

Figures confirm how tourism boomed in Wales – but warning over knee-jerk reaction to hotspot ‘overtourism’

Bumper summer figures have been reported for the tourism sector in Wales as staycations boomed.

The latest Wales Accommodation Occupancy Survey statistics are out – with the numbers for June, July and August.

It will come as no surprise that figures in all sectors were up.

Hotel room occupancy was 82% for the three months, compared to 78% before the pandemic in 2019. Average revenue per available room for August was £77 – up from £59 in 2019.

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B&B and guesthouse occupancy was 71% over the three months – up from 55% two years ago, although the sample size was small in this category.

In self catering there was occupancy of 86% (77% in 2019). There were marginal increases in static home levels and a major rise in touring caravan and camping occupancy figures, 69% last August (57% in 2019).

The figures were welcomed but Welsh Government were warned not to make “knee-jerk” decisions on “overtourism” – like a tourism tax – based on a single year, especially as overseas travel was impacted by restrictions.

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Jim Jones, chief executive of North Wales Tourism, said: “The figures published by the Welsh Government confirm something we knew already.

“There was a massive staycation boom last year which came about because of a number of factors. Foreign travel was for the most part incredibly difficult and at times impossible so North Wales was an obvious alternative for those who would otherwise have travelled abroad.

“As a result, there was a surge of extra visitors on top of the millions who regularly see North Wales as a must-visit destination.



Jim Jones, chief executive of North Wales Tourism, above Llandudno

“Although it came as welcome relief for the tourism and hospitality industry, which was among the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, it also came with a host of difficult challenges.

“Some of the traditional tourist hotspots were at times overwhelmed by the sheer volume of people.

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“Another issue was that the sector was also suffering a chronic shortage of staff so it was frustratingly cruel irony for many operators that they were not able to open fully to cater for the huge demand. After the nightmare of the past 18 months, we’re all hoping that life can return to something approaching normality.

“I’m optimistic we’ll see an increase in international visitors in 2022.”

Wales Tourism Alliance Chairwoman Suzy Davies said: “Glad to see that Wales has had its fair share of the summer staycation boom, especially on the back of very difficult periods when Covid restrictions meant livelihoods dependent on tourism were under genuine threat.



Wales Tourism Alliance Chairwoman Suzy Davies

“However, ‘busy today’ is not the same as ‘sustainable and balanced’. Now is the time to avoid knee-jerk reactions to overtourism in hot spots and concentrate on action to address undertourism.

“As well as relieving pressure in some of our best-loved destinations, now is our chance to share our less well-known treasures.

“While many will revert to holidaying abroad, others will want to explore Wales more – including those of us who live here and are learning that our own backyard is rather special.”

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