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# Tourism, restaurant and event sector in Helsinki

## Fact Sheet

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### 1. Statistics

#### Tourism indicators

- Tourism is usually measured in terms of overnight stays (bednights), as this is practically the only indicator that is measured in the same way all over the world. Overnight stays in Finland are recorded by [Statistics Finland](#). However, not everyone stays in hotels or other registered accommodation providers, so overnight stays do not account for total volumes in the number of visitors.
- Currently, estimates of the number of foreign visitors and spending, for example, are obtained from the [Border Interview Survey](#).
- Data for overnight stays is obtained on a monthly basis with a delay of about a month. Monthly tourism statistics are collected by TAK Research's [Visitory service](#). Data for hotel occupancy rates is obtained on a daily basis and is reported internally by the City of Helsinki on a weekly basis. This confidential information is collected from accommodation providers by the [Benchmarking Alliance](#).
- In addition, the civil aviation administration [Finavia](#) reports data on air passenger numbers on a monthly basis approximately one week after the end of each month.

#### 1.1 Overnight stays

##### Overnight stays and accommodation sales:

- **2019**
  - In the last "normal" year in 2019, there were approximately 4.5 million overnight stays in Helsinki, of which 54 percent were made by foreign visitors. The share of foreign visitors in overnight stays is highest in late summer, when they account for over 60 percent of overnight stays, and lowest in late autumn. Summer accounts for the highest number of overnight stays. The seasonal peak is in July for domestic overnight stays and in August for foreign visitors. Helsinki accounted for 19 percent of all overnight stays in Finland in 2019 and as much as 24 percent in May.
  - In normal circumstances, business trips account for almost half of all overnight stays in Helsinki. This information is collected from hotel registers and is not completely reliable.
  - Top 10 countries of origin for overnight stays in Helsinki in 2019: Finland (2,080,000), Russia (215,000), Germany (203,000), USA (182,000), UK (158,000), Sweden (146,000), Japan (144,000), China (116,000), France (76,000), Italy (69,000).
  - Among the Nordic capitals, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo are clearly ahead of Helsinki in terms of overnight stays. Stockholm reported more than 10 million and Copenhagen 9.3 million overnight stays in 2019. Tallinn and Reykjavik recorded fewer overnight stays than Helsinki, although both recorded more overnight stays by foreign visitors than Helsinki.
  - Helsinki's official accommodation capacity in 2019 was approximately 10,500 rooms (approximately 23,000 for Stockholm and 17,000 for Copenhagen). Helsinki's accommodation capacity has increased by approximately 2000 rooms over the past decade. A rough estimate for other forms of accommodation is around 20 percent of the total, perhaps more. Accommodation capacity from Airbnb and similar providers was perhaps 2500 rooms last year. Airbnb statistics are collected by [AirDNA](#).
  - Helsinki Marketing keeps a record of hotel rooms for congress bids, and the number of active rooms for these is 12,942.
  - Accommodation sales by registered accommodation providers in Helsinki amounted to approximately EUR 350 million in 2019, which represents around a quarter of all Finnish accommodation sales. A rough

estimate for accommodation sales in Helsinki by Airbnb and similar providers is approximately EUR 40 million, which represents around a third of total sales in Finland.

- The occupancy rate among registered accommodation providers in Helsinki in 2019 was 74.3 percent compared to 75.9 percent in the previous year. This reflects the increase in capacity. The occupancy rate has increased gradually from around 67 percent at the start of the decade. The occupancy rate was highest last year in late summer, when it reached 83-85 percent. During the peak season, Helsinki's hotel capacity is almost completely filled.
- **2020**
  - The number of overnight stays in 2020 was approximately 1.6 million, of which 30 percent were made by foreign visitors and 70 percent by domestic visitors.
  - Record high numbers were set for the months of January and February.
  - The number of overnight stays fell by 64 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year (79.5 percent among foreign visitors and 46 percent among domestic visitors). The number of overnight stays fell by 30 percent in Lapland (including Kuusamo) and by 38 percent for the whole of Finland.
  - Helsinki's share of total overnight stays in Finland decreased from 19 percent in 2019 to 11.3 percent in 2020. The market share of Lapland increased from 13.5 percent to 14.3 percent. This reflects how the crisis has had a bigger impact on Helsinki than on the rest of the country.
- **2021**
  - 1.1 million overnight stays have been registered since August.
  - The occupancy rate at the beginning of the year was between 16 and 13 percent.
  - The occupancy rate was 25.3 percent in June, 47.3 percent in July and 43.4 percent in August. Under normal circumstances, occupancy rates are at the level of 80-85 percent in summer.
  - The market share in January-August has been 10%, which is clearly less than normal.
  - Unregistered room capacity was in August 1800 while in August 2019 it was 3800.

## 1.2 Traffic

### Airline passengers

- **2019**
  - The number of airline passengers served by Helsinki Airport has increased rapidly in recent years. Growth in 2018 was in double digits and remained significant also in 2019. Growth has been most visible among transit passengers. The number of airline passengers served by Helsinki Airport was close to 22 million in 2019, which is around five percent more than in the previous year.
- **2020**
  - [Helsinki Airport](#) served 5 million airline passengers in 2020, representing a drop of approximately 77 percent.

### Ferry passengers

- **2019**
  - The Port of Helsinki served 12.2 million passengers in 2019, including both ferry and international cruise passengers. Estonia accounted for 77% of this volume and Sweden 20%.
  - Ferry passengers: 11.6 million
  - Cruise passengers: 604,756
- **2020**
  - In 2020, the Port of Helsinki served 4.8 million passengers.

### Cruises

- **2019**
  - A [new record for international cruises](#) was set in 2019, with a total of 604,756 cruise passengers arriving in Helsinki.
  - A [survey on spending by cruise visitors](#) was conducted in 2019, according to which cruise visitors spent around EUR 25 million in Helsinki.
- **2020**
  - Not a single cruise visitor arrived in Helsinki in 2020.
- **2021**

- The beginning of the summer season is practically cancelled and many companies have cancelled the whole summer season or the rest of the year. Some companies are trying to start their operations in the end of the summer. The situation is in constant change. More information can be read [from the cruise document](#) on the city website (updated 11.6.2021).

### 1.3 Employment and tourism income

#### Employment

- **2018**
  - According to the [tourism income and employment survey](#) for 2018, the overall employment impact of tourism in Helsinki was 10,292 person years.
  - According to a [regional tourism report](#) published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in 2018, tourism employed 57,000 people in the Uusimaa region. This represents approximately 40 percent of all people employed by tourism in Finland (142,000).
  - The two above figures are not directly comparable due to different research methods.
- **2020**
  - Comparing the number of overnight stays in Uusimaa in 2019 (7 million) and 2020 (2.8 million), there has been a contraction of 60 percent. If this percentage is applied to employment, the number of people in the tourism sector in Uusimaa who have been made unemployed is 34,000. **This figure is just a rough estimate and does not necessarily reflect the actual situation.**

#### Tourism income

- **2018**
  - According to the [tourism income and employment survey](#) for 2018, tourism generated approximately EUR 1.6 billion in direct income for Helsinki. This includes tourism income generated by both domestic and foreign visitors (but does not include income generated for Helsinki by Finns travelling abroad).
  - According to the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), the total demand for tourism in Finland in 2018 amounted to EUR 15.7 billion. Uusimaa accounted for EUR 8 billion of the total.
- **2020**
  - It is extremely difficult to estimate the loss in tourism income.
  - If the loss in tourism income is estimated in the same way as for employment, i.e. by the drop in the number of overnight stays, then tourism income in Uusimaa fell by EUR 4.8 billion in 2020. Most of this was in Helsinki. It is important, however, to highlight the major impact of Helsinki Airport.
  - The [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) estimates that the coronavirus pandemic has reduced spending by tourists in Finland by nearly EUR 7 billion.

### 1.4 Events

#### Professional events

- **2019**
  - Normally, approximately half of Helsinki's tourism involves work-related travel, which distinguishes Helsinki from other Finnish cities and regions.
  - The total number of congress delegates (people attending international association meetings and conventions) in Helsinki in 2019 was 84,000. To this number can be added other business meetings. Congress visitors tend to stay longer and generate more tourism income for the city than leisure tourists. Business meetings and congress tourism generate an estimated EUR 400 million in tourism income for Helsinki each year including multiplier effects.
- **2020**
  - In 2020, leisure travellers spent 876,000 nights (-64.1 %) and business travellers 741,000 nights (-63.8 %) in Helsinki.
  - Congresses in Helsinki were attended by approximately 19,000 delegates, including around 4000 in person and the rest virtually. The majority of previously confirmed congresses were postponed until the coming years or cancelled altogether.
- **2021**
  - Six congresses have been moved to years 2022-2025 from the summer season 2021

- Congresses in the fall 2021 are organized mostly as virtual or hybrid events
- Also some recovery can be seen: several congress organizers have shown interest to come for a familiarization trip already in August-September 2021
- A total of 79 congresses have been confirmed for the years 2022-2027, with over 65 000 delegates and 156 000 overnights
- Responsibility and safety are highlighted in the planned congresses
- In the business events, cooperation and engagement of the local ecosystems are highlighted
- [Business travel is not expected to recover to its 2019 level until 2025.](#)

## Public events

- **2019**
  - The economic impact of events is difficult to assess because official industry classifications do not identify the event sector as its own industry. The Finnish event industry association [Tapahtumateollisuus ry](#) has estimated the turnover of the industry in Finland to be approximately EUR 2 billion. Events are one of the most important drivers of tourism in Helsinki.
  - The turnover of the event sector almost doubled in 2012-2019, and profitability increased significantly especially in 2018-2019 ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of the 2020 Finnish Event Industry Report).
  - Many public events are organised in Helsinki, particularly in the summer season, ranging from free events to major festivals lasting several days. Estimating the economic impact of all these events is difficult due to their diverse range.
- **2020**
  - According to estimates, the turnover of the event sector in Finland [decreased by approximately EUR 1.5 billion as a result of the crisis.](#)
  - According to a survey completed at the end of October, just 4 percent of companies in the event sector reported a good amount of business, while 62% reported that they could only survive a maximum of six months anymore (Source: Tapahtumateollisuus ry – tilannekatsaus 2/2021).
- **2021**
  - The first bankruptcies in the industry were seen in January 2021.
  - In the light of the key figures, the industry is in a very serious state.
  - The profitability of companies and businesses in the industry has collapsed and averaged -10% last year, up from + 6% before the outbreak.
  - The crisis has only deepened during 2021, which means that the profitability of companies has only weakened.
  - The majority, more than 80% of the industry is small, privately owned Finnish companies. These do not have large buffers or funders behind them.
  - The industry still faces an acute and widespread threat of bankruptcy, which will make it significantly more difficult for the industry to start up and recover. The industry has already suffered from a large shortage of employees and experts during the summer.
  - [Industry research](#)

## 1.5 Restaurants

### Food service industry in Helsinki

- **2019**
  - The number of outlets in the food service industry, especially restaurants, has continued to grow steadily in Helsinki since the early 1990s. The number of café-restaurants has also increased somewhat.
  - Helsinki had a total of 2612 [outlets](#) in 2019. The number of outlets in Helsinki increased by 15.4% from 2013 to 2019.
  - Finland had a total of 13,466 outlets in 2019. The number of outlets in Finland increased by 5.2% from 2013 to 2019.
  - In addition to the number of outlets, turnover among outlets has also increased faster in Helsinki than in Finland on average.
  - The annual turnover of the food service industry in Helsinki was EUR 1.6 billion, which represents 25 percent of the total turnover for Finland. Among restaurants, those in [Helsinki accounted for 35% of the total turnover for Finland.](#)

- **2020**
  - The business operations of restaurants were severely restricted in spring 2020, when only takeaways and deliveries were initially allowed. This led many employees being laid off. As the restrictions were eased and the situation improved towards the summer, some employees were able to return to work.
  - [Employment](#) among restaurant workers did not recover in summer 2020 to the level it had been at in summer 2019. It is also noteworthy that the number of laid-off employees was particularly high throughout the rest of the year from spring 2020 onwards.
  - The statistics for 2020 indicate that the employment figures began to deteriorate in November-December due to a week pre-Christmas season.
- **2021**
  - Popularity of the lightweight temporary terraces (parkletit) is continually increasing and this year there are over 100 new ones so far. This summer, there are more terraces than ever earlier in Helsinki.
  - The Kasarmitori Square summer terrace has opened on 12.6.2021. More information <https://kasarmitorinkesa.hel.fi/en/>
  - According to mobility data by Telia, the city will be significantly more active during this summer compared to last summer. Already in May, the potential number of customers has been increasing: “In the middle of May there were daily over 8700 people on the average in the Esplanade park, which is over 4000 more compared to last year. Source [HS](#).”
- **2022**
  - [The guide for terraces](#) is updated at the beginning of the year 2022. The goal is to update the instructions as well as provide them in a more clearer way to respond to the needs of the companies.
  - Helsingin leijona Oy and Tukkuutori unit have merged in order to develop more systematically the relevant locations to the food culture of the city. More [here](#) (in Finnish).
  - Work to develop the operating environment of the restaurant industry will be continued on the basis of a report to be published in late autumn 2021: “Development of the ecosystem of the restaurant industry in Helsinki”.

## 1.6 Local residents

### Opinions of Helsinki residents regarding tourism

- A [survey](#) was conducted in 2019 to gather the opinions of local residents regarding tourism. Another [survey](#) on the topic was conducted in 2021.
- Helsinki residents feel that tourism is important for their city. The benefits brought by visitors to Helsinki far outweigh the disadvantages.

## 2. Development

The development of tourism in Helsinki is guided by its [Roadmap for Tourism \(situation update 11/2019\)](#)

### 2.1 Development of tourism

#### Key development projects within the tourism, restaurant and event sector

- *Sustainable tourism.* See actions on the [Tourism Industry website](#).
- *Knowledge management.* See especially the [Carbon Neutral Tourism](#) project.
- *Digitalisation.* See especially the promotion of online trade as part of the [Digitähti project](#).
- *Safety.* See especially the [Leading the Safety in Tourism in Helsinki Area Project](#).
- *Restaurants.* Development of the restaurant ecosystem in collaboration with Gaia Consulting. [This development project is being implemented in 2021](#).
- *Maritime Helsinki.* The Helsinki Maritime Development Project will continue, even though its [key project status](#) expires in 2021. The results have been extremely positive.

- *Corona*. Numerous actions have been taken in response to the crisis. They are described in two blog posts [here](#) and [here](#).
- A new [Travel and tourism unit](#) has been established for the City of Helsinki's Economic Development department in the summer of 2021.
- In addition, the key tourism organisations Helsinki Marketing, Helsinki Business Hub and Helsinki Abroad [are being merged into a new company in 2021](#).

## 2.2 Hotel investments

### Hotel projects in Helsinki

- **2019**
  - Approximately 30 hotel projects were planned before the crisis.
- **2020**
  - According to the [Helsinki Business Hub](#), it appears that some projects may be postponed, but so far none of the projects has been cancelled. Hotel projects involve long-term processes, and the currently planned projects will be completed only after 2-4 years.
- **2021**
  - The situation is being monitored. The [hotel project list](#) was last updated on 1.9.2021.
  - Based on the [study by Helsinki Business Hub](#), it seems that some hotel projects have been postponed to wait for better construction times and a few projects have been canceled. However, most projects are already underway and will be completed in 2022-2024. Hotel projects are multi-year processes and the projects now on the planning table will not be completed in 2-4 years.

## 2.3 Cooperation

### Key tourism, restaurant and event cooperation groups and networks in which Helsinki is active

- [Helsingin tekijät network](#)
- [Visit Finland](#) (Helsinki active in several committees)
- [Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council's tourism committee](#)
- [European Capital of Smart Tourism](#)
- [European Tourism Association - ETOA](#)
- [Nordic Tourism Collective](#)
- [European Cities Marketing - ECM](#)
- [World Tourism Cities Federation - WTCF](#)
- [Cruise Baltic](#)
- [Digital Tourism Think Thank - DTTT](#)
- [Congress Network Finland ry - CNF](#)
- [Association of Tourism Organisations in Finland - Suoma ry](#)
- [International Congress and Convention Association — ICCA](#)
- [Global Destination Sustainability Movement - GDS](#)
- [The City Network on Food & Gastronomy - Delice](#)
- [Finnish event industry association - Tapahtumateollisuus ry](#)

In addition to our normal cooperation networks, a tourism sector crisis committee has been created during the corona crisis led by the Economic Development Department and including representatives of hotels, logistics companies, event organisers, restaurants, the Finnish Hospitality Association MaRa, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Visit Finland and the Association of Finnish Travel Industry SMAL.

### Further information

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