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A tax on tourism

SIR – You report (March 12) that Air Passenger Duty (APD) is hitting the travelling public hard here in the UK. The consequences of levying Europe's highest aviation tax will also be felt by incoming tourists. In the year of the Olympics, when we should be doing everything to encourage tourism, we're likely to see some potential visitors avoiding the UK altogether.

Furthermore, those who do plan to come are finding ways to avoid paying APD: airport arrivals at European cities with high-speed rail links to London are already registering higher than normal air bookings, suggesting that some tourists plan to circumvent the tax through combined air-rail travel.

On Wednesday, George Osborne, the Chancellor, will present his Budget, at which he plans to increase APD from this April by doubling the rate of inflation. On behalf of the travelling public and the many thousands of businesses that depend on inbound tourism, we urge him to re-think his plans and to freeze APD this year.

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