

Tourist Slump Deepens With 30% Fall In Visitors And €88m Revenue Loss

Central Statistics Office Says February Decline Represents ‘Acceleration’ Of Downward Trend

The number of tourists who visited Ireland last month was down 30 per cent, with the economy missing out on more than €88 million compared with the same period last year, new data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows.

Some 304,300 foreign visitors completed a trip to Ireland in February, down from 433,300 in the same month last year.

Tourism is Ireland’s largest indigenous industry and biggest employer with 257,900 people working in the sector. Ireland took in €6.2 billion from overseas tourists in 2024, although the number of bed-nights was down 3 per cent.

CSO statistician in the tourism and travel division Gregg Patrick said last month’s decline represented “an acceleration” of the downward year-on-year trend in foreign visitor numbers that first emerged in September.

The visitors spent €196 million on their trips, not including fares, which represented a drop of 31 per cent from €284 million a year earlier.

The drop in expenditure was almost exclusively down to the reduction in numbers, as the mean expenditure per visitor decreased by just 1.8 per cent to €643.

Broken down by expense category, most of the money was spent on day-to-day activities such as eating out, entrance fees, and public transport, which amounted to €117.8 million, or 43.8 per cent of the total expenditure.

The next costliest subheading was fares at €73.3 million (27.3 per cent) while accommodation cost a further €71.2 million (26.5 per cent). Lastly, prepayments for items such as car hire and pre-booked tickets comprised €6.5 million (2.4 per cent).

Overall, the typical foreign visitor in February spent €884 – or €643 excluding fares – on their trip to Ireland. Breaking that down, they spent €241 on their fare, €21 on prepayments, €234 on accommodation and €387 on day-to-day expenses.

In February last year, the comparable mean expenditure on these items was €209, €18, €264, and €373 respectively.

The largest contingent of visitors came from Britain, accounting for 150,400. The second highest proportion (10.2 per cent) was from the United States, accounting for 31,200 visitors. The third highest (5.8 per cent) came from Germany comprising 17,800.

All three markets saw significant falls compared with last year. By way of comparison, there were 199,000 visitors from Britain in February 2024, whereas there were 46,600 from the United States and 21,900 from Germany.

In terms of revenue generated, the most important tourism markets were continental Europe (36 per cent) and Britain (36 per cent). These were followed by North America (18 per cent), and the rest of the world (10 per cent).

The most frequent reason for travelling to Ireland was to visit family or friends which was the case for 112,900 visitors (37 per cent).

The next most likely reason was for a holiday, with 92,300 (30.3 per cent) of the visitors coming for this purpose. A further 63,400 (20.8 per cent) had come for business or work-related reasons.

Compared with February last year, people visiting family or friends fell by 28.5 per cent, while those visiting for a holiday fell by 39.9 per cent, and those visiting for business or work fell by 28.6 per cent.

The data also shows that those who did visit Ireland stayed for a shorter period. Visitors stayed a total of 1.8 million nights, which was a drop of 33 per cent.

The average length of stay for foreign resident overnight visitors was 5.9 nights, down from an average of 6.2 nights in February 2024.

In terms of accommodation while here, some 133,800 stayed in their own property or with family or friends (44 per cent). This figure was down from 170,200 last year.

Another 131,600 (43.2 per cent) stayed in a hotel, which was down from 204,700 in February 2024, while a further 12,900 (4.2 per cent) used rented/self-catering as their main accommodation type, down from 15,500.

Finally, some 6,700 (2.2 per cent) of the foreign visitors used guest house or bed and breakfast as their main accommodation type. This cohort was down from 17,400 last year.