

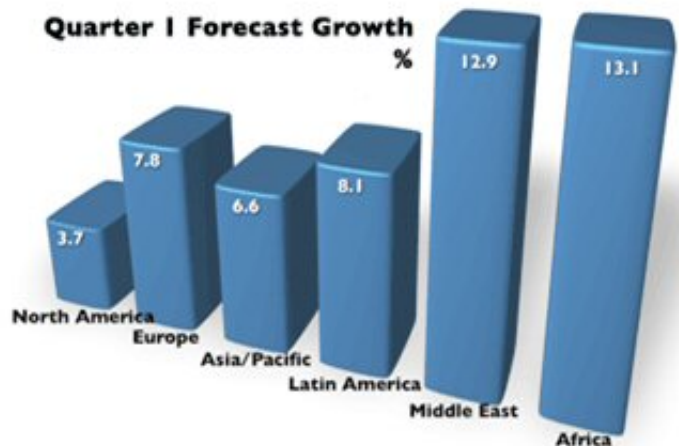
2008 - Record Breaking First Quarter For Air Passengers Predicted

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International passenger growth is the driving force behind the Air4casts November projections for Quarter 1 next year.

Total passenger numbers are set to rise by 6.3% in Q1. While the rate of increase in domestic travel appears relatively modest at 4.9%, it is in international travel that the real growth surge is expected. In both areas there is now a better than good case for raising the 2008 full year forecast which should now stand at above the six percentage point mark for total passengers.



The forecast for December is for vigorous growth: total passengers will register an increase of 6.8%. Domestic travel will rise by 5.2%. The European region will be especially busy.

International Passengers

The first three months taken together will see 8.2% more departing and arriving passengers than in 2007 and within the Quarter there is expected to be a rising trend, January should produce a year on year rise of 8% and March a rise of 8.5%. The first Quarter of this year got off to a brisk start with an increase of over 7%, but because it was the lowest of the four, the 2008 growth rate is a fraction exaggerated. April growth could be a little lower but still nudging up to the eight percentage point mark.

The strength of international travel demand extends across all of the six regions but the key is the European sector. Next year it will account for just over half of all international traffic and its growth rate over the first three months will beat 8%. The anecdotal evidence is there too and in the just published October actuals there is strong support for a bullish forecast: Ryanair pushed up its seat sales by 21% to 4.5 million, the easyjet hike of 14% appears restrained in comparison. Heathrow is growing again. Finnair was up 18%. The country analysis tells it: Russia and Turkey will both grow faster than India internationally, though not domestically. Spain is set to achieve double figures, Italy will be almost at the 10% point mark and the UK is looking positive again, France will be pushing towards 7%.

In the USA overseas travel is set to rise by 6.9%, in this first Quarter passenger numbers will come close to the UK level and together the two will account for almost a fifth of bookings. European destinations will be less popular for tourists and all of this, of course, pre-dates the second Quarter onset of the Open Skies agreement.

Domestic Passengers

Travel demand will grow by 4.9% in the first Quarter of next year, the December forecast is 5.2%. The 2008 forecast is now 4.3%.

Central to the projection for Q1 is the state of the US market. Passenger numbers are expected to rise by 3.3% which is restrained in relation to expectation in other regions but above the medium-term trend for the USA. Anecdotal evidence again confirms, this time from the early October returns from US airlines which shows the year on year total passenger growth settling back to 3.8%

In Asia/Pacific, which accounts for a quarter of all domestic trips, the growth forecast for Q1 is 6.1% and easing. The December forecast is 7.3%. India will continue to be a high performer, turning in a growth of almost 26% for the first three months, and making up 12% of the region's domestic traffic. China, at 27% of the regional total, will see numbers up 13%, while the outlook for Japan is slightly negative.

Source: [Air4casts](#)

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