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Tourism 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:

- Last year, 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 last year and as much as 24 percent in May.
- 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 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](#).
- Accommodation sales by registered accommodation providers in Helsinki amounted to approximately EUR 350 million last year, 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 last year 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.

COVID-19

- The hotel occupancy rate was approximately 3% in May 2020.
- Helsinki's market share among registered overnight stays in Finland was 12.9% in April 2020 compared to around 20% normally. This suggests that Helsinki has been impacted more from the crisis than Finland on the whole.

1.2 Traffic

Airline passengers

- 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 last year. Growth has been most visible among transit passengers. The number of airline passengers served by Helsinki Airport was already close to 22 million last year, which is around five percent more than in the previous year.

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- The number of airline passengers served by Helsinki Airport in May was [down 98%](#) compared to the corresponding period last year.
- Finnair aims to operate approximately 30% of its normal amount of flights in July ([press release 18.5.2020](#))

Ferry passengers

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

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- The Port of Helsinki's passenger number scenario for the rest of the year if leisure travel is permitted as of 15 June:
 - June -80% compared to the same period last year
 - July -50%, August -30%, September -30%, October -10%, November -10%, December -10%
 - Entire year: 7.3 million passengers, -40% compared to last year.

Cruises

- 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.

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- The situation regarding summer 2020 is changing on a daily basis. As of the beginning of June, the vast majority of cruise traffic in July has been cancelled. The situation in August looks quite positive. Cruise Baltic is continuously monitoring the situation in the [Baltic Sea cruise market](#).
- According to the Port of Helsinki, it expects between 0 and 110 cruise ship visits in summer 2020. A total of 110 cruise ship visits would mean a loss of 400,000 cruise visitors.

- With 110 cruise ship visits, the loss in spending would be around EUR 17 million. These are only rough estimates at the moment.

1.3 Employment

- According to a tourism income and employment survey, the overall employment impact of tourism in Helsinki was 10,292 person years in 2018.

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- The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment estimates that tourism income for Finland could contract by up to 60% even with the most positive outlook. If this is realised, then Helsinki could lose around 6000 person years in 2020.

1.4 Events

Professional events

- 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 last year 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.

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- Around 50 international association meetings and conventions were originally scheduled to be held in Helsinki between March and June. The anticipated number of participants was approximately 40,000. Accordingly, the economic impact of not being able to hold these events is at least EUR 24 million. In addition, the economic impact of domestic business meetings and events that had to be cancelled during the same period is in the tens of millions of euros. Fortunately, most international association meetings have been postponed and not cancelled altogether, and new offers are still being made for the upcoming years.
- There is an increasing array of hybrid events, and company guidelines regarding business travel are having a big impact on this sector. The importance of safety in business travel will no doubt increase. This represents an opportunity for Helsinki as an internationally recognised safe and functional city.

Public events

- Events are one of the most important generators of tourism in Helsinki.
- 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.

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- Due to the restrictions on traveling and gathering, practically all events have been cancelled until the end of June 2020. Decisions have also been made for events during the remainder of the summer, and also most of these events have now been cancelled.
- According to initial estimates, the economic impact of cancelled events between March and June amounts to approximately EUR 24 million.

1.5 Tourism income

Tourism income

- According to a report on [Helsinki's tourism income and employment in 2018](#) published this May, Helsinki's direct tourism income amounts to approximately EUR 1.6 billion.

- Income generated for Helsinki by domestic and foreign visitors (does not include income for Helsinki generated by Finns traveling abroad)
- According to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland's total tourism income amounts to EUR 16.1 billion (2019). Helsinki's share of this is roughly 20% -> EUR 3.2 billion
 - Includes income for Helsinki generated by Finns traveling abroad

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- According to a [scenario published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), the impact on tourism in Helsinki ranges from EUR 1.9 billion to EUR 2.2 billion according to the most positive and negative scenarios (figures are indicative).
- The same general estimate is reached by using the data from the tourism income and employment report and adding income for Helsinki generated by Finns traveling abroad.
- It is very important to note that these figures are only estimates and are not statistically reliable!***

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.
- 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 [tourism roadmap](#) (situation update 11/2019)

2.1 Development of tourism

Key tourism projects before the crisis

- Knowledge management
- Promoting digitalisation
- Sustainable tourism ([Think Sustainably](#) service, Sustainable Tourism Programme, [Carbon Neutral Tourism](#) project, [Sustainable Travel Finland](#) programme)

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Key tourism projects during the corona crisis

- Payment waivers for [rents](#) and land leases ([for cultural and recreational purposes](#), as well as for [local businesses](#))
- [Domestic marketing](#)
- Promoting the feeling of safety together with the customer experience design agency Hellon
- [Utilising the urban environment flexibly](#), e.g. Senate Square, street space, etc.
- [Promoting online business for tourism](#)
- Broad co-operation with businesses and national and international actors, including [regular webinars](#).
- Local utilisation of Virtual Helsinki environment (e.g. [May Day concert](#)) and promoting it in international media

2.2 Hotel investments

Hotel projects in Helsinki

- Approximately 30 hotel projects are currently [planned or being built](#) in Helsinki.

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- According to the [Helsinki Business Hub](#), it appears that some projects may be postponed, but so far none of the projects has been cancelled.

2.3 Cooperation

Key tourism cooperation networks for Helsinki

- [Helsinki Doers network](#)
- [Visit Finland](#) (Helsinki active in several committees)
- [Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council's tourism committee](#)
- Helsinki Region tourism cooperation forum
- [European Cities Marketing](#)
- [Digital Tourism Think Thank](#)
- [European Capital of Smart Tourism](#)

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In addition to our normal cooperation networks, two new committees have been created during the corona crisis

- Tourism sector crisis committee – 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).
- Visit Finland has established a project committee to monitor the recovery of the tourism markets, gather an overview of the situation and draw up an action plan in order to react quickly and effectively once the crisis is over and tourism resumes. Helsinki is represented on the steering committee of the project.

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