

Trends in Popularity in Paris

The popularity of any destination is constantly changing for the better or for the worse. Paris as a whole is very popular to UK tourists. There have been many events, which have increased the popularity of Paris as a tourist destination.

There are many key factors, which can influence the change in visitor numbers; these can include social, economic, political and geographical factors. In some situations a combination of factors can effect the destination.

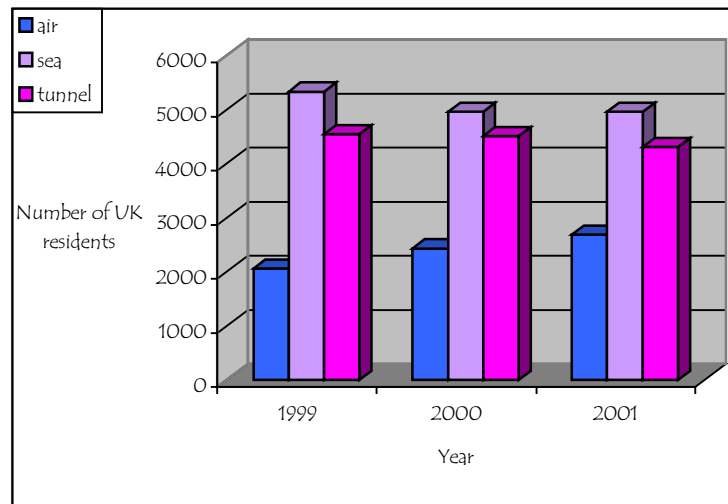
Over the past 10 years France has remained the most popular international tourist destination. This shows that France has maintained its appeal as a tourist attraction by providing a diversity of attractions and facilities. UK residents have also increased throughout the last 5 years. City breaks to Paris are very popular for UK residents with many companies providing special offers within the low season such as coach trips.

Since the 1st of January 2000 the French francs was replaced by the euro. This has attracted European and international tourists to Paris. The euro can be used in 13 countries within Europe which means tourists do not lose money in commission. A higher exchange rate has occurred since the change in currency which has been a bad aspect in the currency change, but tourists are able to use euros within any EU country, **therefore do not have to pay commission on each transaction**. This has become a positive impact for tourists taking coach trips around Europe or students taking a year out also travelling around Europe due to tourists only having to take one type of currency.

Over the years, the legal requirement for all employers to give their employees a paid holiday entitlement, most workers now have an annual five weeks paid holiday. This had an obvious effect due to manual workers had more leisure time which enabled them to have not only one main holiday but day trips and short breaks as well. Short city breaks to places such as Paris have become more and more popular due to an increase in disposable income and increased leisure time.

The terrorist attacks such as the one that occurred on September the 11th in America has had a major impact. Countries throughout the world saw a decline in visitor numbers including France, because many tourists have a fear of flying since the attack etc. This has encouraged other forms of transportation to be used and influenced UK residents to take their holidays within the UK and Europe. This resorted to an increase in visitor numbers from other European countries, but a decrease in the number of American and Japanese visitors within 2001.

The graph below shows the number of UK residents visiting France and the transportation mode they used.



Source: WTO (world tourism authority)

The graph shows an increase in air travel since 1999. The main factor for this has been the introduction of low cost airlines and a variety of companies providing the cheaper flights, such as 'Easy Jet' (now offering 5 daily flights) and 'Buzz' (offering 3 flights daily). This has encouraged independent holidays and short breaks to France and Paris. Competition has occurred against low cost airlines and well-known companies such as British Airways. An event that occurred last April (2002) shows this occurring. This was: British airways attempted to compete with the low-cost airlines by launching a change to its fare structure on key routes to give business travellers and holidaymakers lower fares, greater flexibility and more choice. This will increase the amount of UK visitors using airlines as their transportation due to a decrease in schedule prices and low-cost prices due to constant competition.

There are now more gateways and routes in which tourists can use to get to their destination. UK's most successful transport industry is the airlines. Future plans for development in major international airports are being considered, such as Stansted airport within 2004. The development will be carried out in phases in tune with demand and the airport is expected to be handling about 25 million passengers a year, at around 2010. This is an increase of 10 million passengers which it handles today and the total number of flights a year will increase from today's figure of 165,000 to 245,000 in about 10 years time. This is likely to increase the number of scheduled flights to France enabling tourists to have a wider range of times and gateways in which they can choose from. There is also likely to be an increase of long-haul flights, which may cause a decrease in the number of tourists to Paris.

The opening of the channel tunnel has provided a large opportunity for both France and UK residents and has given easier access to both Paris and Disneyland Paris for UK tourists. Since the opening of the tunnel in 1994 it has become the forth-main gateway used by UK residents to get to France. The channel tunnel opening had a significant increase in visitor numbers, as the graph above shows. There has been a steady decrease in tourists using the channel tunnel since 1999. This is due to competition within the transportation market, such as low cost flights, faster and cheaper ferries.

Sea travel providers have remained at a steady level since 1999. This is due to the fact that many ferries and hovercrafts are providing low rates. Another reason for this is many package holidays such as coach trips to Disneyland (advert shown on page 29) use the ferry as a principal. This will promote ferry companies such as 'P and O' and some companies may even join together to form a partnership such as 'the Kings ferry Coach Company' which offer coach holidays to Disneyland Paris. These will attract School trips because they travel by coach and ferry which will cut costs due to only having to deal with the same company which will attract more groups.

Special events within France like any other destination can also increase the amount of visitor numbers. In 1998 the football world cup was held near Paris and the year saw an increase of international visitors by 3,200 since 1997, many of whom were from the UK.

Euro Disney has also attracted millions of UK residents. In 1997 the theme park was responsible for 3.3 million hotel nights in hotels outside of the Disney resort. This is approximately, 7,000 hotel rooms occupying on average 73% of the year. It has also had a massive effect on the local economy providing 12,500 direct jobs within the resort and 85% of these workers are local residents.

On 26th November 2002 British Airways and Go cancelled a number of flights to France as a result of strike action by French traffic controllers. British Airways had to cancel 6 flights from Bristol international airport, Go had cancelled its daily flight to Nice and Air France cancelled 6 daily flights from Paris. Due to French air traffic controllers having too many flights from the UK to France air traffic controllers formed a strike. This cause British and French air companies to decrease the amount of flight from Bristol international airport. This will and has caused many UK tourists to from around the Bristol area to use other means of transportation or other Gateways. This is likely to decrease the amount of business tourists using the airlines due to a smaller availability and accessibility within the Bristol area since this event.

On 4 Oct 1999, Travel Weekly announced that Paris Travel Services introduced a year-round kids go free offer on British Midland flight packages to Disneyland Paris in a bid to differentiate its package from that of rival products. Disneyland Paris brands manager John Bellenger said the offer had been prompted by an increase in competition. The offer applied to children under 12. Bookings for air travel had to be made by November 30 and for car by January 8. The expected growth of UK tourists is 15% on its 75,000 carryings within the same year (1999). This was promoted to increase the visitor numbers within the low season.

Conclusion

Paris has maintained a high number of tourists including UK tourists visiting each year. Paris offers a diversity of attractions for reasonable prices, which attracts the UK visitors. Paris is located in northern central France so UK tourists do not have to travel far to get to their destination.

Many promotion techniques have been used to promote Paris as a tourist destination such as regular advertisements within local and national newspapers and the occasional advertisements on the local and national television channels.

Transportation from the UK to France itself is very easy with many different gateways and principals from which UK residents can fly, drive and take the train or travel by sea. This attracts UK tourists due to a range in price, accessibility or even gateway or principal whilst within their destination.

Paris caters for different types of tourists such as families, business people, tourists visiting friends and relatives (VFR), the elderly and groups. Companies do this by providing many different types of accommodation such as hostels for groups of students, and it also provide different transportation and different classes or price range such as business class on the Eurostar so business people can work whilst they travel.

I think Paris is more likely to appeal to single business visitors or couples who belong to the social classes A, B and C. Places such as Disneyland Paris will attract families because it offers a range of family friendly attractions and restaurants. Paris is known as the city of romance, due to the spectacular scenery so couples and small groups with reasonable incomes are likely to visit Paris