New research reveals heritage tourism boosts UK economy in tough times

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The new report also suggests that heritage is playing an increasingly important part in the choices of Brits who decide to stay in the UK for their holiday – over a quarter of all UK holiday activities undertaken by UK residents now involve heritage.

HLF published its first report on heritage tourism, Investing in Success, compiled by Oxford Economics, in 2010, based on data from 2007. The report analysed the impact of the heritage-based visitor economy and established that the sector made an even bigger contribution to UK GDP than the advertising, car manufacturing or film industries. Those findings clearly highlighted the importance of heritage tourism and its ability to help the UK economy. Today's analysis, drawing on the latest visitor statistics from 2011, demonstrates the power of heritage in attracting visitors even more clearly.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: "Heritage is a strong driver for both international and domestic visitors and an especially powerful draw for those who choose to stay in the UK for their holiday. We should be thankful that we have such a rich and diverse heritage to offer – from our world-class museums, historic country houses to coastlines and beautiful landscapes."

Loyd Grossman, Chair of the Heritage Alliance speaking on the links between heritage and the tourism business at today's Tourism Alliance AGM, warmly welcomed the report: "I'm delighted that these figures once again clearly demonstrate the links between heritage and tourism. This is incontestable proof that our unique heritage is one of our major national assets and can contribute to our national economic recovery. Heritage means business for Britain."

Minister for Tourism, Hugh Robertson, said: "Britain's world famous heritage attractions are pulling in visitors from both home and abroad, making a significant contribution to the economy. We will do all we can to help both the heritage and tourism sectors continue to grow and compete with other global destinations."

Context

The higher figure of £26.4bn is explained by a number of factors:

- An overall increase in visits: between 2007 and 2011 there was a rise of 13% in both international visits to the UK for holidays and the number of overnight holiday stays in the UK made by UK residents. Domestic day trips (over the longer period 2005-11) rose by 47%
- People were spending more on these trips: International visitors on holiday were spending 28% more per visit in 2011 than in 2007, and UK residents on holiday were spending 7% more
- Heritage has become more important in people's holiday choices. The most recent survey data provides a more accurate picture of what activities people undertake whilst on holiday. For UK residents on holiday in the UK, 28% of the total activities they undertook were to a heritage site or attraction. Previous survey work put this question in a slightly different way, by asking what activities people planned to undertake, so the latest research gives us a better indication of the importance of heritage

- Inflation - the GDP figures are in nominal terms. Over the same period consumer price inflation was about 14%

Both studies used the most current data available (see methodology footnotes below). The figures published in 2010 relate to 2007 and, for domestic day trips, 2005. The study published today is based on the latest visitor and expenditure data for 2011.

Heritage Lottery Funded projects

The HLF has been helping to make a lasting difference for heritage and people in the UK since 1994 and has supported 35,000 projects with an investment of £5.5bn across the UK. Many of these have involved enhancing and developing heritage tourism attractions and two examples of HLF-funded heritage projects which illustrate the positive trends are:

Jackfield Tile Museum (Shropshire) – based in the village of Jackfield, this museum is one of the oldest known ceramic production centres in Shropshire.

Funding from HLF was used to upgrade the museum site, including the construction of the new FUSION building, the renovation of existing historic factory buildings to create more gallery space and the addition of a café. The improvements have led to a significant increase in visitors and income for the museum, with visits up 14% since the opening of the redeveloped site.

The redevelopment project has also led to a 64% increase in the number of people working at the site. Income has risen by 32% as a result of both the rent from new creative tenancies and the increase in visitor numbers.

Croome Park (Worcestershire) – a mid 18th-century Neo-Palladian mansion which is surrounded by extensive landscaped parkland near Pershore in south Worcestershire. In April 1996, the National Trust, with funding from HLF, began an extensive decade-long project to restore the landscape to its original design.

The restoration project has been a resounding success for Croome Park. The number of visitors has increased by 342% compared with 2006, resulting in a growth in income of 183%. Furthermore, the number of staff employed at the park has increased by 500% and purchases have risen by 238%.

Notes to editors

In 2010, HLF published research undertaken by economic consultancy Oxford Economics on the heritage-based UK tourism sector in partnership with VisitBritain. The analysis looked at the extent to which tourism visits and expenditure are motivated by heritage. From this analysis, the researchers were able to estimate the contribution that heritage tourism makes to the UK’s economic output, and the employment impact of heritage tourism.

The research published today uses the same methodology as the first study, but updates it in two ways:

- The incorporation of the most recently available tourism statistics, for both in-bound international tourism and domestic tourism, available from Office for National Statistic sources
- The incorporation of the most recent survey data on the activities undertaken on tourism visits, which is used to understand the extent to which visits are motivated by heritage

The report, like the 2010 report, provides two distinct sets of estimates in order to take into account: available on natural heritage visits including coastlines:

- Excluding natural heritage – ie inclusive of heritage as defined above except for public parks, gardens, national parks, AONBs, nature reserves and country parks, coastal visits and other undesignated countryside
- Including natural heritage – inclusive of all heritage including coastal visits and other undesignated countryside

The Heritage Alliance is the biggest alliance of heritage interests in the UK and was set up to promote the central role of the independent movement in the heritage sector. It represents some 90 members – major national and regional independent organisations, from larger bodies such as the National Trust, to many smaller organisations such as the Association of Building Preservation Trusts – which are in turn supported by over five million members, thousands of local groups and over 450,000 volunteers.

The Tourism Alliance is the voice of the tourism industry, comprising 50 tourism industry organisations that together represent some 200,000 businesses of all sizes throughout the UK. The purpose of the Tourism Alliance is to identify and develop policies and strategies to raise standards and promote quality within the industry and work with and lobby government on all key issues relevant to the growth and development of tourism, to maximise its contribution to the economy.

Tourism is the sixth largest industry in Britain and Britain is the seventh most popular destination in the world. It generates £134bn pa for the UK economy (9% of GDP - 2012), directly supports over 2.7m jobs (9.1% of the total workforce) and is the UK's sixth largest export earner.

Further information

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Economic impact of UK heritage tourism economy