



VisitBritain™

# Foresight – issue 126


# Sightseeing famous buildings and going on guided tours

April 2014

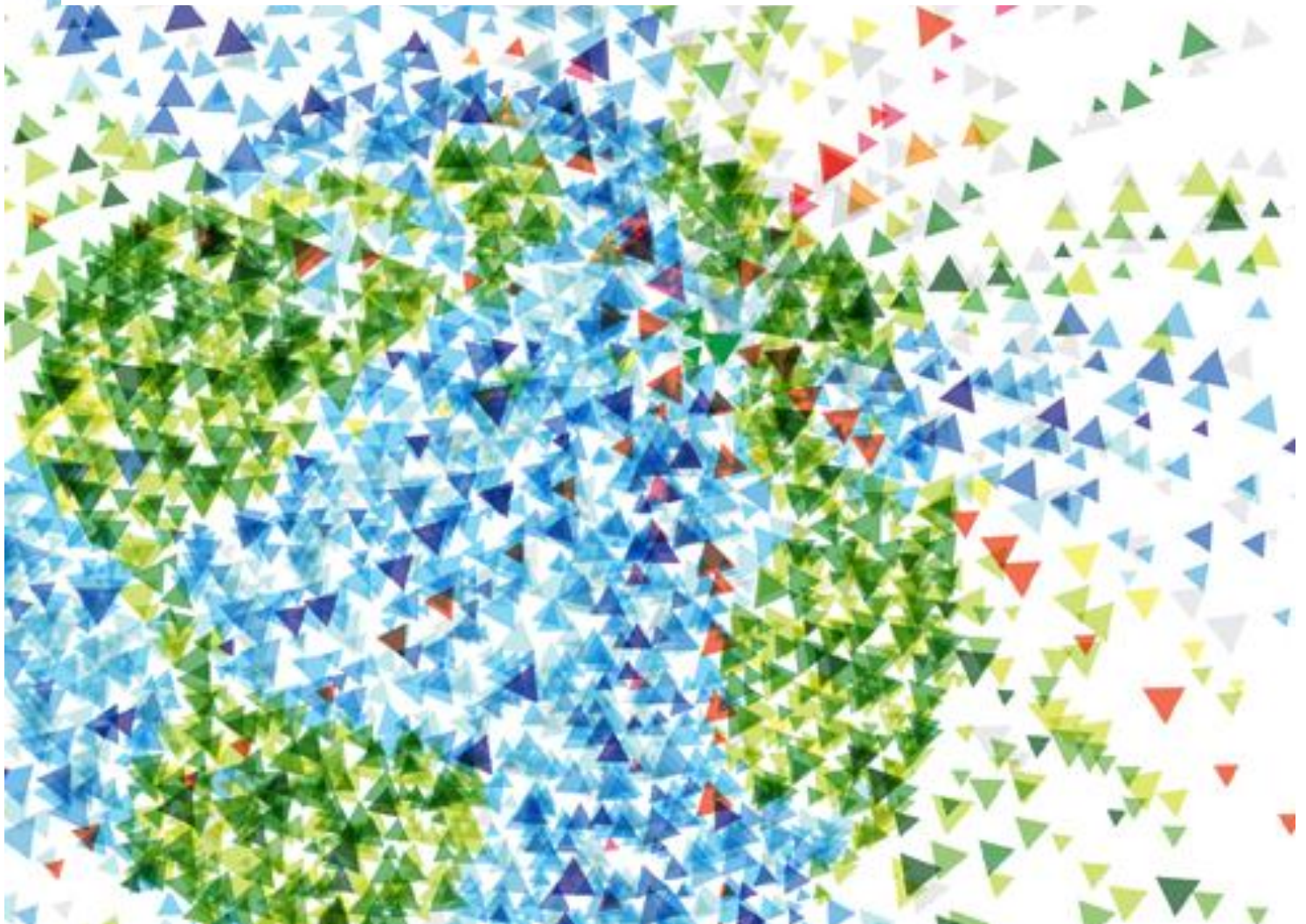
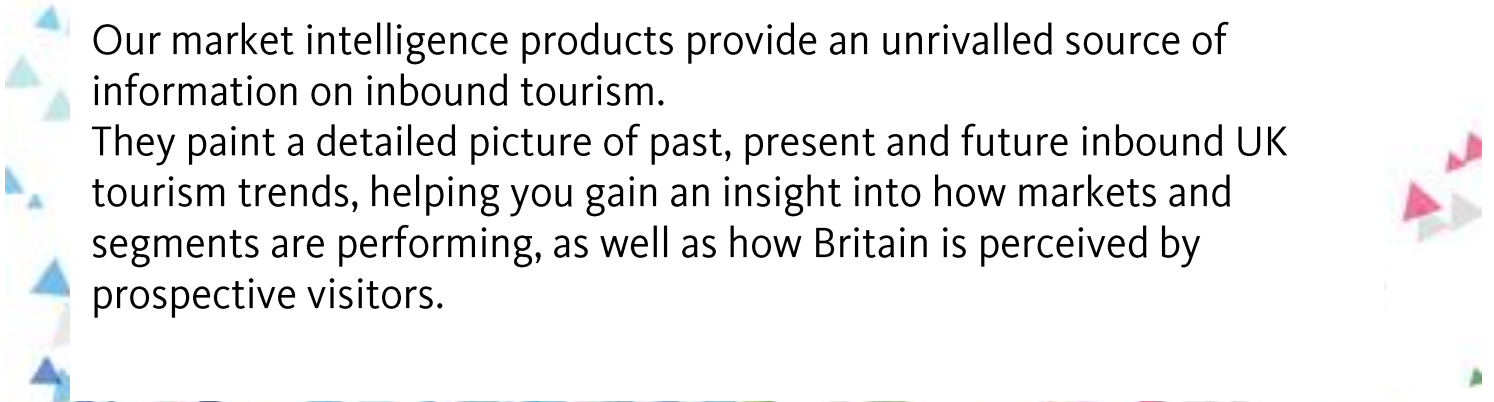
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# Sightseeing famous monuments or buildings and going on guided tours

## Introduction

Over a number of years VisitBritain has added questions to the Office for National Statistics International Passenger Survey to explore the types of activities that inbound visitors undertake during their stay in Britain. Previous editions of Foresight have examined the characteristics of those who watch football, visit parks and gardens and go for a walk by the coast, but this month we take a look at visits that include either sightseeing famous monuments or buildings, or going on a guided tour.

These activities were asked about on the 2008 survey but when looking at the 'profile' of visits that engage with these activities it is unlikely that the picture will have changes substantially in the past few years.

Of the 31.9 million visits in 2008 11.2 million said that they had undertaken a spot of sightseeing famous monuments or buildings, while 3.9 million reported having gone on a guided tour. This demonstrates just how big a role Britain's built heritage plays in the itineraries of inbound visitors.

It should be recognised that respondents were not given any instructions as to what constituted a 'guided tour' so those saying that they participated in this type of activity could range from a full multi-day guided tour on a coach through to an hour long tour around a stately home.

## Purpose

As we have seen when looking at other types of activity there is a strong relationship between propensity to do different types of activity and the overall purpose of the trip.

Chart 1 shows that for each of the major journey purpose categories sightseeing famous monuments or buildings was undertaken more commonly than was going on a guided tour, but also that those with a journey purpose of Holiday or Study were far more likely to get involved than were those Visiting Friends or Relatives, on a Business trip or in Britain for Miscellaneous reasons.

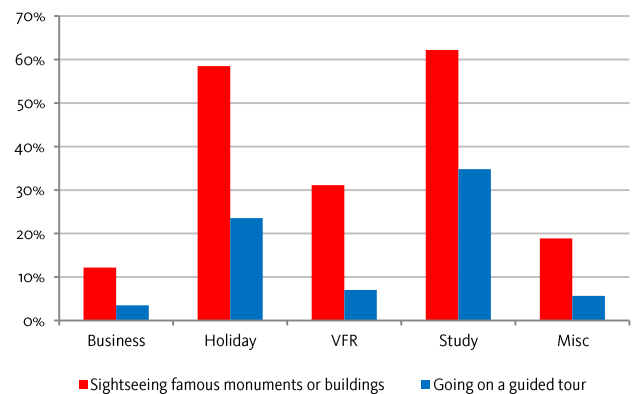
An estimated 59% of Holiday visits include sightseeing famous monuments or buildings and 24% involve going on a guided tour. While, as one might expect, only a minority of Business visits feature such activities nonetheless 12% of such trips did include sightseeing famous buildings and 4% had sufficient spare time to

go on a guided tour.

Looking just at Holiday visits the typical length of stay in Britain for those sightseeing famous monuments or buildings was fractionally higher than for those who did not do so at 6.7 nights, while those who went on a guided tour during their stay typically spent 6.9 nights in Britain.

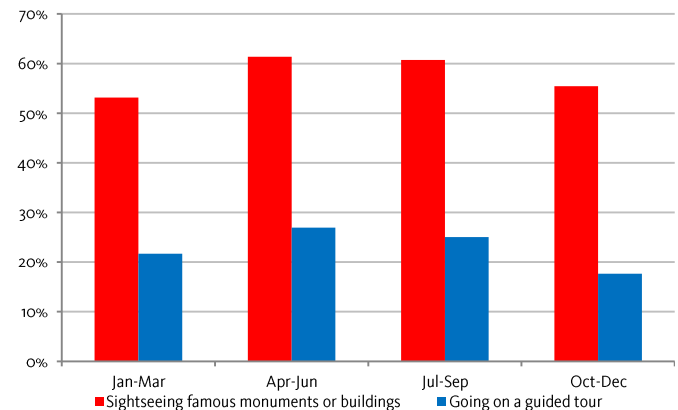
Back in 2008 the average amount spent during a Holiday visit was £502 with those who said they had done some sightseeing of famous monuments or buildings spending marginally less at £486 and those that went on a guided tour rather more at £530.

**Chart 1: Propensity by journey purpose (%)**



## Seasonality

**Chart 2: Propensity by time of year (%)**



The remainder of our analysis is restricted just to those visits

which feature the activities in question where the purpose of the trip is Holiday.

Chart 2 presents the likelihood of taking part in the activities by time of year and it is evident that about six-in-ten visits feature some sightseeing of famous monuments or buildings during the April to September period with this slightly up on the chance of a visit in the cooler months doing so.

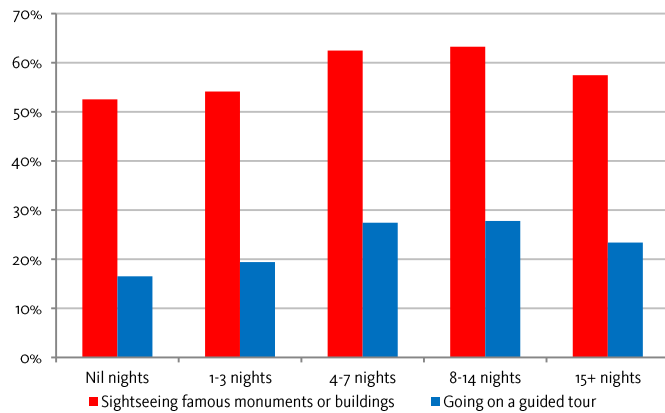
When it comes to going on guided tours more than one-in-four visits during July to September includes the activity, but this falls to only 18% in the October to December period.

### Duration of Stay

Travelling into the centre of Edinburgh from the airport, or a window seat on the right-hand side of a plane approaching Heathrow from the east ensures that you don't have to be in Britain long to indulge in a spot of sightseeing famous monuments or buildings and as Chart 3 demonstrates more than half of all 'day tripper' Holiday visits report having undertaken the activity, with 17% of this segment going on a guided tour or evening 'ghost walk'.

It is certainly the case that those staying in Britain for a Holiday for a longer duration have an increased propensity to sightsee famous monuments and buildings, but interestingly those staying for one to two weeks are a little more likely to do so than are those staying 15 nights or more. A similar pattern emerges for going on a guided tour with one-in-four of those staying one to two weeks taking part, whereas 23% of those with a stay of 15 or more nights do so.

**Chart 3: Propensity by duration of stay (%)**



### Demographics

There is little difference in the chance of a Holiday visit including sightseeing famous monuments or buildings by gender for younger groups but among groups in their forties or older females

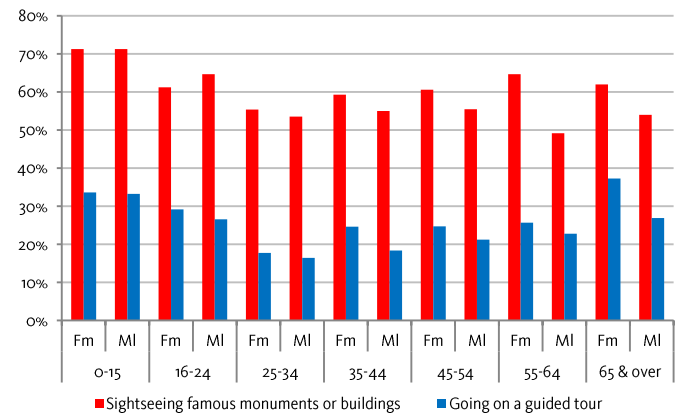
are more likely than males to participate in the activity (Chart 4).

It is children who are the most likely to do the activity with 71% of those aged 15 or younger spending some of their holiday sightseeing famous monuments or buildings. Otherwise there is not huge variation by age with it being only men aged 55 to 64 who have a below fifty-fifty chance of saying that they did the activity.

The age profile for those going on a guided tour is rather different with it being the youngest and oldest cohorts who are most likely to opt for a guided tour, namely one-third of those aged 15 or younger and a similar proportion of those aged 65+, but in this case females are much more likely to do so than males.

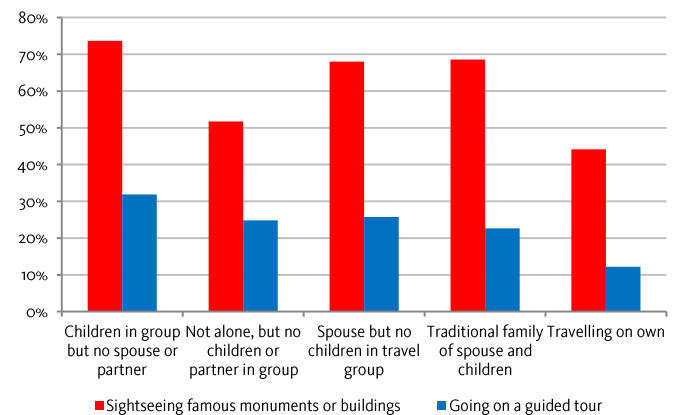
Those visiting Britain for a Holiday who are aged 25-34 are the least likely to go on a guided tour with only around one-in-six doing so.

**Chart 4: Propensity by age and gender (%)**



### Travelling group

**Chart 5: Propensity by travel group type (%)**



From Chart 5 we can observe that those in Britain on Holiday who are travelling on their own are less likely to sightsee famous monuments and buildings or go on a guided tour than are other

types of traveller. It is groups that include children or are ‘couples’ which have the greatest likelihood of doing this activity.

The picture is very similar for going on a guided tour, with 32% of groups that include children but no spouse or partner featuring a guided tour through to just 12% of those travelling on their own opting for the activity.

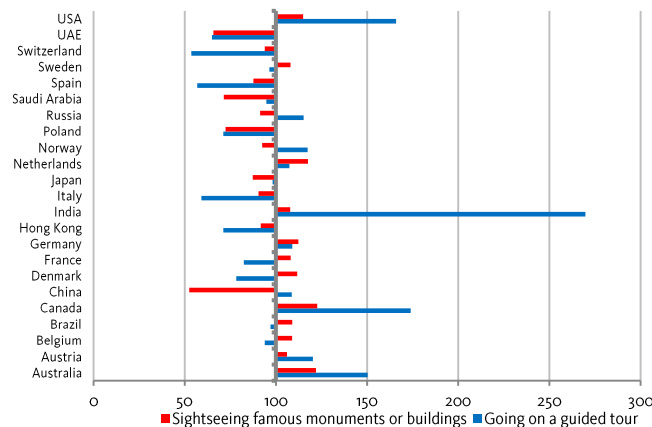
## Markets

Again just looking at Holiday visits Chart 6 shows the likelihood of a visit including the activities relative to the ‘average’ Holiday visit.

This is perhaps best explained by taking a couple of examples from the chart. A Holiday visit from Australia is 22% more likely than average to include some sightseeing of famous monuments or buildings (hence the index of 122) while a Holiday visit from Italy is 41% less likely than average to include going on a guided tour (with an index number of 59).

At least back in 2008 it was Holiday visits from China that were least likely to encompass any sightseeing of famous monuments or buildings and those from Switzerland that were least likely to go on a guided tour, while Canadians were the most likely to sightsee famous monuments and buildings and those from India the most likely to go on a guided tour.

**Chart 6: Relative likelihood by market (average market = 100)**



## Areas of Britain

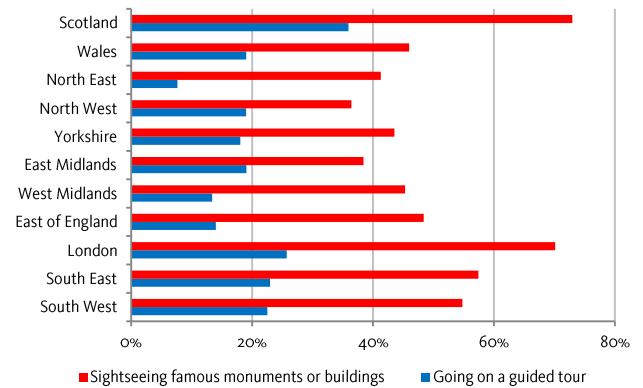
Britain’s towns, cities and countryside are well endowed in famous buildings and monuments and looking just at Holiday visits that were to a single area of Britain we can estimate the relative extent to which visits include the activities under the spotlight this month.

Chart 7 shows that it is in Scotland that Holiday visits are most

likely to feature some sightseeing of famous monuments or buildings (73%), a little ahead of London (70%). This activity is least likely to be undertaken on a Holiday visit to the North West (36%).

It is once again Scotland that leads the way when it comes to going on a guided tour with 36% of all Holiday visits featuring the activity. London again holds second spot on 26% whereas only 8% of Holiday visits to the North East include going on a guided tour.

**Chart 7: Propensity by area visited (%)**



## Attractions

The nature of ‘sightseeing’ famous monuments or buildings means it isn’t terribly practical to capture any hard statistics, for example you don’t need to buy a ticket to have a good look at the Houses of Parliament, Clifton Suspension Bridge the Edinburgh skyline from Carlton Hill. Nevertheless, by taking a look at the 2013 Association of Leading Visitor Attraction figures we can readily spot that a number of the most visited ‘attractions’ are famous monuments or buildings.

For example, Tate Modern attracted 4.9 million visits, Tower of London 2.9 million, St Paul’s Cathedral 2.1 million, Westminster Abbey 2.0 million, Edinburgh Castle 1.4 million and of course Stonehenge 1.2 million. Although these figures include both inbound and domestic visitors, it is clear that very many buildings and monuments are high on the ‘wish list’ of sights that visitors to Britain want to see during their stay.

## Data Sources

**Table 1: Data sources**

| Source                         | Charts/Tables |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Office for National Statistics | Charts 1 to 7 |
| International Passenger Survey |               |



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