



VisitEngland

Domestic Tourism in Small Towns

Town trips

This report focuses on domestic overnight trips to small towns in England in 2014.

Value to Domestic Tourism in England

In 2014, there were 20.83 million trips to small towns in England, 22% of the total, with spend at £3.3 billion (18% of all spending on domestic overnight trips). There were also 310 million tourism day trips involving a trip to a small town – or 23% of the total – with associated spending of £8.2 billion (18% of all spending on day visits).

	Total England	Small towns	Small towns (as % of total)
Domestic Overnight Trips			
Trips (millions)	92.61	20.83	22%
Spend (£ millions)	18,085	3,277	18%
Day Visits			
Trips (millions)	1,345	310	23%
Spend (£ millions)	45,101	8,157	18%



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Trip Type

Overnight Travel

Visits to friends and relatives (VFR) trips are the highest volume trip purpose for small town trips, accounting for 48% of trips taken – this compares to 39% for England as a whole.

	Total England	% of trips taken by all trip takers	Small towns	% of Small towns trips
All Overnight Trips (millions)	92.61	100%	20.83	100%
All Holidays	40.74	44%	7.68	37%
1-3 night holidays	26.47	29%	4.92	24%
4+ night holidays	14.27	15%	2.75	13%
Visiting Friends and Relatives	35.91	39%	10.05	48%
Leisure	22.26	24%	5.98	29%
Other VFR	13.65	15%	4.07	20%
Business Travel	13.55	15%	2.76	13%

Day Trips

Day trips to small towns are more likely than average to include a visit to friends or family and going for a night out. They are less likely to involve outdoor activities and going out for entertainment.

	Total England	% of trips taken by all trip takers	Small towns trips	% of Small towns trips
All Day Trips, millions (selected activities)	1,345	100%	310	100%
Visiting friends or family	313	23%	95	31%
Going out for a meal	131	10%	34	11%
Going on a night out	113	8%	30	10%
Undertaking outdoor activities	100	7%	16	5%
General day out	109	8%	19	6%
Going out for entertainment	84	6%	16	5%
Special shopping	95	7%	19	6%



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Holidays to small towns

Domestic holidays to small towns in England tend to be slightly shorter trips than the average trip length, at 3.10 nights, compared to 3.37 nights across all English trips.

Spend on these trips is slightly lower than the average (£221 vs £247) as is spend per day (£71 vs £73).

Domestic Holidays	Total England	Small towns trips
Average spend per trip	£247	£221
Average spend per night	£73	£71
Average trip length (nights)	3.37	3.10

The South West accounts for the largest share of trips to small towns (20% vs 23% for all England trips). Small town trips are relatively more important to the West Midlands and East of England than to other parts of the country.

These trips are more likely to involve car usage than the average (84% vs 79%). They are also more likely to be booked online (57% vs 54%). Visitors to small towns also tend to be slightly older and more affluent than the average, and are less likely to live in households with children.

These trips are more likely to involve historical activities, a visit to parks/gardens or outdoor activities. They are less likely to involve arts, culture and entertainment activities and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a trip to the beach.

	% of trips taken by all trip takers	% of Small towns trips
Region visited		
West Midlands	7%	12%
East of England	9%	11%
East Midlands	7%	7%
London	8%	4%
North West	17%	18%
North East	4%	6%
South East	15%	17%
South West	23%	20%
Yorkshire & the Humber	12%	11%



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Cont.	% of trips taken by all trip takers	% of small towns trips
Transport used		
Public transport	16%	11%
Car	79%	84%
When booked		
More than six months before trip	7%	7%
Between 2 and 6 months before trip	26%	28%
About a month before trip	12%	14%
2-3 weeks before trip	13%	12%
In the week before trip	13%	13%
Same day / after setting off on trip	1%	0%
How booked		
Booked online	54%	57%
<i>On a laptop or desktop PC</i>	40%	41%
<i>On a smartphone</i>	3%	3%
<i>On a tablet</i>	8%	12%
Activities undertaken		
History & heritage	23%	31%
Arts, culture & entertainment	15%	11%
Visitor Attractions	33%	37%
Parks and Gardens	14%	19%
Events, festivals and exhibitions	11%	10%
Outdoor activities (including long walks)	27%	34%
Outdoor activities (excluding long walks)	14%	19%
Visited beach	20%	13%
Special shopping	7%	6%
Live sport	3%	3%
Special personal event	3%	6%
Age groups		
16-34	23%	20%
35-54	42%	41%
55+	35%	39%



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Cont.	% of trips taken by all trip takers	% of Small towns trips
Social grade		
AB	39%	47%
C1	28%	27%
C2	19%	18%
DE	13%	9%
Children in household	36%	34%

Trends

Trips to small towns haven't benefited in the same way as all England trips have with the onset of the recession in 2009. Although small town trips increased in 2009, and have remained fairly steady since, the rate of growth has not kept pace with the England average.

Number of domestic holidays Millions	Total England	Small town trips
2008	39.75	7.73
2009	47.01	8.59
2010	43.54	8.18
2011	46.16	8.98
2012	45.99	8.69
2013	44.93	8.42
2014	40.74	7.68
Annual average growth 2008-2014	1%	0%