

The VOICE of the USA - Update July 29, 2021

CURRENT SITUATION

The outlook in the US is deteriorating rapidly, with a quadruple increase in new cases daily over the last month. Hospitalizations and deaths are growing as well, although at far lower rates than cases. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths remain below peak levels, and the three approved vaccines remain effective against the virus. It turns out that about 97 percent of hospitalized coronavirus patients have not been vaccinated. Every of the 50 states is reporting an increase in case numbers, although these remain relatively low in much of the Northeast and Upper Midwest. The highly infectious Delta variant has caused a huge surge in cases in the states of Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana. Louisiana, which was averaging fewer than 400 cases a day at the start of July, is now reporting more than 2,400 cases a day, the most since January.

Currently about 49 percent of US residents are fully vaccinated, with high variation from state to state. As an example, two-thirds of Vermont residents are fully vaccinated, as opposed to one-third in the states of Alabama and Mississippi.

The goal was to have 70% of the population fully vaccinated by July 4, which was not achieved, reason why the Biden administration has launched a campaign to entice Americans to get vaccinated, especially keeping the Delta variant in mind. A new deadline has not been set.

MARKET DEVELOPMENTS

KLM has reinstated flights to Amsterdam from all US gateways that were in place prior to the pandemic. However, the frequency of flights is far lower than before, and load factors are significantly lagging compared to previous years. KLM USA is bracing for the winter, a usually slower period anyway, and is looking for ways to increase awareness and bookings during this particularly turbulent time. Good news is that the initially planned launch of the new Austin - Amsterdam route in 2020 is back on the radar for 2022. Expectation is that business travel will start recovering later than leisure, reason why the focus currently mainly is on deluxe leisure travel. United has started flying from Chicago again, and American has started serving Amsterdam from Dallas and Philadelphia as was the case before the outbreak of COVID-19.

US tour operators are mainly focusing on 2022, and beyond, and have seen strong bookings for 2022. Several tour operators started offering US products in 2020, in addition to their European, and other intercontinental programs.

Americans remain to have a strong interest in domestic travel, staycations, and road trips, and we will follow carefully how travel to the Netherlands will develop, especially now that the Netherlands received code 'dark-red,' and the US Government issued a negative travel advice.

OFFICIAL DATA

- Vaccinations – first dose Over 189,9 million people (57.2% of population, +1% since July 22)
- Vaccinations – second dose Over 163.9 million people (49.4% of population, similar to July 22)
- Total cases Over 34.7 million (over 10% of the population)
- Daily cases on July 28 66,924 (+21,500 compared to July 22)
- Total deaths 609,853 (316 on July 28)
- Total hospitalizations 36,680 (+9,100 compared to July 22)

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND MEASURES

On June 24 the US was added to the list of low COVID-risk i.e. safe countries, and travel resumed from the US to the Netherlands. As a result, there is no negative test result or self-quarantine required upon entering the Netherlands. Those Americans who are traveling to the Netherlands despite the negative travel advisory are highly recommended by the US Government to do so only when vaccinated. Upon returning to the US all travelers must show a negative COVID-19 test result no more than three days before travel, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in the past three months before boarding a flight to the US. After travel all passengers should get tested with a viral test within three to five days. Quarantine measures do not apply to fully vaccinated passengers returning to the US.

As far as measures in the US social distancing is still recommended. Facial masks are no longer required outside. Inside varies, based on whether people are vaccinated or not, and some countries have re-instated wearing masks inside, such as LA county. The discussion about the right to not wear a mask is ongoing, including within certain government bodies. Masks are still the rule on public transport, at airports and aboard planes, and schools will decide how to proceed after the summer break. Some businesses, office and gov't buildings, and shops and restaurants also keep on requiring customers to wear masks.

Shops and restaurants are open, and outdoor dining is more popular than ever. Museums and (movie) theaters are open, although some remain closed. Broadway theaters are bound to open in September.

(Business) events are happening with restrictions in certain states. Find a state-by-state update (as of July 28) on events [here](#). Social distancing, and in many cases wearing masks are obliged, and vaccination or a negative test may be demanded by organizers. This varies, however, we notice increased caution due to the Delta variant being prominently present, although to a lesser degree in the Northeast and Midwest.