



VisitEngland survey shows visits overall to attractions in 2022 still down more than a third on 2019

VisitEngland

Press releases

July 2024

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VisitEngland has today published its [Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions for 2022](#) showing that while visits overall to attractions across England last year showed recovery, numbers were still significantly down on pre-COVID levels.

The survey shows that visits to visitor attractions in England increased by 42% overall last year compared to 2021, however this was still down more than a third, 35%, on 2019 (see slide 7 in [full report](#)).

London saw the largest regional increase in visits to its attractions, driven by the return of international visitors, with numbers up 141% last year compared to 2021. Other regions in England saw average growth of between 16% and 42% for the same period.

Tourism Minister John Whittingdale said:

“England’s top tourism destinations offer something for everyone whether visiting from home or abroad. As we continue to support the industry’s recovery, this welcome growth in visitor numbers is promising.

I encourage everyone to enjoy a day out at our must-see attractions this summer to help bring this important industry, which supports thousands of jobs and businesses, back to full health.”

VisitEngland Director Andrew Stokes said:

“While it is good to see that many of England’s attractions made up lost ground last year, and to see the very welcome return of international visitors, these statistics are a timely reminder of the ongoing challenges for the industry with many still rebuilding from the pandemic.

We know it continues to be a mixed picture for many destinations across England with our latest research showing that concerns about the cost of living are having an impact.

Our fantastic visitor attractions are crucial to our tourism offer, from our world-renowned museums, galleries, castles and historic houses to our stunning gardens, rural, wildlife and outdoor attractions. There really is an attraction to suit every taste and budget. With the summer holidays fast approaching I encourage everyone to get out and explore the amazing visitor offer here on our doorstep.”

Chief Executive of Historic England Duncan Wilson, said:

“These statistics confirm that 2022 was a difficult year, but one where the light could be seen at the end of the tunnel as the trend in visitor numbers was so positive. Heritage attractions have been working all hours to find new ways to bring visitors to their sites and their creativity is wonderful to see. I’m convinced that the sector will emerge from the pandemic stronger and more resilient than ever thanks to the passion for sharing our heritage that drives its people.”

The Tower of London was back in the top spot last year as the most visited ‘paid for’ attraction in England, with 2.0 million visitors, up 284% on 2021, although down almost a third on 2019. Kew Gardens was second with 1.96 million visitors, on par with 2021 but still down 15% on 2019, and RHS Garden Wisley third with 1.5 million, up 6% on 2021 and up 21% on 2019.

Topping the list of free attractions in England in 2022 was the Natural History Museum with 4.7 million visitors, up 196% on 2021 although still down 14% on 2019. Second was Brighton Pier with 4.6 million visitors, up 9% on 2021 although a decline of 5% on 2019. The third most visited free attraction in England in 2022 was the British Museum with 4.1 million visitors, up 209% on 2021 but still down 34% on 2019.

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Looking at specific categories of visitor attractions, the category with the highest percentage growth in 2022 was ‘Places of Worship’ with visits up 117% on 2021. ‘Museums/Art Galleries’ also saw strong recovery last year, with visits up 114% on 2021. The category ‘Workplaces,’ representing industrial/craft attractions, saw visits up 55% while ‘Other Historic Properties’ and ‘Visitor/Heritage Centres’ also showed strong recovery in visitor numbers in 2022, up 51% and 49% respectively on 2021.

[See the results of the VisitEngland Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions in 2022 including regional data here.](#)

Tourism is one of England’s largest and most valuable industries, supporting hundreds of thousands of businesses, employing about 2.6 million people and, in 2019, generating £76 billion

in domestic visitor spending.