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# Russia's Aeroflot Posts First Profit Since Start of Coronavirus

## Domestic travel boom and opening up of international routes lifts results at Russia's flagship airline.

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Aeroflot has returned to profit following a tough two years. **Sergei Malgavko/TASS**

Russia's Aeroflot has posted its first profit since the start of the pandemic, as travel bounced back and lockdowns began to ease over the summer.

The flag-carrying airline posted 11.6 billion rubles ($150 million) of net income during the third quarter of 2021, according to company results published Monday — up from a loss of 21 billion ($290 million) in the same period last year.

But revenues were still 20% down on pre-pandemic levels and earnings 60% below those recorded in the same period of 2019.

Aeroflot was hit hard through 2020 by Russia's tough travel bans, but has bounced back due to

the strong performance of its low-cost subsidiary, Pobeda, which offers a host of cheap domestic connections and has benefited from a boom in domestic tourism during the pandemic.

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The return to profitability follows improving results at a number of other international airlines over the same period after dramatic upheaval and heavy losses for the industry at the start of the pandemic.

The airline carried 27% more domestic passengers during the third quarter of 2021 compared to 2019, deputy CEO Andrey Chikhanchin said Monday. On international routes, Aeroflot was only operating at 43% of pre-coronavirus capacity in September.

While the company hailed its return to profits, it also noted that high levels of uncertainty remain, and the group's results will be largely dependent on the course of the coronavirus pandemic.

Russia has already banned flights to a number of southern African countries following the detection of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, and Russia's Foreign Ministry said Monday further restrictions were likely to be announced shortly.

Aeroflot shares are trading 37% below where they were before the pandemic.

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