

SCOTLAND: TOURISM ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE OLYMPICS



The Olympic Games adversely affected the number of tourists visiting Scotland last summer. The "Olympic effect" meant that many holiday makers decided to stay in London, hence making Scotland lose in the total number of visitors.

The latest official figures released indicated that **travelers spent a total of 114, 000 fewer nights in the country** between the months of July-September. This was a drop of 12% compared to the same period in 2011. The report also showed that visitors spent L53 million less compared to the previous year.

These figures compared to other parts of the UK were the worst. According to the analysis that was done, the main reasons of these results were the Olympic Games, a sluggish economy and the bad weather patterns.

The National Tourism Agency of Scotland said that they were disappointed by the results, however, believed that the overall picture was good. Mike Cantlay, the chair of VisitScotland, said that the main areas hit were outdoor attractions and other outdoor activities. However, he reiterated that the first part of the year was better despite the gloomy economic conditions. The lack of success of the summer generally dampened the tourism industry spirit which had adequately prepared.

The National Statics office released data that can be seen in positive light as well. This includes a 12% increase in spending by overseas travelers compared with the year 2011. **There was also a substantial increase in the number of foreign visitors.** But there were dismal indicators for the long-term Scottish tourism industry. London experienced L370m increase in foreign spending compared to the previous year especially through the buying of Olympic Games tickets and also Paralympics tickets. Scotland had a decrease of L53m, while England had L490m increase, and Wales was L1m up.

There was also a drastic drop in the number of visitors spending their nights in Scotland north border by 12%. While London only realized a 5% drop, on the contrary there was a 9% increase in Wales. Professor John Lenon, an authority in tourism industry, said that that although London is the gateway of UK the film industry set in Scotland like the animation Brave and James Bond's Skyfall will most likely make the visitors return to Scotland in huge numbers.

There are several projects that have been initiated to revamp the sector as well as the economy. Scotland's two national parks are to receive a total of L2.9m for projects starting the year celebrating the great outdoors. This coincides with the Year of Natural Scotland scheme organized by VisitScotland. It is with these in place that Scotland is likely to come out of the woods much faster.

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