

Museums Matter

Tourism

The economic output of the tourism industry in 2013 was £56 billion. It employs 2.8 million people, is the UK's fifth largest industry, and is critical to the economic sustainability of many regions of the UK.¹ Government has recognised this by promoting tourism on a national and international level through the GREAT campaign, which has sought to capitalise on the galvanising effect of the London Olympics and Paralympics, the Diamond Jubilee and the Commonwealth Games.

DOMESTIC TOURISM

112.9 million overnight domestic trips were made in 2013.² The domestic market continues to be the mainstay of the tourism industry, and, as the UK's most popular tourism attractions, museums are critical to its success. When it opened in 1993 it was hoped that Tate St Ives would attract 90,000 visitors per year: it now receives over 240,000.³ 67% of visitors to Penlee House Gallery in Penzance visit from outside Cornwall, with the same proportion visiting Penzance with the specific intention of going to the Gallery.⁴ Up to 60% of visitors to Ironbridge Gorge Museums stay overnight in the area and approximately 50% of Beamish's visitors travel from outside the region. Visits to a museum or gallery form part of city breaks, family holidays and visits to see friends, and are a way to fill free time on a business trip. Museums work with destination management organisations and are part of Local Enterprise Partnerships to be central to a region-wide tourism offer. Heritage Lottery Fund research concludes that heritage-based tourism was worth £26.4bn to the UK economy in 2011.⁵

OVERSEAS TOURISM

Museums are a key strength for the UK's international brand, and for many are the main reason to visit.⁶ Overseas visits to DCMS-sponsored museums have more than doubled since 2001/2, with over 21.75 million overseas visits in 2013/14.⁷ VisitBritain research has found that perceptions of the UK's history, vibrant city life and cultural heritage are deeply valued, especially in China, India, Australia and Italy, and when asked what cultural products they associated with the UK almost half of overseas visitors name museums.⁸ Museums are adapting their offer and improving their marketing to attract overseas tourists – websites, audio guides and apps are produced in

many different languages, café menus have been altered and partnerships formed with tour groups.

Encouraging short-stay visitors to visit other UK regions and long-stay visitors to venture outside of London is a priority for tourism bodies and destination management organisations. As culture rates so highly as a reason for overseas tourists to visit the UK, museums are in a prime position to deliver this. The Wordsworth Trust, which manages Dove Cottage in Grasmere, makes special provision for Japanese visitors drawn to the Lake District because of the popularity of Beatrix Potter in Japan. Overseas visitors accounted for 25% of visitors to Dove Cottage between April and July 2013.

TOURING EXHIBITIONS

UK museums lend high profile objects or touring exhibitions to venues in all of VisitBritain's top 20 markets for projected growth between 2011 and 2020, and in doing so raise the profile and recognition of the museums. National Museum Wales' exhibition *Pastures Green & Dark Satanic Mills: The British Passion for Landscape* toured to four venues in the USA. Accompanying the exhibition was a brochure which connected the industrial and pastoral landscapes of the exhibition with visitor destinations in Wales.

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¹ House of Commons Library Briefing on Tourism 2015, p.3.

² House of Commons Library Briefing on Tourism 2015, p.3 and DCMS Taking Part Survey.

³ <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/44097> (p.92)

⁴ http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3624815/max_impact150.pdf (p. 10)

⁵ <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/new-research-reveals-heritage-tourism-boosts-uk-economy-tough>

⁶ *Culture and Heritage Topic Profile*, VisitBritain, 2010

⁷ Visitors from overseas made more than 21.7m visits to the 17 museums sponsored by the DCMS in 2013/14, up from 9.6m in 2001/2. Overseas visitors also make a significant number of visits to national museums in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to those sponsored by the Ministry of Defence. Figures from DCMS Sponsored Museums and Galleries KPIs.

⁸ *Overseas Visitors to Britain, Understanding Trends, Attitudes and Characteristics*, VisitBritain, 2010
<http://www.hlf.org.uk/values-and-benefits-heritage>, p.13