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# VISITOR FIGURES

# 2025

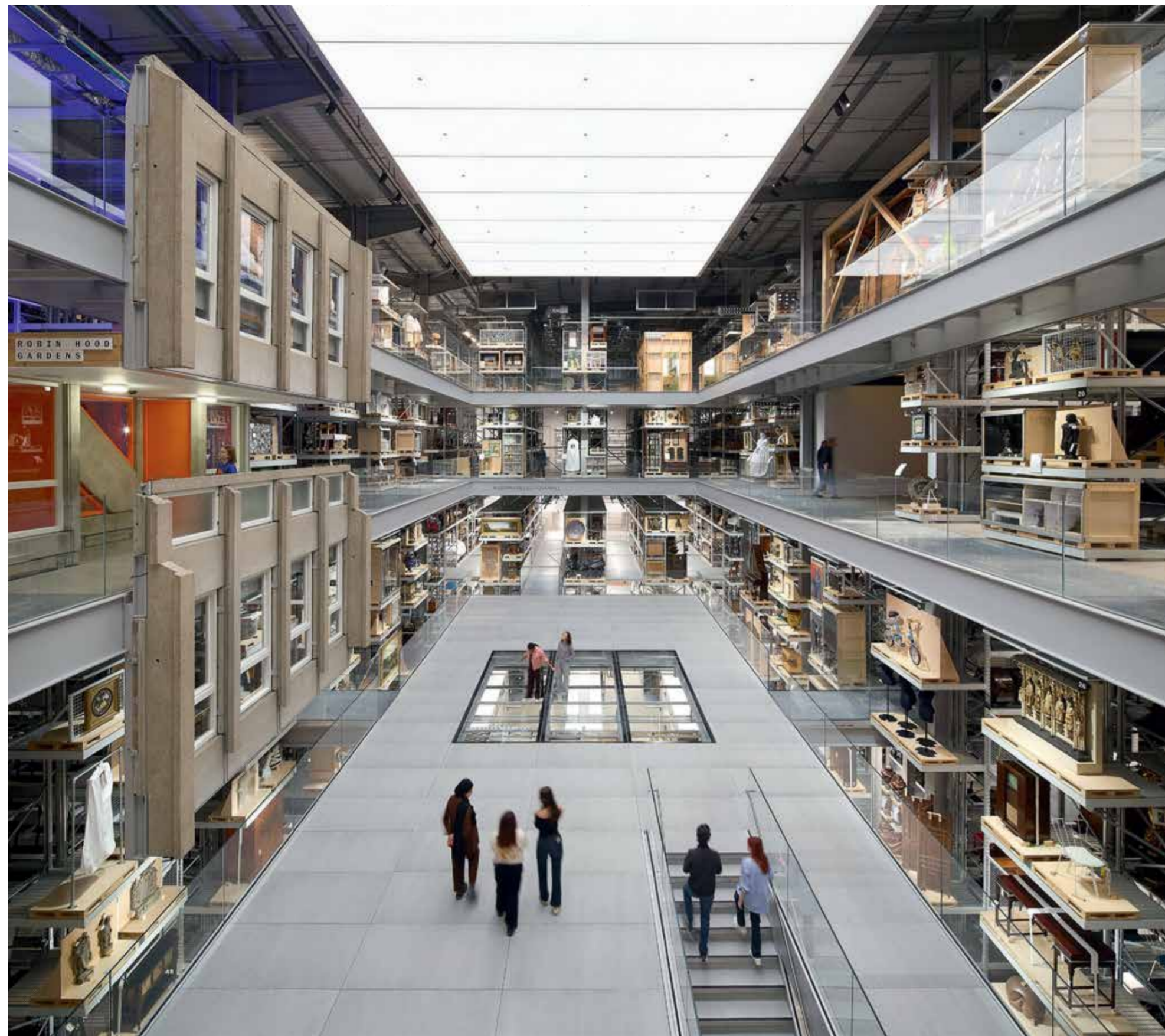
**SPECIAL  
REPORT**

The definitive  
guide to the world's  
most visited  
museums

Art museum  
attendance  
worldwide

# Visitor figures 2025

The results are in...



Shelf life: V&A East Storehouse in Stratford, a new outpost of the Victoria & Albert Museum in Kensington, made a strong start since opening in May last year, welcoming an average of 60,000 visitors per month

## New museums a big hit with visitors

Some of the world's most venerable institutions continue to struggle to attract the number of visitors they had before Covid, but there is enthusiasm for new venues, and in regions such as Asia and Latin America. By Lee Cheshire and Elena Goukassian

As the distorting impact of the Covid-19 pandemic fades, we can start to see more clearly how it changed the museum landscape, and how the near-complete drops in museum attendance in 2020 have obscured deeper trends.

The Art Newspaper's annual visitor-numbers survey compiles figures from art museums around the world for the preceding calendar year. Our data for 2025 shows that, on the whole, art

museums are as popular as they have ever been, with many of the biggest museums continuing to welcome millions every year. More than 200 million visits were made to the top 100 museums in our list – still a little off the 230 million recorded in 2019, but a long way from the 54 million in 2020.

A raft of new museums have opened in the last few years to great success – not just in the Middle East and East Asia, where demand seems almost unlimited, but also in highly museum-dense cities

like London and New York. However, the growth is not spread evenly, with some museums that used to dominate our list still struggling to get back to their pre-Covid glory days.

### United Kingdom

For the last few years we have been reporting the same two things about London's National Gallery. First, it had the ignominious position of being the institution that had lost the most visitors in absolute terms from its

pre-Covid high – almost 3 million of them. Secondly, we expected numbers to jump after it reopened its Sainsbury Wing in May of last year. With a redesigned entrance to more easily accommodate security checks and spectacular rehanging galleries packed with everything from Leonardos to Van Goghs, would visitor numbers get back to normal?

The answer, sadly, is not quite. Numbers have gone up since the re-opening, and the museum finished up on nearly 4.2 million for 2025. That is

about 30% up on the previous year, but still 30% down on 2019. Looking at individual months, as reported by the UK's cultural ministry, we can see that even after the opening, numbers were still on average 15% down on 2019. If those volumes continue into 2026, we can expect the National Gallery to achieve around 4.9 million visitors – still not to be sniffed at, and putting it firmly in the top ten worldwide, but somewhat off its days of getting 6 million-plus visitors.

That, of course, assumes we are not



Despite the opening of the renovated Sainsbury Wing last year, the National Gallery's visitor numbers are still down on its numbers in 2019, before the Covid-19 shutdown

seeing a bump from aficionados eager to see the new galleries. The neighbouring National Portrait Gallery saw exactly that when it reopened in summer 2023, but numbers are now back at pre-Covid levels, with 1.5 million last year. Across town, the new V&A East Storehouse also got off to a good start, attracting an average of nearly 60,000 visitors per month, slightly more than Young V&A and the Wallace Collection and similar to the Imperial War Museum London. It beat its annual target in just five months, says a museum spokesperson. Even if this drops off, it bodes well for the nearby V&A East, which opens this year.

While museum directors sometimes dismiss visitor numbers as a poor measure of an institution's success, they do have an undeniable effect on finances. The National Gallery announced in February it would have to make staff redundant in order to fill a £8.2m deficit, citing "the present global landscape with the cost-of-living crisis". Over at Tate, whose museums have also been struggling since Covid – with Tate Modern still 26% down on 2019, Tate Britain 36% down, Tate St Ives 19% down and Tate Liverpool closed for renovation – a round of redundancies cut 7% of the workforce last year.

But the pain is not spread equally in the UK museum sector. The British Museum had another strong year, with 6.4 million visitors, similar to last year and up on 2019. And London's Natural History Museum (not included in our survey) achieved 7.1 million, a record year. The main Oxbridge museums, the Ashmolean and the Fitzwilliam, were up 16% and 38% on 2019, respectively, while the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery fully reopened after five years of closures, achieving 672,000 visitors, slightly up on 2019.

What is the reason for the divergence? In 2024, Tate shared internal data with The Art Newspaper that showed it had recovered 95% of domestic visitors but only 61% of international visitors. The museum attributed this to the effects of Brexit, reporting that visitors aged 16-24 from the EU had nearly halved, and arguing that this demographic shift hit art museums, especially contemporary art museums, the hardest. In contrast, the British Museum reported that its international visitor numbers had almost fully recovered. The government tourism agency Visit Britain estimates that total inbound tourism to the UK in



### Madrid's Prado broke the 3.5 million barrier for the first time

2025 was higher than in 2019, and EU visitors were up 4% on 2024.

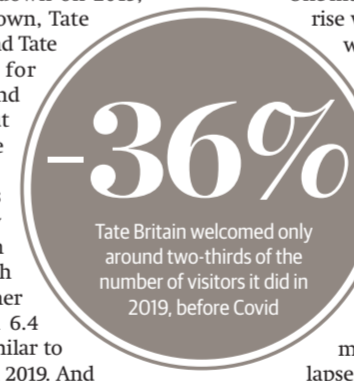
### Europe

It was a relatively uneventful year for museum attendance in mainland Europe. Most of the big museums, especially in France, Spain and Italy, have long recovered any Covid-related falls and are now marching steadily forwards, clocking around the same number of visitors year after year.

One museum that did see a small rise was the Prado in Madrid, which broke the 3.5-million barrier for the first time. But rather than celebrating the record, director Miguel Falomir was circumspect, telling the press in January: "The Prado doesn't need a single visitor more. We feel comfortable with 3.5 million. A museum's success can collapse it, like the Louvre, with some rooms becoming oversaturated. The important thing is not to collapse."

The Musée du Louvre, of course, has been complaining about overattendance for a while and, this year, had to contend with theft, ticket fraud and the resignation of its director to boot. None of that has stopped it keeping its place on top of our survey, however. The Louvre actually gained visitors from the previous year, counting more than 9 million people in 2025.

Elsewhere in Paris, the Musée d'Orsay held firm on 3.8 million. Centre Pompidou closed in September for refurbishment – many of its shows will be held instead at the Grand Palais, while the Musée de l'Orangerie had a short closure, resulting in a small fall to its figures. In Spain, two of the Reina Sofia's venues were closed in 2025, but the main museum in central Madrid rose slightly to 1.6 million. Italy's biggest museums continued to pack them



-36% Tate Britain welcomed only around two-thirds of the number of visitors it did in 2019, before Covid

# Worldwide art museum attendance 2025



## Top 150 museums: 1-70

No	Total	Museum	City	% change from 2024	% change from 2019
1	9,046,000	Musée du Louvre	Paris	+4%	-6%
2	6,933,822	Vatican Museums	Vatican City	+2%	+1%
3	6,507,483	National Museum of Korea Seoul	Seoul	+72%	+94%
4	6,440,120	British Museum	London	-1%	+3%
5	5,984,091	Metropolitan Museum of Art †	New York	+4%	+22%
6	5,087,276	State Russian Museum	St Petersburg	+41%	+112%
7	5,048,893	Museo Nacional de Antropología	Mexico City	+36%	+64%
8	4,593,216	Shanghai Museum East †	Shanghai	+8%	Opened 2024
9	4,514,266	Tate Modern	London	-2%	-26%
10	4,147,544	National Gallery	London	+29%	-31%
11	3,846,375	State Hermitage Museum	St Petersburg	+8%	-22%
12	3,785,134	Musée d'Orsay	Paris	+1%	+4%
13	3,513,402	Museo Nacional del Prado	Madrid	+2%	+10%
14	3,477,951	Wawel Royal Castle	Krakow	+12%	No data
15	3,332,300	Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)	London	-5%	-15%
16	3,075,976	State Tretyakov Gallery	Moscow	+22%	+8%
17	2,895,010	Somerset House	London	-6%	+2%
18	2,847,587	National Gallery of Art	Washington, DC	-28%	-30%
19	2,763,720	Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)	New York	+4%	+39%
20	2,676,373	Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec	Mexico City	No data	No data
21	2,665,000	Centre Pompidou	Paris	-17%	-19%
22	2,601,066	M+	Hong Kong	0%	Opened 2021
23	2,576,118	Tokyo National Museum	Tokyo	+6%	-4%
24	2,516,719	teamLab Planets TOKYO	Tokyo	+3%	No data
25	2,495,189	NGV International †	Melbourne	+9%	+3%
26	2,434,492	Shanghai Museum on People's Square †	Shanghai	+2%	+18%
27	2,426,842	National Palace Museum	Taipei	+29%	-37%
28	2,400,965	Art Gallery of New South Wales	Sydney	+1%	+86%
29	2,318,305	National Museum of Scotland	Edinburgh	0%	+5%
30	2,300,000	Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam	-8%	-15%
31	2,279,825	Galleria dell'Accademia	Florence	No data	+34%
32	2,224,936	National Museum in Krakow	Krakow	+20%	+86%
33	2,164,513	Museo Soumaya	Mexico City	-5%	+94%
34	2,129,677	KHM - Museumsverband	Vienna	+9%	+16%
35	2,112,210	MMA Seoul	Seoul	+28%	+49%
36	2,104,853	National Gallery Singapore	Singapore	+3%	+16%
37	2,004,777	National Galleries Scotland: National †	Edinburgh	0%	+27%
38	1,994,052	Acropolis Museum	Athens	0%	+13%
39	1,976,313	Gyeongju National Museum	Gyeongju	+46%	+58%
40	1,867,342	Van Gogh Museum	Amsterdam	+1%	-11%
41	1,715,830	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum	Tokyo	-14%	-40%
42	1,691,075	teamLab Borderless: MORI Building	Tokyo	+18%	Opened 2024
43	1,648,112	National Museum of Western Art	Tokyo	+21%	No data
44	1,635,322	The Royal Castle in Warsaw - Museum	Warsaw	-24%	+30%
45	1,601,732	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (main site)	Madrid	+4%	*
46	1,570,000	Fondation Louis Vuitton	Paris	+30%	+47%
47	1,556,000	Upper Belvedere †	Vienna	+5%	+23%
48	1,523,447	National Portrait Gallery	London	-3%	-7%
49	1,503,406	Art Institute of Chicago	Chicago	+14%	-10%
50	1,480,055	National Museum in Warsaw	Warsaw	-1%	No data
51	1,455,790	Petit Palais	Paris	0%	+53%
52	1,423,588	Louvre Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	0%	+46%
53	1,400,000	Nat. Museum of African American History and Culture	Washington, DC	-13%	-30%
54	1,394,000	Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac	Paris	+10%	+25%
55	1,381,415	Hong Kong Museum of Art	Hong Kong	-22%	Closed
56	1,375,533	Musem	Marseille	+6%	+14%
57	1,355,689	Palazzo Ducale	Venice	+2%	No data
58	1,323,616	J. Paul Getty Museum (Getty Center) †	Los Angeles	+2%	-8%
59	1,322,716	National Art Center, Tokyo	Tokyo	-25%	-31%
60	1,305,003	Guggenheim Museum Bilbao	Bilbao	0%	+11%
61	1,273,354	Museo Egizio	Turin	+23%	+49%
62	1,240,113	Moscow Kremlin Museums	Moscow	+2%	-60%
63	1,219,831	Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum	Glasgow	+4%	-33%
64	1,195,935	Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand	São Paulo	+106%	+64%
65	1,159,530	Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)	Toronto	+4%	-11%
66	1,149,325	Tate Britain	London	-6%	-33%
67	1,142,012	Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro	Rio de Janeiro	-8%	-56%
68	1,129,211	Musée de l'Orangerie	Paris	-6%	+10%
69	1,123,409	Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Belo Horizonte	Belo Horizonte	+8%	-26%
70	1,094,325	The Huntington	Los Angeles	-5%	32%

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### Methodology

• All the data used was supplied by the institutions concerned. Museums that did not supply data in accordance with our criteria, or whom we were unable to contact, do not appear in the table. The numerical ranking is therefore for ease-of-use only.

• Some institutions have more than one building (†). Please see the footnote on p4 for combined totals

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Italy's big museums are still drawing crowds—the Uffizi's three sites in Florence saw 5.3 million visitors in 2025

**New museums a big hit with visitors**

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in—the Vatican Museums with 6.9 million and the Uffizi with 5.3 million over its three interconnected sites in Florence (The Uffizi was unable to provide a figure for individual sites, thus has been excluded from our table).

The picture in northern Europe was slightly more mixed. An Anselm Kiefer exhibition shared between Amsterdam's Stedelijk and Van Gogh Museums was an unexpected hit, drawing 340,000 visits in total and helping to boost overall attendance to 675,000 and 1.9 million, respectively. The Rijksmuseum was slightly down, however—2.3 million from 2.5 million in 2024. In Oslo, the newish Munch Museum got 775,000 visitors and reported an increase in international visitors and young adults, which it put down to increased marketing efforts.

In Berlin the state museums increased their ticket prices in October 2025, along with starting to charge for parts of the Humboldt Forum that were previously free. This is likely to have weighed on visits to the Humboldt Forum, which reported 634,000 entries, 13% down on last year. The Neue Nationalgalerie was up 8%, though, to 608,000.

As last year, Russia's big museums seem relatively unaffected by the ongoing war in Ukraine—indeed, the State Russian Museum in St Petersburg has more than doubled its attendance since 2019, with more than 5 million visits this year. That is more than the nearby Hermitage (3.8 million) or the Tretyakov in Moscow (3.1 million)—although both of those grew in 2025.

**Asia, Middle East and Australia**

The most dramatic visitor growth can be seen once again in East Asia. After the Shanghai Museum East debuted in 2024 with 4.2 million visitors, despite



**A Yayoi Kusama show was the most popular ticketed art exhibition in Australian history**

not being fully open, it did even better in 2025 with 4.6 million. The original branch in People's Square brought in 2.4 million visitors of its own, and the blockbuster exhibition *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilisation of Ancient Egypt* closed with an extraordinary 2.8 million visitors across its 13-month run. In Hong Kong, M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum maintained their visitor numbers from last year—2.6 million and 940,000, respectively. Unfortunately, numbers for China's thousands of state-run museums are not released in time for *The Art Newspaper's* annual report: if they were, it could be noted that several would make it into the top ten: the National Museum of China reported just under 7 million in 2024.

Japan, a more mature market with older museums, saw rises and falls: the Tokyo National Museum was up slightly to 2.6 million, while an exhibition of Monet's water lilies at the National Museum of Western Art in the capital got 808,000 visits, helping overall numbers to rise 20% to 1.7 million. Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, meanwhile, saw a 14% fall from the previous year to 1.7 million.

The most spectacular rise, however, was seen in Korea. The National Museum of Korea's main venue in Seoul boomed by more than 70%, from 3.8 million in 2024 to 6.5 million in 2025. That is one of the largest rises in absolute numbers we have ever seen (see page 7). Branches of the National Museum in Jinju, Gyeongju, Cheongju, Buyeo and Iksan also saw significant rises. Meanwhile, MMCA Seoul was up 28% to 2.1 million. It seems the worldwide fervour for Korean culture is translating into museum visits from both locals and foreigners.

The Australian art-museum scene is competitive and slightly complex. The big three museums—the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) in Sydney, the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in Melbourne and the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) in Brisbane—are all split into two buildings. At AGNSW they are immediately adjacent, at QAGOMA they are a few hundred metres apart, and at NGV separated by a river.

Combining the figures, NGV takes the lead: it achieved 3 million visitors last year, up 7.8% on 2024, and a few thousand more than in 2019. The NGV's Yayoi Kusama exhibition sold almost 571,000 tickets and, according to the museum, was the most popular ticketed art exhibition in Australian history—beating its own Van Gogh show from 2017.

Next up is AGNSW with 2.4 million visitors, nearly double what it achieved in 2019, before the opening of the Naala Badu building (previously referred to as the Sydney Modern project).

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**Top 150 museums: 71-150**

No	Total	Museum	City	% change from 2024	% change from 2019
71	1,072,267	Ashmolean Museum	Oxford	+14%	+16%
72	1,055,981	Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston	Boston	+7%	-16%
73	1,049,638	National Gallery of Ireland	Dublin	-1%	+38%
74	1,037,347	Albertina †	Vienna	-3%	+4%
75	1,023,412	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	Wellington	-1%	-34%
76	1,003,455	Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza	Madrid	+5%	-3%
77	1,000,096	Tel Aviv Museum of Art	Tel Aviv	-5%	-24%
78	950,862	Buyeo National Museum	Buyeo	+38%	+42%
79	939,880	Hong Kong Palace Museum	Hong Kong	+3%	Opened 2022
80	937,716	Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) †**	Washington, DC	-26%	-44%
	937,716	National Portrait Gallery (NPG)**	Washington, DC	-26%	-44%
81	922,249	Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC)	Barcelona	+8%	+10%
82	917,935	Faberge Museum	St Petersburg	+14%	No data
83	909,498	GES-2 House of Culture	Moscow	-9%	Opened 2021
84	902,024	Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves	Porto	No data	No data
85	901,435	UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing	Beijing	+125%	+23%
86	885,360	Whitney Museum of American Art	New York	0%	-14%
87	881,625	Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park	Grand Rapids	+4%	+31%
88	878,000	Nasjonalmuseet	Oslo	-7%	Opened 2022
89	868,555	Gongju National Museum	Gongju	No data	No data
90	860,018	Musei Capitolini	Rome	+17%	No data
91	852,345	CaixaForum Madrid	Madrid	-10%	+18%
92	840,573	de Young Museum †	San Francisco	+7%	-21%
93	835,925	Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	Houston	-2%	-33%
94	820,000	Pinacoteca de São Paulo	São Paulo	+1%	+52%
95	819,504	Museum of Contemporary Art Australia	Sydney	-2%	-19%
96	815,931	Yokohama Museum of Art (YMA)	Yokohama	No data	No data
97	808,258	Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes	Buenos Aires	+2%	No data
98	802,382	Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art	Bentonville	+14%	+15%
99	801,587	Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)	Los Angeles	-8%	-17%
100	800,822	Cleveland Museum of Art	Cleveland	+25%	+5%
101	799,830	Nara National Museum	Nara	+47%	No data
102	784,374	Museo Picasso Málaga	Malaga	-1%	+11%
103	780,078	Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris /JARC	Paris	+56%	No data
104	774,556	Munch Museum	Oslo	+4%	Opened 2021
105	774,057	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum	New York	+1%	-40%
106	771,000	The Broad	Los Angeles	-9%	-16%
107	764,854	Musei del Bargello	Florence	+7%	No data
108	753,652	Imperial War Museum	London	-7%	-30%
109	749,810	Istanbul Museum of Modern Art	Istanbul	-24%	+108%
110	748,906	National Gallery of Australia	Canberra	+23%	-14%
111	746,420	Royal Academy of Arts	London	+20%	-40%
112	744,168	Daegu National Museum	Hwanggeum-dong	No data	+36%
113	734,502	Szepszmuvezeti Múzeum / Museum of Fine Arts	Budapest	+57%	+44%
114	727,202	Louisiana Museum of Modern Art	Humblebaek	+2%	-4%
115	720,000	Museu Oscar Niemeyer	Curitiba	+1%	+91%
116	710,301	Dali Theatre-Museum	Figueres	-7%	-13%
117	707,176	Royal Exhibition Building	Melbourne	+10%	No data
118	691,755	Design Museum	London	+7%	+7%
119	687,762	MAC / CCB - Museum of Contemporary Art Lisbon	Lisbon	+17%	Opened 2024
120	675,000	Stedelijk Museum	Amsterdam	+18%	+1%
121	674,821	Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)	Toronto	-1%	-27%
122	672,917	Musei Reali	Turin	-7%	No data
123	672,591	Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery	Birmingham, UK	+305%	+4%
124	665,136	Instituto Tomie Ohtake	São Paulo	+84%	+17%
125	656,409	Musée des Arts Décoratifs	Paris	-16%	No data
126	644,411	Irish Museum of Modern Art	Dublin	+3%	+28%
127	639,880	Philadelphia Museum of Art	Philadelphia	-7%	-16%
128	634,000	Humboldt Forum	Berlin	-13%	Opened 2021
129	630,759	Galleria Borghese	Rome	+5%	+10%
130	624,501	Virginia Museum of Fine Arts	Richmond	+8%	+23%
131	620,455	National Museum of the American Indian	Washington, DC	-14%	-35%
132	617,000	San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)	San Francisco	No data	-35%
133	614,365	Minneapolis Institute of Art	Minneapolis	+18%	-17%
134	608,078	Palazzo Reale	Milan	-47%	-19%
135	607,937	Hong Kong Heritage Museum	Hong Kong	-14%	No data
136	607,858	Neue Nationalgalerie	Berlin	+8%	Closed
137	606,294	Queensland Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) †	Brisbane	-5%	-15%
138	605,583	Wallace Collection	London	+34%	+27%
139	590,436	Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Brasília	Brasília	+3%	-51%
140	585,575	CaixaForum Barcelona	Barcelona	+15%	-13%
141	573,520	Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo	São Paulo	-9%	-31%
142	568,977	Jinju National Museum	Jinju	+76%	+28%
143	566,610	The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia †	Melbourne	+3%	-6%
144	563,446	Burrell Collection	Glasgow	+1%	Closed
145	556,084	ARoS	Aarhus	-2%	-23%
146	555,000	National Gallery in Prague	Prague	+5%	0%
147	552,892	Queensland Art Gallery †	Brisbane	-6%	-15%
148	552,045	Frick Collection	New York	Closed	+112%
149	549,754	Art Gallery of South Australia	Adelaide	+16%	+29%
150	539,953	Kunsthaus Zürich	Zurich	+5%	+100%

Venues marked with a dagger (†) indicate institutions with more than one building. We have separated the venues to give a more accurate reflection of footfall. The institutions' total venues and combined totals are: The Met (Met Cloisters 281,807; total 6,265,898); Shanghai Museum (total East and People's Square 7,022,708); National Gallery of Victoria (total NGV International and Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia 3,061,799); National Galleries Scotland (Modern One 178,220; Modern Two 109,023; Portrait 343,483; total with National 2,635,503); Belvedere (Lower Belvedere 375,000; Belvedere 21,990,000; total with Upper Belvedere 2,030,000); Getty (Getty Villa 188,952; total with Getty Center 1,512,568); Albertina (Modern 210,818; Klosterneuburg 42,136; total 1,290,301); Smithsonian American Art Museum (Renwick Gallery 177,073; total 1,114,789); Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (Legion of Honor 406,265; total with de Young 1,246,838); Queensland Gallery of Modern Art and Queensland Art Gallery (total 1,159,186). \*In 2019 we reported Reina Sofía venues as a combined figure, but we now split them to be consistent with other venues. \*\*National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, and Smithsonian American Art Museum share a building, hence report the same figure. We therefore rank them equally and count these visitors only once in our overall totals.

**Irreconcilable differences: Canadian cultural tourism to the US experiences a steep decline**

A significant number of Canadians are shunning their neighbour to the south, a phenomenon felt most acutely by smaller museums and those along the border—largely a result of President Trump's policies and bellicose rhetoric. By Daniel Grant

Canadians have been less than thrilled with US president Donald Trump's calls to annex their country and make it the 51st state. Add to that the on-again, off-again imposition of higher tariffs on Canadian lumber, steel and automotive parts, as well as Trump's claim that the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (which he negotiated during his first term in office) is now "irrelevant". All this has soured relations between the neighbours and historical allies. Hard feelings have led to a drop of more than 30% in Canadian tourism to the US, impacting the real-estate and hospitality markets as well as arts and cultural institutions.

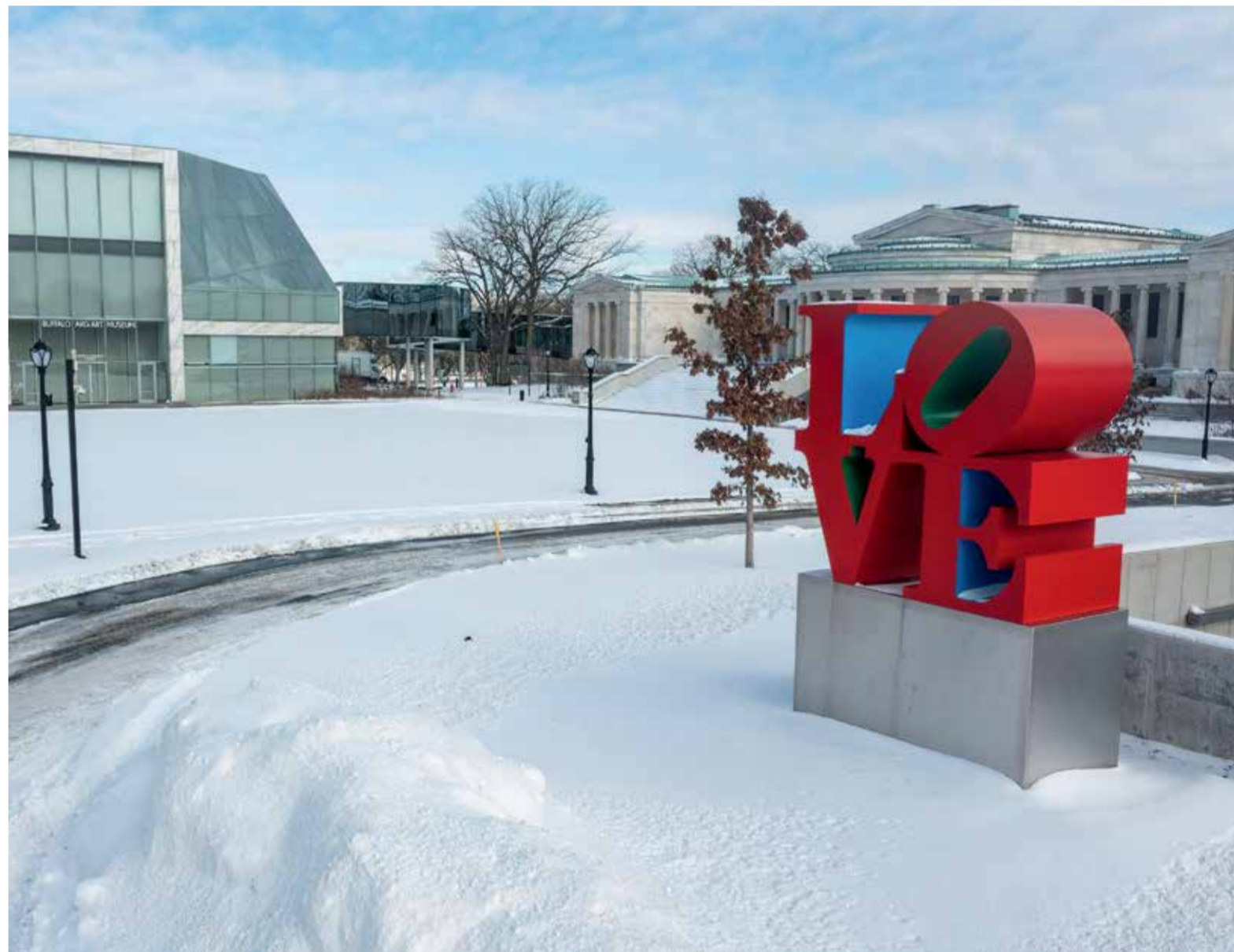
Canadians represent the largest group of international tourists to the US, but the Trump administration's rhetoric has made many of them feel unwelcome. New York City Tourism + Conventions counted approximately 983,000 Canadian visitors to the city in 2024—a number that dropped to 800,000 in 2025. In Washington State, where more than half of all international visitors are Canadian, the tourism board saw a 26% decline in southbound border crossings in October 2025 compared to the same month in 2024. Scott Stulen, the director and chief executive of the Seattle Art Museum, recently told *The Art Newspaper* that there has been a 50% drop in Canadians visiting the Emerald City. (Even so, his museum's numbers appear to have largely remained steady.) A bit further south, Oregon has also experienced a noticeable decline in visitors from Canada—21% fewer in 2025 compared to the year before.

Canadian visitor numbers have dropped across the northern US, including in Detroit, located just across the Detroit River from its Canadian neighbour—the city of Windsor, Ontario. "Visitation from Canada was down about 30% in 2025, which is a significant and unfortunate decline," says a spokesperson for Visit Detroit, the city's travel and tourism bureau. While noting that the "bond between Detroit and Canada is a deep and enduring one, rooted in centuries of shared history, economic collaboration and cultural exchange", he adds that "tariffs have created barriers, impacting both tourism and trade".

Of course, it is not just Canadians who are thinking twice before visiting the US. Higher entrance fees at National Parks for non-residents, the increased cost of tourist visas and possible checks of travellers' social-media accounts at border control have turned off visitors from around the world. For Canadians, the last period of growth in tourism to the US was November 2024. Since then, travel from Canada has declined by more than 25%.

US museums do not ask visitors for their passports, so they usually find out where people are from by asking. (Institutions with free admission tend to know less about their attendees, especially when the welcome counter can be skipped altogether.) "Whenever someone comes to the front desk, we ask for their zip code," says Greg Norstrom, the director of visitor experience at the Portland Museum of Art (PMA) in Maine. "If they're not from the US, we ask where they come from." (Many museums across the country follow the same system.)

"Approximately half the number of Canadians came through in 2025 than the year before," says Marcie Parker



Lost love: New York's Buffalo AKG Art Museum, only a few miles from the Canadian border, has since the beginning of last year welcomed far fewer visitors from its northern neighbour

Griswold, the head of communications and audience engagement at the PMA. Their numbers dropped from 800 to 350. In 2025 Canadians accounted for 4% of Maine's total visitors; in 2024, that number was 7%. The decline led Maine's governor, Janet Mills, to travel to Canada last summer to reaffirm the state's ties with its northern neighbour.

**Tired of playing nice**

An unofficial boycott of the US has been taking place across Canada. The most notable example is espoused by Ontario's premier, Doug Ford, who publicly announced last December that he would forgo his regular winter



The Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida, has seen a notable drop in Canadian visitorship

holiday in Florida because of Trump's tariffs, which have led to major layoffs in his province's automotive and steel sectors. Florida, a popular destination in the winter, has experienced a dearth of Canadian visitors in the past year—a trend that will likely continue.

It has been reported that the American Automobile Association, which tracks travel in and around the US, found Canadian visits to the Sunshine State to be significantly lower in 2025 compared to the previous year—with 46% of likely visitors citing the Trump administration and 35% citing negative feelings towards the US overall as reasons for not going. There

are now fewer flights from Canada to Florida. "The data indicate that there has been a double-digit drop-off in non-stop Canada-US travellers since talk of Canada as the 51st state began in December of 2024," says Ted Botimer, the vice president of research, strategy and revenue management at Visit Lauderdale (the official tourism bureau for the Greater Fort Lauderdale area).

As a result, Florida's museums saw fewer Canadians among their visitors last year. Steven High, the executive director of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, compared figures from a couple of the museum's most popular months of January and February. In January 2024, the Ringling welcomed 734 Canadian visitors; only 298 came in January 2025. In February 2024, Canadian visitors numbered 813; in February 2025, there were 411. At Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami, Canadian visitation was down by 40% in the peak winter months compared to 2024, but "there has been a drop in foreign visitation generally", says John Settles, the museum's director of visitor experience. However, the overall number of visitors has held steady for the most part—the result of

a campaign the museum started during the Covid-19 pandemic to attract more Floridians. "Local visitation has balanced out the decrease in the number of foreign visitors," Settles says.

Given the economic impact of fewer Canadian visitors, US cities and states close to the border have sought to bring their northern neighbours back with declarations of love. The Tourism bureau of Bellingham, Washington—a city roughly 50 miles south of Vancouver—created a "We ♥ Canadians" campaign in May 2025. The city of Buffalo, New York, ran both a "Buffalo Loves Canada" and a "Visit Buffalo" campaign last summer.

At Buffalo's largest museum, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Canadian visitors had ranged between 7% and 10% of total visitorship in 2024 and previous years. Their numbers dropped by two-thirds to 2.4% in February 2025, according to Christine Goerss-Barton, its director of museum experiences. "I'm absolutely hearing the same thing from colleagues at other institutions," she says. "Everybody is feeling it."

Declarations of love can only go so far in a broken relationship.



# Visitor Figures 2025

**D**anish museums have recovered well from Covid-19. The latest survey by Organisationen Danske Museer (ODM), an association of 170 museums, visitor centres and conservation centres across Denmark, published in February, shows that 2025 museum attendance was similar to 2024's record levels: there were 9 million visitors to the 72 museums that responded, with one-third of institutions reporting an increase in visitors of 10% or more.

But as visitor numbers are booming, they are also becoming increasingly central to how museums are funded in Denmark. A new state-funding model, introduced by the government in January 2025, places greater emphasis on measurable outputs, including how many people come through the door.

There are now three criteria for an institution to secure – and retain – government subsidies. It must welcome a minimum of 10,000 annual visitors (or 8,000 where an institution is on an island with a population smaller than 10,000); have a minimum annual income of 4m kroner (\$600,000) (3m kroner on islands with less than 10,000 inhabitants); and publish at least one peer-reviewed research paper every three years.

There are three types of subsidy: a basic grant, fixed for five years; one or more incentive grants, decided on annually; and what is termed “a priority grant”, a discretionary subsidy determined politically.

For the basic grant, institutions are ranked in five categories by the importance of their collections. Those in the lowest category, which account for nearly half (44%) of the 95 museums that receive state funding, now get 1.5m kroner (\$230,000), as opposed to the lowest basic grant a museum could get before the reform of 1m kroner. “The smallest museums gain half a million [kroner] per year. In Denmark, that’s the cost of one extra employee,” says Ulla Schaltz, the director of the Lolland-Falster Museum in south-east Denmark. The highest category, meanwhile, nets an institution 23m kroner (\$3.6m).

The incentive grants will be decided on a year-by-year basis, upon submission of the museum’s officially audited annual report. This must include visitor numbers, income raised (including sponsorship for temporary exhibitions and ticket sales), figures on children and young people engaged, and published research papers. In effect, these grants work out as rewards for institutions excelling in one or more of these areas.

## Levelling the playing field

The changes to the funding model were not motivated by a desire to cut spending. When the culture minister, Jakob Engel-Schmidt, presented his reforms of the Museum Act in May 2024, he announced an additional 95m kroner (\$14.8m) for the sector, taking the annual budget from 470m kroner to 565m kroner (\$72.7m to \$87.5m). The stated aim was to increase fairness and transparency in how state funds are distributed.

The previous funding model was brought in during local government reforms in 2007. For those museums that had depended on subsidies from the old municipalities and counties, the government simply promised to keep the same amounts coming under the new entities, without asking questions as to how they had been calculated in the first place.

This led to considerable unevenness. Until 2025, Arken Museum of Contemporary Art in Ishøj (south of Copenhagen) received between 30m and 34.9m kroner (\$4.6m–\$5.4m) annually while Brøndtårn Museum in Odense got less than a tenth of that, around 2.3m kroner (\$356,000). And yet, according to Danmark Statistik, the country’s official statistics body, in terms of annual visitor numbers, the two institutions are not that different: in 2023, Arken recorded

# Funding reforms in Denmark link grants to visitor numbers

The Danish government has increased its overall funding of museums, but levels of subsidy now depend on visitor numbers—with some questioning how equitable this is. **By Dale Berning Sawa**



135,052 visitors, and Brøndtårn 117,600.

The Fuglsang Kunstmuseum got 4m kroner (\$619,000), while similar museums got only 1m kroner (\$155,000), despite being of similar stature. As Anna Schram Vejlbj, the Fuglsang’s director and deputy chair of the ODM, says: “Getting ten times as much money actually does something, year in and year out. You can see what money does for a museum.”

Furthermore, until now, only those 95 museums already recognised by the state were eligible for government funding – none of the hundreds outside of this group could apply. “The government and all the museums wanted a way to get new museums into the group of state-recognised institutions,” Schaltz says, “because we have a lot of museums working very seriously, to whom state funding until now was not accessible.”

## Happy, despite less money

The reform was passed in December 2024 and came into effect on 1 January 2025. Museums are now preparing their first set of annual accounts under the new regime. Claus K. Jensen, the head of ODM, hailed the changes at the time of their announcement as representing a “much-needed economic boost for the industry”. He said in a statement:

“The reform has been long-awaited. It seems that most museums stand to gain financially.”

However, some institutions have seen their subsidies considerably reduced. Under the new rules, Arken Museum will lose at least 19% of its subsidy – 600,000 kroner (\$93,000) in 2025 and 1.6m kroner (\$248,000) annually over the next three years. Yet its leadership remains optimistic. “You don’t just lose 20% of your subsidy without it making any difference,” the museum’s deputy director, Arne Bjerre Hårbo, told the *Akademikerbladet* magazine in May 2025. “But we’ve been working on the change already, and we’re ready for it.”

“The reform as it is, I think we are quite happy with it,” Schram Vejlbj says. “It’s not completely transparent. But at least we have some clarity.”

However, other museum professionals highlight problems with the metrics by which the government is deciding on an institution’s worth and eligibility

for funding.

Mette Bjerrum Jensen is the director of the Ringkøbing Fjord Museum, located in an area of West Jutland that is sparsely inhabited but popular with tourists.

With 300,000 annual visitors, the museum ranks 11th out of 95 in visitor numbers, but it has been placed in the lowest grant category. As Bjerrum Jensen puts it: “We are not recognised as a large museum.” As a result, her institution’s basic grant has dropped from 5.5m kroner to 1.5m kroner (\$850,000 to \$232,000). Incentive funding has effectively topped this up so that, in the first year under the new regime, the museum received roughly the same sum. But incentive funding is revised annually, whereas the basic grant is a five-year fixed agreement.

Others have pointed to potential problems in counting visitors for the new metrics. Guidelines from Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen, the Danish agency for palaces and culture that sits within the Ministry of Culture, specify that people have to redeem tickets of some kind to be

counted. Those visiting cafés or museum shops, public spaces and venues such as historic buildings, ruins or gardens separate from the museum’s collection cannot be included. Thus Arken, which saw 163,000 visitors (including children) in 2025, can no longer count visitors to its sculpture park or its offsite video exhibition area, PULS, at nearby Vallsensbæk railway station.

In terms of engagement with children and young people, “we all agree that it’s a good thing to have more children in museums”, Schaltz says. But she wishes this was accounted for in the new rules, proportionally to the local population. A big museum in a big city will by default get a lot of children because of the large community on its doorstep and a high influx of tourists, she says. To her mind, the excellent work a small museum does to attract 50% of local schoolchildren should be celebrated, even if that is 50% of a small community. Under the new rules, the number itself is all that counts for incentive grants.

The museumologist Janus Tobias Saito-Madsen says that without greater clarity and independent verification of how museums do their counting, and with institutions competing for incentive-based funding, there is the potential both for visitor numbers to be artificially inflated and curatorial programming to change to chase more visitors. He sees small museums in rural areas increasingly centring experiences, and he fears those doing good cultural-heritage work will gradually lose out to museums offering more entertainment.

Saito-Madsen would like to see a funding system that instead shows that centring local cultural heritage, for example, is in and of itself enough – a system, as he puts it, that “frees the museums and says: ‘We believe in you’”.



The Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand more than doubled its numbers thanks to its long-awaited expansion and a blockbuster Claude Monet exhibition

## New museums a big hit with visitors

→ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

QAGOMA received just under 1.2 million visitors, down 15% on 2019. In the nation’s capital, Canberra, the National Gallery of Australia received 749,000 visitors, up from the previous year, while Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art Australia got 820,000, around the same as in 2024.

Israel’s war in Gaza continued to impact its museum visitorship. The Israel Museum lost 40% of its visitors compared with 2024, as it closed for two days of each week. The Tel Aviv Museum of Art saw its exhibition programme severely disrupted, with cancellations of international exhibitions, and was only open 244 days because of security concerns. It still drew more than a million visitors, however.

We were unable to obtain reliable visitor numbers for the biggest museum opening of 2025 – the Grand Egyptian Museum outside Cairo. After its formal opening in November, the museum reported it was receiving up to 18,000 visitors a day, which would equate to around 6.5 million annually – around the same as the British Museum.

## United States

In the US, museums saw only modest rises in visitorship and, in some cases, significant falls – the most dramatic of which were a result of closures due to the Los Angeles wildfires in January and the federal government shutdown in October and November. The Getty Villa, miraculously spared by the Palisades fire that burned all around it, suffered the steepest drop-off in numbers (189,000 visitors, down 58% on 2024), as it was closed for almost half the year. Other Los Angeles-area museums – including the Getty Center (1.3 million visitors, up 2% on 2024) and the Huntington (1.1 million visitors, down 5% on 2024) – saw their numbers remain generally stable, despite the wildfires. In fact, the Getty Center was the sixth most popular art museum in the US last year, with the Huntington close behind in seventh.

In Washington, DC, meanwhile, federally funded museums closed for more than a month in the autumn during the longest government shutdown in US history. The most affected institutions included the National Gallery of Art (2.9 million visitors, down 28% on 2024), the National Museum of African American History and Culture (1.4 million visitors, down 13% on 2024) and the National Museum of the American Indian (621,000

visitors, down 13% on 2024). The National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum, which share a building, saw their visitor numbers sink to almost half of what they were pre-Covid (938,000 visitors in 2025, down 26% on 2024 and 44% on 2019). The two museums had a particularly volatile year – with prolonged political battles with the Trump administration over programming, artists pulling out of exhibitions amid accusations of institutional censorship and high-level resignations.

As in previous years, the most popular US museum was the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York with almost 6 million visitors to its main building (up 4% on 2024); the Met reopened its revamped Michael C. Rockefeller Wing of African, ancient American and Oceanic art to great acclaim in May. The National Gallery of Art, despite its troubles, came in second. It was followed by New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, 2.8 million visitors, up 4% on 2024) and the Art Institute of Chicago (1.5 million visitors, up 14% on 2024).

The most popular exhibitions in New York last year were *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style* at the Met’s Costume Institute and a retrospective devoted to the artist Jack Whitten (1939–2018) at MoMA. Shows dedicated to Van Gogh specifically or Impressionism more broadly were extremely popular at the National Gallery of Art, Getty Center and Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) Boston. At the MFA Boston (1.1 million visitors, up 7% on 2024), an exhibition focused on Van Gogh’s portraits of the Roulin family in Arles brought in more than a quarter of the museum’s total visitors for the year. On the other side of the country, almost half of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art’s yearly visitorship attended its Ruth Asawa retrospective.

The largest gains in visitor numbers were seen



New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art remains the most popular museum in the Western Hemisphere

## Seoul sees a surge



The Seoul location of the National Museum of Korea is beginning to attract more foreign visitors

The National Museum of Korea (NMK) Seoul’s main site in Yongsan District last year saw its visitorship leap to 6.5 million from 3.8 million in 2024. Of these, says a spokesperson, 230,000 (3.55%) were international visitors, the first time its annual international visitors have surpassed 200,000.

Though the globally popular Korean cultural wave is already several years old, a museum spokesperson says there was a new surge of “interest and enthusiasm” for *Hallyu*, both globally and domestically. That certainly helped drive visitors, but the museum has also been “steadily preparing diverse and substantial content” to meet the renewed interest with “innovative exhibition planning centred on historical artefacts”.

Some of the museum’s permanent galleries were overhauled and special exhibitions “presented fresh interpretations of Korean cultural heritage” and global cultures. Last year’s programming tied into Korea’s 80th anniversary of its liberation from Japanese rule with shows about the naval legend Admiral Yi Sun-sin (1545–98) and the marathoner Son Kee-chung, who won the gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics. The museum also commemorated the 20th anniversary of the museum’s relocation to Yongsan with an exhibition of the art of the early Joseon era.

In addition, NMK hosted a loan show from France’s Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac on Pacific Islander culture and opened a new permanent room devoted to Islamic cultures. The museum worked on its audience engagement and accessibility, too, with barrier-free content and greater integration of digital technology.

Lisa Movius



## There has been an explosion of visitors to museums in Asia and South America

in smaller museums and those outside of major art centres. The Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, for example, almost doubled its numbers to 132,000 visitors. The Morgan Library and Museum in New York, Cleveland Museum of Art and Toledo Museum of Art also each saw significant jumps in visitorship of more than 20% on 2024. Museums that surpassed their pre-Covid numbers included the San Diego Museum of Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond and Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And while the numbers at institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and New York’s Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum are still far lower than in 2019, they held fairly steady. Not so for the Brooklyn Museum, which had a particularly hard year (422,000 visitors, down 29% on 2024); the museum explains the drop by the fact that it had only one ticketed show in 2025, whereas it usually has two per year.

## Mexico and Brazil

As was the case in 2024, some of the biggest gains in museum attendance in the Western Hemisphere were seen in Mexico and Brazil. Latin America’s most popular museum, the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, has been gaining on the Met with a record 5.1 million visitors last year (up 36% on 2024). Other museums in Mexico City that saw more than a million visitors include the Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec (2.7 million) and Museo Soumaya (2.2 million, down 5% from 2024). Outside the capital, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey saw its numbers drop (203,000 visitors, down 22%), but this was likely a correction for the inordinate number of people who



went to its Dan Flavin retrospective in 2024.

Brazil was largely a success story as well. The Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (Masp) more than doubled its attendance to 1.2 million visitors. Masp opened its long-delayed expansion in March; it also had a very popular Claude Monet exhibition, which brought in 503,000 people. Also in São Paulo, Instituto Tomie Ohtake saw a significant increase (665,000 visitors, up 84% on 2024), as did the photography-forward Instituto Moreira Salles (532,000 visitors, up 36% on 2024). In Belo Horizonte, there was a major gain in visitor numbers at Casa Fiat de Cultura (453,000 visitors, up 65% on 2024).

Meanwhile, the numbers at the various branches of the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB) were greatly helped by an exhibition of 1980s Brazilian art that started in Rio de Janeiro before touring the rest of CCBB’s spaces in Brasília, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. At CCBB Rio, the show brought in 325,000 people; at CCBB Belo Horizonte, it attracted 205,000 visitors. While all of the CCBBs have kept their numbers fairly steady (gaining or losing no more than 10% on 2024), they also have a long way to go to regain their pre-Covid numbers.

Generally speaking, there has been an explosion of visitors to museums in Asia and South America. At the same time, institutions in Europe and the US are largely seeing steady numbers – at least in the absence of natural and political disasters. And while 2024 was all about immersive exhibitions, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists appeared to be back in full force in 2025.

• Research by Alexandra Timorina and Allison C. Meier

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