

## **Overnight Tourism Data for Towns, Local Authorities and Counties Analysis of GB Tourism Survey Data 2006 - 2012**

### **Background**

The UK (now GB) Tourism Survey was originally designed to provide accurate data about the volume and value of domestic overnight tourism for the country as a whole and for its constituent nations. With a contact sample of 100,000 respondents annually, generating information about some 18,000 trips taken in Great Britain, the survey provides extremely robust annual data at the national level, and even at regional level, annual results are generally based on 1000 – 2000 actual trips, allowing us a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the data.

Increasingly however, there is a demand for information below the regional level, with a requirement to understand the importance of tourism for towns, local authorities and counties. The problem with this is that while it is possible to analyse GBTS survey at this level (and we have done so for the top 20 most visited towns in England), the underlying base sizes can become very low for the smaller towns and authorities.

### **Local Authorities, Counties & Towns Analysis (now also including Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) and Parliamentary Constituencies)**

In order to respond to the demand for greater geographical aggregation - while taking into account the sample size issues we face - we have developed an analysis of our domestic overnight tourism data. Rather than considering individual years, this considers three year averages (summing the results for a three year period together and dividing by three to establish the average annual visitor volume / value for that period).

Data is provided for the five periods 2006 – 2008, 2007 – 2009, 2008 – 2010, 2009 – 2011, and 2010 - 2012 and figures are shown for total overnight tourism (considering all trip purposes – holiday, business and visiting friends and relatives) and separately for holiday travel. This will be updated each year as new data becomes available.

Results are provided for local authorities, for counties and for towns (note that there is some overlap with local authorities in the “towns” analysis, but this is useful for understanding the importance of individual destinations within some of the larger authority areas). The 2010–2012 data also includes results for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) and Parliamentary Constituencies.

This analysis is published as several different excel spreadsheets on our website, here:

[http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/major-tourism-surveys/overnightvisitors/GBTS\\_2012/Regional\\_Results\\_2012.aspx](http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/major-tourism-surveys/overnightvisitors/GBTS_2012/Regional_Results_2012.aspx)

### **How Robust Is the Data?**

Even using three year averages, base sizes remain low for many of the individual towns and local authorities. The analysis includes a user guide, which explains how to estimate the underlying base size based on the number of reported trips – and also provides a guide to margins of error for different base sizes.

Our recommendation is that when interpreting this data, users should refer both to the margins of error, and also to the degree of variation in the five year period to come to a “common sense” view of what the figures mean.

### **For Example**

Table 1, below, is an excerpt from the analysis, which shows that the average annual visitor numbers for Coventry over the past five years are in the range 518,000 to 563,000. The margin of error on these results is around +/-15%, which means that statistically, we can be 95% confident that the true value for these results 440,000 to 645,000.

However, the general consistency of the figures over the five year period suggests that a “common sense” view might be that the true value really is likely to be in the region of 520,000 – 550,000, but that it is not possible to identify any clear trend over the five year period.

**Table 1**

	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
	Trips	Trips	Trips	Trips	Trips
	2006-8	2007-9	2008-10	2009-11	2010-12
	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands
<i>England</i>	98265	98724	97516	100682	101418
Birmingham	2279	2314	2241	2205	2279
Coventry	544	518	528	563	531

The same approach can be taken when looking at the position of individual local authorities relative to others. Based on Table 2, we can say with some certainty that Coventry has fewer visitors than local authorities like Cornwall or Manchester, and more than places such as Lincoln or Peterborough. However, from these results, we cannot be certain that in the period 2009 – 2012 Coventry had more visitors than the Derbyshire Dales, or fewer than Kensington and Chelsea or Reading – rather, we would need to conclude that these local authorities are broadly similar in their numbers of domestic overnight trips.

**Table 2**

	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
	Trips	Trips	Trips	Trips	Trips
	2006-8	2007-9	2008-10	2009-11	2010-12
	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands	thousands
<i>England</i>	98265	98724	97516	100682	101418
Cornwall	4253	4375	4142	4136	3899
City of London	2823	2856	2952	2944	3274
Manchester	2372	2445	2409	2470	2526
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Weymouth and Portland	618	599	593	616	554
Stratford-on-Avon	468	480	470	494	550
Kensington and Chelsea	562	500	553	535	541
Reading	530	475	456	571	537
Coventry	544	518	528	563	531
Derbyshire Dales	556	528	526	552	501
Cheltenham	437	392	439	517	489
Bradford	419	409	405	463	480
Milton Keynes	435	427	463	497	479
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Cotswold	325	305	328	327	341
Lincoln	361	350	341	395	340
Peterborough	380	360	312	330	339

## **In Summary**

In an ideal world, the sample size of the GB Tourism Survey would be increased to be able to provide more robust data at differing levels of geography, but the fact is that this would be a very costly exercise, requiring us to more than double the existing sample size.

We believe that despite the caveats, the solution that we have provided in three year averages is still a major step forward in delivering sub-regional tourism statistics, which we hope will be useful to many people and organisations.

Please contact us with any questions or comments at [VEResearch@visitengland.org](mailto:VEResearch@visitengland.org)