

Airlines poised for takeoff as Brits race to the beach this summer

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[ASYJET](#) declared itself ready for lift-off today as travel curbs ease and holiday bookings are poised to rocket.

A host of other UK [businesses](#) also reported feeling optimistic about this year on the day face [masks](#) stopped being compulsory at indoor public spaces.

Easyjet saw losses in the quarter to Christmas halve to £213 million while passenger revenue soared from £165 million a year ago to £805 million.

CEO Johan Lundgren said: “We believe testing for travel across our network should soon become a thing of the past. We see a strong summer ahead, with pent up demand that will see easyJet returning to near 2019 levels of capacity with UK [beach](#) and leisure routes performing particularly well.”

Rival [airlines](#) Wizz Air and Ryanair are also set to boast capacity as demand bounces back and Omicron recedes. According to polls two-thirds of Britons say a foreign holiday this year is a priority. Easyjet said it will offer more flights from the UK to beach destinations this summer than ever before.

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Wizz Air has already bought new slots at Gatwick – the airport could be the centre of a battle for trade among the budget carriers as consumers let rip.

While inflation remains a concern and interest rates are also set for lift-off, markets today held firm despite hawkish words from the US Federal Reserve last night. In the City traders are now pricing in that rates will be 1% by the summer. A quarter point increase in February to 0.5% is already priced in.

Despite that, the FTSE 100 held steady today, up 9 at 7478.

Pubs, estate agents and casino groups all had upbeat news today.

Rank Group CEO John O'Reilly said today was a "big day" for businesses like his.

Rank, which owns Grosvenor Casinos and Mecca Bingo, today said it returned to a half-year profit in the last six months.

"With restrictions removed as of today, we're expecting to see a good strong bounce back," O'Reilly said. The gambling group, which makes just over 40% of its revenues in London, is hoping the easing of testing requirements for international travellers will also see visitors from the Middle East and Asia return. Both groups are major customers at its casinos.

"Once we get past Ramadan, we expect London to get busy," O'Reilly said.