

A REPORT ON TOURISM STATISTICS IN THE UK AND IRELAND

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This report has been requested by the line manager of the Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau for an upcoming conference. It is hoped that this report will be informative as well as interesting and that it will shed light on the varying number of tourists to Ireland over a five year period.

Bord Failte – Table 1

Tourism Numbers 1998-2002

Where did Ireland's tourists come from?					
Numbers (000s)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Britain	3,199	3,430	3,428	3,340	3,452
Mainland Europe	1,255	1,321	1,436	1,336	1,378
Germany	310	305	319	285	288
France	270	275	283	280	298
Italy	141	165	186	157	157
Netherlands	134	139	179	182	162
Belgium/Luxembourg	71	71	89	81	104
Spain	82	78	89	100	113
Denmark	30	39	42	25	24
Norway/Sweden	67	81	88	75	59
Switzerland	54	60	49	38	42
Other Europe	97	109	112	113	131
North America	858	950	1,056	903	844
USA	789	860	958	829	759
Canada	70	90	98	74	85
Rest of World	221	243	261	261	245
Australia/New Zealand	124	136	148	132	113
Japan	26	28	28	22	22
Other Overseas	71	79	85	107	110
Total Overseas	5,534	5,943	6,181	5,840	5,919
Northern Ireland	530	460	465	513	557
Total Out-of-State	6,064	6,403	6,646	6,353	6,476
Domestic Trips	6,934	7,285	6,556	7,488	5,891

An explanation of visitor trends to Ireland (1998-2002)

There are many reasons for the varying numbers of tourists over this five year period, which range from political factors to economic factors. Several different markets rose, some fell and others fluctuated.

The largest tourist generating region for Ireland is Great Britain. In 2002 three million, four hundred and fifty two thousand (3,452,000) tourists visited Ireland which was a rise of two hundred and fifty-three thousand from the number of tourists in 1998 which was three million, one hundred and ninety-ninety thousand (3,199,000)

The reason for this would seem to be the buoyancy of the British economy which fared reasonably well over this five year period. Without any serious economic trouble, such as high exchange rates the British had more disposable income, the majority of which seems to have been spent on holidays and other types of trips. The number of British visitors to Ireland increased in 1999 by two hundred and thirty-one thousand but it fell slightly by two thousand in 2000. This downward slump continued into 2001 and British tourist numbers fell by eighty-eight thousand. This fall is easy to explain as 2001 was perhaps the year the tourist industry would like to forget, with the terrorist bombings in New York and Washington on September 11th and, closer to home, the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. With people afraid fly and unable to access certain rural attractions these two events are undoubtedly the cause of the decrease in British tourist numbers. However the year 2001 would not continue to blight the Irish tourist industry as in 2002 the number of British tourists to Ireland would increase to three million, four hundred and fifty two thousand (3,452,000), the highest number in the five year period.

Germany is another important generating region for Ireland's tourist industry. In 1998 there were three hundred and ten thousand visitors. It fell by five thousand in 1999 but rose by fourteen thousand in 2000. In 2001 the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the British Isles and the global effects of September 11th contributed to a fall in the number of tourists by thirty-four thousand. The introduction of the Euro in the same year had an unforeseen effect on Germany's economy- it went into recession. Many would say that the Euro was the catalyst to Germany's current difficulties. Since reunification in 1990 the prosperous west has had to bear the brunt of economic efforts to bring the former Communist controlled east to the same level. With a serious recession in progress and expendable income down it is obvious to see why fewer Germans are travelling to Ireland. The irony is that the majority of German tourist are backpackers and do not usually spend large amounts of money in Irish hotels, preferring youth hostels. The market cautiously rose in 2002 by three thousand

The United States of America is the second largest generating area after Britain to Ireland's tourist industry. There were seven hundred and eighty nine thousand visitors in 1998 which rose to eight hundred and sixty thousand visitors in 1999 and nine hundred and fifty eight thousand in 2000. It fell in 2001 due to September 11th and foot and mouth to eight hundred and twenty nine thousand. Interestingly, the USA is one of only a few generating countries that tourist numbers continued to fall in 2002, by 70,000. This seems to be due to the fact that Americans were still afraid to travel and this was coupled with the continued threat of terrorism and the looming war in Iraq.

In conclusion the fluctuating visitor numbers over this five year period can be attributed to the events of September 11th, the outbreak of foot and mouth disease, the potential war in Iraq and other economic factors such as recessions and the introduction of the Euro.

NITB - Table 2

What was the main purpose of their visit?

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
trips total=	1,415,000 100%	1,477,000 100%	1,655,000 100%	1,672,000 100%	1,676,000
Visiting friends & relatives	577,000 (41%)	617,000 (42%)	684,000 (41%)	743,000 (100%)	773,000 (46%)
Holiday	263,000 (19%)	277,000 (19%)	305,000 (18%)	306,000 (18%)	274,000 (16%)
Business	419,000 (29%)	434,000 (29%)	501,000 (30%)	464,000 (28%)	501,000 (30%)
Other	156,000 (11%)	149,000 (10%)	165,000 (10%)	159,000 (10%)	128,000 (8%)

The above table shows the number and type of trips made by tourists from 1997 to 2001 to Northern Ireland. In 2001 the number one reason why people visited was to visit friends and relatives. This was a total of seven hundred and seventy-three thousand visitors that fell into this category in 2001 making up 46% of all the trips in 2001, almost half. The next most popular type of visit was for business purposes making up 30% of all total visits with a total of five hundred and one thousand tourists, more than a quarter of all visits in that year. The third largest type of trip were holidays which made up 16% of all trips with two hundred and seventy four thousand tourists visiting for this purpose.

Table 3 -

UK Residents		Overseas Residents*	
	% of Trips		% of Visits
South East	15	USA	16
London	11	France	12
North West Merseyside	11	Germany	10
West Midlands	10	Ireland	9
South West	10	Netherlands	6
Eastern	9	Belgium	4
Yorks & Humber	8	Italy	4
East Midlands	8	Spain	4
North East	4	Australia	3
Wales	5	Canada	3
Scotland	9	-	-
Northern Ireland	2	-	-
-	-	Other Countries	29
Total	100	Total	100

Note: Figures may over add due to rounding.

The top three groups of UK residents that travel within the United Kingdom are from the south east, London and North West Merseyside. Fifteen percent of all trips were from the southeast, and both London and North West Merseyside made eleven percent of all trips. The reason for the south east and London's high percentage of total trips seems to be due to the fact that the south of England (including London) is a much richer area of the country, and as such the people there have a much higher amount of disposable income than other areas. The south of England also has better infrastructures with a plethora of airports in the local vicinity, excellent motorways and excellent rail connections. The reasons for the high amount of people travelling from North West Merseyside would seem to be due to the high amounts of investment in the area, the prominent port in Liverpool and the improvements to local roads, motorways and railways.

Turning to the international markets, it is clear that the United States of America is the most visited country in the world with sixteen percent of all total visits. The next highest amount of overseas visitors were from France with twelve percent of all total trips. Finally the third highest number of visitors to the UK were from Germany with ten percent of all trips to the UK were from there. American tourists visit the UK mainly to be sightseers who want to see attractions such as Buckingham Palace, the Royal Albert Hall and the home of Britain's most famous band, the Beatles, in Liverpool. French and German tourists prefer to visit natural areas and famous buildings that belong to Britain's heritage. They also prefer outdoor activities such as hiking.