

VisitBritain CEO Patricia Yates' speech to international buyers and media at VisitBritain's Showcase Britain event – held on 25 January at the Old Royal Naval College – Greenwich, London:

It is my pleasure to welcome you all here today to ‘Showcase Britain’ – our flagship international trade event where we have the opportunity to show you the very best of Britain.

- I am delighted to see that so many of you made the journey from all corners of the world to join us, thank you. It’s wonderful to see lots of familiar faces and new ones too – a very warm welcome to you all!
- And what a week its shaping up to be - our in-country teams have worked so hard in partnership with industry and destinations across England, Scotland and Wales on tailored itineraries - to show you that Britain is packed full of fresh and exciting experiences to come and enjoy right now.

So, how is inbound tourism looking? Let’s take a look at the numbers.

- We’re forecasting an increase in visits and spend overall compared to 2023 - although with varying rates of recovery and growth across our markets.
- Spending of £34.1 billion is forecast - up 7% on spending predicted in 2023 and up 20% on 2019 - although 96% when adjusted for inflation.
- Looking at visits - 39.5 million are forecast - up 5% on 2023 however still 3% shy of 2019 levels.
- Our forecasts show that both visits and spending will recover to 2019 levels by early 2025.

The US continues to lead tourism’s recovery with record-breaking spend by American visitors:

- The US market is forecast to be worth £6.3 billion this year - contributing almost £1 in every £5 of all inbound spending.
- Our European markets are also extremely important– making up 67% of volume and 44% of value in 2022. The pace of recovery from Europe overall slowed as 2023 progressed with spending just below 2019.
- China has continued to build back and is forecast to recover to a value of £1.5 billion, to be our fourth most valuable market.

So, what are we doing to harness the growth we’re seeing and to boost recovery?

Our priority is to rebuild value – positioning Britain as an exciting and dynamic destination to visit now – with three main strands to our work:

Our international campaigns invite visitors to ‘See Things Differently’ shining a spotlight on all the amazing destinations and experiences on offer here, alongside a warm British welcome.

- Our new GREAT campaign this year – ‘Starring GREAT Britain’- will use the power of Film and TV to put Britain centre-stage.
- Set-Jetting is a booming trend - more than half of travellers Expedia recently surveyed said films and TV were inspiring their travel plans.

- By shining the spotlight on film- and-TV inspired experiences you can only have in Britain, we're encouraging visitors to come now and discover more, putting themselves in the picture.
- Films and TV drives urgency to visit. Castle Howard in North Yorkshire reported that visitors aged 18-24 to its website increased by 3400 per cent after *Bridgerton* was released.
- We're also working with the British Film Commission to boost screen tourism throughout our nations and regions. Our film and tv industry attracts major international productions with its world-class production offer, unique locations and talented crew base - contributing billions to our economy.

Working with commercial partners we're converting that inspiration and excitement created by our campaigns into bookings, from British Airways in the US to Wego in the Gulf:

- These partnerships have a big impact – our campaign with Wego in the GCC saw a 25% increase in bookings to Britain.
- And we are always looking for new ways to partner with industry to drive growth.
- Last year, we ran a Pilot co-op campaign with industry in the US - which was so successful we're launching a second phase in the coming weeks. The pilot saw a boost to the UK economy from bookings of about £4 million.

Our work with you, the international travel trade, is crucial to selling Britain and broadening itineraries, encouraging visitors to discover more of our nations and regions, and to come now.

- Events such as Showcase, and our overseas trade missions build awareness of our outstanding tourism products and experiences.
- And gives us the chance to listen and hear from industry – about how we can best support you to sell Britain.
- My team has been thrilled to hear about the new products you added to your itineraries following Showcase last year and after seeing the plans for your trips later this week, I am sure this year will be even more fruitful.
- I also encourage you to use the tools we've developed to support you sell Britain.
- Our latest trade programme is on our website so do take a look at the opportunities.
- Our revamped Trade website lists our upcoming trade events, sample itineraries, guidance on travelling to & around Britain and our latest research and insights.
- Our VisitBritain online shop offers special trade discounts on attractions, experience and transport and the opportunity to join our affiliate scheme to earn commission on referrals.
- Our VB Assets library – where you can download destination images.

I hope you all have the most wonderful time exploring Britain and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the course of the day.

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