Tourism trends quarterly bulletin
Visitor statistics for the peak season 2007: (Q3)

Introduction

This bulletin provides the key findings of the tourism monitor for the peak season which was July 16th - 2nd September 2007. Where possible, comparisons are made with previous research dating back to 2002.

Looking first at the broad picture of international travel, this shows an overall decline in peak season travel versus 2006, which is a change from last year when this market saw significant growth. In July/August combined, travel abroad by UK residents reached 14.9 million trips – down by 1.6% vs. 2006 but slightly up on 2005 (+1.9%). Visits to the UK from residents abroad were down significantly to 6.4 million, a drop of 11%, these also remain slightly ahead of 2005 (+1.6%).

Turning to the domestic market: during the month of August, staying trips* within the UK fell by 2% but within England the market was static (+0.6%). July fared less well: UK trips were down 6% and trips in England down 3%. A survey of attractions* across England reported an 8% increase in visits to attractions but within the South East visits to attractions was more or less static (+1%).

Focussing on the Isle of Wight, the Island continues to feature a strong schedule of events to boost tourism. Major events this peak season included Cowes Week (4 - 11th August), the Garlic Festival (18-19th August), the Cowes Powerboat festival at the bank holiday weekend (24th – 26th August) and Wight Air which was held in the peak season for the first time this year (27th August – 2nd September).

The mixed and cool weather seen in early summer continued through to the end of July. This improved in August, although it remained cooler and wetter than expected at this time of year.

Total visits to the Island increased by 4% versus 2006 to reach an estimated 626,000.

Domestic staying visits are the most important category both in terms of volume and value. In this sector the Island performed in line with England (during August), by maintaining the number of domestic staying trips at just below 360,000 (+1% versus 2006).

There have been some changes to the mix of visitor types arriving on the Island:

- Domestic holidays/short breaks remained at the high level seen last year - 265,000.
- Domestic long holidays (5+ nights) reached 165,000, slightly ahead of last year (+1.5%).
- Domestic short breaks declined slightly to 100,000 – just 3% below last year's high point.
- Staying VFR trips increased by 6%.
- Domestic day trips increased significantly (+11%) to reach 232,000.
- More than 135,000 new or lapsed visitors came to the Island on a leisure trip, two thirds of whom were staying visitors.
- Visits by overseas residents decreased by 7%, which was due to a fall in staying trips amongst these visitors. This is slightly better than the national trend in visits to the UK by overseas residents.
- Over half the leisure visitors (53%) went to an attraction, which was level with last year. Amongst short break and holiday visitors this increased to 75%. The majority visited an attraction charging an entrance fee.

Consequently it is estimated that tourism contributed £103 million to the Island economy during the peak season. Despite the increase in visitors, this has not risen versus last year because the increase in long holiday visits was offset by the decline in overseas visitors and there was a greater proportion of day visitors this year.

N.B. Data included in this bulletin is taken from research conducted on board the six ferry routes to the Island. Isle of Wight Tourism and Medina Valley Centre supply additional data.

International travel trends are taken from the IPS, a government survey. Data is not seasonally adjusted.

* Source: Visit Britain.

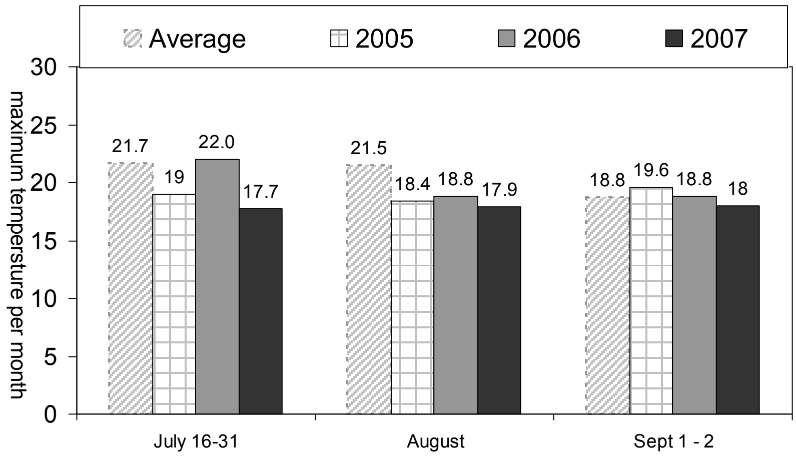
Weather

Temperatures were below average for much of the peak season with maximum temperatures rarely exceeding the mid twenties. Hours of sunshine were well below average and these combined with above average rainfall to produce disappointing weather.

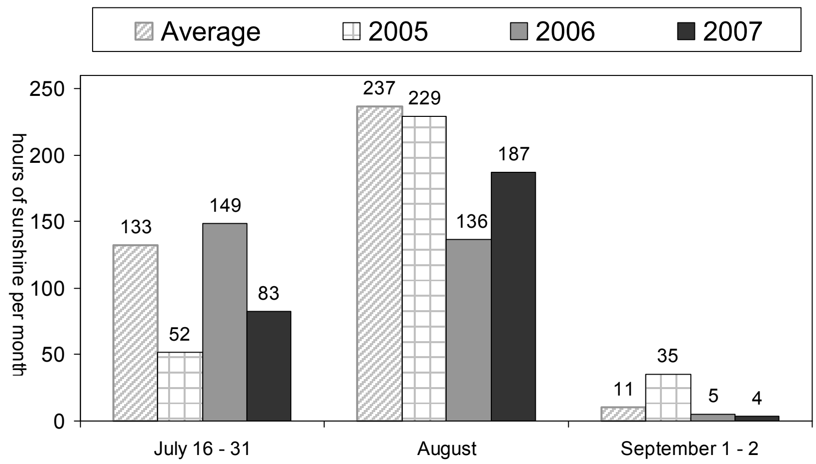
The second part of July was a particularly unseasonal period: sunshine was well below average - 38% and rainfall exceeded the norm by almost 260%. Rainfall was also much higher then the previous two years however this was due to extremely heavy rainfall on a handful of days, rather than a continuously wet period.

The weather improved during August, although sunshine hours were 21% down on the average for the month but an improvement on last year. Rainfall was above average for the month (+23%) but a big improvement on August 2005.

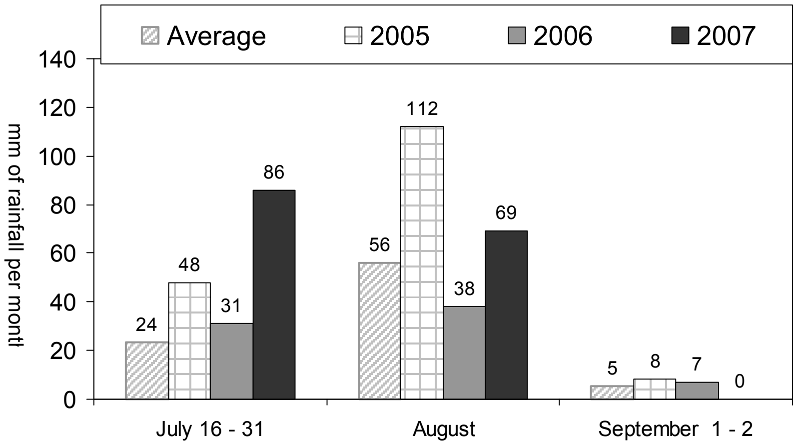
Maximum temperatures on the Isle of Wight
Peak season 2007 vs. long term average and recent years



Sunshine on the Isle of Wight
Peak season 2007 vs. long term average and recent years



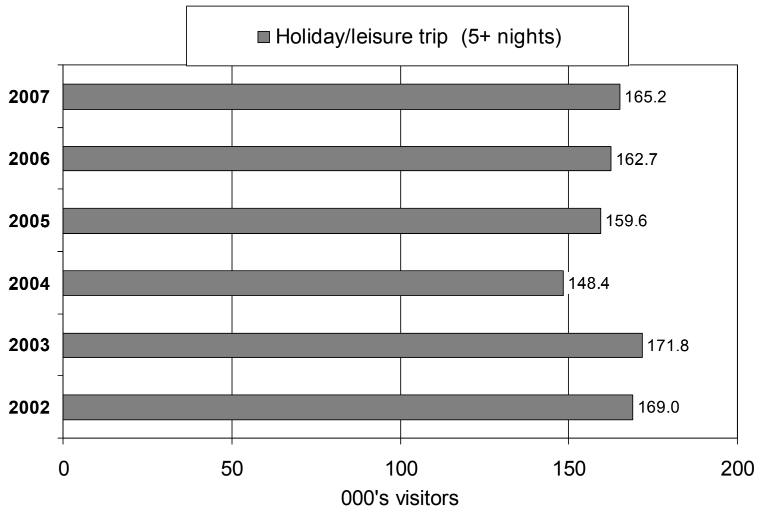
Rainfall on the Isle of Wight
Peak season 2007 vs. long term average and recent years



Estimated number of longer stay domestic leisure visitors

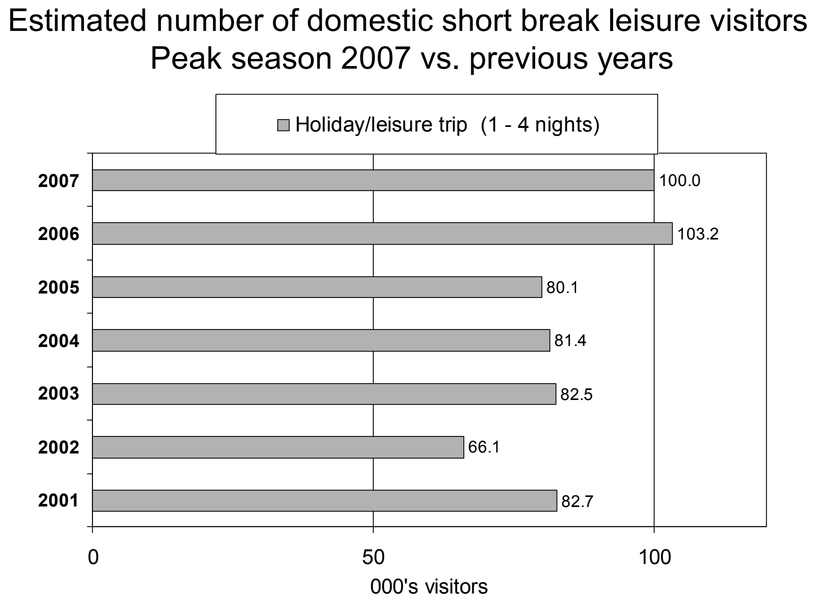
The most important group of visitors during the peak season is long stay (5+ nights duration) domestic holiday visitors. This group of visitors are one of the largest at this time of year and have the highest value due to the length of time they spend on the Island, hence their need for accommodation/food, plus their propensity to visit attractions. It is estimated that 165,000 of these visitors came to the Island during the peak season. This is at a similar level to that seen in 2006 (+1.5%) and an increase on the previous two years (+3.5% versus 2005), taking these back towards the level seen before 2004.

Estimated number of domestic longer stay leisure visitors
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



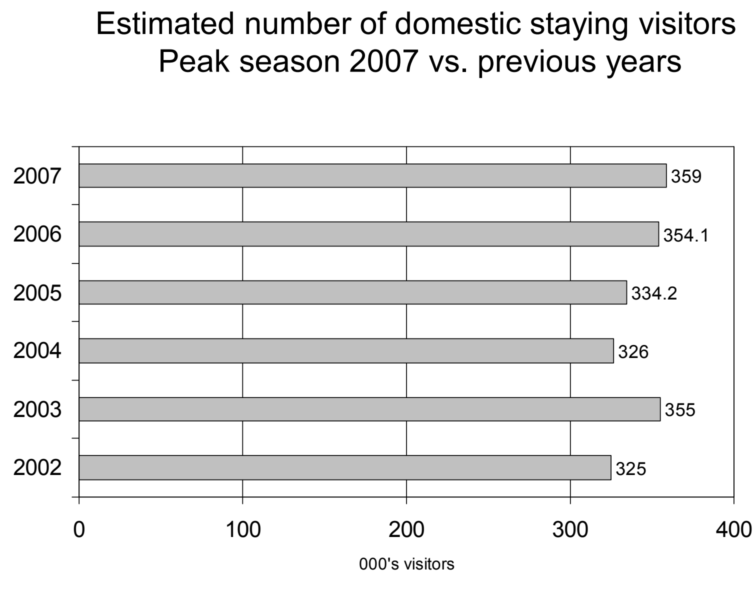
Estimated number of domestic leisure short breaks

Another important customer segment is domestic short break visitors (staying 1 - 4 nights). These reached an estimated 100,000 during this peak season, almost on a par with the record high last year (-3%) and significantly ahead of the numbers seen in earlier years (+25% versus 2005).



Total number of domestic staying visitors

Taking all types of staying visits into account, the total number of staying visitors was just under 360,000. This is in line with last year (+1%) and above the previous two years (+7% versus 2005). This takes the number of staying visitors to a new high point in the 6 year period illustrated.

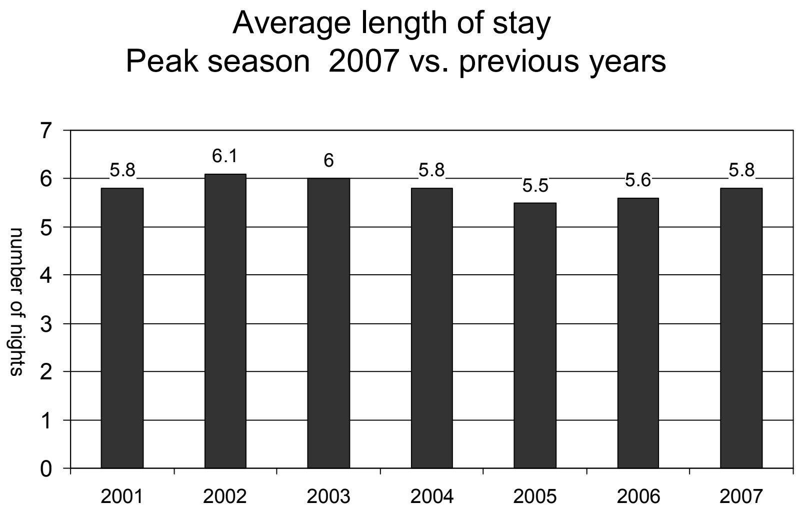


There have been few significant changes in the staying visitor market, with the mix remaining very similar to last year:

- Visiting friends and relatives: this is another large group of visitors in the peak season, although of lower value than holiday/short break visitors as the majority do not pay for commercial accommodation. VFR trips reached almost 80,000 visits this year, an increase of 6%, and close to the level seen in 2005.
- Staying business trips are usually at a low level during the peak season and this year there were an estimated 12,000 such trips, a similar number to 2006.
- As noted above, holidays/short breaks were relatively static.

Average length of stay

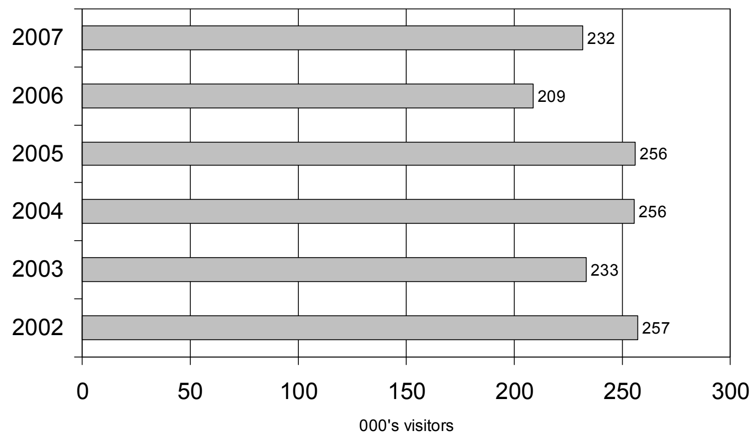
The peak season average length of all domestic staying trips was 5.8 nights: this is a slight increase on the last two years and takes this back to the 2004 figure. This small increase has been driven by a slight increase in the duration of longer stay holidays – up from 8.2 nights to 8.6 nights. VFR trips remained at the same length.



Estimated number of domestic day trips

Day visits boost peak season visitor numbers to the Island significantly and this year these increased by 11% to reach 232,000 day visitors; this reverses the decline seen last year but remains below the previous two years (-9% versus 2005).

Estimated number of domestic day visitors
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



Leisure day visits make up 70% of all day trips (170,000) with the majority of these (75%) being day trips starting from home (128,000); the remainder are day trips taken by people holidaying on the mainland (42,000). Both types of leisure day trip increased (+12% day trips from home; +17% day trips whilst on holiday).

Business and work related day trips are a small sector in the peak season, accounting for around 15% of day trips; these numbered 33,000.

VFR day trips also tend to be at a low level in the peak season, making up 10% of day trips, 28,000.

Estimated number of visits made by overseas residents

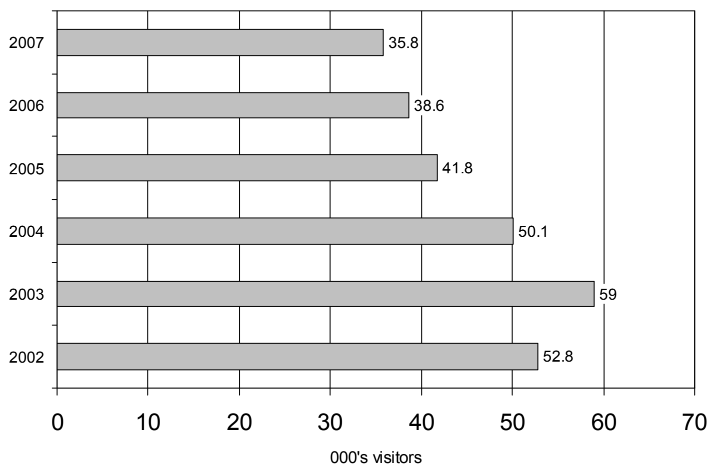
The spring and peak seasons are when overseas residents tend to visit the Island, but even in the peak these visitors make up a small proportion of total visitors. In 2007 there were an estimated 36,000, 6% of total visitors.

In line with overseas residents' visits to the UK as a whole, visits to the Island were down (by 7% versus last year), the fourth successive year to register a fall; taking these to a new low point.

Key groups within this market segment are those:

- on holidays/short breaks (9,000);
- travelling to visit friends and relatives (8,000);
- visiting on a leisure day trip whilst on holiday on the mainland (8,000).

Estimated number of abroad visitors
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



Number of staying and day trips made by overseas residents: 2004-2007

The breakdown of trip type, shown below, shows some fluctuations in types of visitor. This year staying visitors decreased by 9,000 but there were an additional 6,000 day visits.

000's trips	2004	2005	2006	2007
Staying trips	28	23	26	17
Day trips	22	18	13	19
N.B. These estimates are based on small sample sizes				

New versus repeat visits to the Island

Day and staying leisure visitors are asked when they last visited the Isle of Wight, if at all. The following data excludes those visiting friends and relatives as these are, by definition, likely to be repeat visitors. (Only 5% of VFR visitors were on their first visit to the Island.) The survey identifies first time visitors, those who are recent repeat visitors (in the last year and within the last 5 years), and lapsed visitors who have visited before but not in the last 5 years.

The Island benefits from a high proportion of repeat visitors: in this peak season two thirds were on a repeat visit with almost half on their second or subsequent visit in a 12 month period.

17% of leisure visitors were on their first visit to the Isle of Wight: slightly more of whom were on holidays/short breaks.

In addition to these new visitors, the Island is successful at attracting lapsed visitors back: 15% of day visitors and 16% of short break/holiday visitors had visited before but not in the last 5 years.

	Leisure Day visitors (not VFR)	**Short break/holiday visitors (not VFR)**
First visit to Island	16%	18%
Visited before in last 12 months	48%	48%
Visited before 12 months to 5 years ago	22%	19%
Visited before but more than 5 years ago	15%	16%

Based upon these visitor patterns, it is estimated that over 135,000 new or lapsed visitors came to the Island during the peak season, two thirds of whom were higher value holiday/short break visitors and one third were day visitors.

The number of new/lapsed visitors is slightly higher versus last year (+7%), due to more holiday/short break visitors coming to the Island for the first time.

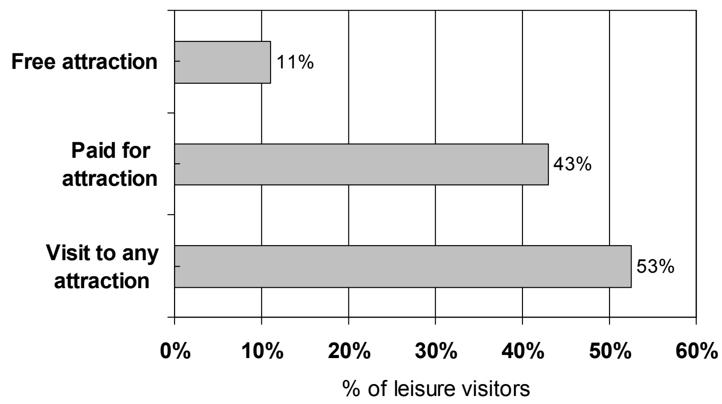
000's new/lapsed visitors	**Leisure Day visitors (not VFR)**	**Short break/holiday visitors (not VFR)**
First visit to Island	23	47
Visited before but more than 5 years ago	24	43

Visits to attractions

Just over half the leisure visitors went to an attraction; the majority of these went to an attraction with an entrance fee (43%) whilst 11% visited a free attraction. Propensity to visit attractions differs between different visitor segments:

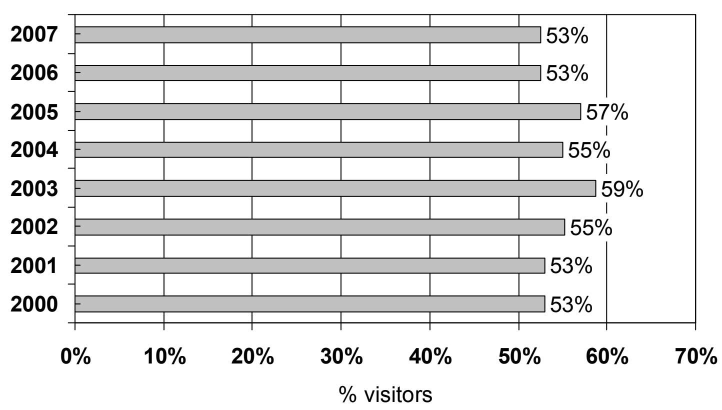
- Visitor groups with children were much more likely to visit an attraction: 71% of these did so whereas only 44% of adult only groups went to an attraction.
- Holiday and short break visitors were more likely to visit attractions than leisure day visitors: 75% vs. 39%.

Estimated visits to types of attractions
Peak season 2007



Looking at the trend over time, visits to attractions were estimated to be at the same incidence level to last year, but to be down 4 points on 2005. This is consistent with a survey in the South East of England which reported that visits to attractions were more or less in line with last year (+1%).*

Estimated visits to any type of attraction
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



Source: Visit Britain

Mode of transport

All visitors are asked how they travel to the mainland terminal and around the Island. Mode of travel on board the ferry is also recorded and used to estimate the overall split between visitors travelling as car, coach and foot passengers.

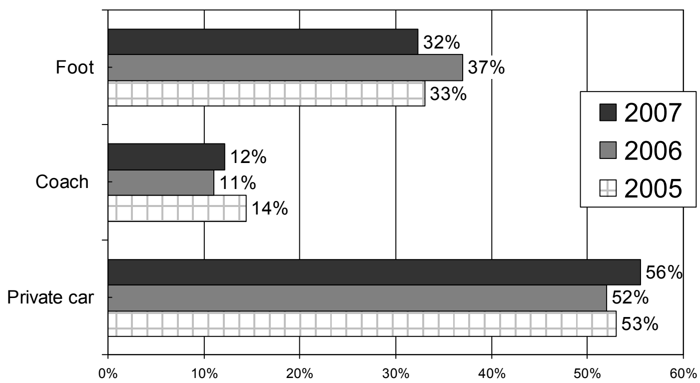
N.B. This question was added to the survey in 2005.

Mode of travel on board the ferry

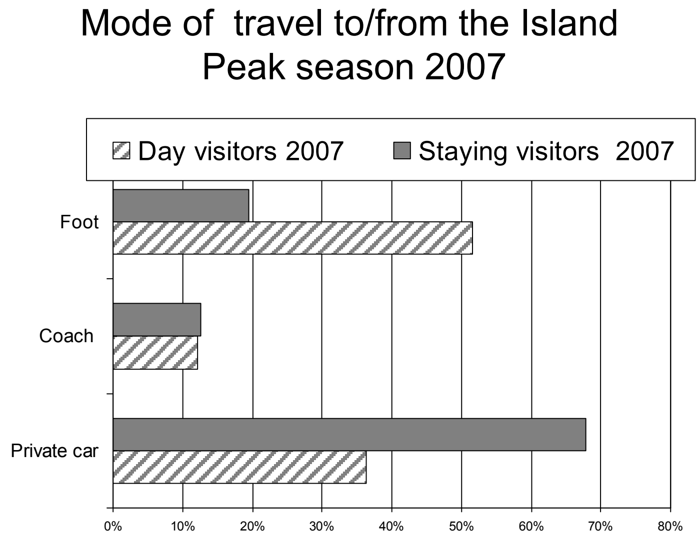
The car dominates travel - it is estimated that:

- over half the visitors (56%) travelled by car; a slight increase on last year.
- A third, 32%, travelled as foot passengers, which is a decrease of 5 points on last year but in line with 2005. The poor weather may have affected propensity to travel on foot and encouraged more visitors to bring their car.
- 12% travelled by coach, a similar proportion to last year.

Mode of travel to/from the Island
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



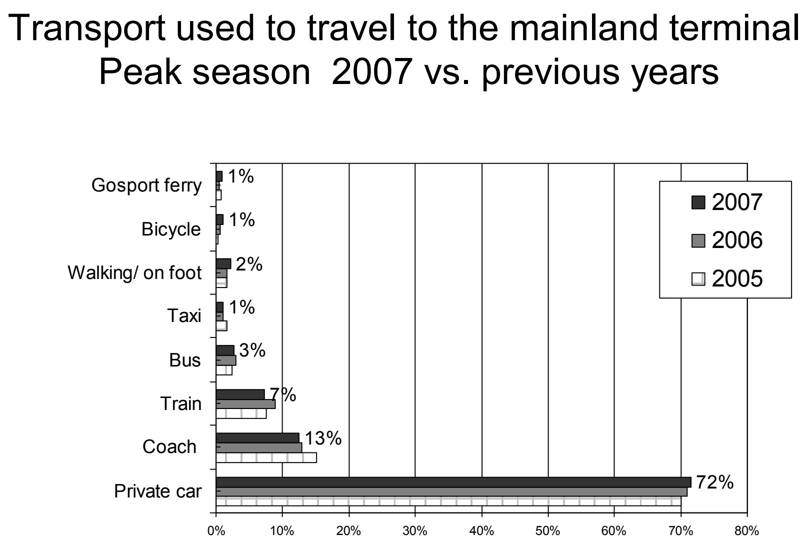
Travel by day and staying visitors differs dramatically, with staying visitors much more car dependant whereas day visitors favour travel on foot. Use of coaches is at a similar low level for both groups.



Mode of transport to the mainland terminal

The majority of journeys to the mainland port were by car (72%) which is 16% more than took their car on board the ferry with them. Use of the car to access the mainland port is up slightly on the last two years. Coach and train travel were used by a minority (13% and 7% respectively).

Choice of transport by day and staying visitors was very similar with use of the car only slightly higher amongst staying than day visitors (73% vs. 65%).



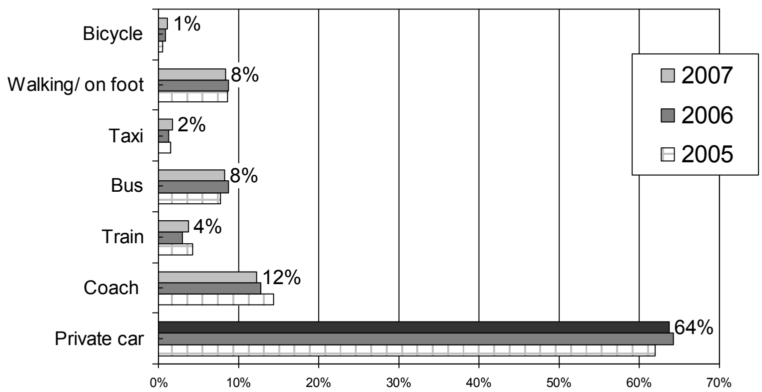
N.B. It is assumed that anyone travelling with their own car on the ferry uses that as their main mode of transport to the port. Likewise, those travelling with a coach on the ferry are assumed to travel by coach to the port.

Mode of transport to travel around the Island

The car continues to dominate travel, but not to the extent it does when travelling to the mainland terminal. Once on the Island, almost two thirds travelled around by private car, either their own or that of a relative, (64%). Walking, use of local buses, train and travel by coach all featured but at a fairly low level.

Year on year travel patterns remain very similar.

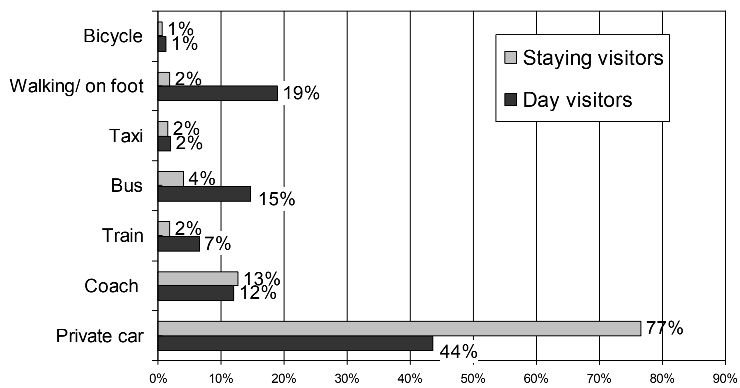
Transport used to travel around the Island
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



There are differences between day and staying visitors:

- Day visitors made much greater use of public transport than staying visitors. In addition, almost one fifth of day visitors were on foot.
- Staying visitors travelled predominately by private car.

Transport used to travel around the Island
Day versus staying visitors
Peak season 2007



N.B. It is assumed that anyone travelling with their own car on the ferry uses that as their main mode of transport around the Island. Likewise, those travelling with a coach on the ferry are assumed to travel by coach on the Island.

Value of tourism

The value of tourism during this peak period is estimated at £103 million: this is at approximately the same level as last year, which was itself 8% up on 2005 (excluding inflation).

Despite the 4% increase total visitors, overall value has not increased due primarily to the fall in overseas visitors. In addition the extra day trip visitors (up by 11%) contribute far less than the staying visitors.

Staying trips were worth £94 million, the vast majority of which, £88 million, was from domestic staying trips; day trips generated another £9 million.

Staying trips	
All domestic staying trips	£88 million
All overseas staying trips	£6million
All staying trips	£94 million*
Day trips	
All domestic day trips	£8 million
All overseas day trips	£1 million
All domestic day trips	£9 million

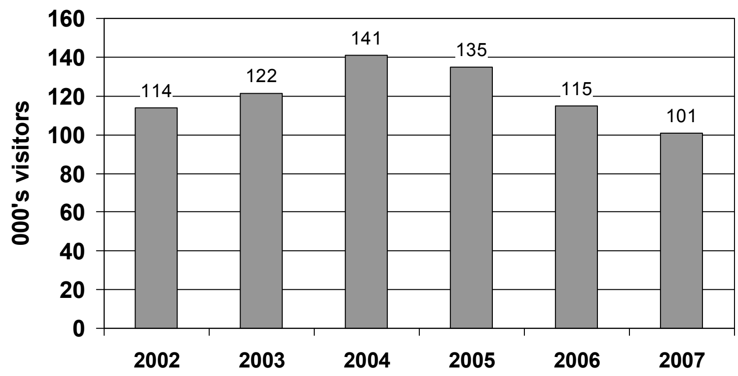
N.B. Spending by visitors is based on visitors arriving by ferry; base value figures are taken from UKTS estimates produced for the Isle of Wight and the GB Leisure Day Visits survey estimates. These are adjusted annually for inflation using the RPI (all items RP04).

Activity at Island Tourist Information Centres

There were just over 100,000 visitors to the Island TIC's during the peak season. This is 12% below last year and continues the downward trend in TIC usage as people increasingly seek information from the website (see below).

The average spend per head was £7.97 which is down slightly (-3%) from last year, however spend last year was boosted significantly by sales for the Westlife concert at Osborne House.

Number of visitors to TIC offices
Peak season 2007 vs. previous years



islandbreaks.co.uk website activity

There were 197,000 visits to the website during the months of July and August, continuing the upward trend in the number of visits. This is up by 17% versus 2006 and by 63% versus 2005.

Occupancy statistics

The Isle of Wight occupancy statistics for the peak summer season 2007 will be issued in a separate bulletin.