

Acsa ready for peak travel season at its airports

Following a challenging two years, when the aviation industry was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, Airports Company South Africa (Acsa) expects to see a recovery in passenger volumes and movements to return to near pre-pandemic levels during this year's peak season.



Source: VOO QQQ via [Unsplash](#)

The company is ready to handle the millions of passengers that will pass through its airports during the busiest times of the peak season, with plans in place to ensure that passengers have a stress-free and efficient experience.

Mpumi Mpofu, Acsa CEO says the organisation is ready for the influx of passengers across its airport network, and started the implementation of the plans a couple of months ago. "It took months of planning, but we finalised our Integrated Peak Season Plan and implemented it at the end of October.

"Overall, we are pleased with what has been an initially difficult and slow response to a robust recovery in passenger movements and air traffic volumes during this year," she says.

The figures issued by the Airports Council International (ACI) show global air travel is expected to fully recover from Covid-19-induced losses in 2024. More specifically, according to ACI data, demand for air travel continues to be strong despite heightened macroeconomic risks with forecasts seeing a continued dynamic in the second half of 2022.

ACI attributes the positive performance to fewer health and travel restrictions in many European and African countries and in the Americas leaving room for renewed industry optimism.

Global domestic passenger traffic, meanwhile, is expected to reach its 2019 levels in late 2023 with full-year 2023 traffic on par with the 2019 level. Global international passenger traffic will require another year to recover fully reaching 2019 levels in the second half of 2024.

For the entire ACSA network, we have recorded an overall recovery of pre-Covid numbers of 70% for the year-to-date, with 72% coming from domestic travel and 66% international travel by end of October 2022.

Ready for the busiest days

ACSA's busiest days are expected to be 15 December and 6 January for departures and arrivals at its key hubs – OR Tambo International Airport, Cape Town International Airport and King Shaka International Airport.

"Integrated Peak Season Plan will ensure that the airports are adequately resourced, positioned and capacitated to handle the huge volumes of passengers. The plan involves various stakeholders, among them Acsa, the airports, Saps, Sars, and various state entities that have each contributed an operational deployment plan for the peak season," says Mpofu.

"Through this plan, every stakeholder is aware of what to expect and what is expected of them in terms of resource planning for our busiest time."

A main focus area of the plan is the availability of key services and infrastructure across the airports to ensure that these operate reliably and efficiently. This includes lifts, escalators, travelators, and trolleys – all the equipment needed to facilitate the seamless movement of passengers. In this area, ACSA has exceeded its availability targets. In addition, we've introduced several technology solutions, such as e-gates, to streamline passenger processing and shorten waiting lines.

"We have focused on upgrading and expanding our parking infrastructure, with equipment which had reached end of life, and are currently replacing with brand new parking payment machines, to address areas of congestion and to provide a more efficient and user-friendly parking procedure at our airports," says Mpofu.

In addition, Acsa launched an app to make the passenger experience more seamless with features including flight information, parking payment at entry and exit points, and other numerous features for a pleasant journey.

Working hard to increase resources

"We have been hard at work to increase our human resources, but we've also re-opened more areas, such as lounges and parkades, and also introduced technology solutions and general improvements across our airports to be able to provide excellent service during this holiday season."

She notes that Acsa jet fuel supply challenges are a thing of the past, after various factors resulted in supply challenges, specifically at OR Tambo and Cape Town International Airports. Stock levels at these airports dropped to alarmingly low levels at times during the year, as the supply chain was hit by flooding in KwaZulu-Natal and a shipment delayed by high seas en route to Cape Town.

"We are happy to announce that fuel stock levels have stabilised and that all our airports have sufficient stock to comfortably meet current peak season demand. We do not foresee any further problems with the availability of jet fuel," she says.

In conclusion, Mpofu says it is all systems go at ACSA airports and that the organisation is looking forward to a successful and seamless holiday season that will ensure many passengers depart to and arrive from their holiday destinations in a stress-free and well-managed environment.

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