

Gravesham Borough Factsheet

The Experiential Offer – Opportunities & Gaps

September 2020



The following factsheet will review:

- ✓ Key trends that resonate with the Gravesham Borough offer
- ✓ Area product strengths & opportunities
- ✓ Building on the current product for Gravesham
- ✓ Gravesham specific
 - ✓ Opportunities & examples
 - ✓ Gaps & considerations
- ✓ Opportunities offered by the NDW & Kent Downs AONB
- ✓ Kent experience product snapshot grid highlighting seasonal opportunities

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Key trends that resonate with the Gravesham Borough offer

Gravesham is a somewhat forgotten slice of North Kent; the consumers perception is dominated by the riverside town of Gravesend, known as the English home of Pocahontas and for its links to maritime defence heritage. Yet this is very much a district of stories, from the breadth of cultures that have and still do call it home, to the pilgrims that have travelled through its stunning countryside. The multicultural experience offered by the Gurdwara and festivals celebrating calendar events such as Eid or Diwali, all offer a new and engaging opportunity to welcome visitors.

Developing engaging travel experiences is an effective way for a destination to reach and influence customers.

From recent research we already know that:

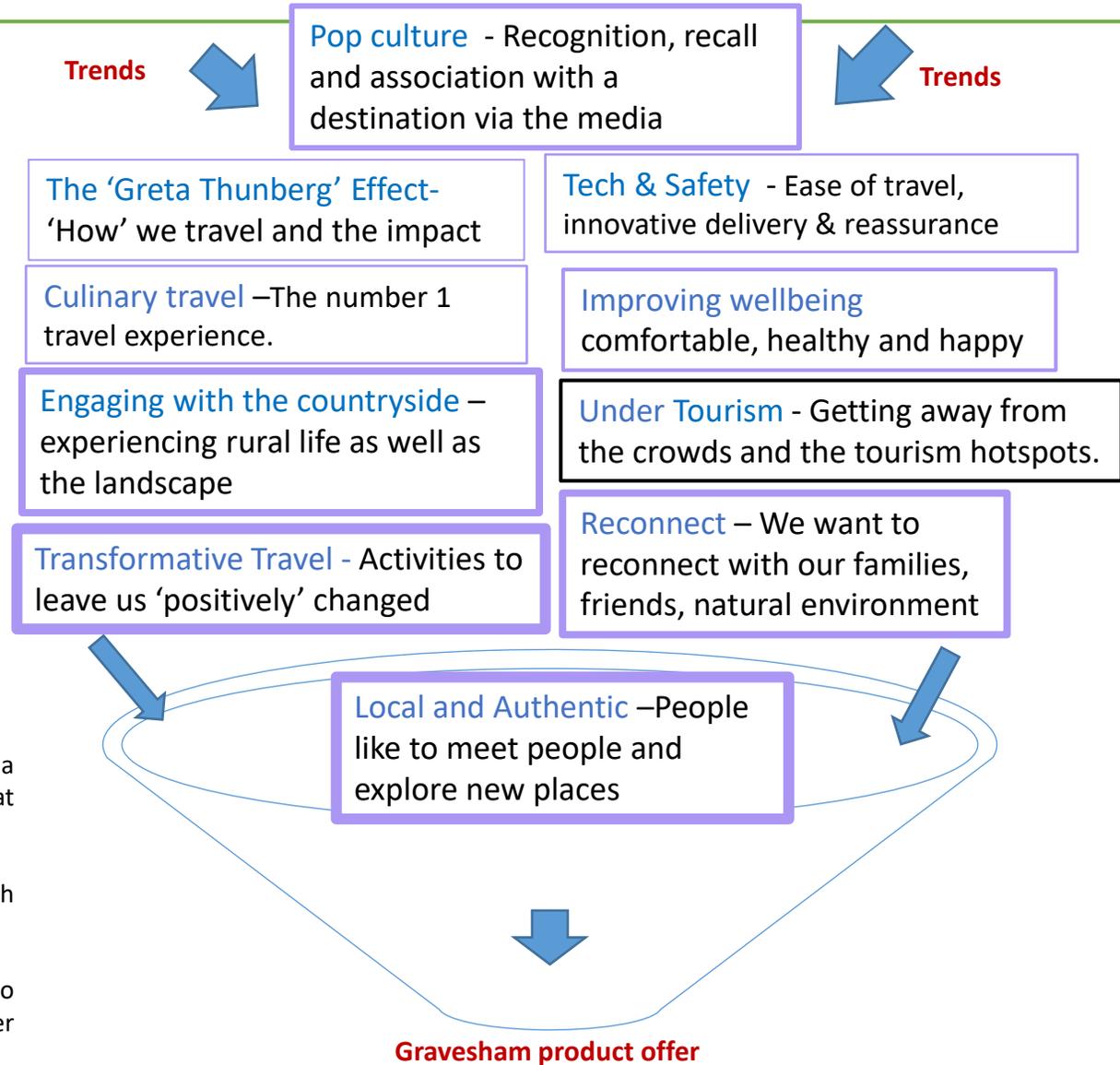
- ✓ **BOOK IN ADVANCE** - When booking an experience, 65% of of the domestic market book before leaving home.
- ✓ **WILL TRAVEL UP TO 1 HOUR** - Approximately 80% of customers looking to book an experience are prepared to travel up to an hour, any longer and the % drops dramatically.
- ✓ **EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE DESTINATION CHOICE** - Nearly 60% of the domestic market are influenced by an experience when selecting a destination

Key Trends:

Local & Authentic – The visitor is looking for an authentic experience, where they can feel less like a tourist and more like a local. In the search for authenticity, the most popular experience is one that takes them behind the scenes to gain an insight into a different way of life/ culture or industry.

Transformative Travel – Is an experience that leaves us ‘positively’ changed, this can be through education, wellbeing and mindfulness, or by gaining a deeper insight and understanding.

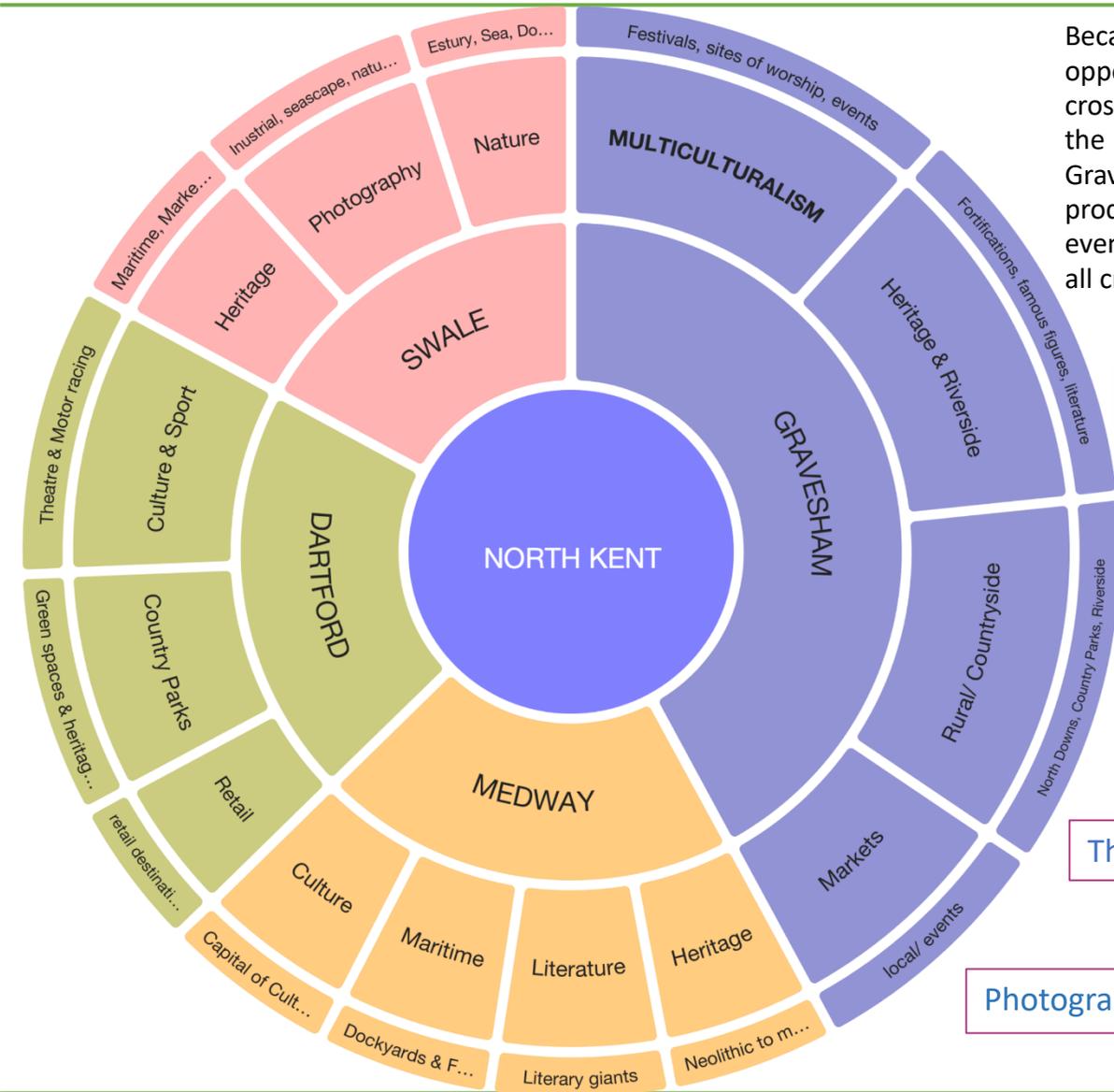
Engaging with the countryside – accentuated by lockdown, there is an increased desire to get out into the countryside. Although walking and cycling are key activities, when this is combined with other interests such as food & drink or heritage, the consumers interest increases significantly.





Strengths & opportunities for North Kent and Gravesham Borough

Because **North Kent** is 'known, yet not known', developing experience-led product creates an opportunity to, challenge perceptions and reach new audiences. For Gravesham, there are several cross-over areas with neighbouring districts, especially around established product such as Dickens and the North Downs but also new areas for potential partnerships. For example, the panic room in Gravesend is ranked as one of the best in the country and is leading the way for further gamer-led product development in the Borough, while both Medway and Thanet were planning geek and gamer events(pre Covid). This, along with the walking tours and the chance to celebrate the Borough's heritage all create product development opportunities.



Culture

Creative partnerships - Cultural & Heritage cross over

Multiculturalism – Locations, Events & Community

Youth Culture - Games culture

Markets & Events

Markets & Events that link to core themes

The Heritage Story

Maritime history, military & defence

Literary heritage, famous associations & walking tours

The Great Outdoors

Walking /Cycling / Nature/Riverside/Country Parks

Transformative and Pilgrimage - North Downs Way

Photography

Industrial heritage & Military heritage



Building on the current product for Gravesham Borough

Cultural heritage – Dickens has a strong association across the county, but Gravesham holds hidden gems such as Gads Hill and locations that have influenced his storylines like the Leather Bottle Inn, Cobham. These sites could form the basis for a rural walking tour product linking to the NDW, building on the established Gravesend historical tours. River based product & fortifications also have a bigger part to play in the Gravesend experience.

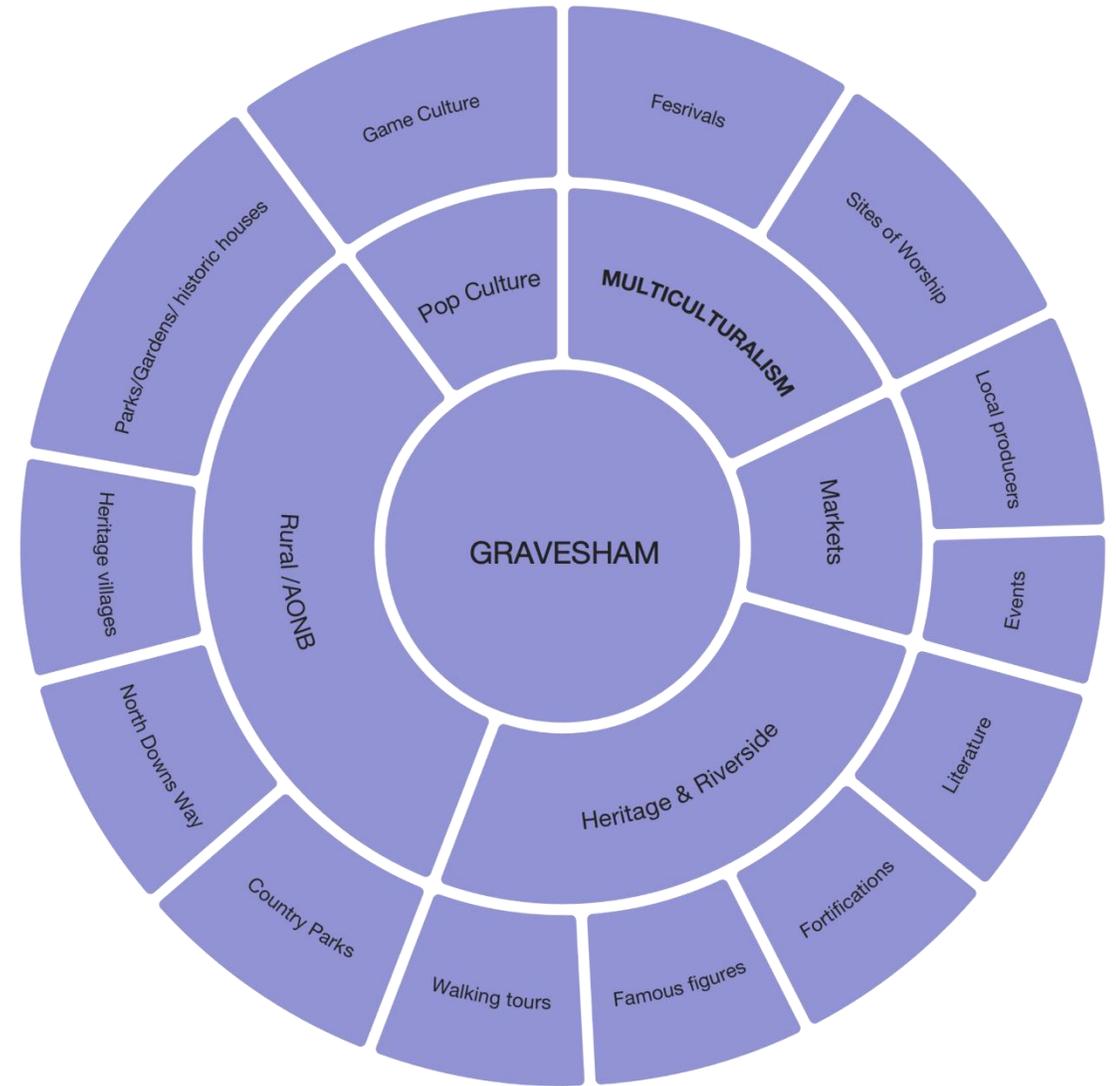
Markets– Market footfall like general retail has been significantly impacted by Covid 19, however footfall pre covid was known to fluctuate. The Borough market building has a fantastic heritage with the potential to build on the current market offer with events and cultural festival themes.

Multicultural offer – The Gurdwara does have the potential to develop an independent and group visitor market, but needs to establish an attraction's operating model to sit alongside the day to day worship. Although additional, it is achievable and can generate a considerable economic return for the community, as seen in Neasden. Raising the profile of key festivals, linking these to possible events at the market could generate a reason to travel, generating a wider interest beyond the community.

Pop culture: Linking into the playcation trend for gaming, panic rooms and off season events would also strengthen Gravesham's appeal to a teen family market which could then align to the London Resort offer.

Food & Drink: The interest in English wine has grown exponentially over the past 10 years and food related experiences are the no. 1 bookable product on most platforms, indicating an opportunity for Gravesham to develop this area.

Strengthened and enhanced via a sustainable commitment





Gravesham Borough experience product opportunities

Gravesham: Product Strengths: Countryside of the North Downs, riverside maritime and defence heritage at Gravesend, Pocahontas, Dickens, historic villages and estates

Experience	Lead Opportunity underutilised at present	Product example
Multiculturalism	<p>Out of the 12 local authorities in Kent, Gravesham has the highest number and proportion of residents from an ethnic minority group accounting for just over 1/6th. This cultural diversity within the population, offers the borough a great opportunity to celebrate its multiculturalism and explore how this strength can benefit the visitor economy.</p> <p>Location Visits - The Gurdwara is a stunning architectural addition to the Gravesham visitor experience and is currently the largest in Europe. As with all Gurdwara, Guru Nanak Darbar is an inclusive and welcoming site of worship offering hospitality and tours to visitors, yet at present these tours are volunteer run and free. At present all temple visits are suspended due to Covid 19. When group tour business can resume there is an opportunity to explore how learnings can be taken from the Neasden Mandir and how this could work for Gravesend.</p> <p>Events & Festivals – Multicultural festivals are a mainstay for the year-round London cultural calendar, there could be an opportunity to develop a small scale festival programme incorporating festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Easter, De Los Muertos, Christmas, Passover, Hanukkah and Chinese New Year.</p> <p>Local Heroes - Crossing over with the guided tours programme, there is also the opportunity to celebrate leading figures from the community such as Squadron Leader Mahinder Singh Pujji and his significance to the areas military heritage.</p> <p>Target segments -The Potential of the ethnic minority travel market offers a huge opportunity for Gravesham. Travel has a reputation for bringing people together yet it is often the ethnic minority community who are missing from the target segment profile. Visibility is key across all destination delivery, where diversity and inclusion can support business growth.</p>	<p>Described as a London landmark and one of London’s 7 wonders, the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Hindu Neasden Temple) www.londonmandir.baps.org At present the temple is closed, but major coach operators incorporate visits to the Mandir as part of a day excursion programme from London e.g. Golden Tours</p> <p>Advice and guidance can be sort from organisations such as: www.bftlsn.com and www.womenintravelcic.com</p>
Markets	<p>Gravesend Borough Market – Like all markets housed in an enclosed location, the last 6 months have proved increasingly difficult for traders. But this could be an opportunity to review the market and test to see if there is a visitor and local resident appetite to change formats/ new ideas. Food Markets are a great way to get local people to use the space along with visitors that are ‘in the know’. Although an ambitious model to follow, the Time out Market in Lisbon is a great model – The focus is food and drink on keys days/ evenings to engage the audience in the current climate they have introduced pop up cooking courses. There could be an opportunity to deliver this type of experience at Borough Market, working with current traders (July 2020) like @justwinenot and @urban.farm.it</p> <p>Partnership potential - If course time slots were scheduled to coincide with the Gravesend – Tilbury Ferry, there could be an opportunity to joint promote to the Tilbury audience with Jet Stream.</p>	<p>Timeout market Lisboa Timeoutmarket.com @timeoutmarketlisboa</p>



Gravesham Borough experience product opportunities

Experience	Lead Opportunity underutilised at present	Product example
<p>Raising the profile of key attractions through the experience lens</p>	<p>There are a number of key attractions within Gravesham that would directly benefit from being packaged as a more immersive experience to raise their profile.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meopham Vineyard is actually in a prime location for small group tour day excursions out of London. • Cobham Village with access to Cobham Hall, Cobham College and The Leather Bottle could offer a guided tour experience which could be a bookable product or used by the travel trade as part of a longer tour. • The extensive Woodlands and Parks such as Cobham, Shorne, and Jeskyns Community wood all offer great locations for foraging, walking and personal fitness bootcamps/ days, all of which are of high interest via the Airbnb platform and aren't summer season dependent. • In July 2020, Sustrans published a report indicating a large unmet demand for cycling from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups in urban areas, linking to opportunities around multiculturalism and building the destinations appeal to BAME segments, there could be an opportunity to develop a targeted guided cycling experience. 	<p>For example:</p> <p>Opportunities for Gravesham to position Cobham for inclusion in village tours for companies such as www.odysseytraveller.com who already package villages into a tour programme across Britain.</p> <p>www.jackravenbushcraft.co.uk @blackgirlshike were established as a meet up group in 2019</p>
<p>Guided Tours Programme – Town and country</p>	<p>Gravesham has made a significant investment into developing a great guided walks programme, linking key sites of interest in Gravesend. To complement these town based tours, bookable guided rural walks could be developed around key sites of interest such as Cobham College, Cobham Hall and Gads Hill. These key sites can easily be linked together via the footpath and regional route network, including the North Downs Way.</p> <p>Grabbing the visitor's attention - Product testing the current Gravesend tour programme under different name format such as Ghost tours, Murder Mystery etc could help engage with a wider cross section of visitors. Ghost tours are the most popular themed walking tour in Britain, and there is also an opportunity to raise the profile of such walking tours around Halloween and Autumn school holidays.</p> <p>What will help? – a greater emphasis on visual inspiration on Instagram, working with local photographers and bloggers linking and utilising key # for greater reach and engagement.</p>	<p>Walking tours do need to inform and educate, but they also need to entertain, hence the most popular heritage tours are around Ghosts, Famous People or restricted access.</p> <p>Canterbury Ghost Tours</p> <p>Harry Potter tours of Oxford</p> <p>Canterbury Ghost Tours (York, Bath, Salisbury, Edinburgh, Tun Wells) Rotten Ramsgate Tours</p>
<p>Gaming and escape rooms ‘PLAYCATION’</p>	<p>As gaming continues to grow in popularity, gamers are looking to more than just their consoles and mobile apps for entertainment. Although still a specialised form of travel that is technology dependent, the gamer tourism trend could be an opportunity for the districts game stores, cafes and escape rooms to link together to offer a ‘playcation’ product.</p>	<p>The market leader here is Japan offering: Professional gamer cafes – Anime pop ups, iconic gamer eateries and geek gaming hotels</p>



Gravesham Borough Product Priorities – Opportunities & Gaps

	Primary Themes	Gaps analysis for selected themes
Gravesham	Multi-culturalism	<p>This product area has significant growth potential for Gravesham; Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara has the potential to capitalise on group tour interest similar to that seen with the Neasden Temple (Pre Covid). At present interest is quite localised, however a review of the cultural events programme could engage a wider audience.</p> <p>BIDs across the country use cultural events to create a ‘reason to travel’, where the event encourages visitor footfall into retail areas. E.g. Bath BID ran a ‘De Los Muertos’ festival in October 2019 to offer a cultural alternative to the Halloween retail event – This included pop up Mexican dining, music and screenings of recent children’s films alongside street decoration.</p> <p>A number of cultural events already exist in the district, but to enable this to expand, would require a central events delivery programme reliant on a public/ private sector partnership model.</p>
	Markets	<p>The Market area needs footfall.... and consumers need a reason to visit beyond just purchasing of items from the stall holders.</p> <p>A ‘canteen social’ event around family dining linking to the cultural events calendar could revitalise this product. Actions that would support this type event would be; free parking scheme for the events days and linked offers with the Gravesend Ferry etc...</p> <p>Equally, the development of a ‘hands on’ food and drink course programme could run on market days, or experiences associated to a wider events calendar; these could include for example, wine tasting and pairing, how to grow your own mushrooms and cooking with mushrooms.</p>

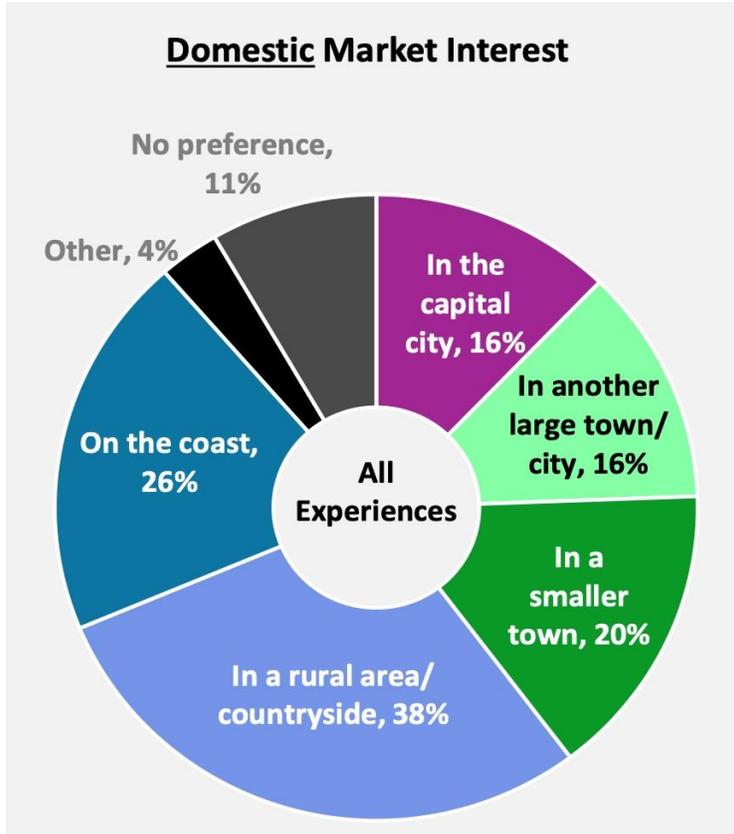


Markets & Multi-Culturalism

The Value of the North Downs Product

Tapping into countryside taster walks would be a great way for Gravesham to capitalise on the NDW and the Kent Downs offer – Themed around the appeal to engage with rural life, visiting key areas associated with Dickens and capitalising on the number of country parks that fall within the AONB could offer the perfect backdrop for rural courses and activity such as wild cooking and foraging.

Gravesham’s proximity to London and to the Medway towns, offers an extensive consumer base in the less than one-hour journey time. As a borough with a strong ethnic community, there is also the opportunity to engage key groups who may not currently access the countryside.



- ❖ The Discover England Experiences research (June 2019) highlights the potential to develop product in the rural area, capturing the following insights for shaping new experiences:
- ❖ There is a high interest in engaging with a rural product for the domestic audience with 39% stating their preference for the countryside, rural area. International preference was less, however is still represented 29%.
- ❖ Both Domestic and International visitors highlighted journey time to an experience was a factor with 85% will travel up to 1 hour, any longer saw a dramatic drop.

They want the experience to be:

- ✓ Authentic & Unique
- ✓ Create a distinctive memory
- ✓ Deliver cultural or historical immersion
- ✓ Provide a challenge that they don't have access to at home

The North Downs Way & Kent Downs AONB deliver against all these consumer requirements. Accessible in less than 30 minutes journey time; offering an authentic rural and historical experience that complements the city offer and encourages extension of stay.

The Gravesham Opportunity

- High volume day visitor market with low spend
- **An opportunity to create a 'walk in the footsteps of' product**
- Visitors are generally older; travelling from SE & London
- Rural and town based walking product

Gravesham needs it's visitors to:

- Stay longer & spend more
- Disperse from the city centre pressure points
- Visit out of core season

Tapping into current trends

- Transformative & wellbeing experiences are a growth area
- Under tourism – visitors wanting to get away from the hot spots
- Sustainability appeal/ family offer



The added value of the North Downs Way:

- Pilgrims Way/ North Downs Way is an established product
- Adaptation of the pilgrimage product could reposition the route as a transformative experience.
- Accessibility via public transport; the appeal of engaging with rural life; the opportunity to link key points of historical interest
- This product can be self guided or guide led
- This product is a sustainable offer to the consumer

What makes a good walking experience?

- ✓ Landscape/ views/ architectural vistas
- ✓ historical or cultural insight often delivered as insider knowledge
- ✓ A chance to relax, unwind and recharge – linking to the well-being and mindfulness trend.

Engaging the visitor with the landscape

Experience products: E.g. Food & Drink – Hidden Heritage – Literary – Agricultural - health – Pilgrimage

How do visitors engage with outdoor activities ?

Engaging with the North Downs Way/ AONB Walking / Cycling/Nature

Local
Day visitor
Leisure walker/ group tour
Families
outdoor activity is not the main reason for travel
Local/ Domestic/ group international

Product; 1-2 hours walking combined with other attractions - often circular routes to car park with other products
Barriers: Concern about getting lost, accessing the countryside, weather

85% of visitors that want to engage with the countryside are casual walkers

Casual/ leisure walker

Casual / moderate walker / cyclist with limited time

1-2 day options combined with other product
Repeat visitor
Walking/ cycling as 'part of' not main reason
Domestic 1-2 hour journey time/ rural retreaters/ active

Product: 1/2 day - 2 days - regular walkers, time poor -mid -higher range accommodation/ Unique Airbnb/ looking to combine other experiences
Barriers: Time, need to relax, competition from other activities, weather

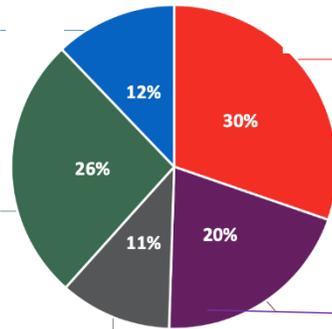
Long distance walker/ hiker/cyclist

Solo traveller/ couples/groups
Hikers / mountain biker/ route cyclist
Trail collectors
Domestic & International
Product - self guided/ looking for planning and local knowledge assistance to assist own planning - camping, Airbnb ,B&B
Barriers: appeal of other trails, baggage carrying service/ lack of

Who are the lead segments?

The countryside appeals across all VisitEngland segments, however, there is a greater resonance with segments 1&2.

1. COUNTRY-LOVING TRADITIONALISTS
2. FUN IN THE SUN
3. FUSS-FREE VALUE SEEKERS
4. FREE AND EASY MINI-BREAKERS
5. ASPIRATIONAL FAMILY FUN



1. COUNTRY-LOVING TRADITIONALISTS

Empty nesters with traditional values, they are likely to have recently taken a countryside break in England. Good quality, secure accommodation is a priority when booking a holiday.

2. FUN IN THE SUN

Typically parents looking for family-orientated summer holidays where beaches play a starring role. Tend to seek cheaper, more 'social' alternatives to hotel accommodation, such as caravans or holiday camps.



Example experience
Landscapes that inspire art, literature and poetry are always of interest

You are here: Things To Do > The Tolkien Trail - in the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien

The Tolkien Trail - in the Footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien

Type: Walking Route
Hurst Green, Lancashire
Tel: 01200 425566

♥ Add to My Planner



The potential of the casual walker -

Engaging in a casual/ leisure walk is of considerable interest to the day visitor, however they will look to incorporate this as part of the overall experience rather than sole activity. Therefore, it is key to layer additional experiences to the walking and cycling offer. For example – North Downs Way, incorporating Cobham village can include Literary heritage and behind the scenes with Cobham college.

Appendix 1

Kent/Lead District Snapshot - Strength, Opportunity and Gap analysis

– Experience led product only

Please note: This is not a definitive list of the county's tourism product, each district factsheet will have a more in-depth product snapshot.

Strength (S) – The product is already established but could be more experiential/ season lengthened

Opportunity (O) – There is an opportunity to develop this product to raise the profile of the area through experience

Gap for development (G) – There is a consumer interest and potential for the destination to showcase this product

Seasonality Key for product delivery (Actual and Potential)

High	Potential for high product delivery in this quarter – This product may not be currently delivering in this month
Med	Potential for Medium level product delivery in this quarter due to - weather, product, availability of local support
Low	Low product delivery in this quarter due to – Reliance on weather, volunteer base, product availability

Product Grid	Kent (All)	Kent Downs AONB	White Cliffs Country NDW/AONB	Folkestone & Hythe District	Canterbury NDW/ AONB	Thanet	Ashford NDW/AONB	Tun Wells	Gravesham NDW/AONB	Medway	Seasonality			
											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Golf	O		S/O	O			O							
Hidden Heritage	S	S/O	O	O/S	S/O	O	S	S	S/O	S/O				
Archaeology	O		O/G		O/G					O				
Gardens/ Gardening Courses	S/O	O		O			O	S	O					
Fossil Hunting	O		O	O/S	O	O								
Military heritage	O		S	S			O		S/O	S				

Product Grid	Kent (All)	Kent Downs AONB	White Cliffs NDW/AONB	Folkestone & Hythe District	Canterbury NDW/ AONB	Thanet	Ashford NDW/AONB	Tun Wells	Gravesham NDW/AONB	Medway	Seasonality			
											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Wildlife	O	S	S/O	S/O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O				
Walking & Cycling	S/O	S	O/G	O/G	O/G	O	S/O	O/G	O/G	O/G				
Water sports	O	O	O	O	O	O								
Food & Drink	S	S/O	O	S/O	S	O	S/O	O	O/G	O				
Multicultural	O	G	O	O	O	O	O		S/O	O				
Foraging	O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O					
Pilgrimage	O	S/O	S/O		S/O		O		O	O				
Photography	O/G	S/O	O/G	O/G	O/G	O/G	O	O	O	O				
Agriculture		S/O	S/O	S/O	S/O	O	S	S	O					
Vineyards	S/O	O	O	O	O		S	O	O					
Theatre/ Music	O		O	S/O	S/O	S/O		S/O		O				
Creative courses	O	O	O	S/O/G	O	S/O/G	O	O	O	O				

Product Grid	Kent (All)	Kent Downs AONB	White Cliffs Country NDW/AONB	Folkestone & Hythe District	Canterbury NDW/ AONB	Thanet	Ashford NDW/AONB	Tun Wells	Gravesham NDW/AONB	Medway	Seasonality			
											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Art tours	O			S/O/G		O				O				
Lux escapes	O			S/O	O		O	O						
Wellbeing	O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O	S/O	O	O				
Maritime	S/O		O	O	O				S	S				
Seafood	O		O	S/O	O	O								
Outdoor pursuits			O	O/S	O	S/O								
Events	S/O		O	S/O	S/O	S/O/G	O	O	O	S/O				
Markets	O				O		O	O	O	O				
Retro culture	O		O	O	O	S				O				
Pop Culture	O			O		O			O	O				
Screen tours	O		O	O	O/G	O/G	O			S/O				
Fishing	O		O	O	O	O								
Cooking	O	O	O	S/O	O	O	S/O	O	O	O				
Family/ small group focus			O	O	S/O	S	O	O	O	O				
Bespoke tours	S	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O				

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