



# VisitBritain/VisitEngland activity boosts economy by £1.26 billion, as agency sets out plans to grow value of tourism

VisitBritain

VisitEngland

Press releases

July 2024

May 2024

Visitors spent an additional £1.26 billion across Britain as a result of activity by national tourism agency VisitBritain/VisitEngland, latest figures show.

It means that for every pound invested in the agency visitors spent an additional £15 in Britain.

The agency reported the figures, which cover its activity from April 2021 to July 2023, as it brought industry leaders together at its annual review event on 22 May **‘Working in partnership to drive a thriving tourism industry,’** outlining its priorities and activities to support the sector and grow the visitor economy.

It comes as VisitBritain’s [latest inbound tourism forecast](#) estimates £32.5 billion will be spent by international visitors in the UK this year, up 5% on 2023, and up 14% on 2019. Looking at visits to the UK, 38.7 million visits are forecast, up 2% on the 38.0 million seen in 2023 however still 5% shy of 2019 levels.

Domestically, the agency’s latest research shows that more than a third of Brits, 35%, are more likely to choose a UK trip rather than an overseas trip in the next 12 months compared to the previous year.

**Speaking ahead of the review, British Tourist Authority Chairman Nick de Bois said:**

*“With the summer season fast approaching it is timely to shine the spotlight on the importance of Britain’s outstanding tourism industry. An industry worth £127 billion a year to the economy, our third largest service export, a growth industry and a job creator, with huge potential to fire up regional economies.*

*“Working in partnership with industry and Government, getting the right structures and policies in place, we can boost Britain’s competitive position, unlock growth and drive inward investment so more local communities feel tourism’s benefits, and not within years but within months.”*

*Looking at inbound tourism to the UK, Mr de Bois said while it had been fantastic to see the double-digit growth in visitor spending from the United States (US) as well as the overall growth forecast this year on 2023, there had been a slow-down in the pace of recovery and there was fierce competition from European neighbours.*

*To drive spending to Britain, VisitBritain’s international GREAT Britain campaigns would be focused on markets showing strong growth, including the US, its largest and most valuable market, forecast to be worth £6.3 billion in 2024, as well as Australia, the valuable Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and its major European markets.*

*Mr de Bois said that tourism also framed how people around the world saw Britain, building positive perceptions, and those who have visited were 19% more likely to invest in British products and businesses. Tourism was also a competitive global industry and visitors have a lot of choice.*

*“Britain ranks highly for its history and heritage and contemporary culture and sport, but perceptions are not as strong for its natural beauty and perceived welcome. To counter this VisitBritain’s international GREAT campaigns promote Britain’s welcome, inspiring visitors to discover more, stay longer and to drive that sense of urgency to come now,” he said.*

Looking ahead VisitBritain would be using the powerful pull of screen tourism and the booming set-jetting trend to boost inbound tourism. Its upcoming ‘Starring GREAT Britain’ campaign would be putting filming locations and associated visitor experiences centre-stage, telling the story of Britain’s regional diversity to drive visits and spend across the regions.

As well as its global campaigns VisitBritain is working with partners across its major inbound markets, including British Airways in the US and Wego in the Gulf, to convert the interest to visit Britain into bookings now, generating £6.1 million of additional cash and marketing-in-kind activity alone across the last financial year.

Its work with international trade had ensured British products and destinations are sold internationally, hosting major trade missions to markets showing growth, connecting hundreds of British businesses with international buyers and generating an additional £47 million in sales. As well as leisure travel, it is supporting the business events industry to win international conferences and exhibitions, with its grants programme supporting events worth about £20 million to the economy.

Mr de Bois also emphasised the ongoing operational challenges faced by the sector.

*“Many businesses are battling rising costs and staff shortages while competing for visitors. Supporting our industry will continue to be at the heart of our strategic activity. Working with the Government and industry we will play our part in building a more resilient, sustainable and accessible visitor economy, making the strongest possible case for tourism and cementing the future of one of our greatest industries.”*

An important step towards this and a key priority for VisitEngland has been the creation of the [Local Visitor Economy Partnership \(LVEP\)](#) programme, following the [de Bois review of Destination Management Organisations](#) in England, simplifying a regional structure for English tourism to grow sustainable local visitor economies, with 33 LVEPs created to date. Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) were also part of the review recommendations. They are made up of a number of LVEPs, setting regional priorities and receiving government funding. Two DDP pilots are currently underway in the North-East of England and the West Midlands.

VisitEngland continues its targeted support to small businesses from guidance and tools on sustainability to accessibility through its [Business Advice Hub](#). Free trade initiatives including the ['Taking England to the World'](#) programme are supporting businesses to reach new customers and grow their revenue. VisitEngland is also championing a sustainable tourism strategy for England, to harness the industry's collective impact.

Tourism is one of Britain's most successful industries, supporting hundreds of thousands of small businesses and employing more than three million people across all the nations and regions.