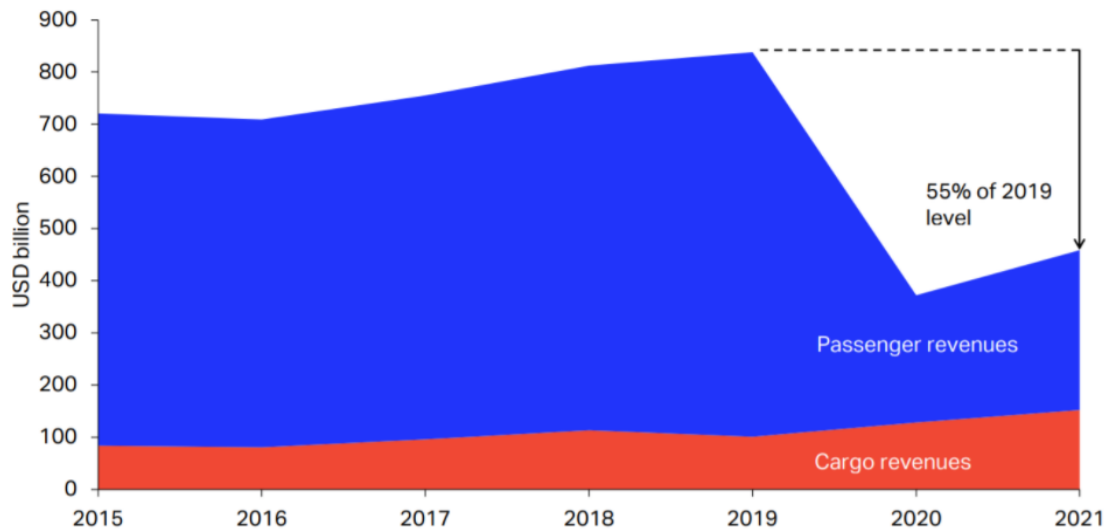




THE YEAR PLANES STOOD STILL

BY STACE KNABEL



Prior to the pandemic I was traveling often. I was in the airport after a successful conference in Atlanta when one of the NYC bureaus shut down, the pandemic was here. There were employees wiping down the handrails to the escalators and not a mask in sight, but you could feel that this was going to be big.

As everyone adjusted to switching from the office to home, I was adjusting from travel to home. My first flight after the pandemic hit was in July 2020 for a personal trip. The airports were empty, the vendors were all closed, and it had an eerie feeling to it.

On my flights in August through September 2020, the passenger count increased slowly as the months went on. The flights started filling up more in October with Thanksgiving being a noticeable change, the flights were starting to be full again.

This experience was not unique, however, as revenue from passenger flights was down 55% from 2019, according to IATA. Passenger numbers are expected to rise to 2.4 billion in 2021. This is better than last year, but still nowhere close to the 2019 peak of 4.5 billion. Much of this success comes from domestic flights in the U.S., Russia and China that are no longer under pandemic restrictions.

It's a good feeling to see the airports full of life, vendors open and flights getting to full passenger capacity again, a drastic difference from a year ago.

Sources

Freightwaves, Airlines to lose \$48B despite banner year for cargo

IATA

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Stace Knabel

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

stace.knabel@rockfarm.com

616-902-2747

300 Data Ct, Dubuque, IA 52003

