

Insight

# Home sweet home: How popular is domestic tourism in Great Britain?

Published Tuesday, 05 November, 2019

Insight    Industry

Niamh Foley

Domestic tourism outweighed foreign trips in 2018, but the total number of trips to home destinations dropped compared to 2017.



Domestic tourism, known by some as a 'staycation', is defined by the tourist board VisitBritain as residents of Great Britain taking trips of one or more nights away from home, within Great Britain.

This Insight looks at why people decide to visit other parts of the UK, over going abroad, where they are going and how much is being spent.

## The 'staycation nation'

Staycations are popular with Britons, so much so that a 2018 Travelodge study concluded we are a 'staycation nation'.

Domestic tourism outweighed foreign trips in 2018, but the total number of trips to home destinations dropped compared to 2017.

Tourism data is recorded according to why people travel: for holidays, to visit friends and relatives, for business, or for other reasons. From 2000 to 2018, holidays have consistently been the most popular reason for people to take trips in Great Britain.

## Why are people holidaying at home?

In 2018, the number of domestic visits was over 50% higher than the number of foreign trips. The popularity of staycations in recent years has been attributed to:

- **The fall in the value of the pound.** [The travel website, Lonely Planet](#) found the cost of travelling abroad was expected to become more expensive, causing more people to stay in the UK. The average cost for a couple to travel abroad would be £987.50, compared to £574.10 to stay in the UK (found in a survey by the website VoucherCodes).
- **Heatwaves.** The higher temperatures have encouraged people to stay in the UK for holidays. According to [The Sykes Staycation Index 2019](#), over 1 in 10 had planned to holiday in the UK in 2019 because of the warmer weather.
- **Brexit.** A poll by Travelodge found that 58% of respondents have chosen to have their holidays in Great Britain due to '[Brexit uncertainties](#)'.

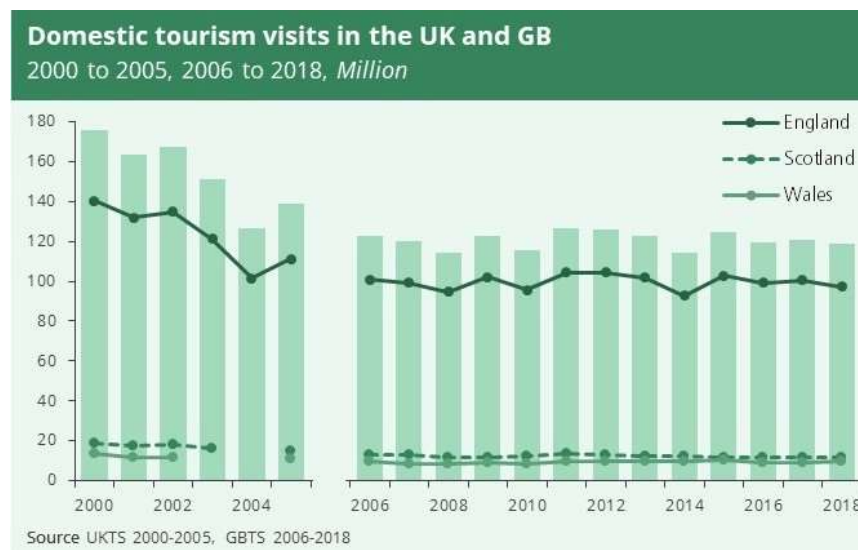
Domestic tourism data is collected by the [Great Britain Tourism Survey](#) (GBTS). The GBTS replaced the United Kingdom Tourism Survey in 2011, which included visits to and from Northern Ireland. From 2011, a separate survey by Tourism Northern Ireland collects Northern Ireland data. The [2017 GBTS](#) re-published data from 2006 to 2010 to exclude Northern Ireland from visitor and destination data. This Insight relies on that data, as well as data published in the [GBTS 2018](#).

## Domestic tourism visits

In 2018, there were 118.6 million domestic tourism visits in Great Britain. This is 2% lower than the number of trips taken in 2017.

In 2018, around 97.4 million domestic trips were made to England. 11.8 million were made to Scotland. And a further 10 million were made to Wales. Both Scotland and Wales saw an increase in domestic tourism visits in 2018, with a rise of 1% and 11% respectively.

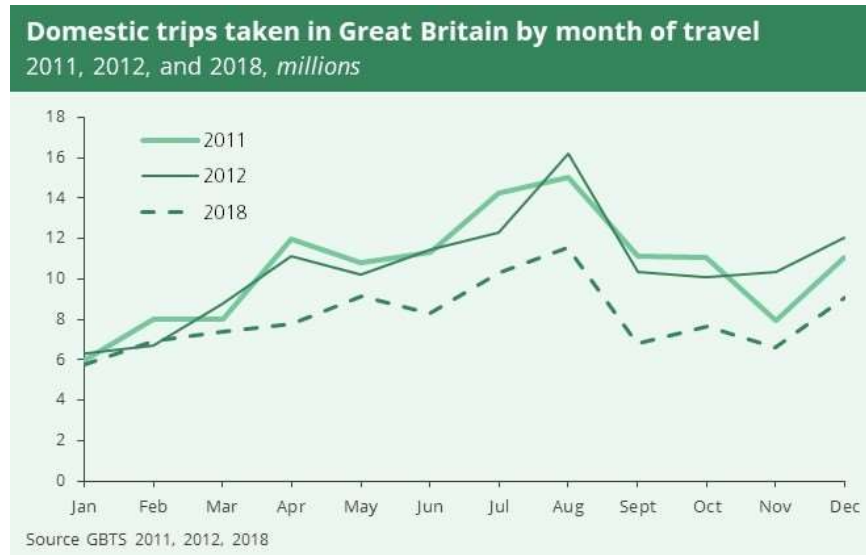
Since 2011, the number of domestic trips in Great Britain has remained flat or has fallen. 2015 and 2017 were exceptions to this trend. This is unlike the number of international [outbound and inbound visits](#), which have both risen in recent years.



Between 2006 and 2018, the highest number of domestic trips was in 2011 (126.6 million trips). [VisitBritain](#) partly credits this to the Royal Wedding in May of that year.

The second highest number of domestic trips over the past 12 years was in 2012. In that year 126 million domestic trips were taken. According to the [GBTS 2012](#), there were 8% more trips in August 2012 than in August 2011, which may have been boosted by the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. That year was also the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

In August 2018 there were 4.6 million fewer trips than in August 2012.



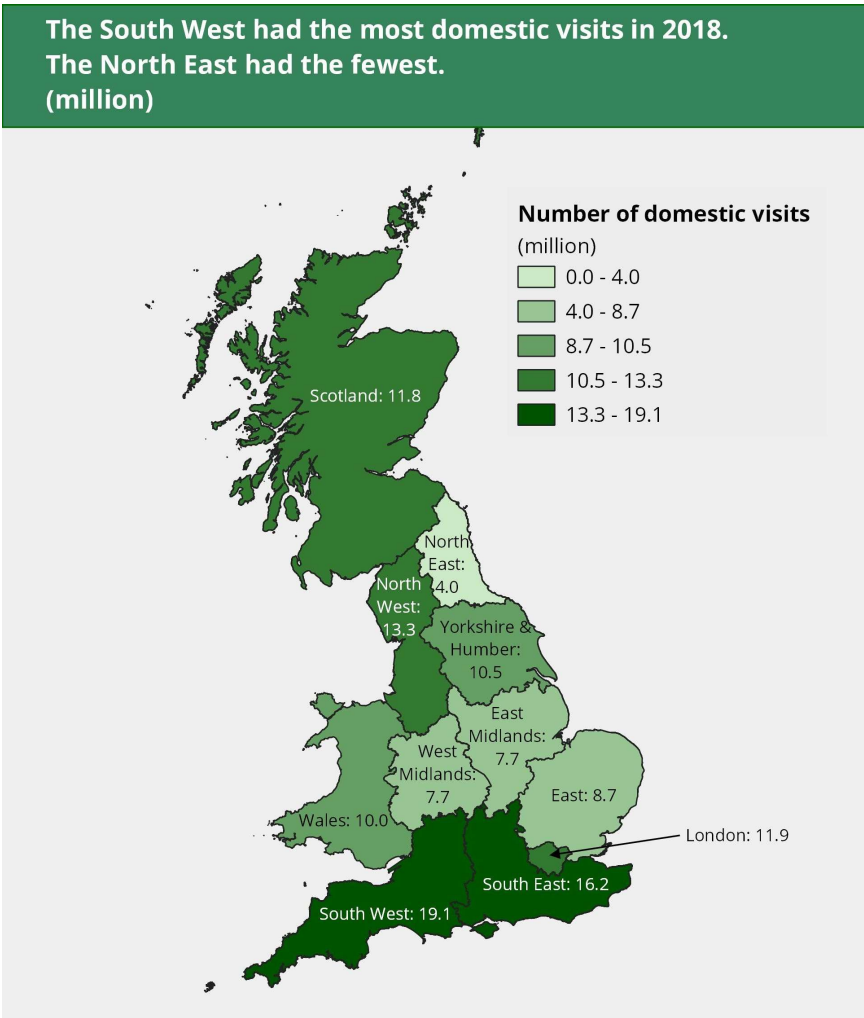
## Where are people going and why?

In 2018, the most visited region in Great Britain was the South West, with 19.1 million domestic trips, followed by the South East with 16.2 million.

The South West was the most popular region for domestic tourists to visit for a holiday in 2018, with 20% of all holiday trips.

The South East was the most popular destination **to visit friends and relatives**, with the region welcoming 17% of domestic visits of this type.

London had the most domestic tourists whose purpose for **travel was business**. 20% of Great Britain's domestic business trips taking place in the capital.



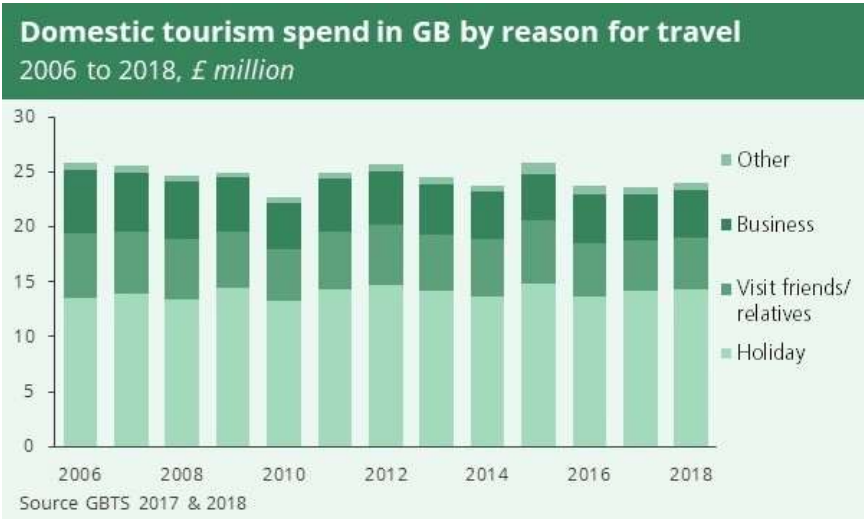
## How much is being spent?

In 2018 domestic tourists spent £24.0 billion in Great Britain. This was a 1% increase from 2017.

£14.3 billion was spent by holiday makers, £4.7 billion by people visiting friends and relatives, and £4.4 billion by people travelling for business.

Between 2006 and 2018, 2015 had the highest domestic tourism spend for the whole of Great Britain, when £25.9 billion was spent.

The highest domestic tourism spend for England was in 2012 when £20.9 billion was spent. As noted earlier, 2012 was the year of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.



In 2018, the South West had the highest domestic tourism spend out of the in the whole of Great Britain, at £4.3 billion. The second highest spend was in London at £3.0 billion, followed by Scotland at £2.8 billion.

### Further reading

Tourism statistics and policy, *House of Commons Library*

---

**About the author:** Niamh Foley is a researcher specialising in economic policy and statistics at the House of Commons Library.

---

 Share this

---