

# Press release: Culture Secretary meets Swedish tourism leaders to promote the UK as a go-to destination

More than 820,000 Swedes visited the UK last year, contributing £458 million to the economy. Swedes are drawn to coming to watch Premier League game, going to British pubs, visiting our world-class heritage sites and vibrant cities.

Visitors from Sweden account for the third biggest overseas market for going to a British football match, after Ireland and Norway, with 58,000 people coming to see a match in 2014.

The Culture Secretary met tourism leaders from Scandinavian Airlines, Swedavia, Visit Britain in Sweden and Apollo to see how government can help strengthen this offer for Swedish tourists and encourage more visitors to travel beyond London to see more of the UK.

She heard how the UK is the first choice for a majority of Swedes travelling outside Scandinavia and it is also where young Swedes leaving the country for the first time like to go – thanks to strong cultural bonds.

Speaking as part of a visit to the Nordic countries to promote trade, she championed the UK's diverse culture, top-class sport and international events – the year-long UK City of Culture 2017 celebrations in Hull, the Great Exhibition of the North in Newcastle and Gateshead in 2018, and the UCI World Cycling Championships heading to Yorkshire in 2019.

She pointed to Liverpool, where next year China's terracotta warriors will be seen in the UK for the first time in 25 years, Northumberland's stunning beaches and Durham's cathedral, the shopping options in Bicester as well as the outdoor pursuits on offer in stunning national parks in Wales and Scotland.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley said:

Tourism from Sweden and the Nordic countries is hugely valuable to the UK and we want to make sure that more of our country benefits from this important market.

We welcome hundreds of thousands of Swedish visitors every year and we are committed to ensuring the UK continues to be a major draw for tourists from across Europe.

The meeting today was about building on our success to date, strengthening ties and seeing what more we can do to encourage more people from Sweden to come and experience the very best of Britain.

In the first three months of 2017, there were 169,000 visits to the UK from Sweden, up from 167,000 in 2016. Spend is on the increase too, in the first quarter of 2017 Swedes holidaying in the UK spent £86 million, up 12% on the same period in 2016. The Nordic market – Sweden, Norway and Denmark – made 2.3 million visits to the UK in 2016 and spent £1.24 billion. The first three months of 2017 saw record numbers of Nordic visitors to the UK, 518,000, up from 507,000 in the same period on 2016.

VisitBritain Nordics Manager Gary Robson said:

Britain has so much to offer holiday-makers from Sweden, from our cool cities and stunning national parks, to our world class shopping, heritage sites and our high-energy sports matches.

By promoting the sheer diversity of incredible experiences on offer, we want to inspire more visitors from Sweden and the Nordic market to book a trip right now to come and discover more of Britain.

Some 54% of Swedish tourists only visit London and the government wants to encourage a greater number to see more of what the whole of the country has to offer.

As part of the government's Tourism Action Plan, launched in 2016, £40 million of investment is going into supporting tourism outside of London, investing in local businesses and attractions across the country to help attract more overseas and domestic visitors.