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Foreign tourist numbers 'booming'

Scotland has received a large rise in the number of foreign visitors, according to official figures.

More than 2m overseas tourists visited the country in the first nine months of 2006 - an increase of 14% on the same period in 2005.



VisitsScotland said the country's attractions are behind the rise

The figures compare favourably with the rest of the UK where the increase was just 8%.

Tourism Minister Patricia Ferguson said it showed that overseas tourism to Scotland was booming.

A total of 2,249,000 visitors came to Scotland from abroad in between January and the end of September in 2006, compared to 1,981,000 for the same period in 2005.

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Rise in Scottish tourist numbers

The number of visitors to Scotland rose by 8% in the first nine months of last year as staycations grew in popularity, according to new figures.



The overall number of international visitors to Scotland fell over the first three quarters of 2011

The Great Britain Tourism Survey, compiled by national tourist boards, suggested a strong domestic market.

However, a separate **Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey** showed a 4% fall in the number of international visitors in the first three quarters.

This was despite an 18% rise in tourist numbers from North America.

Just over 12 million people visited Scotland between January and September.

Spending by visitors from Britain rose by 21% year-on-year to about £2.3bn, while expenditure by overseas tourists fell by 6% to just over £1.1bn.

Tourism Minister Fergus Ewing described the overall figures as "encouraging".

Mr Ewing said: "The staycation market is continuing to boost visitor numbers and average spend also rising. We will continue to invest in this market and the recently launched Year of Creative Scotland will help generate even more opportunities to do so.

"An 18% increase in visitors from North America is extremely welcome and evidence that this market is continuing to pick up after a tough time.

"This is offset by an overall fall of 4% in the number of international visitors to Scotland but we have to remember that tough times in the eurozone will have an impact."

'Opportunities' ahead

Mr Ewing added the Scottish government would work with tourism body VisitScotland to ensure the industry was "in the best possible shape" to make the most of opportunities in the next three years, including the Ryder Cup and the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

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Scottish wildlife tourism call to businesses



RSPB SCOTLAND

Accommodation providers are being urged to provide guests with more information about local wildlife, nature reserves and trails

Businesses have been urged to tap into Scotland's wildlife tourism market after figures indicated the country attracted more than a million wildlife trips a year.

The call came in a new guide published by Tourism Intelligence Scotland (TIS).

Wildlife tourism is already estimated to generate £276m a year for the Scottish economy.

Ministers said the figure should rise further because of growing interest in sustainability and responsible tourism.

The new guide offers advice on how businesses can help wildlife enthusiasts make the most of their trips in Scotland.

It encourages accommodation providers to offer guests access to maps, keep spare binoculars and waterproofs for guests to use, and place information about local wildlife, nature reserves and trails on their websites.

The Wildlife Tourism in Scotland guide has been produced in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Wild Scotland.

'Abundant wildlife'

Launching the guide, Tourism Minister Fergus Ewing said: "Scotland has an abundant range of rich and unique wildlife and habitats - from ospreys to otters, and forests to farmland.

"We also have some of the most fantastic, world-class settings in which to enjoy wildlife.

"Over a million wildlife trips a year are already taken to or within Scotland, where people visit specifically to view our rich wildlife."

He added: "In reality, however, the scope of wildlife tourism is much larger, with some 58% of all visitors to Scotland citing our scenery and landscapes as their top reason for choosing us as a holiday destination."

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