



Kent's Business Barometer

January - June 2007

Welcome to the Business Barometer, an update on tourism performance in Kent. The new Barometer will be issued on a Quarterly basis, and it is hoped to get the future issues to you within one month of each quarter end. This issue covers January to June 2007 and has been compiled using data supplied to Tourism South East by tourism businesses in Kent. Thank you to those who have continued to send data to Tourism South East, and to new contributors. More contributors would be welcome as a larger sample helps us to give you a more accurate picture.

Kent Headlines Jan – June 2007

- Kent Attraction Visitor Numbers up by 9.31%**
- Kent Accommodation Occupancy up by 0.9%**
- TIC Visitor Numbers down by 2.93%**
- Kent Carriers**
 - **Port of Dover up by 3.9%**
 - **Eurotunnel up by 4.3%**

Attractions

Kent

Data was provided from a sample of 47 attractions with a good geographical spread across Kent, and attraction type. There has been an increase of 9.31% in visitor numbers during the first six months of the year, compared to 2006. The monthly data for visitors to Kent Attractions is:

January	Up 4.51%
February	Up 9.27%
March	Up 22.38%
April	Up 12.12%
May	Up 2.94%
June	Up 4.62%

With probably the wettest summer on record (BBC, Sept '07) this positive slant may not continue into the July to September quarter results. The excellent figure in March may in part be due to the **Big Day Out** event on 31st March, where 88 attractions took part, 11,447 tickets were distributed, and 57% were redeemed. The months of March and April were also drier than average, with a particularly good Easter and so may have encouraged earlier visits. Some key attractions made investments in their products and put on new events, which also helped to stimulate an increase in visitor numbers.

Rural attractions have been particularly successful in Kent during January to June with a **22%** increase in visitor numbers, but there has been some major product investment, which will inflate this figure. Visits to Urban attractions have risen by 5%, but Coastal attractions' visitor numbers have declined by 1% during the period January to June

If the data is analysed according to attraction type, it shows a mixed set of results below with Historic Properties, Museums and gardens being particularly successful in attracting visitors from January to June. This may again be partially due to the flurry of additional visitors around the **Big Day Out** as English Heritage and the National Trust properties were key contributors to the event, along with many other historic properties, museums and gardens.

Visitor Numbers to attractions Jan to Jun 2007 analysed by attraction type

Historic Properties	Up 26%
Museums	Up 29%
Gardens	Up 9%
Zoos	Down 1.4%
Other	Down 0.5%

Attractions were asked how much they felt they had benefited from the groups/coach market this year so far. 29% felt that this year was better than before, with 13% of these perceiving it to be much better. 21 % that it had been worse, but 10% of these felt it was only slightly worse.

National Picture

The Visit Britain, England Attractions Monitor findings from Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2007 were highly encouraging, with 56% of attractions recording an increase in visitor numbers compared with 2006. Overall, visitor numbers across their 551 participating attractions sample increased by 13%. March was a particularly positive month, with visits up 20% year-on-year

Quarter 2 (Apr to Jun) 2007 was also encouraging, with 56% of attractions recording an increase in visitor numbers compared with 2006. Overall, visitor numbers across the 574 participating attractions increased by 5%. April and May were similar, both reporting a year-on-year increase in visits of 8%. June was less positive, with visits increasing by less than 0.5%. The record high rainfall and flooding in June 2007 compared with the record



dry and sunny June of 2006 is likely to have had an overall negative impact upon relative visitor admissions between the two years.

Accommodation

Kent Serviced Accommodation Data

It would help us tremendously if accommodation providers could sign up to the Tourism South East '*who's sleeping in your beds?*' accommodation occupancy survey. Please contact Janet Biles on 023 8062 5458 if you are interested in taking part and she will be happy to explain further. If you take part, a personalised report will be given back to you on how your accommodation compares to other Kent accommodation. The more data we collect, the more accurate the analysis can be. From a sample of 55 serviced accommodation providers, the following year on year changes were highlighted.

District Serviced Accommodation	% Room Occupancy 2006	% Room Occupancy 2007	% change
Ashford (insufficient sample size)			
Canterbury	51.5	58.3	Up 6.8%
Dover	54.8	51.2	Down 3.6%
Maidstone	61.1	54.1	Down 7%
Medway (insufficient sample size)			
Sevenoaks	63.0	33.3	Down 29.7%
Shepway	31.3	35.5	UP 4.2%
Swale	53.3	34.7	Down 18.6%
Thanet	48.6	50.5	UP 1.9%
Tonbridge and Malling (insufficient sample size)			
Tunbridge Wells	53.5	63.5	UP10%
Occupancy – Kent overall	50.2	51.1	UP 0.9%

Kent Self Catering Data

Data was only available for the months of April, May and June 2006 from a sample of 25 providers to compare with 2007's data. This showed that in the quarter from April to June 2007 there was an increase in average net unit occupancy from 63.7% to 68.3%. However, there was a marked change in the origin of the occupants as can be seen from the following table. A greater proportion of overseas residents used self-catering facilities compared to last year, an increase from 17.6% overseas residents to 38.7%. This may be because of increasingly independent travel booking from our European neighbours.



Self-Catering Occupancy Comparison Data April – Jun 2006/7

	No of units in sample	Net unit occupancy	% UK residents	% Overseas residents
April 06	13	60.5%	82.6%	17.4%
May 06	13	58.3%	87.2%	12.8%
June 06	12	72.5%	77.4%	22.6%
Average	12.7	63.7%	82.4%	17.6%
April 07	24	70.1%	57.0%	43.0%
May 07	25	68.3%	64.2%	35.8%
Jun 07	25	66.4%	62.7%	37.3%
Average	24.7	68.3%	61.3%	38.7%

National Data - United Kingdom Occupancy Survey

Occupancy across UK serviced accommodation was 71% in June 2007, up +2% from the same month in 2006. Bed space occupancy was 57%, up +4% from June 2006. Room occupancy in hotels rose by +4%, but fell for guesthouses (-1%) and for bed and breakfasts (-3%).

Tourist Information Centres

All TIC's should now have now moved over to inputting their visitor data on to www.EnglandTIC.org. Thank you to those who resubmitted data by phone or email due to problems with the system, we hope to eradicate these glitches by the next issue. The final sample gathered provided a good spread across Kent, including both coastal and inland destinations. The results were as follows:

Comparison of visitor numbers at Kent TIC's Jan – Jun 2006/7

Month	% Increase/Decrease
January	0.2
February	-4.8
March	-6.4
April	-11
May	4.4
June	No change

Overall, Kent TIC's experienced a decrease in visitor numbers by 2.93% between January and June 2007. Only 5 TIC's recorded rises in visitor numbers, the rest recorded decreases. The reasons behind these changes have not been identified.



Carrier News

Kent

The cross channel carriers have experienced a rise in business for each month of 2007 so far:

- Eurotunnel passengers were on average 4.57% up on the first six months of 2007, with a particularly strong month in March.

January	February	March	April	May	June
5.12%	3.13%	12.29%	0.20%	4.18%	2.48%

- Port of Dover figures were up 3.9% overall, again with a particularly strong month in March.

January	February	March	April	May	June
3.30%	1.74%	15.46%	0.5%	2.3%	0.2%

- Operators reported that there seemed to be a general trend to use the channel crossings more. Airport congestion and delays on flights have encouraged people to consider alternative means of travelling or alternative holiday destinations.
- The coach market has remained fairly stable with little growth, and in some cases contracting slightly. This could be said to be partly because of the advent of low cost airlines, and also the ageing population is used to flying and is comfortable with this. However, coach companies are fighting back with more specialised tours offering people the chance to experience and see attractions that perhaps would not normally be accessible or require an in-depth knowledge.

National operator news

- UK Inbound report visitor arrivals in July 0.2% up on last year, with forward bookings up 1.8%
- In August BAA airports handled 5.1% more domestic passengers than a year ago, 8.2% more passengers on European scheduled routes, 10.2% more on North Atlantic routes and 6.1% more on other long-haul routes, note that traffic was disrupted in August 2006 by the introduction of stringent hand baggage security controls
- American Airlines, which will be commencing a New York to Stansted service in October will go double-daily from next May



Business Confidence

Tourism South East conducts business confidence research on tourism businesses in the South East, measuring their perceptions of their own performance and their expectations for the future. This research revealed the following confidence levels within tourism businesses:

January to March 2007

There was an improvement in perceived **business performance** from 27% in 2006 to 43% in 2007. This indicates that generally businesses were positive about their results. However, **expectations** for continued growth in this period reduced from 49% down to 45% indicating increasing concerns over the future.

April to June 2007

Again there was a perceived improvement in **business performance** from 38% in 2006 to 57% in 2007, which indicated that the season started well for many. **Expectations** for continued growth are also up in this period, from 46% to 56% and so confidence improved as the season progressed to June.

Concerns

The prime concerns of the region's businesses when questioned were:

- **Weather**' 80%,
- **'UK economic climate'** 40%
- **'Strength of the pound/exchange rates'** 36%
- **'Competition'** 26%.

UK News from Visit Britain

- Following extensive collaboration with LateRooms, the LateRooms website now clearly identifies accommodation awarded with an official star rating by VisitBritain or the AA.
- The Government has announced that 'in principle' a £1 levy on ATOL protected package holidays should be introduced from 1st April 2008

United Kingdom Tourism Survey Monthly Update



There were 55.5m overnight trips made in the UK, by UK residents during January to June 2007, an increase of +1% from the first half of 2006. The value of domestic overnight trips was £9.2bn, up almost +6% on the first six months of 2006.

International Passenger Survey. In 2006 there were 32,713 Million Visits, with a value of £16,002 Billion. Spend per visit was £486, and days per visit 8.4.

International Tourist Receipts League Table

The UK was ranked 6th in the league table in 2006, down from its 5th position in 2005. Receipts were 33.5 billion.

International Tourist Arrivals

The UK retained its 6th position with 30.1 million arrivals in 2006. The spend per visit reached a 6 year high in Oct 06 up around 7%, but dropped sharply in January 07.

- Volume and Value of tourism to the UK was up by 1% in the first seven months of 2007
- Strongest markets include Spain, Russia, China and South Korea
- Weakest markets are USA, Japan, Ireland and Austria
- Outbound Travel by UK residents fell by 1% in the first 6 months of this year

Domestic Economic News

- The Ernst and Young Item Club estimate that UK growth could be as much as 1% lower than previously forecast during 2008 and 2009 due to the current 'credit crunch'
- The Centre for Economic and Business Research forecast a sharp slowdown in the UK economy, with GDP growth in 2008 cut to 1.5%, and consumer spending growing at just 1%

Please feedback to Tracey Parker, Research Coordinator at Visit Kent, tracey@ktanet.co.uk (01227) 862792 if you have any suggested improvements for the style or content of the Barometer.

