

UK Holiday Parks and Campsites are Making a Positive Contribution to the Health and Wellbeing of Visitors

Findings from the 2019 Economic Benefits Report: Campsites and Holiday Parks – UK'¹ suggest that visiting a holiday park made people more relaxed, happier, and less stressed while providing them with time away with family. The following word cloud was developed in response to the question: "During my time visiting a holiday park/site I feel.....". From this the most frequent words were relaxed/chilled (40%), happy/happier (9%) and no stress/content (10%).



Holiday parks/campsites are providing access to the right environment to support an active and healthier lifestyle

Almost half (44%) of holiday park/campsite operators participating in the 2019 Economic Benefits study provided information on how they encourage health and wellbeing, the most frequent examples include:

- direct access to waterways/beaches, cycle paths and walks provision and information – some on park but mostly linked to surrounding
- provision of local health and wellbeing facilities and promotion within the wider community – includes on-site fitness sessions and park runs
- healthy food options on park/site restaurants/cafes
- dog owners encouraged

"We seek to promote a healthier lifestyle in an environment of outdoor living, which encourages exercise and physical activity".

Holiday park/campsite operator

¹ This report can be found at <u>www.ukcca.org.uk</u>

Visitors are proactively engaging in activities that can benefit their health and wellbeing

According to further evidence from the 2019 Economic Benefits study, time spent relaxing was the most commonly undertaken activity by visitors when visiting a holiday park, followed by short walks and time spent with family and friends.

- 64% spend more time relaxing
- 55% do more short walks
- 50% spend more time with family and friends

During the study visitors were asked to what extent they agree with a range of health and wellbeing statements, when staying on a holiday park/campsite:

- 91% feel less stressed
- 88% feel more relaxed
- 87% feel happier
- 70% do more exercise

"I feel alive and not hemmed in by the stresses and strains of daily life and appreciate every moment with my family away from modern technology enjoying nature and life."

Rented Caravan User, Scotland

"More contented being in the outdoors as a lifestyle choice and getting better value for money. Comfortable and able to manage my time as I wish, with no pressures. I love the easy access to the countryside around."

Touring Caravan Owner, Northern Ireland

"Relaxed and at one with nature, having unwound over our weekends away and feel refreshed when we go back to work every Monday."

Motorhome/Campervan Owner, Wales

"Happy that we have family time because we both work to raise our children. We don't seem to have much time for each other but on our camping holidays we do."

Tent Owner, England

"Relaxed. It's nice to switch off from work and just spend quality time as a family, because in a few year's time the kids probably won't want to come on holidays with us."

Caravan User, Wales



Benefits and impacts of improved physical and mental health

There are a number of physical and mental health benefits related to increased relaxation, spending time with family and exercise such as walking and cycling.

According to the Chief Medical Officer:

"If a medication existed which had a similar effect to physical activity [like walking], it would be regarded as a wonder drug or a miracle cure."

Data shows that walking regularly at any speed will:

- help manage weight
- reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes
- reduce the risk of certain cancers
- improve flexibility and strength of joints, muscles and bones, and reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- increase 'good' cholesterol
- boost the immune system
- improve mood, reduce anxiety, aid sleep and improve self-image

A new study by scientists from the University of East Anglia has officially confirmed the 'significant and wide-ranging health benefits' of spending time outdoors and living closer to nature. Findings revealed that exposure to green spaces can boost your health in so many ways, including reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature death, and high blood pressure².

As well as health impacts, there are significant socioeconomic implications. Physical inactivity currently costs the NHS between £1bn and £1.8bn a year. Costs to the wider economy are conservatively estimated at £5.5bn in sickness absence and £1bn in premature deaths – a total of £8.3bn.

Research also shows that feeling more relaxed can reduce stress in a person's everyday life which is vital for maintaining overall health, as it can improve mood, boost immune function, promote longevity and allow you to be more productive.

A study by the New Economics Foundation found there were 17,500 episodes where stress or anxiety was the primary cause for hospital admissions in 2016/17, which led to 165,800 days when beds were occupied.

According to the think tank, the average cost of a bed day to the NHS is around £429, which means the total cost to the taxpayer of these episodes is £71.1m.

In 2010 the UK Government launched the National Wellbeing Programme to:

"Start measuring our progress as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving; not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life."

In response the Office of National Statistics established a national programme to develop and publish an accepted and trusted set of statistics for wellbeing, to complement traditional economic measures such as GDP. Examples of indicators on this framework include:

- healthy life expectancy
- sports participation
- accessed natural environment
- satisfaction with leisure time
- mental wellbeing
- satisfaction with overall lives
- overall happiness
- satisfaction with health

Evidence from the 2019 Economic Benefits study shows that the **UK holiday park sector is making a positive contribution to visitors' health and wellbeing, supporting the UK policy agenda.**



