

Tourism Intelligence Update – April 2019

The Key Performance Indicators for April are almost exclusively showing positive growth for many of the tourism measures when compared to April 2018. There are a number of factors for these successes, including the timing of Easter in 2018 (30 March to 2 April) and 2019 (19 to 22 April) and the school holidays, and so the Easter exhibitions and events, being spread throughout April this year. The weather was also a positive factor for both months, with the hottest Easter Sunday ever recorded in the UK this year, compared to a bank holiday weekend of almost constant rain last year.

Footfall through the city centre went up by 2% compared to April 2018, and the overall year to date footfall is on par with the last year. In particular the Easter weekend saw city centre footfall grow by 22% compared with Easter 2018 and by 21% compared with the same weekend (20 to 23 April) in 2018. This exceeds the national high street footfall by 1.7 times (which saw a growth of 13.5% across the UK as a result of the much improved weather this year) and is equal to the increase seen in coastal towns (who, unsurprisingly, saw the biggest gains of all destinations). The good weather also impacted retail parks and shopping centres across the UK, but negatively as shoppers stayed away from under-cover shopping centres so they could enjoy the sunshine.

The Great York Bunny Search lasted for three weeks this year, from the 2 to 23 April, with people invited to pick up a leaflet and discover 26 decorated bunnies hidden on many different streets in York. This was designed to drive footfall around the lesser visited streets in York, with the Micklegate footfall camera showing a 17% increase when compared to April 2018.

The Visit York Information Centre saw a 9% decrease in visitors through the doors vs April 2018, with a smaller decrease (3%) in numbers for the year to date.

The number of hotel room nights sold grew by a significant 13% compared to April 2018, with over 9,000 additional room nights sold, far exceeding the growth in supply since this time last year. The proportion of hotel rooms occupied has also gone up, by 10%, which is the biggest monthly gain recorded in over a year. The average room rate remained on par with April 2018, at £102.49. For the year to date, there are no significant changes in any of the hotel performance measures.

Small attractions continued to attract more visitors throughout 2019 with 30% increase in visits in April vs same month in 2018. The big attractions have a mixed result with an overall increase of 3%, however while some attractions gained significantly, others saw fewer visitors compared to April 2018. Overall, seven of the big attractions reported growth but four reported a loss. As was also seen in March, high profile exhibitions held in 2018 lead to an inevitable drop this year compared to the excellent numbers drawn last year. The change from year to year varies from 55% down to a huge 346% up for City Cruises York, who had a record breaking Easter weekend with almost 8,000 passengers carried over the four days. Warm sunny weather over the Easter Bank Holiday was one of the reasons for the positive growth in visits to outdoor attractions.

Visits to attractions made with a York Pass slightly increased (1%) vs April 2018, continuing to show a positive trend after the launch of the re-branded York Pass on 2 April 2019.

April 2019 results have shown an 89% increase in sessions on visityork.org compared to the last year. The new website launched on 16 April 2018, so this is the first time when we are comparing results for the same website, although not for a full month at this stage. It is worth noting that Google

search engines take time to recognise newly launched web pages and the rise up their rankings can be slow and steady, for a better comparison we should wait for results of the next three months.

Social media has shown positive results compared to April 2018 with a 40% increase in new followers and 73% more impressions; year on year both figures are also on the increase.

Summary of tourism performance indicators for April 2019:

- 79.6% of hotel rooms occupied
- £102.49 average hotel room rate
- 79,520 hotel room nights sold
- 338,985 visits to attractions (*provisional*)
- 8,784 visits to attractions using a York Pass
- 137,528 sessions on www.visityork.org (including on the mobile site)
- 1,098 new followers across Visit York social media channels (FB, IG, TW)
- 806,493 impressions on social media (FB, IG, TW)
- 33,138 customers through the Visit York Information Centre

Occupancy survey expansion

It's time to get on board with our new and expanded occupancy survey – we are looking for self-catering and B&B property owners to participate in this benchmarking study for York. For more information, please read more here <https://www.visityork.org/members/about-us/research-and-statistics/occupancy-survey>

To find out any more about our Research and Insights or to discuss your specific tourism intelligence queries, contact Make It York's Senior Research and Insight Executive, Zoe Rawson
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