

# Record breaking year for museums and galleries in England

- Massive jump in visitors to sponsored museums and galleries outside of London
- New initiatives and exhibitions saw number of visits from children swell to 8.5 million, with the number of visitors from overseas growing as well

Almost 50 million people visited DCMS-sponsored museums and galleries last year, the highest number since records began more than 15 years ago, new figures published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) reveal.

DCMS-sponsored museums make up seven of the top 10 most popular free visitor attractions in the UK, and the British Museum, the Tate Modern, the Natural History Museum and V&A were in the top 10 most popular art museums in the world in 2018.

Overall, visitor numbers at the 15 DCMS-sponsored museums and galleries saw a 5.5 per cent increase in 2018/19 compared to the previous year. The figures also reveal that around half of all visitors were from overseas, confirming the important role that our museums and galleries play in attracting international tourists.

## **Arts Minister Helen Whately said:**

It's been a blockbuster year for our museums and galleries. I'm delighted that they're going from strength to strength and attracting audiences from all over the world.

It's fantastic to see the huge rise in the number of visits by children and young people – showing that our museums and galleries are doing a great job attracting new audiences and reaching a new generation.

There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of visitors to museums and galleries outside of London, with the figures revealing an 11 per cent jump compared to the previous year.

This was in part driven by National Museums Liverpool's (NML) hugely successful China's first Emperor and The Terracotta Warriors and the Double Fantasy: John and Yoko exhibitions. Overall, NML saw a huge 20 per cent increase in visitor numbers, attracting more than 4 million people last year.

Visits by children and young people also increased, accounting for 17 per cent of the total number of visitors to the museums and galleries. This was driven in part by new initiatives and exhibitions like the Natural History

Museum's Life in the Dark exhibition and their "Kids Go Free" campaign which helped attract more than 1.5 million young people to the South Kensington site last year.

It wasn't just the number of physical visitors to the museums and galleries that had a tremendous boost last year – visits to the institution's websites also jumped significantly.

Together, there were more than 123 million unique website visits in 2018/19, an increase of 8 per cent from the previous year.

**Sir Ian Blatchford, Chairman of the National Museum Directors' Council and Director of the Science Museum Group, said:**

The strong and consistent growth in visits to museums, and the increase in self-generated income, reflects the creativity and ingenuity of those who work in our sector. Today's announcement shows not only the important part museums play in encouraging tourism, but also their vibrant, vital role at the heart of our communities.

**ENDS**

**Background:**

- In 2018/19, there were 49.8 million visits to DCMS-sponsored museums and galleries.
- The Tate Gallery Group, comprising of five branches across England, is the most visited DCMS sponsored museum-body for the third year running with 8.2 million visits. The British Museum remains the most visited single site with over 6 million visits annually.
- 48% of visits to DCMS-sponsored museums were made by overseas visitors.
- DCMS sponsored museums and galleries included in the report are: the British Museum, the Geffrye Museum, the Horniman Museum, Imperial War Museums, the National Gallery, National Museums Liverpool, the National Portrait Gallery, the Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Royal Museums Greenwich, the Science Museum Group, Sir John Soane's Museum, the Tate Gallery Group, the Victoria & Albert Museum and The Wallace Collection. The Geffrye Museum closed on 7 January 2018 to commence a two year capital refurbishment project, but continues to host commercial events which the museum includes within the visitor numbers.
- As of 2015, Tyne and Wear museums are no longer sponsored by DCMS and

have therefore been excluded from DCMS total visits for all years. Figures reported here therefore may not match those that were previously published.

- You can find the full report here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sponsored-museums-and-galleries-annual-performance-indicators-201819>