says Victorinox.

Built to withstand daily wear and tear, the bags are adaptable, gender-neutral, reliable and purposeful in design.

Backpacks and daypacks feature a removable laptop sleeve for a 15.6 inch electronic device. Efficient storage solutions include lockable zippers, a key fob, a sound pocket, business organization and a sunglasses holder. The collection also features reflective accents for increased visibility, a light mounting fixture for added safety and a trolley pass-through on smaller items to keep luggage items together.

The Altmont Modern collection is available in 10 styles and 3 colorways. Each item can be selected in either black, stone white or navy blue and all are constructed from recycled Polyester (rPET).

Each model also uses a recycled lining fabric that is antimicrobial, using SILVADUR™ technology to inhibit any growth of microorganisms.

The Altmont Modern collection includes the **City Daypack**, which includes the removable laptop sleeve, anti-scratch compartment, bottle holder and interlocking zipper features; the **Compact Backpack** with an integrated multipurpose net, additional storage space, trolley pass-through feature and highly optimized organization design to keep essentials secure and easy to locate; and the **2-Way Bag**.

All models come with a 1+10 year warranty.

International: Dubai Duty Free reaches record half-year sales

Dubai Duty Free posts new record half-year sales, reaching Dhs4.118 billion (US\$1.128 billion) for the first six months of 2025, a 5.34% year-on-year increase.

This exceeded last year's previous record turnover for the first half of the year by Dhs208.95 million (US\$ 57.24 million).

DDF reports robust growth in April, May and the first half of June, with sales buoyed by a surge in travel over the Eid holiday and the early summer travel season.

Dubai Duty Free Managing Director, Ramesh Cidambi said, "We are very pleased with our record performance for the first half of 2025. Whilst we await the final passenger numbers for June 2025, the spend per passenger is likely to be better than last year June. This performance is a testament to our team's hard work and the strength of Dubai as a global travel hub."