Nearly 3 million UK Travel & Tourism jobs could be lost due to prolonged travel restrictions, according to new research from WTTC

- Up to 2.9 million jobs are at risk in the UK Travel & Tourism sector alone
- Prolonged travel restrictions could result in the loss of $186bn to UK GDP
- Worst-case scenario can be avoided if UK follows four-point plan for recovery

London, UK: Nearly three million jobs could be lost in the UK Travel & Tourism sector if barriers to global travel, such as quarantine measures and blanket anti-travel advisories remain in place, according to new research from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

The devastating figure comes from WTTC economic modelling, which looks at the impact faced by the Travel & Tourism sector amid local and global travel restrictions as a result of COVID-19.

In the worst-case scenario, where restrictions were lifted after the summer, the impact would be more significant, putting a total of 2.9 million jobs at risk. This represents an alarming 142 per cent rise from the most recent 1.2 million jobs WTTC had previously estimated to be under threat from the coronavirus pandemic.

The research shows that if these travel restrictions were removed sooner, it could save a staggering 1.3m jobs.

The impact of prolonged travel restrictions could also wipe out $186 billion in the sector’s contribution to UK GDP, equating to a 73% percent drop compared with 2019.

Meanwhile, the UK would suffer a sharp decline in visitor numbers of 73% for international arrivals and 71% for domestic arrivals.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: “Our new modelling reveals the depth of the long-term crisis facing the UK Travel & Tourism industry if travel restrictions, such as the 14-day quarantine measures introduced by Government this week and the FCO travel advisory continue for some time.”
“Under our worst-case scenario, prolonged travel restrictions could put nearly three million jobs under threat and cause a loss of more than $180 billion to Travel & Tourism GDP in the UK.

“The sector’s recovery risks being undermined by heavy-handed restrictions just as it emerges from one of the most punishing periods in its history – and it’s not just airlines who will bear the cost but the entire travel ecosystem.

“Hotels, destinations and travel agents will all suffer from the economic domino effect of prolonged restrictions on movement, plunging millions of travel businesses and their employees into financial ruin.”

WTTC, which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector, carried out the extensive research this week and its expert analysis came up with three possible outcomes for the sector:

1. **Worst-case scenario**: Current restrictions starting to ease from September for short-haul travel, from October for mid-haul and from November for long-haul.

   In this scenario, 2.9 million jobs could be lost in the UK Travel & Tourism sector, with a loss of $186 billion in GDP. Meanwhile, UK visitor numbers would drop by 73% for international arrivals.

2. **Baseline scenario**: Current restrictions starting to ease from July for short-haul or regional travel; from August for mid-haul, and from September for long-haul.

   In this scenario, a total of 1.9 million jobs could be lost in the UK Travel & Tourism sector, with a loss of $126 billion in GDP. Meanwhile, UK visitor numbers would drop by 57% for international arrivals and by 45% for domestic arrivals.

3. **Best-case scenario**: Current measures starting to ease from June for short-haul and regional travel; from July for mid-haul and from August for long-haul.

   In this scenario, a total of 1.6 million jobs could be lost in the UK Travel & Tourism sector, almost half the number in the worst-case scenario, with a loss of $106 billion in GDP. Meanwhile, UK visitor numbers would drop by 49% for international arrivals.

   While the best-case scenario would undoubtedly still result in a devastating blow for Travel & Tourism, this outcome avoids unnecessary additional harm to the sector as a result of prolonged travel restrictions and protects more than a million UK jobs that could otherwise be lost.

   This best-case scenario can still be achieved for the UK Travel & Tourism sector if the Government follows WTTC’s recommended four-point plan.
Firstly, the immediate removal and replacement of 14-day quarantine measures, with ‘air corridors’ to countries with similar circumstances to stimulate the Travel & Tourism sector and the wider UK economy, as well as the removal of travel advisories and bans on non-essential international travel, which prevent insurance protection cover for travellers.

Secondly, the adoption of global health and safety protocols, such as the ‘Safe Travels’ initiative recently launched by WTTC, to provide assurance to travellers that it is safe to travel again.

Thirdly, the implementation of a rapid test and trace strategy to help contain the spread of the virus, while still allowing people to travel responsibly at home and abroad.

And finally, greater and sustained collaboration between the public and private sectors to ensure a standardised, global approach to the crisis.

Guevara added: “We’re calling on the Government to remove its quarantine policy as soon as possible to minimise the impact to its economy, which is currently putting the UK at a distinct competitive disadvantage. Instead, we recommend the opening of ‘travel corridors’ to countries which have controlled the spread and immediate support for the entire Travel & Tourism ecosystem to kick-start the UK’s economic recovery.”

As the sixth largest economy in the world, and the third largest in Europe in terms of Travel & Tourism GDP, a healthy UK travel sector is vital to global recovery.

WTTC analysis shows that the Travel & Tourism sector contributes 9% of the UK’s GDP and is supports11% of total UK employment.

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For further information, please visit wttc.org

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