

Parkdean Resorts prepared for strong year of UK staycations amid cost-of-living challenges

The leader of holiday park operator Parkdean Resorts expects demand for UK staycations to remain strong next year as families seek value in the face of cost-of-living challenges.

Newcastle-based Parkdean Resorts owns and operates 66 award-winning holiday parks around the UK, including sites in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Druridge Bay, Ashington, Crimdon Dene near Hartlepool, and Whitley Bay. CEO Steve Richards said the firm is ending the year on a high following record investment, busy parks and strong customer feedback scores, with many parks at full capacity from Easter through to the October half term.

And with the UK gripped by economic uncertainty, Mr Richards expects bookings to hold firm in 2023, saying consumers will prioritise trusted operators who can deliver value for money experiences. He said: "The sector as a whole is facing huge challenges at the moment, in terms of recruitment and inflation.

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"Given the current economic climate, we expect consumers to begin planning holidays for the new year sooner than ever before, prioritising 'value for money' and cost-effective deals to make their money go further without compromising on quality. We expect the UK will likely remain a popular holiday choice and we're therefore hopeful the demand for staycations will remain high into the new year."

His comments come as the firm spent £140m in 2022 – its largest annual investment – to improve the guest experience at its parks with new accommodation, new and upgraded activities and facilities, and the installation of park-wide wi-fi. It led to the business winning gold awards at the British Travel Awards.

Despite the success Mr Richards, who is also chairman of UKHospitality, has warned the business is not immune to the challenges faced by the wider sector, with inflationary pressures proving difficult to navigate for businesses with high energy, gas and electric operational usage.



Steve Richards of Parkdean Resorts
(Image: John Cleary Photography)

He said recruitment is an ongoing issue and employing young people in the sector is also proving to be a challenge for the hospitality industry. To encourage more people to apply for jobs, Parkdean Resorts recently lent its support to Hospitality Rising, a new campaign aimed at tackling the industry's staffing crisis.

He said: "We've had another fantastic year and we're ending the season on a real high, with outstanding customer feedback scores and high demand at our parks. Our people work incredibly hard and these results are testament to their efforts. We're committed to providing great value for money for our guests, and we're thrilled that holidaymakers are enjoying all that our parks have to offer.

"By investing in the customer experience, our guests can continue to make lasting memories with their families next year and beyond, and we're dedicated to becoming a digitised business to streamline the experience for our customers and to make everything as simple as possible for them. Another focus for us in 2023 is to drive recruitment – we hire thousands of people every year, and we want to encourage those who may not have considered a career in hospitality to give it a go, because the prospects are outstanding."

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