

Two Edinburgh attractions head the visitor list

The Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions (ASVA) has announced that visits to its member sites rose slightly in 2018, the fifth year running that an increase in numbers has been recorded.

ASVA, which represents the interests of the key visitor attractions sector in Scotland, has over 480 members comprising some of Scotland's most popular and iconic castles, galleries, museums, historic houses, heritage sites, wildlife parks, gardens and leisure attractions.

Analysis of statistics submitted by 232 of the organisation's member sites for its annual 'Visitor Trends Report' confirms that 30,262,245 visits were made to those sites in Scotland in 2018, which represents a modest increase of 0.1% over 2017 figures.

The increase comes on top of a 9.7% rise in 2017, which itself followed a 6% rise in 2016, confirming once again that visitor attractions in Scotland are enjoying a period of sustained growth.

The two top sites – The National Museum of Scotland and Edinburgh Castle – each attracted more than 2 million visits, only the second time that any visitor attraction in Scotland has surpassed the 2 million milestone.

Four additional sites attracted in excess of 1 million visitors – two in Edinburgh (Scottish National Gallery and St Giles' Cathedral) and two in Glasgow (Riverside Museum and Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum).

Sectors which fared particularly well in 2018 include castles and heritage sites (+4.2%), zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums (+4.3%), sports and activity attractions (+7.7%) and distilleries/whisky-related attractions (+2.3%).

Edinburgh continued to dominate the marketplace, with 10 of the top 20 attractions located in the city. The National Museum of Scotland welcomed the most visitors over this period, while Edinburgh Castle retained its status as the most popular 'paid' attraction.

Dr Gordon Rintoul, Director of National Museums Scotland said: "It is terrific that the latest ASVA visitor figures have once again confirmed the National Museum of Scotland as the most popular visitor attraction in Scotland. In addition we recorded the highest ever visitor numbers across all our sites with over 3.2 million visits.

"It has been a busy year for the Museum with the hugely popular exhibitions, Rip It Up: The Story of Scottish Pop and Art of Glass and a packed programme of activities including a Q&A with astronaut Tim Peake as he unveiled the display of his Soyuz spacecraft, Science Festival events and workshops and the sell-out Fringe showcase, Museum After Hours.

"We have just completed the 15-year, £80 million transformation of the National Museum of Scotland with the opening of three new galleries devoted to our outstanding collections of ceramics, ancient Egyptian and East Asian material and we look forward to welcoming visitors to these over the coming year."