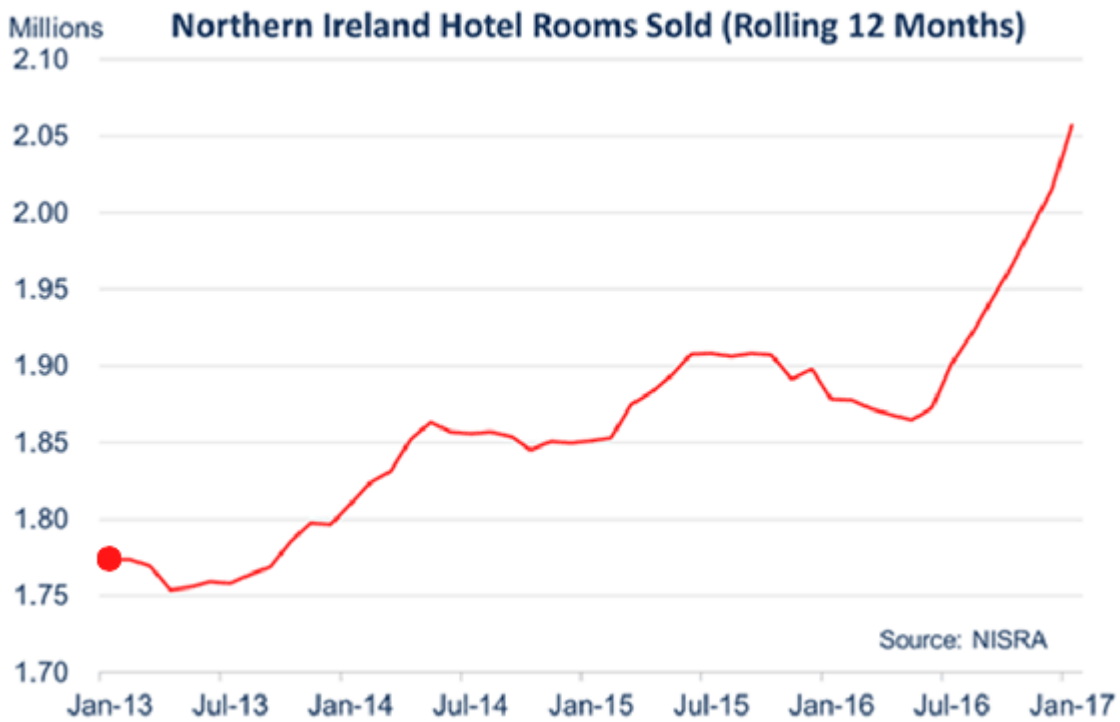


Northern Ireland’s tourism industry has been breaking records across a range of performance indicators in recent years. 2016 witnessed a hotel room boom and this trend looks set to continue in 2017. Last year the local hotelier industry breached the 2 million mark for room sales for the first time.



There were 2,015,289 hotel rooms sold. This represented an increase of 114,592 or 6%. But 2016 was a year of two halves. The annual rise in room sales was entirely due to a marked increase in the second half of 2016. During the first half of 2016, local hotels reported a fall in room sales of almost 2% y/y. Meanwhile the second six month period, which coincided with a fall in the value of sterling following the EU referendum result, posted an annual increase of 15%.



The early indications are that 2017 will be a bumper year for the hotel industry. January saw a whopping 42% increase in room sales relative to the corresponding month a year ago. However, it should be noted that January 2016 was particularly weak, down 16% y/y and marked the weakest January in four years. Nevertheless, even allowing for this, the 141,279 hotel

rooms sold this year represented a 19% rise (+22,452) on 2015's figure - the previous January high. Overall, 2017 is likely to see a healthy double-digit rise in hotel room sales. That would be no mean feat.

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