

Cumbria Tourism Latest Tourism Research Newsletter

Fifth consecutive year of growth for tourism

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In 2017 Cumbria and the Lake District received over 47 million visitors, made up of 40.7 million day trippers and 6.6 million overnight visitors. Between them, day and staying visitors combined to produce 62.7m tourist days.

These visitors brought in £2.9 billion to the region's economy and provided employment for 37,796 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. As many tourism jobs are actually part time, or seasonal, the total number of people in tourism jobs is estimated at 64,992, around 20% of the county's total employment.

Between 2016 and 2017, there was an increase of 5.5% in tourist days, 4.8% in tourist numbers, and 6.4% in tourism revenue. This builds on increases in 2013, 2014 and 2015. In 2017 the county

welcomed an extra 2.2m visitors, and generated an additional £175m, taking total tourism revenue to £2.9bn.

Staying visitors grew at a faster rate than day visitors. Staying visitors increased by 6.2%, equivalent to an extra 222,000 visitors, and day visitors by 5% - almost 2m additional day trip visits.

Much of the staying visitor growth was due to those choosing non-serviced accommodation (self-catering, caravan and camping etc) – non-serviced accommodation visitor numbers grew by 6.6% and visitor days by 9%.

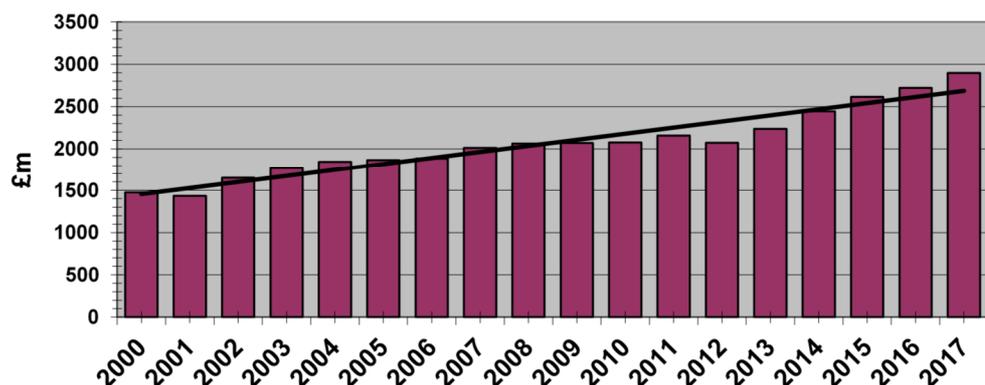
South Lakeland district accounts for the greatest share of tourism revenue at 43%, followed by Carlisle with 19%, and Allerdale with 16%. Eden district generates 12% of the county's tourism

revenue, Copeland 6% and Barrow 4%. The area covered by the Lake District National Park accounts for almost half of the county's total tourism revenue (49%).

In the nine years between 2009 and 2017, tourism revenue has grown by 40% from £2.07bn to £2.90bn (unadjusted). Over the same period, visitor numbers have grown by 15.8% and visitor days by 15.3%. Employment supported by tourism has increased by 13.2%.

Source: Cumbria Tourism (2018) *Tourism in Cumbria 2017 Key Facts and Trends* <https://www.cumbriatourism.org/shop/tourism-in-cumbria-key-facts-and-trends/>

Tourism Revenue (unadjusted)



Tourism Business Performance Survey

This biannual survey has been carried out by Cumbria Tourism for over 20 years. It is an online survey that is sent to all known tourism businesses (accommodation providers, visitor attractions, retailers etc) whether members of Cumbria Tourism or not.

The survey covered the six-month period from October 2017 to the end of March 2018, and looked ahead to the rest of 2018.

Bad weather, rising costs, uncertainties around Brexit and a downturn in consumer spending has resulted in profits being squeezed and a challenging start to the year

Just 19% of businesses reported profits up on the same six month period 12 months ago (compared to 32% in March 2017). Over half (52%) reported profits down.

30% said that visitor numbers over the last six months were up on the previous year, but almost half (47%) reported decreases in numbers overall.

Repeat business in the form of returning customers is a critical factor in the success of many tourism businesses, and 72% cited this as a positive factor over the last six months.

44% said that the use of social media had a positive effect on business. Other factors having a positive effect on business were people taking more short breaks/holidays (38%), investment in facilities (35%), special offers/discounts (33%) and more British people staying in the UK (31%). A fifth of tourism businesses (20%) said that the Lake District achieving World Heritage Site Status has had a positive effect on business.

84% of businesses said they had been adversely affected by the weather (spells of snow and the 'Beast from the East'). Over half (57%) of tourism businesses reported that increased costs had had a detrimental impact on business performance. 48% said people have been spending less.

Traffic and parking problems for visitors are also having a detrimental

effect on trade. 38% reported problems for people getting to Cumbria and once here, and almost a third (32%) say visitors are having problems parking once they have arrived.

Confidence has fallen. 59% of businesses feel 'fairly confident' about the next six months, and 8% 'very confident' – a total of 67% confident to some degree. This compares to 79% in March 2017.

There was a mixed response to the anticipated impacts of Brexit based on current perceptions, with 36% expecting no impact at all. 21% of businesses think Brexit will impact positively on their business (up on 19% six months ago) but 43% of businesses think Brexit will impact negatively on their business (up on 37% six months ago). Areas of most concern are for operating costs (49%), the recruitment of workers from the EU (43%), border controls for visitors (38%) and overseas visitor numbers (33%).

Source: Cumbria Tourism (April 2018) March Tourism Business Performance Survey <https://www.cumbriatourism.org/shop/tourism-business-performance-survey-march-2018/>

VisitBritain/VisitEngland: Latest Research

Overseas Visitors

2016 was the seventh consecutive year of growth for inbound tourism.

Provisional figures for 2017 are an increase of 3% in the volume of trips, and 8% in value, bringing a total of 38.89m trips and generating £24,290m in revenue.

Overseas visits to the UK are forecast to break through the 40 million mark for the first time in 2018, reaching 41.7 million, up 4.4% on 2017 which is expected to see 39.9 million visits. Spending by overseas visitors to the UK is forecast to reach £26.9 billion in 2018, up 6.8% on 2017 which is expected to total £25.1 billion by year end.

Tourism Business Monitor

Easter 2018 was a difficult period for many accommodation sites, with 51% reporting a reduction in visits compared with the Easter period in 2017, and just 23% reporting an increase. Many cited extremely poor weather conditions as the primary reason for this adverse performance.

Aside from the weather conditions, more than one in five accommodation sites also commented that continuing issues surrounding the exchange rate and Brexit were impacting upon the performance of their business.

Business optimism for the remainder of 2018 remains broadly positive, but a reduction in the percentage of sites stat-

ing they are 'very confident' of better performance than in 2017 shows that many are erring on the side of caution after the Easter period.

Like accommodation sites, visitor attractions experienced a difficult Easter period. Whilst 31% of attractions did report an increase in visitors vs. the Easter period in 2017, a further 56% reported a decline.

When thinking about 2018 as a whole, 60% of attractions are optimistic that business performance will be better than in 2017 (slightly higher than the levels seen in January) - compared to just 11% who think that the year's performance will be down on last year.

Visits to Visitor Attractions 2017

This sector has seen increased visitor numbers over the last few years – by 4.7% in 2014, 3.3% in 2015, and 7.2% in 2016 (year on year comparisons).

Growth in visitors to visitor attractions in Cumbria has also been outperforming national results – VisitEngland’s Annual Attractions Survey for 2016 showed an overall growth in visits to attractions of 2% on 2015, with gardens and zoos showing growth of 8%.

For 2017, data was captured from 71 visitor attractions, 60 of whom had provided figures in both 2016 and 2017. These

attractions, with 5.5m visitors between them, saw an increase of 3.4% in 2017 - an extra 182,000 visitors through their doors.

Top 20 Visitor Attractions 2017 (by visitor numbers):

1. Windermere Lake Cruises
2. The Rheged Centre
3. Ullswater Steamers
4. Brockhole – the Lake District Visitor Centre
5. Whinlatter Forest Park & Visitor Centre
6. Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery
7. Grasmere Gingerbread
8. Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway
9. The World of Beatrix Potter
10. Grizedale Forest Park and Visitor Centre
11. Carlisle Cathedral
12. Hill Top, Beatrix Potter’s House
13. Lowther Castle and Gardens
14. Theatre By The Lake in Keswick
15. Wray Castle

16. Lakeland Motor Museum
17. Tree Top Trek, Brockhole
18. Muncaster Castle
19. The Puzzling Place
20. Dove Cottage and the Wordsworth Museum

Source: Cumbria Tourism - Visitor Attractions Monitor

(Please note this only includes visitor attractions who have provided data for 2017, and also gave permission for their figures to be published).

Cumbria Tourist Accommodation Occupancy 2017/8

Occupancy rates for serviced accommodation in Cumbria and the Lake District have been steadily increasing over the last few years. Cumbria was affected by severe flooding events during December 2015, which significantly affected the tourism industry well into 2016. Despite this, 2016 annual average occupancy rates for serviced accommodation were on a par with 2015 overall. 2017 ended marginally up on 2016, and the highest ever recorded.

Unit occupancy rates for self-catering properties in Cumbria have been strong since 2014. 2017 annual average unit occupancy rates were the highest recorded.

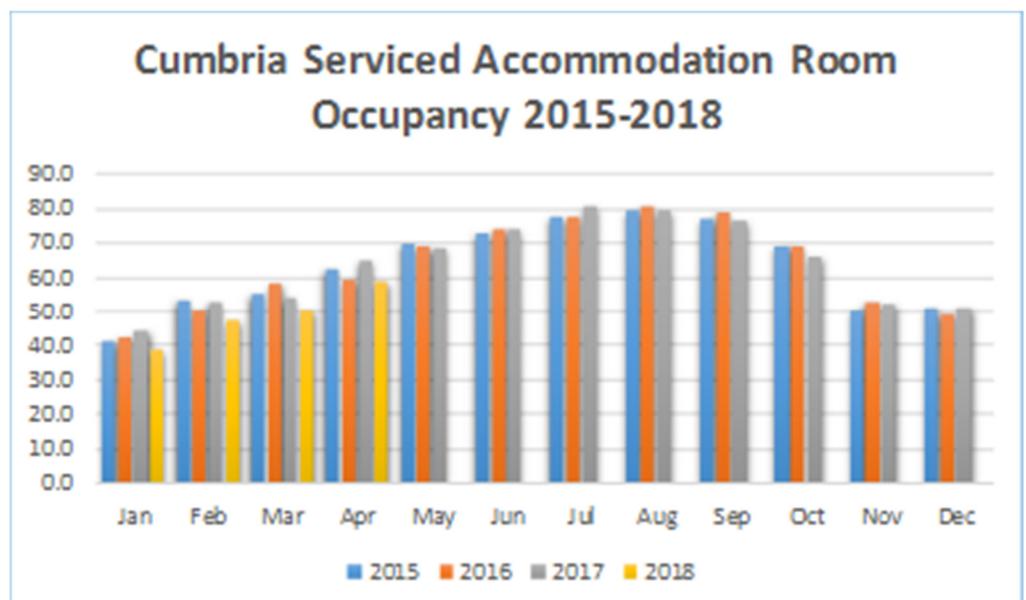
However, the first four months of 2017 show both

room occupancy rates for serviced accommodation, and unit occupancy for self catering accommodation, around ten percentage points down on the first four months of 2017. Bad weather seems largely to blame.

Pitch occupancy rates for touring caravans and campsites can vary depending on the weather. This sector has also performed particularly well since 2014. Pitch occupancy in 2017 was the highest recorded, and around 8% up on 2016.

Pitch occupancy levels for the first four months of the year are on a par with 2017 (but these are provisional results only).

Latest occupancy information available here: <https://www.cumbriatourism.org/what-we-do/research/>



Comment: 2018 and Beyond...

In an article written by George Clode, published by [Travel GBI](#), Graham Donoghue, chief executive of Sykes Holiday Cottages, shared his five predictions for trends that will affect the UK travel sector throughout 2018 and beyond:

1. Importance of four-legged travelers

People's pets are a consideration now more than ever before, and four-legged travelers (and their owners) are an important market for staycations. This could be further reinforced in 2019 if there's no Brexit deal, as it may make travelling in the EU more difficult with pets.

2. Growth in unusual accommodation

Glamping is by no means a new phenomenon, but I expect this trend to continue

throughout 2018 as families and an older demographic cotton on to the experiences available at these more unusual accommodation options, without compromising on comfort.

The supply of quality glamping accommodation is also on the up, as it's becoming a popular lifestyle business for many entrepreneurs and a diversification option for farmers and landowners.

3. Families spending on luxury

The family market will drive demand for luxury UK breaks in 2018, as the weak pound is pricing families out of foreign holidays. Hot tubs and swimming pools are holiday features that deliver reasonably-priced luxury that people can't get at home. In fact, hot tub breaks are the second most

sought-for term on the Sykes Holiday Cottages website, behind pet-friendly properties.

4. Skill and experience-based breaks

Consumers are increasingly craving new experiences, and UK accommodation providers are up against competition from operators offering a whole host of experiences across the globe. This year, staycationers will seek adventure, thanks in part to destinations like Snowdonia upping the ante with new action-packed attractions such as the world's first inland surf lagoon and Europe's first four-man zipline. Travellers will also look to the UK for wellness breaks and to learn a new skill – be it surfing in Cornwall, orienteering in the Scottish High-

lands or stargazing in the Brecon Beacons.

5. Girl power continues

In 2017, 63% of Sykes Holiday Cottage bookings were made by women – up 10% on the previous year. This should make tourism providers think more carefully about how they make their products and messaging more attractive to female bookers.

"In terms of popular locations, I'm expecting the Lake District to bear the fruits of its UNESCO listing in 2018. The region has had a huge PR boost in Britain and abroad, which is already translating into an increase in bookings.

With all of the above considered, there's probably never been a better time for anyone in the business of selling British breaks."

2018 Cumbria Tourism Visitor Survey

Tourism plays a vital role in Cumbria's economy, creating businesses, generating revenue, providing jobs, and sustaining rural communities, while also protecting the natural environment upon which it depends.

As the destination management organisation for Cumbria, Cumbria Tourism takes the lead in delivering information on our visitor markets. Every three years, we undertake a countywide visitor survey. The last one was in 2015, and we are carrying out this research again this year. In simple terms, the research identifies where our visitors come from, who they are with, their visit history, party size and composition, why they come, what they do (and spend) when they are here.

This project is being carried out in partnership with Cumbria's Local Enterprise Partnership, the Lake District National Park Authority, Allerdale Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council, and South Lakeland District Council, all of whom have committed financial resources.

In order to speak to a representative sample of visitors, we will be carrying out 1,400 face-to-face surveys with visitors across the county – at locations designed to pick up all visitor types. Fieldwork will be carried out by qualified researchers, between 1st June and the end of September. This is just to make you aware - so if you see surveys being carried out, you know what its all about!

Any questions about any of the information in this newsletter, please contact Helen Tate, Research Manager at Cumbria Tourism – htate@cumbriatourism.org



Cumbria Tourism
At the heart of our visitor economy

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