



5.9.2023

Tourism, restaurant, and event sectors in Helsinki

Fact Sheet

City of Helsinki, Economic Development Department, Tourism and Destination Management Unit

1. Statistics

Tourism indicators

- Tourism is usually measured in terms of overnight stays (bed nights), because it is a relatively comparable number around 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](#). This data can also be found from [Statistics Service Rudolf](#). Data for hotel occupancy rates is obtained daily. This confidential information is collected from accommodation establishments by the [Benchmarking Alliance](#).
- The civil aviation administration [Finavia](#) reports data on air passenger numbers on a monthly basis approximately one week after the end of each month.
- The number of ship passengers is obtained from the [traffic statistics](#) published monthly by the Port of Helsinki.

1.1 Overnight stays

Overnight stays and accommodation sales

- 2020
 - The number of overnight stays was approximately 1.6 million, of which 30 % were made by foreign visitors and 70 % by domestic visitors.
 - Record for the highest numbers were set for the months of January and February.

- The number of overnight stays fell by 64% compared to the previous year (79.5 % among foreign visitors and 46% among domestic visitors). The number of overnight stays fell by 30 % in Lapland (including Kuusamo) and by 38 % for the whole of Finland.
- Helsinki's share of total overnight stays in Finland decreased from 19 % in 2019 to 11.3 %. The market share of Lapland increased from 13.5 % to 14.3 %. This reflects how the crisis has had a bigger impact on Helsinki than on the rest of the country.
- 2021
 - There were approximately 2.1 million overnight stays, of which 26.2 % were foreign and 73.8% domestic.
 - The number of overnight stays increased by 31% compared to the previous year (foreigners 12% and domestic 39 %).
 - The occupancy rate at the beginning of the year was between 16 % and 13%, when normally it is around 65 %.
 - Helsinki's market share of all overnight stays in Finland was 12 %, which is clearly less than normal (2019 19 %).
 - Unregistered room capacity was 1,800, while it was 3,400 in 2019.
- 2022
 - There were approximately 3.7 million overnight stays, of which 41.7 % were foreign and 58.3% domestic.
 - The number of overnight stays increased by 75.8 % compared to the previous year (foreigners 179.6% and domestic 39 %).
 - The occupancy rate at the beginning of the year was 52.3 %
 - Helsinki's market share of all overnight stays in Finland was 17 %
- 2023
 - There were approximately 499 thousand overnight stays in July, of which 42,7 % were foreign and 57,2% domestic.
 - The number of overnight stays decreased -0,4 % in July compared to the previous year.
 - In July, the occupancy rate of accommodation establishments was 64,2%
 - Helsinki's market share in July 2023 of all overnight stays in Finland was 15,5 %
 - Estimated hotel occupancy rate in August is 69 %

1.2. Traffic

Airline passengers

- 2020
 - [Helsinki Airport](#) served 5 million airline passengers in 2020, representing a drop of approximately 77 %.
- 2021
 - In 2021, the number of passengers at Helsinki-Vantaa was 4.3 million, representing a drop of approximately 16%.

- 2022
 - In 2022, the number of passengers on Helsinki-Vantaa was approximately 12.8 million, which is 202 € more than previous year.
- 2023
 - In July, the number of passengers on Helsinki-Vantaa was approximately 1,4 million.
 - Finavia's statistics can be found [here](#).

Ferry passengers and Cruises

- 2020
 - In 2020, the Port of Helsinki served 4.8 million passengers.
 - Not a single cruise ship arrived in Helsinki
- 2021
 - The passenger volume was approx. 3.7 million.
 - Ferry passengers: 3.7 million
 - Cruise passengers: 10,909
 - Passenger traffic was quieter in the summer of 2021 than in the summer of 2020. The decrease in traffic was due to the lower volume of Estonian traffic.
 - 14 cruise ships and almost 11,00 cruise passengers arrived in Finland.
- 2022
 - In January-December, the passenger volume was approx. 8 million, a change of 116.4 % compared to the previous year in the same period.
 - Ferry passengers: 7.9 million
 - Cruise passengers: 163,322
 - During the summer 164 cruise ships arrived in Helsinki of which 25 overnight stays.
- 2023
 - In July, the passenger volume was approx. 1,4 million, a change of 9 % compares to the previous year in the same period.
 - Ferry passenger: 1 335 508
 - Cruise passengers: 43 376

1.3. Employment and tourism income

Employment

- 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%. 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.

- 2021
 - According to [Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki in 2021](#) the total employment impact of tourism was 5,798 man-years.

Tourism income

- 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.
 - The [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) estimates that the coronavirus pandemic has reduced spending by tourists in Finland by nearly EUR 7 billion.
- 2021
 - As stated in [Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki in 2021](#) -study direct tourism income in Helsinki was 782 million euros, which is about half of what it was in 2019 (1,65 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. 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 travelers 741,000 nights (-63.8%) in Helsinki.
 - Congresses in Helsinki were attended by approximately 4,000 in person and the rest virtually. The majority of previously confirmed congresses were postponed until the coming years or cancelled altogether.
- 2021
 - The six congresses of the summer season 2021 were postponed to the years 2022–2025.
 - Congresses in the fall 2021 were organized mostly as virtual or hybrid events

- In business events, the cooperation and commitment of the local industry ecosystem is emphasized already at the application stage. In addition, when it comes to congresses, flexibility in terms of meeting facilities and accommodation quotas is highlighted and forms a competitive advantage.
- 143 congresses were organized with approx. 24,500 participants.
- 2022
 - 157 international congresses arranged, with estimated 27,600 congress guests. ([Helsinki Partners](#))
 - Most of the organized congresses are hybrid events.
- 2023
 - 22 congresses have been confirmed with 19,000 congress guests. Congresses are aimed to organize as live-events and direct flights are a competitive advantage when selecting the destination.
 - Travelling for business is estimated to recover to same level as in 2019.

Public events

- 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% 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - [Industry research](#)
- 2022

- The work initiated by the Event Industry Association to identify the entire industry that produces events will continue even after the corona crisis. During the rest of the year, the identification of companies in the industry, business mechanisms, effectiveness, as well as the skills and training needs of the industry will be investigated extensively.
- [The results of the event industry's June member survey](#) give direction on the industry's recovery.
 - In June, almost 80% of companies reported that the operating conditions existed more than half a year ahead, while in February the corresponding figure was only 38%. Sales are increasing in 83% of the responding companies. 44% of companies report that there are more sales than before the start of the corona epidemic.
 - Increase of costs (78%) and shortage of manpower (56%) are a challenge.
 - The predictability of the operating environment is also recovering. 50% of the responding companies stated that there are challenges in the operating environment, but the business can be planned quite well going forward. 44% of companies report that predictability is still weak, and planning is only possible in a short time span.

1.5. Restaurants

Food service industry in Helsinki

- 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.
- 2021
 - Popularity of the lightweight temporary terraces ([parklet](#)) is continually increasing. At summer, there were more terraces in Helsinki than ever before.
- 2022
 - [The terrace instructions of the city of Helsinki](#) were updated during the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. In addition to updating the instructions, the goal was to provide clearer instructions to better meet the information needs of companies.
 - Helsingin Kaupunkilat Oy started operations at the beginning of 2022. Combining the operations of Helsingin Leijona Oy and the Tukutori unit operating in the urban environment sector creates good opportunities to develop more planned areas central to the city's food culture. The operation of the

new business establishment also enables the wider development of Helsinki into an internationally interesting gastrotourism destination. More [here](#) (in Finnish).

- Work to develop the operating environment of the restaurant industry will continue based on the report published in late autumn 2021: "Development of the restaurant industry ecosystem in Helsinki".

1.6. Local residents

Opinions of Helsinki residents regarding tourism

- A [survey](#) was conducted in 2019 to gather the opinions of 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

Published in May 2022, [Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022 – 2026: New horizons - growth through sustainability](#) outlines topics related to the tourism development. The aim is to enhance sustainable growth, develop smart tourism and events services and promote personalized and high-quality services.

2.1. Development of tourism

Key development areas within the tourism, restaurant and event sector

- Sustainable tourism. See actions on the [Tourism Sustainability in Helsinki -page](#).
- The City of Helsinki signed the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism on 1 June 2022.
- Knowledge management. See especially the [Kestävää Nostetta](#) -project.
- *Maritime Helsinki*. Information about Helsinki Maritime Strategy can be found [here](#).
- In addition, the key tourism organizations Helsinki Marketing and Helsinki Business Hub [were merged into a new company Helsinki Partners at the end of 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
 - Some hotel projects were postponed waiting for better construction times and a few projects were cancelled. Most of the planned projects started and will be completed between 2022 and 2024. Hotel projects are processes of several years, and the projects that were on the planning table in 2021 will only be completed in 2–4 years.
- 2022
 - In 2022, 5 hotel projects have been completed by September and 2 projects are estimated to be completed by the end of the year.

2.3. Cooperation

The city of Helsinki is involved in several cooperation groups and networks for tourism, restaurants and events, including international ones, these can be found [here](#).

- The City of Helsinki works closely with the tourist and hospitality industry through the Makers of Helsinki partner network.
- For the years 2022–2025, the City Group's tourism cooperation group was established, the goal of which is to agilely and sustainably promote the competitiveness, renewal and growth of tourism in Helsinki
- Helsinki's tourism advisory working group, on the other hand, increasingly consistently brings the voice of the industry to be heard in the promotion and development of tourism.

Further information

City of Helsinki, Economic Development Department
Nina Vesterinen, Tourism Director, **Media contact**
+358 40 6354508
nina.vesterinen@hel.fi

City of Helsinki, Economic Development Department
Jukka Punamäki, Senior Advisor, **Tourism**
+358 44 713 1753
jukka.punamaki@hel.fi

City of Helsinki, Communications Department
Päivi Munther, Project Manager, **Events**
+358 40 3342045
paivi.munther@hel.fi

Helsinki Partners
Anu Syrmä
Senior business advisor, **hotel-investments and communications**
+358 40 5412261
kati.soini@helsinkipartners.fi

Helsinki Partners
Leena Lassila, Senior business advisor, **visitor attraction**
+358 50 3080322 leena.lassila@helsinkipartners.com

Helsinki Partners
Kati Soini, Senior business advisor, **hotel-investments**
+358 40 5011469 kati.soini@helsinkipartners.com