

Quarterly Inbound Update Q4 2019

22nd May 2020

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About this data

This report is based on the latest International Passenger Survey (IPS) data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the morning of 22nd May 2020. [Visit the Inbound research & insights section of the VisitBritain website](#) that, once updated, will contain much more detail including on visits to UK regions.

As part of this data release, the ONS has revised inbound (and outbound) tourism data from 2009 to 2019. Data has been significantly revised for some countries of residence and to some degree for all countries; the total volume/value of tourism has also been revised upwards. More information is available from the ONS website or by contacting the VisitBritain Research team.

The data is based on interviews with a sample of departing visitors. The number interviewed varies but is typically around 2,500-3,000 per month. Please note that sample sizes at the quarterly level for some markets can be low and results should be treated with caution, especially for spending.

Please also note:

- All data is sourced from the International Passenger Survey by the Office for National Statistics.
- All figures quoted are not “seasonally adjusted”.
- Numbers in some tables / charts may not sum due to rounding.
- All percentage changes in spend are nominal.

Refer to the [ONS website](#) for more on IPS methodology and UK outbound travel.

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Inbound market statistics

Q4 2019
(October – December)



UK Highlights

Q4 2019 (October – December)

Visits, spend and nights

	Q4 2019	% change vs. Q4 2018
All visits	10.3 million	+6%
Spend	£7.6 billion	+26%
Nights	67.0 million	+6%

There was a record of **10.3 million visits** to the UK in Q4 2019, up 6% from Q4 2018 and the first Q4 where we have seen over 10 million visits.

Those inbound visitors **spent £7.6 billion** in the UK during Q4 2019, the highest Q4 on record, up 26% year-on-year (YoY).

In total **67.0 million nights** were spent in the UK by inbound visitors during Q4 2019, up 6% YoY.

UK Highlights

Q4 2019 (July – September)

By journey purpose

Journey purpose	Visits (million)	% change vs. Q4 2019	Spend (£ billion)	% change vs. Q4 2018
Holiday	4.1	+10%	£3.3	+28%
VFR	3.3	+6%	£1.7	+5%
Business	2.2	+1%	£1.6	+31%
Miscellaneous	0.7	+2%	£1.0	+69%

Holiday visits and spend in Q4 2019 were both up on Q4 2018. Visits were up 10% to 4.1 million and spend rose 28% to £3.3 billion, a new Q4 record for both inbound holiday visits and holiday spend.

Journeys to **visit friends or relatives (VFR)** grew by 6% to a record 3.3 million. Inbound VFR spend increased by 5% to £1.7 billion, setting another record for Q4 VFR spend.

Business visits rose 1% YoY to 2.2 million in Q4 2019. Those business visitors spent £1.6 billion, 31% up on the relatively low level in Q4 2018.

There were 2% more visits for **miscellaneous purposes** (including short-term study) in Q4 2019 than in Q3 2018, reaching 697,000 visits, with spend increasing to £989 million, up on a relatively low Q4 2018.

UK selected market highlights (1/2)

Inbound visits to the UK (in thousands)

Country of residence	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	Growth	New record
Australia	199	234	17%	yes
Belgium	248	291	17%	no
Brazil**	70	64	-7%	no
Canada	182	188	3%	no
China	190	170	-11%	no
Denmark	170	201	18%	yes
France	893	921	3%	no
Germany	782	814	4%	yes
GCC*	250	302	21%	yes
Hong Kong	84	91	9%	no
India	143	117	-18%	no
Irish Republic	731	765	5%	yes
Italy	571	530	-7%	no
Japan	102	101	-1%	no
Netherlands	530	528	0%	no
New Zealand**	49	37	-23%	no
Norway	206	197	-5%	no
Poland	357	435	22%	no
Romania	266	227	-15%	no
Russia**	38	48	26%	no
Spain	670	615	-8%	no
Sweden	221	203	-8%	no
Switzerland	232	280	21%	yes
USA	777	1,003	29%	yes

*GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Sample sizes for Brazil, New Zealand and Russia are below 100 (but above 50); please treat the quarterly data with caution

UK selected market highlights (2/2)

Inbound spending in the UK (in million pounds)

Country of residence	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	Growth	New record
Australia	£162	£285	76%	yes
Belgium	£100	£106	6%	no
Brazil**	£42	£41	-1%	no
Canada	£155	£131	-16%	no
China	£347	£461	+33%	yes
Denmark	£95	£102	7%	no
France	£309	£430	36%	yes
Germany	£392	£385	-2%	no
GCC*	£468	£771	+65%	yes
Hong Kong	£113	£111	-2%	no
India	£185	£117	-37%	no
Irish Republic	£226	£326	44%	no
Italy	£233	£249	7%	yes
Japan	£100	£92	-8%	no
Netherlands	£192	£212	10%	no
New Zealand**	£55	£40	-28%	no
Norway	£112	£141	26%	no
Poland	£102	£161	57%	yes
Romania	£128	£107	-16%	no
Russia**	£26	£51	99%	no
Spain	£300	£246	-18%	no
Sweden	£94	£117	24%	no
Switzerland	£119	£173	46%	yes
USA	£658	£910	38%	no

*GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Sample sizes for Brazil, New Zealand and Russia are below 100 (but above 50); please treat the quarterly data with caution

Inbound market statistics

2019
(full year)



UK Highlights

Full year, 2019

Visits, spend and nights

	2019	% change vs. 2018
All visits (million)	40.9m	+1%
Spend (£ billion)	£28.4bn	+7%
Nights (million)	289.6m	-1%

There were **40.9 million visits** to the UK in 2019, 1% up on visits in 2018, but 1% fewer than in the record-holder 2017.

Those inbound visitors **spent £28.4 billion** in 2019, up 7% on inbound spending in 2018, setting a new record for inbound spending.

In total, they spent **289.6 million nights** in the UK in 2019, 1% down on the number of nights spent in 2018.

UK Highlights

Full year, 2019

By journey purpose

Journey purpose	Visits (million)	% change vs. 2018	Spend (£ billion)	% change vs. 2018
Holiday	16.9	+3%	£13.3	+9%
VFR	12.4	+1%	£6.4	+3%
Business	8.7	-1%	£5.8	+14%
Miscellaneous	2.9	+1%	£2.8	-2%

Holiday visits rose 3% in 2019, to a record 16.9 million. Inbound holiday visitors spent 9% more in 2019 than in 2018, setting a new record with £13.3 billion spent.

Visits to friends and relatives (VFR) in 2019 reached a record 12.4 million visits, up 1% on 2018. Spending increased 3% in 2019, with £6.4 billion spent, the second best spending levels for VFR within any year.

Business visits declined slightly in 2019, with 8.7 million visits, just 1% short of visits in 2018. However, those business visitors spent 14% more in 2019 than in 2018, up to £5.8 billion.

Visits for **miscellaneous** purposes (including study) increased by 1% YoY to 2.9 million such visits in 2019. Those visitors spent £2.8 billion in 2019, down 2% compared to 2018.

UK Selected Market Highlights – (1/3)

Full year, 2019

Visits (000s)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
Argentina	160	131	-18%	no
Australia	1,039	1,063	2%	no
Austria	327	342	5%	yes
Bahrain*	36	42	16%	yes
Belgium	1,097	1,135	3%	no
Brazil	288	291	1%	no
Bulgaria	233	235	1%	no
Canada	852	874	3%	no
Chile*	62	61	-1%	no
China	860	883	3%	yes
Czech Republic	360	414	15%	yes
Denmark	614	691	13%	no
Egypt*	56	52	-7%	no
Finland	188	215	14%	no
France	3,592	3,561	-1%	no
Germany	3,170	3,233	2%	no
Greece	223	250	12%	no
Hong Kong	403	409	2%	yes
Hungary	372	334	-10%	no
Iceland	116	95	-18%	no

Spend (£m)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
Argentina	£159	£74	-53%	no
Australia	£1,090	£1,174	8%	no
Austria	£149	£172	15%	no
Bahrain*	£110	£76	-31%	no
Belgium	£389	£359	-8%	no
Brazil	£252	£250	-1%	no
Bulgaria	£103	£170	65%	yes
Canada	£681	£734	8%	yes
Chile*	£51	£40	-22%	no
China	£1,501	£1,710	14%	no
Czech Republic	£106	£165	55%	yes
Denmark	£321	£329	3%	no
Egypt*	£57	£80	41%	no
Finland	£102	£122	19%	no
France	£1,347	£1,398	4%	no
Germany	£1,483	£1,567	6%	yes
Greece	£131	£170	30%	no
Hong Kong	£486	£560	15%	yes
Hungary	£118	£145	22%	yes
Iceland	£82	£52	-37%	no

*Sample sizes for those markets are below 100 (but above 45); please treat the quarterly data with caution

UK Selected Market Highlights – (2/3)

Full year, 2019

Visits (000s)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
India	680	692	2%	no
Indonesia*	42	54	29%	no
Irish Republic	2,983	2,851	-4%	no
Israel	264	265	0%	yes
Italy	2,080	2,197	6%	no
Japan	429	389	-9%	no
Kenya*	41	36	-13%	no
Kuwait	167	181	8%	yes
Lithuania	322	236	-27%	no
Luxembourg*	78	146	87%	yes
Malaysia	239	210	-12%	no
Malta	111	190	71%	yes
Mexico	164	166	1%	no
Netherlands	1,978	1,987	0%	no
New Zealand	232	188	-19%	no
Nigeria	203	208	3%	no
Norway	648	647	0%	no
Oman*	37	40	8%	no
Pakistan	95	90	-6%	no
Philippines*	50	50	0%	no

Spend (£m)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
India	£647	£753	16%	yes
Indonesia*	£50	£94	88%	yes
Irish Republic	£965	£958	-1%	no
Israel	£218	£243	12%	no
Italy	£902	£1,109	23%	no
Japan	£497	£369	-26%	no
Kenya*	£47	£44	-6%	no
Kuwait	£443	£406	-8%	no
Lithuania	£101	£111	10%	yes
Luxembourg*	£47	£84	81%	yes
Malaysia	£243	£238	-2%	no
Malta	£56	£130	131%	yes
Mexico	£88	£122	39%	no
Netherlands	£722	£796	10%	yes
New Zealand	£276	£171	-38%	no
Nigeria	£296	£332	12%	no
Norway	£375	£437	16%	no
Oman*	£54	£79	46%	no
Pakistan	£103	£115	11%	no
Philippines*	£50	£46	-9%	no

*Sample sizes for those markets are below 100 (50 or over); please treat the quarterly data with caution

UK Selected Market Highlights – (3/3)

Full year, 2019

Visits (000s)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
Poland	1,555	1,651	6%	no
Portugal	453	613	35%	yes
Qatar	149	175	18%	yes
Romania	897	902	1%	yes
Russia	229	199	-13%	no
Saudi Arabia	196	221	12%	no
Singapore	259	233	-10%	no
Slovakia*	120	113	-6%	no
South Africa	265	217	-18%	no
South Cyprus*	102	124	22%	no
South Korea	305	301	-1%	no
Spain	2,451	2,319	-5%	no
Sweden	745	789	6%	no
Switzerland	825	926	12%	no
Taiwan*	142	127	-10%	no
Thailand*	189	184	-2%	no
Turkey	318	334	5%	yes
UAE	511	553	8%	yes
USA	4,571	4,499	-2%	no

Spend (£m)	2018	2019	Growth	Record
Poland	£391	£498	27%	no
Portugal	£173	£292	68%	yes
Qatar	£318	£548	72%	yes
Romania	£436	£439	1%	yes
Russia	£197	£182	-8%	no
Saudi Arabia	£495	£627	27%	no
Singapore	£331	£299	-10%	no
Slovakia*	£33	£42	28%	no
South Africa	£310	£222	-28%	no
South Cyprus*	£65	£103	60%	no
South Korea	£271	£285	5%	no
Spain	£1,075	£977	-9%	no
Sweden	£399	£400	0%	no
Switzerland	£461	£570	23%	no
Taiwan*	£156	£188	20%	yes
Thailand*	£316	£279	-12%	no
Turkey	£270	£264	-2%	no
UAE	£911	£869	-5%	no
USA	£4,025	£4,184	4%	no

*Sample sizes for those markets are below 100 (but over 60); please treat the quarterly data with caution

UK Selected Market Highlights – Summary (1/2)

Full year, 2019

USA posted mixed results in 2019, with visits down 2% YoY to 4.5 million visits in 2019, but spend up 4% to £4.2 billion in 2019.

China has again posted record breaking results in volume with 883,000 visits from China to the UK in 2019, up 3% on 2018. Those visitors spent £1.7 billion in that year in the UK, up 14% on spending in 2018, almost catching up with the 2017 record-holder.

Australia showed some growth in both visits and spend in 2019. There were 1.1 million visits, up 2% YoY, and £1.2 billion spent in the UK in 2019, up 8% on 2018.

India, too, saw growth in 2019. Overall, there were 692,000 visits from India to the UK, up 2% on 2018. Those visitors spent a record £753 million, up 16% on 2018.

GCC combined markets saw visits up 10% YoY to a record 1.2 million in 2019, and spend grow 12% YoY to £2.6 billion that year (not enough to catch up with the 2017 record though).

- **UAE** also reached a new visit record in 2019 with 553,000 visits, up 8% on 2018. However, those visitors spent 5% less than in 2018, with £869 million in 2019.
- **Saudi Arabia**, too, posted strong growth: there were 12% more visits in 2019 than in 2018, with 221,000 visits, and spend increased 27% YoY to £627 million in 2019.

UK Selected Market Highlights – Summary (2/2)

Full year, 2019

France saw mixed results in 2019. There were 1% fewer visits from this market to the UK in 2019 compared to 2018, with 3.6 million visits. However, visitors from France spent £1.4 billion in the UK in 2019, 4% more than in 2018.

Germany, however, saw growth in both visits and spend. There were 3.2 million visits in 2019, up 2% on 2018. Spending was up 6% on 2018, to a record £1.6 billion in 2019.

Spain saw YoY declines in both visits and spend in 2019, with visits down 5% to 2.3 million in 2019 and spend down 9% to £977 million.

Italy saw good results in 2019. Visits to the UK increased 6% YoY with 2.2 million visits to the UK in 2019, and those visitors from Italy spent £1.1 billion in 2019, 23% more than in 2018. However, there were no new records set.

Netherlands saw some mixed results. Visits were on par with 2018 with 2.0 million visits in 2019, but spend rose 10% YoY to £796 million spent in 2019 by Dutch visitors in the UK, setting a new record.