Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism

Do you enjoy working with people and using your communication skills? Are you happy to go the extra mile to provide customers with excellent service, including working longer hours? If so, then hospitality, leisure and tourism could be the industry for you.

This industry needs friendly, outgoing, helpful and well organised people.

In September 2025 there were 2.6 million jobs in the UK accommodation and food services sector, accounting for 7% of all UK jobs, making hospitality the sixth largest of the main UK industries. [1]

In 2024, it was estimated that 2.4 million people worked in tourism related activities, with 1.4 million of those working specifically in tourism, Tourism related activities were estimated to have directly generated £147 billion to the UK economy. [2]

What areas can I work in?

This is a wide ranging area, with jobs available at all levels. In hospitality you would be providing food, drink or accommodation services to customers. Leisure involves providing support in recreational activities. Travel and tourism can be a combination of both leisure and hospitality and also overlap with the culture and heritage sector in terms of certain visitor attractions.

All areas of this industry also involve an element of retail and jobs such as airline cabin crew and cruise ship workers are covered in the career area 'Transport and Distribution'.

There may also be opportunities to work abroad.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our Career Pathway.

What kind of companies can I work for?

You might work for:

- hotels
- restaurants, pubs or clubs
- holiday parks or centres
- cinemas
- leisure complexes
- travel agencies
- tour operators
- visitor attractions
- tourist boards and information centres.

What's the job market like?

In 2025 Scotland's tourism sector employed 200,700 people, accounting for 7.4% of Scottish employment. It was estimated to have generated over £5 million for the Scottish economy, accounting for 3.1% of Scotland's total economic output. The highest proportion of people working in Scottish tourism were in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian (39,700), followed by Glasgow College Region (32,600), and the Highlands and Islands (24,200). Between 2025 and 2028 it is forecast that there could be demand for an extra 6,890 people, a growth of 3.4%. This compares to a Scotland wide increase of 2.5%. [3]

The hospitality sector remains a crucial contributor to the Scottish economy and is its third largest employer, accounting for 9% of all jobs in Scotland. It supported £1.9 billion of economic activity and 243,000 workforce jobs in the second quarter of 2025. There was a modest growth of jobs since the last quarter of 2025 of 1.2%, or 3,000 jobs. In the second quarter of 2025 there were 111,117 full-time roles and 135,444 part-time roles in the Scottish hospitality sector, continuing the trend of part-time roles being the most predominant type of employment. [4]

In the UK, despite vacancy rates being above pre-pandemic levels, since 2022 the number of job postings in hospitality has been steadily declining with 74,000 vacancies advertised between July and September 2025. [4]

Facts and figures

- The latest figures report that in 2024-25 the median hourly pay in Scottish hospitality was £12.71 per hour, compared with the Scottish economy-wide median of £18.39 per hour. [6]
- Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were 8,710 job postings for chefs and cooks in Scotland. The highest number of postings were in Edinburgh City (1,800), Glasgow City (1,300) and the Highlands (800) respectively. [3]
- Tourism was estimated to have a lower proportion of the workforce educated to SCQF Levels 7 and above, and a higher proportion educated to SCQF Levels 5 and 6, compared to Scotland overall. [3]
- In 2024, men were paid 1.5% more on average than women employed in UK accomodation and food services roles. [4]

Want to find out more?

You can find out more about career opportunities in the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries at Springboard UK.

Sources

[1] Hospitality, statistics and policy, UK Parliament House of Commons Library (10 February 2026)

[2] Economic Value of Tourism in Britain, Visit Britain (20 January 2026)

[3] Sectoral Skills Assessment: Tourism, Skills Development Scotland (October 2025)

[4] Hospitality Briefing, Fraser Allandar Institute (December 2025)