Visit Kent's Business Barometer January 2011

Remembering the snowy start to 2010, it is no surprise that most tourism businesses in Kent reported a good rise this month compared to January 2011. However smaller serviced accommodation occupancy has risen strongly from the previous two years and is back to 2008 levels in January. The consumer website also shows a strong increase in visits and page views, indicating visitors are exploring options.

Comparison January 2010/11	
Attraction visitor numbers	**Up 18%**
Serviced Accommodation which includes the smaller B&B and guest houses. **Source: www.ribos.co.uk/kent**	**Up 8.6%**
Serviced Accommodation **Larger Hotel Accommodation Occupancy for January** **Source 2011 STR Global Ltd**	**Up 3%**
TIC Footfall	**Down 4%**
Cross Channel Passengers	**Up 3.4%**
Business Tourism **(Down 12% in December)**	**Up 10%**

Other news

- Attractions up 18% overall, due to figures in January 2010 being hard hit by heavy snow. Attractions started the year confidently with 93% reporting business had been as good as or better than expected so far.
- Smaller serviced accommodation occupancy shows a return to 2008 levels. Occupancy for smaller serviced accommodation in January 2011 was 34.6% and for the larger hotel chains 50%. Larger hotels were not so badly hit by the snow last year.
- Channel crossings are up for passengers and cars
- Business Tourism is reported for two months, as submissions were delayed in December. December was a weak month due to the snow, but picked up in January.
- TIC footfall and telephone enquiries go down, but emails and postal enquiries are rising.

Attractions

Kent visitor numbers in January

Visitor numbers	2011	2010	% change
	60682	51133	Up 18%

Range of performance amongst attractions overall

71% of attractions' visitor numbers were up ranging from 12% to 126% up. 29% of attractions were down ranging from 3% to 29% down.

Performance according to cost % change January 10/11

Charging	Free
22% up	5% up

Performance according to location, % change January 10/11

Coastal	Rural	Urban
Down 6%	Up 24%	Up 40%

Performance according to attraction type, % change January 10/11

Museum	Historic Building Heritage Attraction	Other
42%	14%	23%

Performance according to size, % change January 2010/11

Visitors of 20,000 or less	Visitors of between 20,001 and 50,000	Visitors of between 50,001 and 100,000	Visitors of between 100,001 and 200,000	Visitors of over 200,000 per year
Up 32%	Up 37%	Up 37%	Up 44%	Up 11%

Attractions were also asked if they had experienced any change in structure, opening hours, location or staffing levels over the last year due to the current environment. Only one reporting attraction had experienced these. Three attractions reported minor changes in product since last year.

Factors affecting visitor attraction results

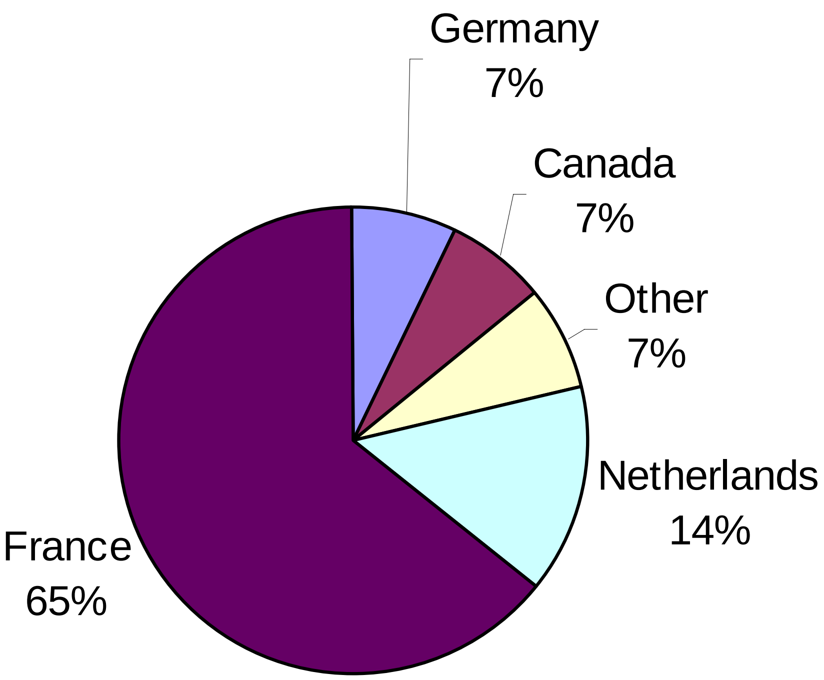
Positive factors
Better weather than 2010
Special event
Growth in groups
More publicity
Support for local food
Overseas visitors still around

Negative factors
VAT increase - advance bookings slow
Weather still very cold
Notoriously quiet time of the year

Overseas visitors to attractions in January

88% of visitors to attractions in January came from the UK, 3% Long Haul, and 9% European.

Top countries of origin of overseas visitors in January



Accommodation

Larger hotel serviced accommodation

According to STR Global, room occupancy for the larger and chain hotels was 50.1%, up 1% compared to 2010. The larger hotels did not suffer so badly in the snow in January 2010 due to their generally more accessible location.

Year To Date			Running 12 Months		
2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
48.9	49.6	50.1	67.4	67.8	69.9
49.8	48.9	49.6	67.7	67.4	67.8
-1.9	1.5	1.1	-0.4	0.7	3.0

Smaller hotels, guest houses and B&B's

Accommodation occupancy in January was the best since 2008. However, the marked rise between 2010 and 2011 was mainly down to better weather this January. Small town occupancy was particularly strong, and hotel/inn occupancy.

Year on year occupancy comparison Kent

Kent	January 2008	January 2009	January 2010	January 2011
Occupancy	**40%**	**32%**	**26%**	**34.6%**

Occupancy according to location

Location	Occupancy
Countryside/village	23.6%
Seaside	32.7%
Large town/city	40.1%
Small town	50.0%

Occupancy according to business type

Location	Average Occupancy
Bed and Breakfast	24.7%
Guest House	30.8%
Hotel/Inn	42.7%

The percentage of UK guests was 85.5%, with average length of UK stay 1.49 days. 14.5% of occupancy was for overseas guests, with an average length of stay of 1.48 days.

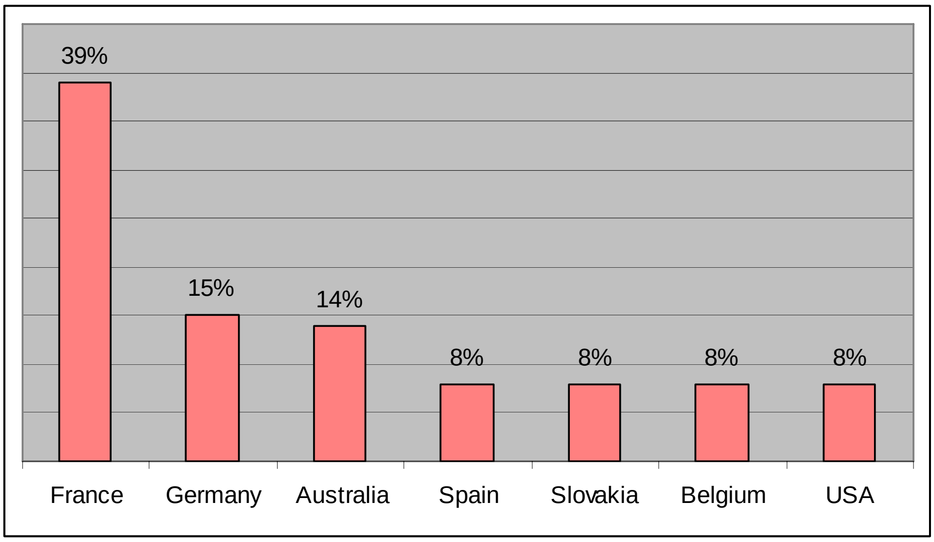
Tourist Information Centres (TICs)

Although overall TIC footfall was down by 4%, this was due to major falls at Royal Tunbridge Wells, Canterbury and Ashford, and a small fall in Thanet. The other TICs who deal face to face with visitors experienced a good or stable January compared to 2010. 7 of the TICs including Tunbridge Wells, Canterbury and Thanet have experienced either changes of staffing, structure, or location or other factors which have affected their visitor numbers.

TICs Comparison January 2010/11

Name of TIC	Footfall 2011	Footfall 2010	% change	Phone Calls 2011	Phone Calls 2010	Emails 2011	Emails 2010
Ashford	704	817	-14	127	242	322	322
Canterbury	18933	23578	-20	526	726	172	181
Deal	903	896	1	75	111	198	172
DFH&RM	0	0	n/a	521	585	224	220
Dover	2669	2681	no change	220	521	386	800
Faversham	835	623	34	122	51	82	25
Gravesend	2133	1747	22	237	227	357	234
Maidstone	5446	4160	31	331	376	42	50
Medway	13283	11048	20	420	567	421	317
Royal T. Wells	1093	2766	-60	320	442	418	334
Thanet	1550	1614	-4	104	146	45	35
Tonbridge	1438	1196	20	625	595	2320	2016
Kent	**48987**	**51126**	**-4%**	**3628**	**4589**	**4987**	**4706**

Top countries of origin of Overseas TIC Visitors in January (%)



Nationality of TIC visitors

Name of TIC	Domestic	Long Haul	European	Euro visitors compared to January 2010
Ashford	92	0.5	7.5	Down 0.5%
Canterbury	80	5	15	Up 7%
Deal	98	1	1	Down 3%
DFH&RM	90	1	9	Up 2%
Dover	66	12	22	Up 2%
Faversham	95	2	3	No change
Gravesend	89	3	8	Up 7%
Maidstone	95	2.5	2.5	Up 1.5%
Medway	75	5	20	Up 5%
Royal T. Wells	99	0	1	Down 4%
Thanet	99	0	1	Down 9%
Tonbridge	95	2	3	No change

Cross Channel Carriers

These figures are the combined totals for the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel and show a rise in channel crossings for passengers, cars and coaches compared to 2010. The reasons for this are that 2010 crossings were affected by snow and the accessibility of transport links.

Cross channel crossings

January	2011	2010	% CHANGE
Passengers	690,306	667,463	3.4% up
Cars	186,406	173,070	7.7% up
Coaches	4229	4199	1% up

Business Tourism

December 2010 results

Number of business conferences taking place

2010	2009	% change
178	202	-12%

Number of weddings taking place

2010	2009	% change
12	8	50%

Number of other events taking place

2010	2009	% change
146	150	-3%

Comments from Business Tourism venues in December
Cancellations due to heavy snow.
Excellent Christmas Period
Just the weather impacted on the month - similar to 2009
Snow made us cancel a Christmas party night and also accommodation bookings dropped as people cancelled as they didn't want to risk travelling. Also found that some companies holding Christmas parties who come regularly decided not to run with them in Dec 10 due to financial constraints.
The number of business events saw a downturn in the month of December but dinner/dances and Christmas parties were up.
The poor weather greatly affected business resulting in large amount of postponed business. Most of which has moved into Jan/Feb 2011

Length of conferences

Half a day	1 day	2 days	3 days or more
35%	60%	4%	1%

Average daily delegate rate for this month

£18 to £25	30%
£26 to £30	40%
£31 to £40	30%

Origin of delegates

Kent	84%
London	8%
UK	7%
Other	1%

January 2011 results

Number of business conferences taking place

2011	2010	% change
481	437	10%

Number of other events taking place

2011	2010	% change
67	55	22%

Comments from Business Tourism venues in January
Closed for refurbishment for half of the month
January is a very quiet month for conferences, with no functions other than wakes
Public spending cuts having an effect on catering income.
Same as last year - snow affected events in December and these were then held in January.

Length of conferences

Half a day	1 day	2 days	3 days or more
53%	42%	3%	2%

Average daily delegate rate for this month

£18 to £25	30%
£26 to £30	30%
£31 to £40	10%
£41 to £50	20%
£51 or more	10%

Origin of delegates

Kent	92%
London	1%
UK	6%
Other	1%

If you would like to be part of this cycle of activity for conference and events, please contact Dawn Bowen at Kent Conference Bureau on dawnbowen@maidstone.gov.uk
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Visit Kent News

Visit Kent Research update

A question of VAT

In the January survey businesses were asked what effects the increase in VAT has had on their business so far.

- For attractions the responses were 60% felt so far it had no effect, 13% felt the effect had not yet come through, but from the remaining 27% the following effects were reported.

  "Advance bookings and shop sales for January were lower than expected"

"A combination of so many price increases will have an impact over and above VAT"

"Hard to say yet. Obviously price increases."

- For TICs, it was unanimous that there had not been any noticeable effect yet of the rise.
- For smaller accommodation providers on RIBOS, many were not large enough to be registered for VAT and so had not yet experienced any cost rises for the business.

Visit Kent Websites

Consumer website www.visitkent.co.uk.

Visits to the consumer site were up by 24%, and page views up by 150%

January 2009 unique visits	January 2010 unique visits	January 2011 unique visits
97,201	141,825	176,108

B2B website www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk

Visits to the B2B site were up by 29% and page views up by 27%

January 2009 unique visits	January 2010 unique visits	January 2011 Unique visits
1,059	1,325	1,713

Visit Kent Marketing

January was a busy month for the marketing team in terms of exhibitions. We attended Tourissima in France and Vakantiebeurs in Holland. Along with investors from Mulberry Cottages, Freedom Holiday Homes and Biddenden Vineyards we showcased the Garden of England and some of its local delicacies at these two international markets. During January we also hosted the Group Travel Organisers Association National Conference and AGM and welcomed over 250 of the Associations' members to the county over the three-day conference.

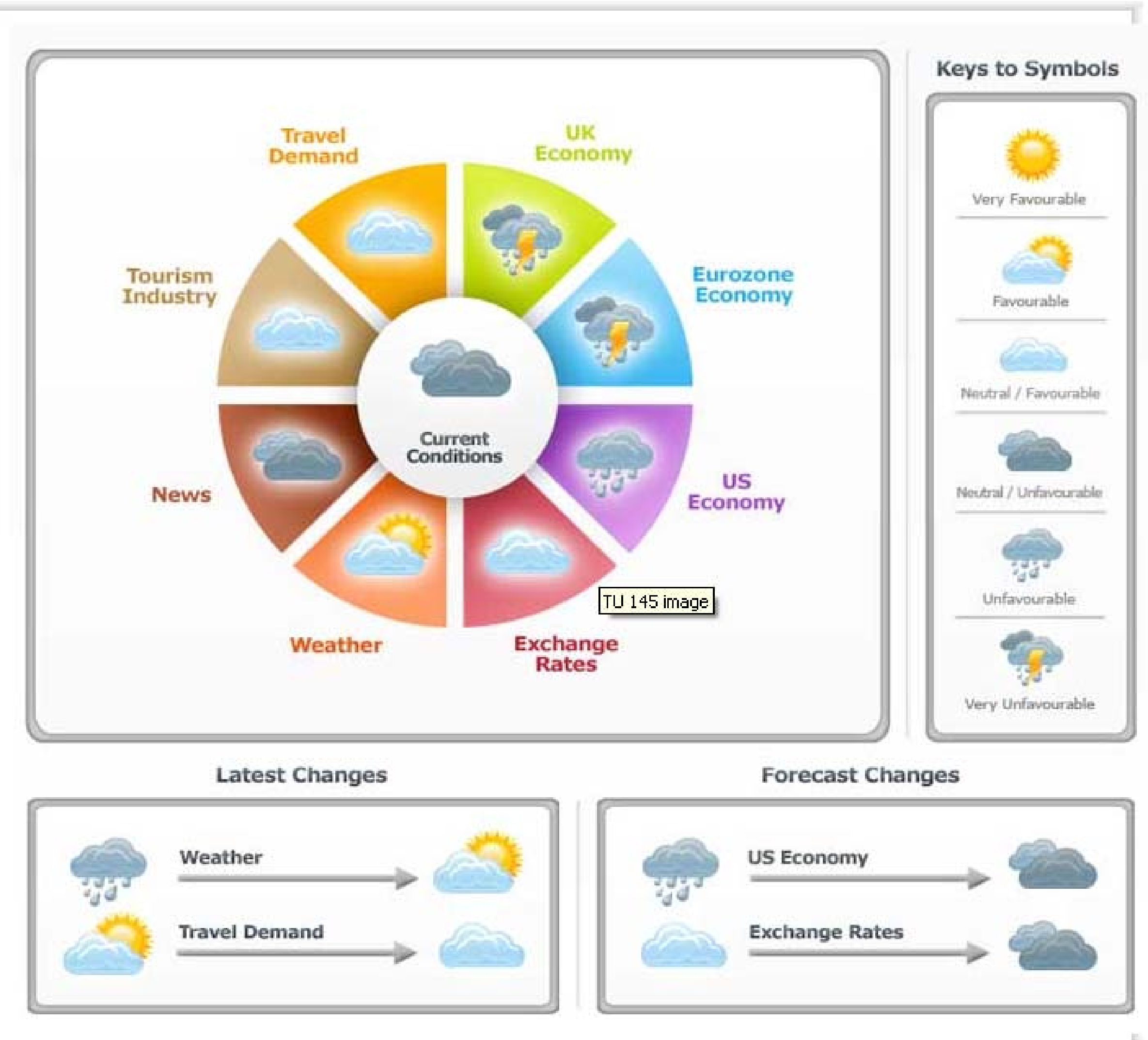
Other News

Trends Update (147 - Visit Britain)

- In the final quarter of 2010 the number of miles travelled by car on Britain's roads was 4% down on the same period of 2009 according to Department for Transport figures

- BAA report that its six UK airports handled 3.8% more passengers in January than a year ago, although around half of this is due to the impact of snow in January 2010. Heathrow had its strongest ever January for long-haul traffic with strong growth in traffic to/from both China and India
- According to PwC by 2012 London will have an additional 2,400 'deluxe' hotel rooms, representing a 27% increase in inventory
- According to PKF in December London hotel occupancy stood at 74.6%, down from 76.7% a year earlier, while outside London occupancy stood at 57.4%, down from 58.9%

Trends Update (144 - Visit Britain)



Business Barometer Contacts:

If you would like to be part of the Business Barometer process, or have any comments on its content, please contact Tracey Parker, Research Manager tracey.parker@visitkent.co.uk