

- Britain's fifth largest industry – worth £85 billion – 3.5% of the nation's economy –
- employs 2.1 million people – 7.7% of the workforce – more jobs than construction or transport –
- generates over £16 billion in export earnings –
- inbound visitors pay £3.3 billion in tax, the equivalent of the salary of 195,000 nurses –

31 January 2008

TOURISM TOLD: GET INVOLVED AND RAISE AWARENESS OF CRITICAL INDUSTRY

As Britain heads into another holiday season, public sector and commercial tourism businesses – accommodation providers and attractions, Tourist Information Centres and tour operators, regions and destinations – are being urged to organise or attend an event under the British Tourism Week banner.

The second annual event takes place from 10 to 18 March this year and, with the support of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, aims to galvanise organisations and individuals to take pride in being part of the nation's fifth biggest industry. Events aim to raise the profile of an £85 billion visitor economy and draw national awareness to its critical importance and the contribution it makes to local economies and millions of livelihoods.

Already more than 60 different events are listed on the website, but organisers hope that every region and destination will organise something to help businesses or raise awareness of tourism experiences among consumers.

Stephen Dowd, co-chairman of British Tourism Week's multi-sector steering committee and chief executive of UKinbound, says: "Around 2.1 million people – nearly eight per cent of the workforce – in a wide range of sectors depend on tourism for their jobs and livelihoods.

"We are asking businesses to help us raise awareness of the tourism experiences that can be enjoyed in this country. We hope that if nothing else, MPs, the media, opinion-leaders and consumers will take time for a day visit or overnight stay during British Tourism Week."

This year British Tourism Week recognises that 80% of industry success comes from domestic visitors and that, with increasing competition from overseas destinations, it can do more to encourage Britons to holiday at home.

More...

Says Tom Wright, chief executive of VisitBritain and co-chairman of British Tourism Week: "Taking place in a year that witnesses the handover of the Olympic Games from Beijing to London and the start of a four-year Cultural Olympiad for the whole of the nation, we want to ensure that the many sectors that make up our industry, the private and public sector, are prepared to unite in generating a lasting legacy.

"Every day, more of us are enjoying the appeals of heritage sites and historic buildings, exploring our stunning countryside and cinematic landscapes or taking a break in contemporary cities. Becoming ever more familiar with world-renowned events from Wimbledon to Ascot, we are also rediscovering the eccentricities – from worm-charming to sedan-racing, cheese-rolling and bog-snorkelling – and quintessentially British, cultural qualities that make us unique."

As last year, the British Travel Trade Fair remains one of the core events of the Week, showcasing excellence in destinations and experiences from around the country. Members of Parliament are being invited to visit tourism businesses in their constituencies, sign a pledge card in support of the week and enjoy a free guided tour of London.

Visitors can take advantage of a series of free walking tours in London and around the country and, in the lead up to the Week, visit a stunning exhibition of landscape photography, Britain on View. With Easter arriving soon after British Tourism Week, consumers will be urged to get out and enjoy a wide variety of holiday experiences.

Visit www.britishtourismweek.com for more information.

- ends -

Elliott Frisby, Corporate PR Manager, VisitBritain on 020 8563 3035 or 07951 996241

Notes to Editors

- British Tourism Week (10-18 March 2008) has been established to demonstrate the critical value of tourism to the economy of the United Kingdom. Through a week of events throughout the UK it will:
 - Increase awareness of the success and importance of the tourism industry
 - Raise quality standards
 - Promote training and professionalism
 - Improve competitiveness of the UK tourism industry
 - Support the preparations for hosting the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- British Tourism Week is organised by VisitBritain and UKinbound with the support of the Tourism Alliance, Tourism Society, ABTA the Travel Association, VisitScotland, Visit Wales, Visit London and Britain's regional tourist boards.