

Edinburgh and Lothians are top tourism magnets

Staycations are on the rise in Scotland with coastal towns and urban destinations most popular with holidaymakers, according to the latest national visitor statistics.

There were 5.5 million domestic overnight holiday trips from GB visitors, including Scots, in Scotland between January and August this year, raising £1.5 billion for the Scottish economy.

Figures from the Great Britain Tourism Survey reveal that domestic tourism in Scotland has grown by 40% over the same period since 2016, driven by staycationing Scots.

Already in 2019 (between January and August) there have been two million total overnight visits to coastal resorts and towns and 4.5 million to cities and major towns while 860,000 overnight trips took place in rural areas, with Scottish residents accounting for 54.4% of all GB visitors.

The number of coastal trips could be set to rise further in 2020 as Scotland celebrates the Year of Coasts and Waters.

Those aged 55 and over continue to be the main source of domestic tourism, with the millennial and generation z markets amounting to almost a fifth of all domestic travellers.

Edinburgh & Lothians (picture at South Queensferry), Highlands & Islands and Perthshire are among the most popular regions, with year-on-year growth in the last three years. January to August this year saw 2.1 million total trips to Edinburgh &

Lothians, 2.1 million to Highlands and 507,000 to Perthshire.

In addition, Fife and Central Scotland (Argyll & the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling & Trossachs) saw a spike in total visits for the first eight months, with a 25% and 64% increase on 2018 figures to 424,000 and 1.4 million trips, respectively.

Activity attractions; castles; and outdoor/nature attractions, have all seen growth according to the Moffat Centre's Scottish Visitor Attraction Barometer, which is in line with the latest tourism trends of wellness, betterment and a desire to seek and develop experience and skills.

Visits to activity attractions between January and September this year grew by 10% to 172,312 compared with the same period last year. There were 539,178 visits to castles (a 6% increase) and 771,435 visits to outdoor/nature attractions (a 21% increase).

VisitScotland's Trends 2019 paper published earlier this year identified that Scotland is well placed to capitalise and embrace the global movement that is wellness tourism, valued globally at more than \$600bn.