

LEISURE AND TOURISM PERFORMANCE

Visit Kent's monthly Business Barometer tracks tourism trading performance and allows businesses to benchmark accommodation figures within their peer group. This supports developers and those planning investment. The trend for 'staycations' has resulted in strong tourism performance and improving occupancy and footfall. In turn, this has stimulated significant new investment in Kent's wider economy.

According to Visit Kent's annual Business Barometer report, in 2017, footfall to visitor attractions in Kent was up by 3.5% compared to 2016. Overall, 2017 witnessed some fluctuation in visitor footfall for Kent's tourism businesses, although the period between April and July saw a particularly healthy increase in visitor footfall.

Attractions

The most recent Cambridge Economic Impact Model analysis showed that in 2016 the county welcomed a record 60m visitors and the industry's value remains strong at £3.6bn. Tourism accounts for around 72,000 jobs or 11% of total Kent employment. In the last decade, the economic impact of Kent's tourism industry has risen by 42% and related employment has risen by 30%.

The last year saw further development across Kent to strengthen the visitor offer. The following examples show continued confidence in the importance of the tourism industry to Kent businesses and wider job opportunities:

- Ashford – Curious Brewery opening late 2018
- Ashford Designer Outlet £90m extension due to open autumn 2019
- Ashford Elwick Place boutique Cinema and leisure complex
- Dover – Six-screen Cine-UK (Cineworld) Cinema opening St James development
- Whitfield, Dover a new £26m leisure centre with Kent's first county-standard, eight-lane competition swimming pool

3.5%

Increase in footfall to visitor attractions in Kent compared to 2016

KCC business barometer report

- Folkestone – launch of the newly renovated station buildings on the Harbour Arm
- Hush Heath Winery and Visitor Centre to open in September 2018
- Gravesend – re-opening of the Cold War Bunker following a 3 year refurbishment
- Gravesend – re-opening of the Borough Market with ongoing support and further development through Interreg Channel Go Trade Project
- Canterbury – opening of the Marlowe Kit, a museum and playhouse performance space with escape room and literary exhibition
- Folkestone – the Urban Sports Park, a climbing and skate park opening 2019
- Dartford – Bluewater West Village extension approved

- Sittingbourne cinema, restaurant quarter, civic square and multi-story car park in development
- Margate – Dreamland further development of parkland to attract large scale music events and 9 new rides, opening of rooftop bar and other food and drink offerings
- Margate Turner Contemporary starts £6m extension
- Tunbridge Wells – planning permission approval for a new Theatre
- Canterbury Christchurch University to develop Canterbury prison with incorporated visitor offer
- Betteshanger Park – new Mining Museum opening in Spring 2019
- Biggin Hill – Memorial Museum opening November 2018
- Rochester – Eastgate House re-opened after extensive refurbishment
- Manston – Spitfire & Hurricane Museum opened new Spitfire simulator
- Tunbridge Wells – secure £4.6m grant from HLF for their Cultural Learning Hub
- Canterbury Cathedral Visitor Centre progresses and is due to open in 2019
- Shepherd Neame have invested in substantial refurbishments including £1m in the Spitfire Pub in Kingshill and £1.2m in The Boathouse at Yalding
- Westerham – Squerryes Estate and Westerham Brewery open tasting rooms and brewery



Proposal showing the view from the restaurant of the Slatters Hotel development, Canterbury.

SLATTERS DEVELOPMENT LTD AND GUY HOLLAWAY ARCHITECTS

11%

Total Kent employment in the tourism sector (72,000 jobs)

KCC business barometer report

- Gusbourne open The Nest Tasting Room
- Simpsons Estate opened new Glass House tasting room
- Champagne Taittinger along with their UK partner Hatch Mansfield Ltd have set up Domaine Evremond, purchasing 69ha of farmland at Selling Court Farm in Kent
- Dover and Folkestone – new Marco Pierre White restaurants open in Best Western Hotels.

Accommodation

Results from our annual Business Barometer showed that in 2017, serviced accommodation providers in Kent saw an average occupancy of 76%, compared to the 75% witnessed in 2016, an increase of 1.2%. Across Kent's larger hotels and chains, based on data supplied through STR Global for 67 properties, occupancy levels saw a 2% increase compared to 2016. In addition, revenue per available room experienced an increase of 5.5% and average daily rate was up 3.4%.

Across Kent, hotel and other accommodation development to support the visitor stay beyond the day trip now includes:

- Travelodge opening 12 new hotels in Kent including 108-room hotel in Dover St James development and a 58 room hotel at the Elwick Place development in Ashford
- Unique rural visitor destination for glamping and events at former Snowdown Colliery site
- Planning permission given for a 131 bedroom hotel with two restaurants and a gym at the Silver Spring site at Park Farm Road, Folkestone
- Leeds Castle opened Battel Hall, a new venue and luxury accommodation offer
- New high end, luxury glamping accommodation developments at Port Lympne Reserve include The Bubble, Forest Hideaway, Giraffe Cottage and Wolf Lodge with further experiential accommodation options planned
- A new Premier Inn is due to open in Sevenoaks in September with a further hotel planned for Tunbridge Wells



Proposal for the Curious Brewery, Ashford.

- Champneys have invested substantially in the refurbishment of Eastwell Manor and spa facilities
- The Bay Tree Hotel in Broadstairs, The Burlington Hotel and Clifton Hotel in Folkestone have undergone full refurbishments
- Quex Park Livery Glamping opened at the Quex Estate in Thanet
- Margate Estates revealed plans for a 120 bedroom lifestyle hotel on the Margate seafront.

Transport

In summer 2017, Visit Kent conducted in depth research with HS1 on the impact of their high speed rail services on Kent's visitor economy over the last 10 years. The results concluded that £311m had been added to the Kent visitor economy since HS1 services began, with leisure journeys on HS1 increasing from 100,000 (2010) to 890,000 (2016). In addition, 73% of Kent tourism businesses believe HS1 has attracted more leisure visitors to the county and nearly 6,000 tourism sector jobs in Kent have been created and supported by HS1.

Southeastern continues to invest in Kent's railway stations, with improvements planned at Maidstone East Gateway, and also recently delivered at Rochester, a new build and Strood.

Ashford International Station has benefited from the delivery of a new signalling system to allow the next generation of Eurostar trains – and any future European rail operators – to continue to stop at the station.

A new, direct train service is due to start from December 2019, linking Maidstone East Gateway with London Bridge, Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras, to be operated by new trains on the Thameslink network.

Further transport improvements include:

- Station improvement programme at Maidstone East Gateway to link to Phase 3 public realm improvements and create a sense of arrival on new concourse with signage
- The single biggest investment (£120m) ever undertaken by the Port of Dover is underway to link the historic and new marina facilities and deliver a new waterfront for Dover.
- Eurotunnel launched their Flexiplus lounges on both side of the channel
- Thames Clippers successfully trialed a new commuter service to Gravesend which could lead to a permanent service
- Southeastern launched their One Local Plan with Network Rail which included detailed improvements including:
 - Refurbishing station forecourts and car parks by 2019 and creating hundreds of new car parking spaces at Staplehurst
 - Investing around £300m to complete enhancements to the power supply and make platform extensions in the most congested areas, so that longer trains can be run, giving passengers more space
 - More than £6m in major station refurbishments by 2019
 - A new facility at Tonbridge with 200 cycle spaces and a bicycle repair centre
 - Installing more waiting shelters on platforms in 28 stations in 2018.