

## New research shows strong growth and recovery for Kent's tourism and hospitality industry



Punting in Canterbury © Visit Kent

**12 December 2023**

Visit Kent has published its latest economic data today which shows that Kent's tourism industry continues to recover strongly from the impact of the pandemic.

The data shows that by the end of 2022:

- The value of the county's visitor economy had increased to over £3.7 billion – a 46% increase compared to 2021 and just behind the value of the visitor economy in 2019 which topped £4.1 billion.
- The number of tourism related jobs supported by the visitor economy in the Garden of England had increased by 27% to 74,462 jobs (when compared with 2021), accounting for 10% of total employment in Kent last year. The number of tourism related jobs supported by the visitor economy in 2019 was 81,458 which accounted for 11% of total employment in the county.
- There were almost 61 million combined day and overnight trips in 2022 - an 18% increase compared to the volume seen in 2021 and down only 9% compared to 2019

The tourist board commissioned the study which uses the industry-respected Cambridge Economic Impact Model to measure the volume and value of tourism within a destination and the effect of visits and visitor expenditure on the local economy.

**Visit Kent Chief Executive, Deirdre Wells OBE, said:** *“It is fantastic to see this data which shows a significant uplift in spend, jobs and visitation last year across Kent’s tourism and hospitality industry especially as many businesses were still recovering financially from the impact of the pandemic and grappling with a sudden sharp rise in inflation.*

*“Our flourishing visitor economy has clearly benefitted from a substantial increase in visitors and spend from international markets such as Germany, France and The Netherlands and the strong preference in 2022 for many UK residents to travel and stay within the UK rather than go abroad. Although the volume of overnight stays and trips is not quite there yet compared to before the pandemic, it is great to see that the length of stay in Kent and spending per head has increased compared with 2019.*

*“Encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more while they are in the county has been a central part of our strategy over the last few years so it is great to see that our efforts are paying off! We are also focused on trying to secure more hotel accommodation to support increasing numbers of visitors who are keen to come and experience our wonderful landscapes, attractions, food and drink.*

*“The data also tells us that for both UK and international visitors - seeing and staying with family and friends in Kent is a major draw and our Big Weekend initiative which sees local tourism and hospitality businesses giving out free tickets to local residents is really helping to grow this segment of the visitor market.”*

**Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council said:** *“The visitor economy has long been a real strength for Kent, and with one in ten jobs in the county linked to it, this strong recovery is very encouraging. The County Council is firmly committed to supporting sustainable growth in the sector, and we believe that a great place to visit has to also be a great place to live, work and invest. We remain focused on promoting everything that makes Kent the unique county that it is – the Garden of England and a lot more.”*

**Helen Bonser-Wilton, CEO of Leeds Castle commented:** *“At Leeds Castle during 2022, we have been delighted to see the gradual recovery of the sector from the ravages of COVID, with the welcome return of European and North American visitors to visit and to stay in our unique accommodation. It has also been great to see visitors return to major events, with our annual Concert, Fireworks Spectacular and Medieval Joust particularly well attended.”*

To access the full county report and infographic for 2022. please visit:  
<https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/insights-and-resources/kent-cambridge-economic-impact-model/>

**ENDS**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

For further media information on Visit Kent and images please contact [press@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:press@visitkent.co.uk)

### **About Visit Kent**

Visit Kent Ltd is the Destination Management Organisation for Kent (the Garden of England).

It is recognised as one of the country's leading DMOs and was awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership status by VisitBritain in April 2023. Targeting UK and overseas markets to raise Kent's profile as a premier destination, improving quality and skills within the industry, and growing investment in tourism. Visit Kent is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, district and borough councils, and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent.

For further information visit [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk) (consumer) or [www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk](http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk) (business), or tweet @visitkent.

### **About the Cambridge Economic Impact Model**

The figures were derived using the Cambridge Economic Impact Model undertaken by Destination Research on behalf of Visit Kent. The Cambridge Economic Impact Model is an industry respected tool for measuring the economic impact of tourism in a given area. It utilises information from national tourism surveys and regional/local data (e.g., accommodation stock, domestic and inbound trips) of the level of tourism activity within a given local area.

Please note that all figures in the research reports have been rounded, therefore there might be marginal discrepancies in subtotals and totals.

It is estimated that 3,686 actual jobs are supported by Bluewater, raising the total employment in that area to 9,451, or 14% of all employment in Dartford. Whilst it contributes to Kent's visitor economy, the shopping and retail nature of the destination must be taken into consideration.