



Insight Department:  
China Factsheet | 2019

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Published: November 2020

# Executive Summary

## Key Facts and Trends

*This factsheet provides the latest data on the volume and value of visitors from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Visitor figures refer to residents of Mainland China only (excluding Hong Kong and Macao). In 2020, the methodology of IPS was revised to represent more accurately international visitors and all data was recalculated back to 2009. As a result, international figures in this report might differ from, and supersede, previously published IPS data.*

**Please note:** Due to the relatively low annual sample sizes for visitors to Scotland from China, 3-year average figures have been calculated to allow for more accurate comparison of recent and historical data (pages 7 and 8), and to provide a more robust basis for analysis of detailed data such as regional visits and purpose of travel (pages 3 and 6). Some top-level 2019 figures have been provided on pages 3, 4, 5 and 9 to keep this publication consistent with other international factsheets published on [visitscotland.org](https://visitscotland.org). While these can be useful, it is recommended to refer to the 3-year average figures on pages 7 and 8 when analysing size and trends of the market.

Figures suggest that big increases in visits and spend made China Scotland's **fifth largest international source market** measured by number of visits, and **fourth largest** by tourism expenditure in 2019.

Analysis of 3-year average data reveals significant and continuous market growth over the last decade which culminated in 2017-2019 with 153,000 visits per year on average. China is Scotland's **fastest growing key source market**, with average annual trips increasing **fivefold** between 2010-2012 and 2017-2019. Over the same period, tourism **expenditure rose** sevenfold, from £17 million to £121 million per year on average.

Chinese travellers prefer to visit Scotland during **summer**, and 60% of all trips occur between July and September. Three in four visits last longer than a week. Among Scotland's top ten source markets, China has the highest share of **holiday** travel – 81% of all trips between 2017 and 2019. It is also interesting to note that Chinese visitors are **younger than the average** international visitor and nearly half of all Chinese trips to Scotland are made by people aged 34 or younger.



# Latest Information

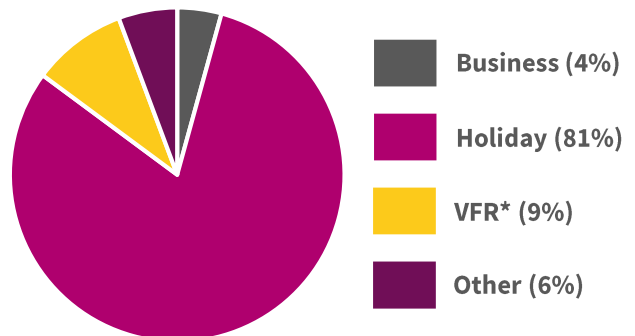
## Visitors from China to Scotland

### Key Figures Overview, 2019

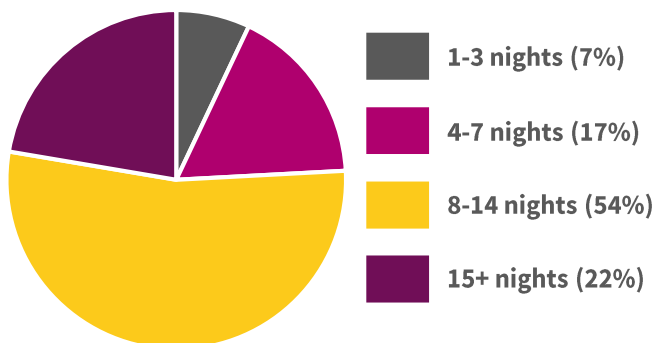
Indicators	Key Facts in 2019	% Change 2018/19
Total visits to Scotland	172,000	+33%
Total nights in Scotland	2,047,000	+191%
Total spend in Scotland	£141,976,000	+31%
Average length of stay	11.9 nights	+118%
Average spend per day	£69	-55%
Average spend per visit	£827	-2%

Source: IPS, 2019. Figures based on relatively low sample size. It is recommended to refer to the 3-year average figures on page 7.

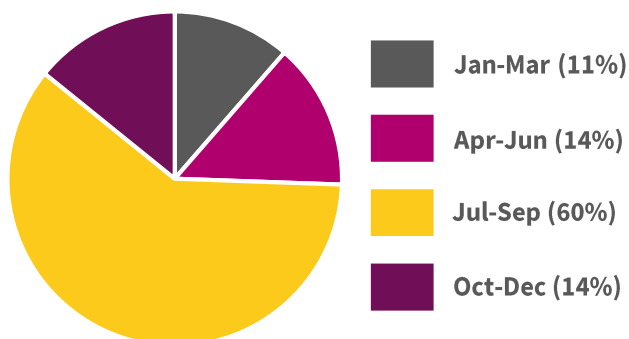
### Purpose of Travel



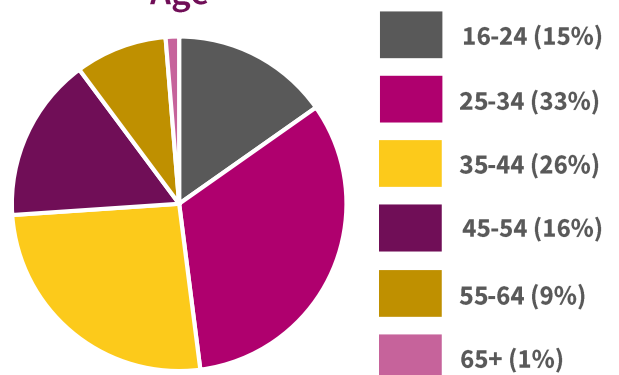
### Duration of Stay



### Seasonality



### Age



All charts are based on 3-year average data (2017-2019); \* VFR = Visiting friends or relatives. Figures may not sum up due to rounding. Source: IPS.

# International Tourism Figures

## Top 10 Overseas Markets



Glenfinnan Monument, Loch Shiel, Highlands  
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### Visitors from China Compared to Other Overseas Markets: Trips, Nights and Spend – Value and Percent of Total, 2019

Country	Trips		Spend		Nights	
	000s	%	£m	%	000s	%
USA	636	18%	717	28%	4,246	16%
Germany	322	9%	196	8%	2,228	8%
France	222	6%	135	5%	1,723	6%
Netherlands	182	5%	95	4%	1,210	4%
<b>China*</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2,047</b>	<b>7%</b>
Australia	148	4%	146	6%	1,706	6%
Ireland	146	4%	60	2%	475	2%
Spain*	128	4%	51	2%	915	3%
Canada	125	4%	92	4%	1,023	4%
Italy*	122	4%	86	3%	1,072	4%
Rest of World	1,257	36%	818	32%	10,741	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,460</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,538</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>27,385</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: IPS, 2019. Figures may not sum up due to rounding. \*Figures based on lower sample sizes.

# Inbound Tourism | UK & Scotland

## Visitors from China

### Trips of China Residents to the UK and Scotland: Total and Average Figures, 2019

Indicators	Key Facts in 2019	
	UK	Scotland
<b>Total visits</b>	884,000	172,000
<b>Visits by purpose*</b>	58% Holiday 14% VFR 14% Business 14% Other	81% Holiday 9% VFR 4% Business 6% Other
<b>Total nights</b>	14,427,000	2,047,000
<b>Total spend</b>	£1,711,070,000	£141,976,000
<b>Average length of stay</b>	16.3 nights	11.9 nights
<b>Average spend per day</b>	£119	£69
<b>Average spend per visit</b>	£1,937	£827

Source: IPS. Figures may not sum up due to rounding.

\*3-year average (2017-2019).

Chinese residents made 884,000 trips to the UK in 2019 which marked a 3% growth from 2018. Nights increased slightly more (+5%), while total expenditure rose significantly by 14% to exceed £1.7 billion.

Annual figures suggest a much bigger year-on-year market growth in Scotland, with **visits and spend** of Chinese residents **increasing by a third** from their 2018 levels. It is important to note that these figures are based on relatively low sample sizes which reduce data reliability. For this reason, it is recommended to use the **3-year average figures** provided on pages 7 and 8 when analysing market performance in recent years.

China's share of Scotland's inbound tourism has been growing rapidly over the last decade, and in 2019 it became Scotland's **fifth largest international source market** measured by number of visits. Figures indicate that one in five Chinese travellers to the UK in 2019 visited Scotland.

### In 2019, China was

#### The UK's

- **13th** largest source market measured by number of visits
- **5th** largest by number of nights
- **2nd** largest by expenditure

#### Scotland's

- **5th** largest international source market measured by number of visits
- **3rd** largest by number of nights
- **4th** largest by expenditure

## Popular Destinations

### Tourist Flow Across Scotland's Regions

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#### Top Regions Visited:

**Edinburgh &  
Lothians**

**Greater Glasgow &  
Clyde Valley**

**Highlands &  
Islands**

Holidaymakers, who form the vast majority of Chinese travellers to Scotland, tend to visit mostly **high-profile** tourist destinations. In 2019, Edinburgh & Lothians, Greater Glasgow & Clyde Valley, and the Highlands & Islands were once again the most popular regions. Between 2017 and 2019, China was the **fifth largest** international source market for Edinburgh & Lothians, generating more than 130,000 visits to the region annually.

*Due to International Passenger Survey's (IPS) methodology in the collection and publishing of tourist data, the flow of overseas visitors within Scotland is analysed at a regional level. Small sample sizes for visitors from China make regional analysis possible only for the top three regions listed above. Each of these consists of council areas as follows:*

**Edinburgh & the Lothians** = City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian;

**Greater Glasgow, Clyde Valley** = East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire;

**Highlands & Islands** = Highland, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands.

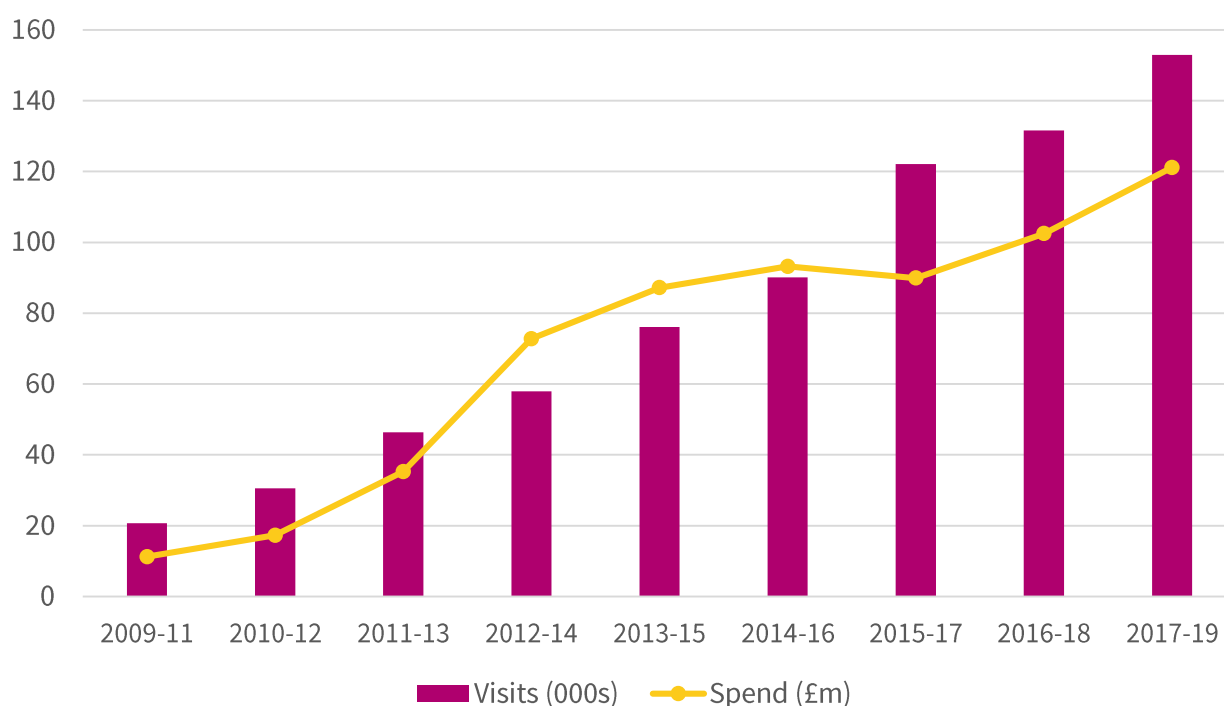


# Visitors from China to Scotland

## Historical Trend Information | 2009/11 – 2017/19

The 2017-2019 period was the **most successful 3-year period in the last decade** in terms of visits, nights and spend by Chinese residents travelling to Scotland. China has been Scotland's **most rapidly and steadily growing key source market**, with number of trips increasing in every year since 2009. Between 2010-2012 and 2017-2019, visits rose fivefold while associated expenditure grew sevenfold. With 153,000 trips per year on average in 2017-2019, Chinese visitors accounted for 4.3% of all international travel to Scotland. This percentage was much smaller in 2010-2012 (1.3%), when the average annual Chinese visits were 31,000.

### Inbound Tourism Volume and Value Trend, 3-Year Annual Average Figures (2009/11-2017/19)



Source: IPS.

### Total Visits, Nights & Spend, 3-Year Annual Average Figures (2009/11-2017/19)

	2009-11	2010-12	2011-13	2012-14	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19
<b>Total Visits (000s)</b>	21	31	46	58	76	90	122	132	153
<b>Total Nights (000s)</b>	167	230	451	699	773	834	868	931	1,248
<b>Total Spend (£m)</b>	11	17	35	73	87	93	90	102	121

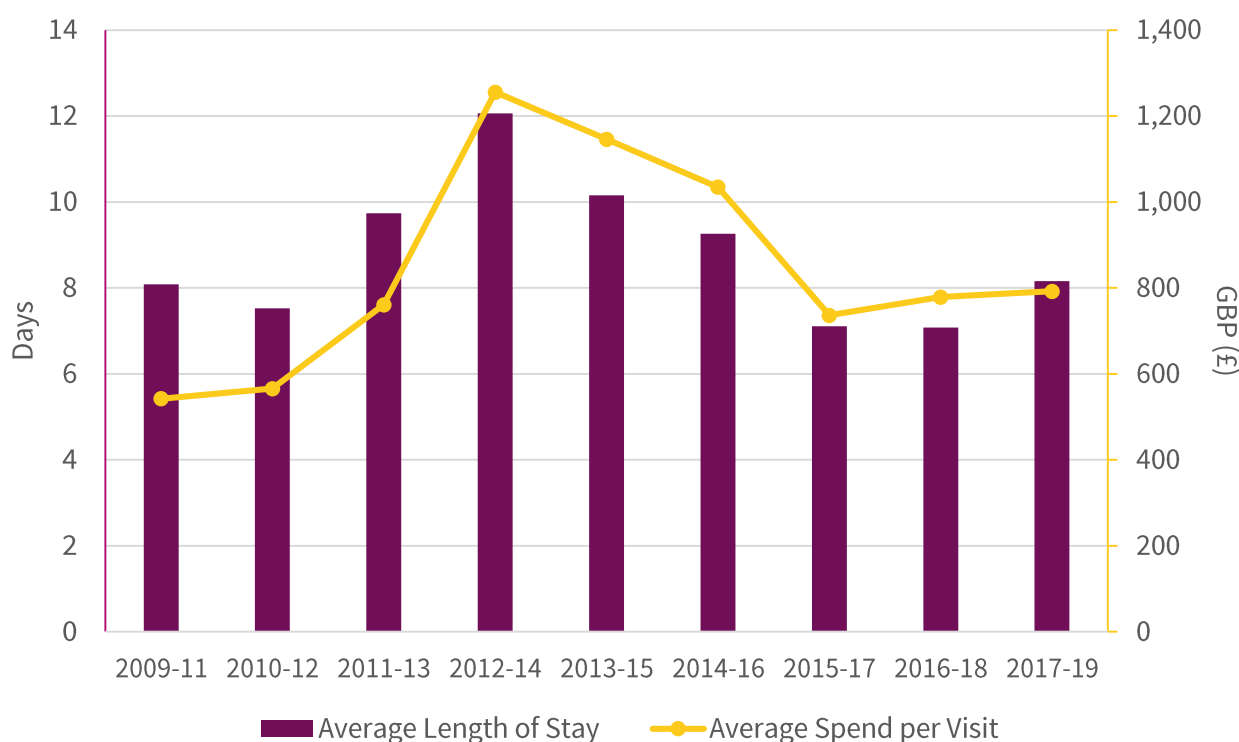
Source: IPS.

## Average Chinese Visit to Scotland

### Historical Trend Information | 2009/11 – 2017/19

As long-haul travellers, Chinese residents tend to stay in Scotland **longer than a week**. Average length of stay varied between 7 and 10 nights throughout the last decade, except for a peak in 2012-2014 when it reached 12.1 nights. The majority of Chinese visitors to Scotland also travel to England during the course of their trip, and the historical trend in average stay seems to be strongly influenced by Chinese travellers' **average stay in the UK** as a whole. At £792, average spend per visit in 2017-2019 was almost £100 above the international average.

#### Average Length of Stay and Spend Trend, 3-Year Annual Average Figures (2009/11-2017/19)



Source: IPS.

#### Average Length of Stay, Daily and Trip Spend, 3-Year Annual Average Figures (2009/11-2017/19)

	2009-11	2010-12	2011-13	2012-14	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19
<b>Average Length of Stay (Nights)</b>	8.1	7.5	9.7	12.1	10.2	9.3	7.1	7.1	8.2
<b>Average Spend per Day (£)</b>	67	75	78	104	113	112	104	110	97
<b>Average Spend per Visit (£)</b>	542	566	761	1,255	1,146	1,035	736	779	792

Source: IPS.



# Outbound Tourism

## Visitors to China

### Trips and Spend of UK and Scottish Residents in China, 2019

Indicators		Key Facts in 2019	% Change 2018/19
Total visits to China	UK	646,000	+51%
	Scotland	48,000	+64%
Total spend in China	UK	£635,694,000	+104%
	Scotland	£24,620,000	+21%
Average spend per visit	UK	£985	+35%
	Scotland	£517	-26%

Source: IPS, 2019.

2019 marked big increases in visits and spend by UK travellers in China. The number of outbound trips was just under 650,000, while total expenditure reached £636 million.

The average UK resident spent **24.6 nights** and **£985 per visit** while in China. Such average stay is also typical for other long-haul destinations like Australia due to the time and resources involved in undertaking such a journey, as well as the high proportion of VFR trips. **Three in five** of all UK trips to China are made by people **visiting friends and relatives**, 17% by travellers attending business matters and only 15% by holidaymakers.

As a destination, China amounted to 0.7% of the total UK outbound tourism in terms of visits and 1% in terms of expenditure in 2019. Its share of Scotland's overseas tourism was smaller, constituting **0.8% of all international trips** undertaken by Scottish residents, and **0.6% of their total overseas spend**.

Figures indicate that in 2019 Scottish residents made just under 50,000 trips to China, with an associated tourism expenditure of £25 million.

### In 2019, China was

#### The UK's

- **27th** most popular destination measured by number of visits
- **22nd** by expenditure

#### Scotland's

- **26th** most popular destination measured by number of visits
- **26th** by expenditure

Source: IPS, 2019.



## Appendix

International Passenger Survey 2019

### USING AND INTERPRETING STATISTICAL DATA

Sources: Data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics' International Passenger Survey (IPS). Information about the survey can be found on the VisitBritain website [www.visitbritain.org](http://www.visitbritain.org) (Insights & Statistics section) or the Office for National Statistics website [www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html).

**Sample Sizes:** Analysis of sub-groups, such as trips by purpose or demographic group, relies on small sample sizes that can be unreliable. Where this is a particular issue, methods to aggregate data, such as using a 3-year average instead of single-year data, have been used. Before using the data, it is important to recognise the limitations of using a small sample size. Further information, including methodology and sample sizes, can be found on the VisitBritain website [www.visitbritain.org](http://www.visitbritain.org) (Insights & Statistics section).

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