Tourism State of the Nation

VisitBritain/VisitEngland

July 2026

VISIT BRITAIN

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Recent trend:

- Inbound: Data suggests that European visit numbers are up year-on-year and those from long haul down, with overall numbers in the first half of 2026 slightly up on 2025.
- Domestic: Recent performance appears to be steady: similar to, or slightly up on, early 2025.

Forward look:

- Inbound: Flight bookings have picked up in the last several weeks. Flights for August arrival are slow but those for the autumn are more promising, especially from Europe. Prices and cost of living remain key traveller concerns globally.
- Domestic and industry: Both domestic and outbound intentions dipped in July, after a more positive reading in June. In recent months, there has been an increase in the proportion who are cutting back on spending on eating/drinking out as a response to cost of living pressures. However, broader consumer confidence has picked up.

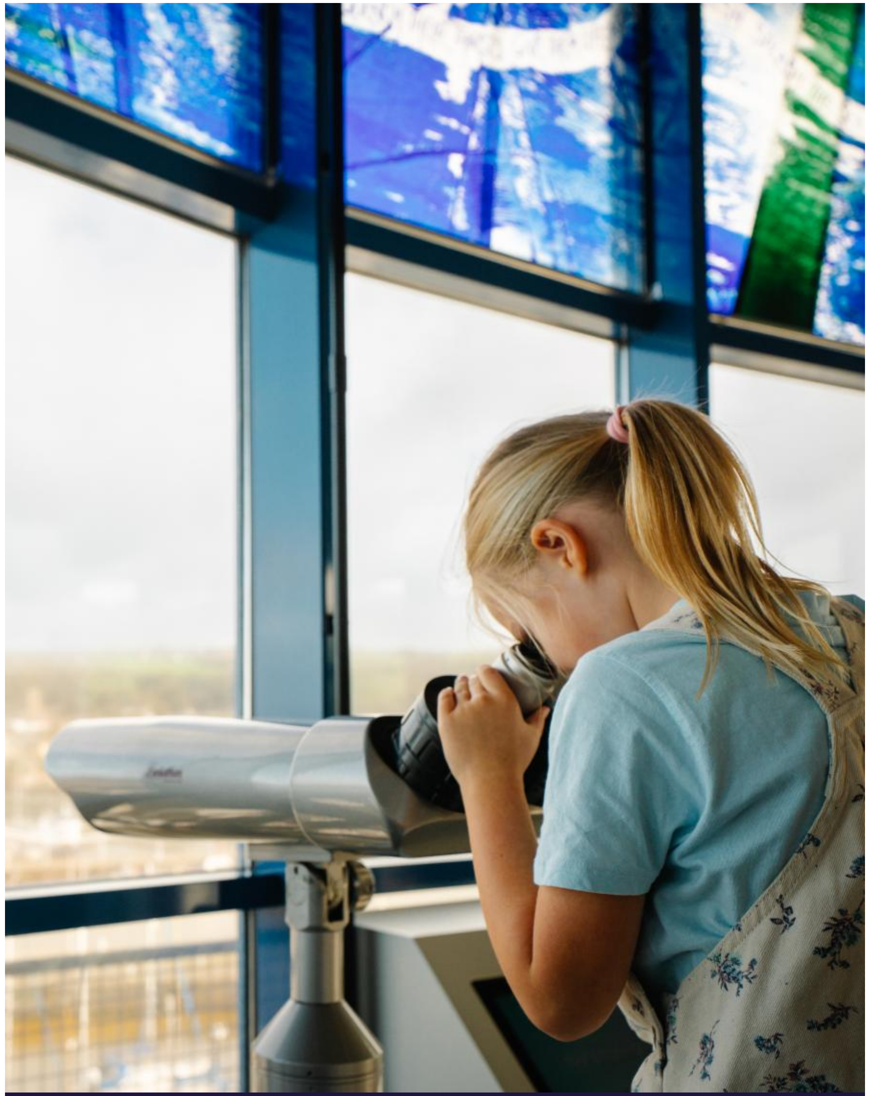

Image: A girl standing at the telescope at the Beacon Museum, Whitehaven © VisitBritain/Zedmill

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Tourism State of the Nation July 2026: Inbound performance and prospects

- **Recent performance:** Looking across several available data sources, VisitBritain's provisional estimate is that the volume of inbound tourism to Britain in the first quarter was up around 2% on 2025. Signals are that the UK saw growth in European visits in Q2 but a decline from long haul.
- **Prospects:** Flight bookings made in the last several weeks to the UK have shown an improvement. Bookings in the Forward keys database (which recently has tracked behind the total) are 3% behind last year in the last six weeks of data (to 19th July), well ahead of the trend seen throughout most of the year, and suggesting growth in the total inbound market. Flights on the book for August are running well below last year, but those for the autumn are looking more promising.
- **Global regions:** Flight bookings from Europe for the autumn are almost on par with last year, although bookings from Middle East, India and Australia are well behind 2025 levels and those from the US are also down. Looking back at the last few months also strongly indicates that Europe is outperforming long haul.
- **Nations/Regions:** London and Rest of England performing similarly; Scotland seeing strong growth. In the last six weeks, flight bookings made to London airports are down 5% and to Rest of England down 4%, including to the North of England down 3%, but to Scotland up 15%. In Q1, spending by Visa cardholders was up 3% year on year in England, up 19% in Scotland, but down 12% in Wales vs a strong 2025. Spending was up 3% in London, and up 18% in the North of England.
- **Competitive view:** Oxford Economics forecast that tourism to the UK is forecast to grow by just 1.5% this year, compared to 6.3% for Western Europe; Mediterranean destinations are expected to have a strong year due to travellers avoiding the Middle East, and the UK has a higher exposure to Middle Eastern and Indian visitors. However, the UK is forecast to rebound with 7% growth next year, regaining much of its lose share. Globally, tourism is forecast to grow by 4.3% this year.

Source: VisitBritain, Visa, Oxford Economics, Forward Keys/Amadeus

Tourism State of the Nation July 2026: Global context and drivers

- **Economic outlook:** Short term forecasts have been changeable as the Iran situation develops and the oil price fluctuates. As of early July, the US economy is forecast to grow at 2.3% this year, an slight upwards revision since the peace deal, but still well down on expectations before the conflict began. The Eurozone is expected to see 0.6% growth this year, albeit an upgrade on the previous forecast. 2027 is forecast to see a pickup to 2.7% and 1.5% growth respectively. Within Europe, Spain, Poland and the Nordics are seeing stronger economic growth. Globally, growth will be led by India and China this year; Saudi Arabia and the UAE are expected to see little-to-no growth this year and Kuwait and Qatar sharp declines, before a likely rebound next year.
- **Oil price:** The oil price is volatile due to the Iran conflict. It has risen from a low of $72/barrel at the time of the peace deal to $82 at time of writing, though a little down from a July high of $87 and well down from April levels. The jet fuel price is up substantially from its low point in June and is up 78% year on year, putting upwards pressure back onto air costs.
- **Exchange rate:** The pound has been fairly stable recently, with $1 buying 75p, well within its recent range, and €1 buying 86p, the same as a year ago.
- **Global consumer confidence & trends:** Sentiment from European markets to Britain remains stable, although European markets report travellers being more price sensitive and a trend towards late booking. Higher airfares and fuel prices, and cost-of-living concerns, are key pressures globally. GCC confidence is fragile although premium travellers are more resilient. Economic and price pressures

Source: VisitBritain, Oxford Economics, Bank of England, IATA

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Tourism State of the Nation July 2026: Domestic and tourism industry

- **Domestic outlook:** Both domestic and outbound intentions dipped in July. 74% intend to take a trip in the next 12 months, down from 77% a year ago, and also below levels seen the last few months. 56% intend to take an outbound trip, down from 60% a year ago (and well down from 65% just before the Iran conflict). Coming after a relatively positive reading for trip intentions in June, August's result will confirm if this is a blip or a trend. In recent months, there has been an increase in the proportion who are cutting back on spending on eating/drinking out as a response to cost of living pressures.
- **Recent performance:** Recent domestic trip taking appears to be in line with or slightly up on last year. 23% say they took a trip in April-June, similar to the 22% seen in the second quarter of 2025. Reported outbound trip taking, however, has softened to 12%, from 14% last year. Looking back to the first quarter of the year, Visa data suggests that domestic tourism spending was up 3% in the first quarter of the year, around in line with inflation (and similar to the picture suggested by other sources). Northern England saw strong year-on-year growth (up 13%).
- **Economic outlook:** Consumer confidence jumped in July, up to its highest level since January. Renewed hostilities in the Middle East, however, could push the inflation outlook back up. Petrol prices are down from their peak but likely to rise again due to the fresh jump in the oil price. Economic growth forecasts for this year and next have been nudged up fractionally due to better than expected resilience to the Middle East conflict, though growth rates of 1.0% and 0.9% respectively are nonetheless sluggish. Consumer spending growth is even lower than this (0.8%/0.7%).
- **Industry data:** Business revenues in the accommodation sector are up 4% year to date and 7% for eating/drinking out, both ahead of inflation and with steady growth in recent months, and up 4% in recreation/culture. Business confidence about the next 12 months is slightly net positive for both hospitality and recreation/culture; for the former, the first positive reading on this measure since November.

Source: VisitEngland, Visa, ONS, Oxford Economics, DESNZ