

An Introduction to the Tourism Geography of Britain



Introduction

Great Britain and Ireland are the two largest islands in the group known as the British Isles, lying off the north-west coasts of Europe.

- The naval heritage is an important part of Britain's tourists appeal and
- A cultural identity quite distinct from other west Europeans. The importance of tourism is clearly illustrated by these statistics for 2006.

- Overseas arrivals to the UK exceeded 30 million;
- The British took 69 million trip abroad;
- The British took around 120 million domestic trips and
- Tourism was estimated to support over 2 million jobs directly and indirectly, and contribute almost 4.5 percent of GDP.

The physical setting for Tourism

Britain offers great variety.

- Three landscape zones as the physical setting for tourism:
- **The highland zone** includes Central and North Wales, the Southern Uplands and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Here rocks are older. The population is thinly scattered and land use is dominated by livestock rearing.

- **The upland zone** includes Exmoor, Dartmoor, the Brecon Beacons, the Black Mountains and the Pennines; and in Scotland, Caithness, Sutherland and the Orkneys. Here rocks are younger. Britain's national parks are mainly in the highland and upland zones where they have been designated for their natural beauty and characteristic landscapes.

- **The lowlands** southern and eastern England. The lowlands are warmer and drier, with intensive agriculture and sprawling conurbation dominating land use.

The coasts are of major importance, particularly for domestic tourism. Most of the attractive stretches of coastline have been given protection as “Heritage Coasts” and there are plans to designate areas of the sea and sea bed as marine conservation areas.

Social and Economic influences

Social and economic changes in Britain have combined to boost demand for both domestic and international tourism. The 1960s were a particularly prosperous period of high employment in which the first real stirrings of mass demand for holidays abroad were experienced. Car ownership has increased rapidly over the period and, in 2005, car ownership stood at over 26 million vehicles.

The time available for holiday has also grown with increased holiday entitlement, three-day weekends, and various flexible working arrangements providing blocks of time for trip away from home. Since the 1990, legislation at the European level has increased workers entitlement to holiday and leisure time.

Between 1951 and 2001 the population in Britain grew by less than 10 percent, despite large-scale immigration. The post-Second World War baby boom produced a generation that demanded tourism and recreation from the late 1970s onwards.

Demand for tourism in Britain

Overseas visitors come to Britain for heritage, culture, the countryside and ethnic reasons. The ebb and flow of tourist movement in and out of Britain is due to the relative strength of sterling against other currencies, the health of the economy, special event attractions, the impact of international and national crises, and the marketing activities of both public and private tourist organizations.

The historical trend

The 1960

The early 1960 saw between 3 and 4million overseas visitors coming to Britain, but with the devaluation of sterling in 1967 Britain became a very attractive destination.

The 1970

The number of overseas visitors has increased to 7 million visits by 1970. Spending by overseas visitors to Britain was greater than spending by British residents overseas. This was compounded by the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, which increased arrivals to 12 million.

The 1980

World economic recession also depressed visits in the early 1980 but an upturn began in 1982, caused by weaker pound and allied to economics recovery in the main generate checked by the Pan-Am bombing over Lockerbie, the Chernobyl disaster and the weakening of the US dollar.

The 1990 and the new millennium

By the late 1990, overseas visits to the UK had grown steadily to reach a peak of almost 26 million but by 2001 they had fallen back 23 million. Recovery began in 2002 with over 24 million arrivals and by 2006 the number was over 30 million.

- Visits from Western Europe form the majority of the market at around two-thirds of the total but are declining. Visits from North America have remained relatively stable at between 15 and 20 percent . In the rest of the world, the major markets are Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and Japan;
- Length of stay is decreasing;
- Independent travel is increasing and
- Visitor spend is increasing.

Visitor characteristic

- Holiday visits grew rapidly up until 1977
- Visiting friends and relatives is a reliable and growing segment that has reached a plateau at 29 percent of total arrivals.
- Business travel has also grow steadily, accounting for 28 percent of total arrivals in 2006.
- Almost 90 percent visitors are to England.

Seasonality is less of a problem than before, but the third quarter of the year still accounts for the highest percentages of overseas visitors to Britain. Around 75 percent of visitors to Britain arrive by air and 15 percent by sea, with 10 percent arriving through the Channel Tunnel.

British residents demand for tourism

Around 60 percent of the British take a holiday in any one year, but taken over period of three years, this figure rises to 75 percent as some enter and other leave the market in a particular year.

The main growth in tourism has been overseas travel at the expense of the domestic long-holiday market. For the British tourism market as a whole the underlying factors fuelling growth-leisure spending, holiday entitlement and mobility-continue to rise.

Domestic tourism in Britain

Domestic tourism accounts for about 6 percent of consumer spending.

- The length of stay is shorter;
- The level of spending is lower and
- It is more difficult to measure in 1989 the four UK national tourist boards launched the UKTS, replacing previous surveys .

The historical trend

The 1970

The decade began with strong demand for domestic holiday in Britain. The share of domestic tourism experienced absolute decline as that of overseas tourism by Britain residents increased.

The 1980

Domestic tourism is dominated by those in the lower socio-economic groups who are more sensitive to price and changes in income or economic circumstances. The mid-1980 saw a significant upturn in domestic tourism due to the increased cost travel overseas, a week pound, and vigorous promotion of holiday in Britain.

The 1990 and the new millennium

The volume of domestic trips grew to over 123 million in 2006. Since the 1990 there have been important structural changes in the domestic tourism market:

- A continued decline in length of stay;
- Growth in the market for short holiday;
- Growth of business and conference tourism;
- A shift away from traditional coastal destinations towards towns and countryside;
- A response by the coastal resorts to upgrade and reposition their facilities and
- An increased volume of trips to friends and relative .

Visitor Characteristics

The level of spending on overseas trips confirms the high priority given to overseas travel by the British. Examining the reason for the visit, holiday tourism is growing representing two-thirds of trips, business tourism accounts for 15 per cent and VFR for 12 per cent of trips.



Overseas Travel

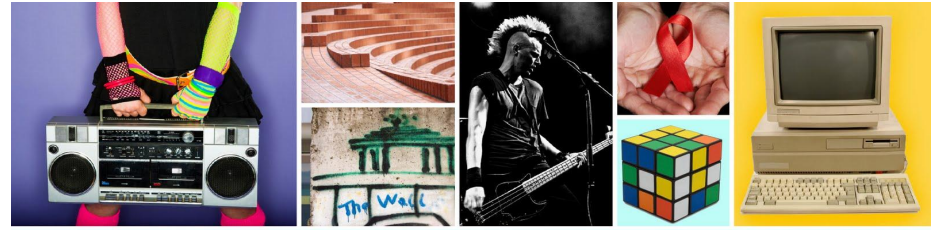
Indeed, the greatest market growth in tourism has been in trips overseas which exceed 66 million trips in 2005. Since the 1950s, the holiday sector in particular has exhibited strong growth, especially inclusive tourism to short-haul destinations.



The Historical

TREND

Taking the critical 20 years when growth was at its height, in 1970 only one-third of the population had ever taken a holiday overseas, by 1990 this figure was well over two-thirds. Clearly, this has implications for both products and destinations as the market matures.



THE 1980s

(DECADE THREE)





Resources

Regional landscapes and character often feature in the novels of British writers and the marketing of a particular area often capitalises on these literary associations, for example South Tyneside has been promoted for many years as “Catherine Cookson Country” and Carmarthenshire in Wales as “Dylon Thomas Country”. However, association with a celebrity, a well-known TV series, or a feature film are perhaps less easy to justify. Nevertheless, ‘film tourism’ is now a major factor in attracting visitors to a number of country houses, historical towns,



Attractions





Accommodation





Transport



Organisation

National Level

- The British Tourist Authority
- The Scottish and Wales Tourist Boards
- The English Tourism Council

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Tourist Boards (RTBs)
- 10 RTBs in England, 3 regional tourism companies in Wales
- Area Tourist Boards in Scotland

North Atlantic Ocean

John o' Groats



SCOTLAND



North Sea

Summary



Angel of the North

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast

Hadrian's Wall

York

Manchester



ENGLAND

Birmingham

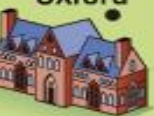


Cambridge

WALES

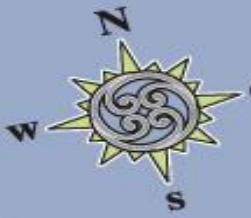
Swansea

Cardiff



Oxford

London



Atlantic Ocean



IRELAND



Dublin



Irish Sea



English Channel

The Fossil Coast



Lands End

Strait of Dover

English Channel