# Concerns rise over environmental impact of tourism at Birling Gap



Birling Gap, a picturesque coastal area located in East Sussex, is experiencing a significant influx of tourists, raising concerns about its environmental sustainability and the integrity of its historic buildings. The increase in visitors is attributed largely to the influence of social media and recent popularity among South East Asian tourists, particularly following the filming of a reality TV show featuring South Korean actress Seo Hyo-rim and a music video by Taiwanese singer Jay Chou.

Local business owner Rhys Webb, who operates an ice-cream stall in a nearby car park, remarked on the changing demographics of visitors to the site, stating, “There are a lot of South East Asian visitors. It is very popular among that group of tourists,” as reported by MailOnline. This surge in tourist activity has drawn attention away from the natural beauty of the area, leading to concerns about the impact on local flora and fauna.

Residents and environmental advocates are voicing their worries about the detrimental effects that increased foot traffic is having on Birling Gap’s ecosystem. Philip Dean, a 72-year-old local walker, commented on the issue, stating that tourists often "don't stick to the pathways" which results in damage to the area’s delicate plant life. He recalled that Birling Gap used to be a habitat for rare seabirds, but noted that the overwhelming number of visitors has likely driven them away "probably for good." Dean categorised Birling Gap as an "incredible site," yet he expressed concerns that it cannot accommodate the current level of visitor numbers each year without facing serious consequences.

In addition to the ecological threats posed by increased tourism, Birling Gap is one of the regions in the UK most affected by coastal erosion. Significant portions of the cliff have been observed to crumble away, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures. Prominent figures, including actress Dame Judi Dench, have been vocal about the necessity for improved sea defences to combat this erosion. The situation has recently led to the closure and partial demolition of a local café that found itself perilously close to the cliff's edge.

As Birling Gap continues to attract tourists from around the globe, both the local community and environmentalists are grappling with the challenge of balancing tourism with conservation, keenly aware of the fragility of this stunning coastal landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/South-Downs-Visitor-Survey-2021-Final-report.pdf> - This report provides insights into the visitor patterns within the South Downs, which includes areas like Birling Gap. It highlights changes in visitor numbers and behaviors post-pandemic.
* [https://www.visitbrighton.com/dbimgs/Sussex%20and%20Brighton%20&%20Hove%20Visitor%20Economy%20Baseline%20Sep%202023.pdf](https://www.visitbrighton.com/dbimgs/Sussex%20and%20Brighton%20%26%20Hove%20Visitor%20Economy%20Baseline%20Sep%202023.pdf) - This document discusses the visitor economy in Sussex, including strategies for growth and sustainability, which can be applied to areas like Birling Gap to manage tourism impacts.
* <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2025/sussex-launches-ambitious-10-year-growth-strategy-visitor-economy> - This news article outlines Sussex's 10-year growth strategy for the visitor economy, focusing on sustainability and collaboration, which can inform efforts to balance tourism with environmental concerns in areas like Birling Gap.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the initial information about Birling Gap's increased tourism and environmental concerns. However, it does not offer additional external validation without more specific context.
* <https://www.heritagedaily.com/2022/01/coastal-erosion-posing-threat-to-uk-coastal-sites/137528> - This article, while not specifically about Birling Gap, discusses the issue of coastal erosion in the UK, a problem that affects Birling Gap. It emphasizes the need for protective measures.