

Tourism in UK National Parks

Information sheet

Our 15 National Parks are popular tourist destinations that appeal to a wide range of different audiences.

Why do visitors come to the national parks?



Cyclists near Rosedale, North York Moors National Park © Tony Bartholomew

About 58% of visitors come to enjoy the scenery and landscape, which makes this the main reason for visiting a national park. Other reasons people visit national parks are:

- Scenery and landscape
- Enjoyed a previous visit
- Peace and quiet
- Take part in an outdoor activity
- Easy to get to
- Visit friends and family that live in the national park
- Own accommodation in the national park
- Never been before
- Because it is a national park
- Recommended to visit
- Come every year

Who are the visitors to national parks?

About 68% of visitors are families, most coming in a group with under five people. Only 7% of visitors come from outside the UK. Most visitors come from the densely populated South-East region, near London or from the regions closest to national parks.

There are two categories of visitors, day visitors and holiday makers. People on day trips come to the national park from home to enjoy a day in the national park. Holiday makers stay in accommodation in or nearby the national park.

How do visitors get to the national parks?

When national parks were first created in the UK, John Dower recommended that they should be near enough for people who live in big cities to easily visit them. Their locations should be chosen so "that at least one of them is quickly accessible from each of the main centres of population in England and Wales."

Most visitors, 93%, travel to the national parks in their own car.

Only a small percentage of visitors use public transport like a train or a bus, which is a situation we're working hard to change. Look at the map of national parks, cities and motorways resource to see where people travel from.

What activities do visitors do in national parks?

The most popular activities visitors do in national parks are:

- Walking (40%).
- Driving around and sightseeing by car (19%)
- Relaxing (12%)
- Visiting towns and villages (10%)

A smaller percentage of people were involved in other outdoor activities like horse riding, climbing or kayaking.



Grassington Farmer's Market, Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Visitor survey

The figures given here are taken from a survey where thousands of visitors were asked about their visit to a national park. The survey was done quite some time ago, before the New Forest, the Cairngorms and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs national parks had been created, so they were not included.

Although there has not been another survey done recently, the findings from this survey are still generally valid today. Some national parks have done local surveys more recently and their results give similar answers.