

London 2012 to Boost UK Foreign Guests by 330,000



The UK will only welcome an additional 330,000 international visitors as a direct result of hosting the London 2012 Olympics, reveals research at WTM Vision Conference London.

Euromonitor International Head of Travel and Tourism Research Caroline Bremner told senior travel industry delegates, at the event organised by Reed Travel Exhibition's World Travel Market, the UK will welcome 29.4m international visitors this year, a 2% increase on 2011, or 588,000.

The number of international visitors coming for London 2012 represents less than 1% of the total UK inbound market.

Bremner told WTM Vision Conference - London delegates that domestic visitors were crucial to the success of the games, saying that around 70% of the eight million tickets sold had gone to British people.

Other speakers at the event backed Euromonitor International's findings about the low number of international visitors. EasyJet UK Managing Director Paul Simmons said that the airline had seen "no significant impact on bookings" because of the Olympics and suggested that "BA would probably say the same".

Furthermore, London hotels appear to be missing out, according to the world's biggest online travel business. Expedia Managing Director UK Andy Washington said that worldwide bookings for flights into Manchester Airport during the three weeks of the Olympics are 40% ahead of the same period last year.

International bookings into Scottish airports are 31% higher.

"I can't say for sure that these people are staying in the regions and travelling into London to see the Games," he said, "but I can't think of any other reason why the growth should be so big."

Washington admitted that London hotel prices during the games had been high thus far, but average daily rates were likely to come down as more rooms are released for tourists.

Hoseasons Group Managing Director Geoff Cowley said that his business was not able to comment because it does not have any London based product. But he said that Hoseasons has participated in the government-backed 20.12% promotion because it wanted to be part of the legacy that domestic tourism would benefit from once the Games concluded.

TUI UK Managing Director David Burling said that "the inbound and outbound industries need to come together so that the authorities make sure the airports work."

Reed Travel Exhibitions Chairman World Travel Market Fiona Jeffery said: "With less than 100 days to go, the Olympics were like to be discussed at WTM Vision Conference - London Vision."

Euromonitor International's findings suggest that while the number of international visitors may appear modest, the real benefit of London2012 could be the long-term boost to domestic tourism."

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World Travel Market, the leading global event for the travel industry, is the must-attend four-day business-to-business exhibition for the worldwide travel and tourism industry.

Almost 48,000 senior travel industry professionals, government ministers and international press, embark on ExCeL - London every November to network, negotiate and discover the latest industry opinion and trends at WTM.

WTM, now in its 33rd year, is the event where the travel industry conducts and concludes its deals.

WTM 2011 will generate £1,653 million of travel industry contracts, revealed independent research by Fusion Communications.

WTM is owned by the world's leading events organiser Reed Exhibitions (RE), which organises a portfolio of other travel industry events including Arabian Travel Market and International Luxury Travel Market.

In 2010, RE held more than 460 events in 36 countries bringing together more than seven million people from around the world generating billions of dollars in business.

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