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TRENDS & VISITOR MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES 2026

Visit West Annual Regional Visitor Economy Conference

Simon Jones
Managing Director



Quick Introduction



Simon

Managing Director



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More visitors, less guesswork.

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The Box



ROMAN
BATHS
BATH



ALVA

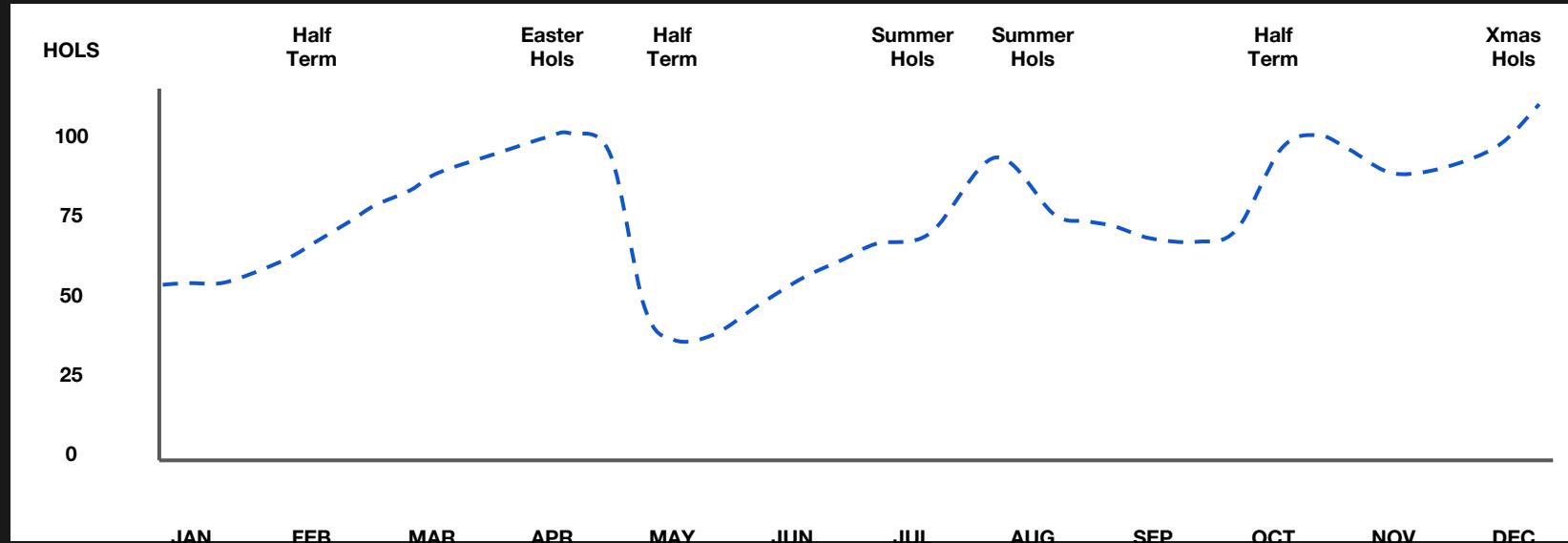


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2025 can be described as *unpredictable*

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COMPARISON DATA FROM ANNUAL AVERAGE



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Things are tough for many

'National treasure' Brighton pier put up for sale

Castle trust 'to pay staff when fortunes improve'

Pecorama in Beer will not open in 2026 due to financial strain

A POWYS tourist attraction is weighing up a decision to close early for the winter, following recent storm damage.

Cornwall's tourist board goes into liquidation

Jobs at London Zoo under threat as ZSL seeks to save £2m

Beloved tourist attraction in Cornwall is closing for good

Farm attraction to close after charity liquidation

Beloved Westcountry family attraction to shut for good

Dartmoor National Park visitor attraction to close after 30 years due to funding crisis

Resort's museum axes staff 12 months after opening

Sad day as Visit Kent ceases operations

Paignton Zoo put on the market by owner, Wild Planet Trust

More than half of UK job losses since last Budget were in hospitality, says industry body

Job cuts and rides shelved as Pleasure Beach cites cost-of-living crisis in announcing further losses

York Archaeology closes exhibitions department as part of restructure

Fears that 20 jobs could be lost at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as strategic review goes ahead

National Trust to cut at least 550 jobs after £10m rise in costs from Reeves's budget

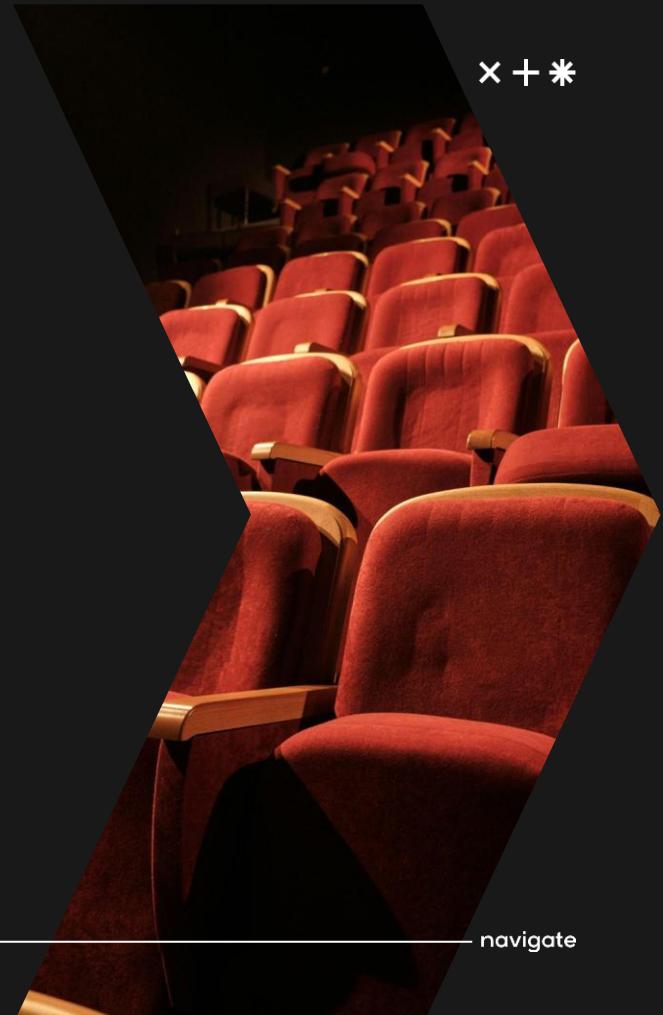
English Heritage launches public appeal to combat 'rocketing' costs

Key trends

Late *late* bookings

Spontaneity is the default.

- While 49% of families research weeks ahead, 44% book within just 48 hours of their visit.
- Search peaks for “what’s on near me **tomorrow** / **today**.”
- Visitors are researching early, booking late due to weather and personal circumstance



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Accessibility mainstream

What are you already doing for this market?

- 41% of families include a child with SEN. That is not a small demographic.
- SEN isn't a side audience, it's central to the family visitor market.



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Value

- Attractions that pushed tickets up sharply saw numbers drop while those more steady or modest increases held their audience.
- Discounting works, but over-reliance is risky: audiences are becoming trained to wait for deals.
- It's better to focus on perceived value, family bundles, flexible ticketing, or messaging on emotions.
- Later booking means higher yield can be driven later



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Event based marketing

Big moments to remember.

- **People book when it feels unmissable.** Time-limited events like Halloween and Christmas create urgency and make decisions easier.
- **They're chasing memories, not just days out.** Shared, screen-free experiences with a clear story beat open-ended summer visits.



How to respond

Programming

Bring in hooks at key periods to make people not want to miss out - **standard offer not enough** to drive bookings in key times anymore

Summer often open choice, no single hook to entice people in an expensive period.

Need to create FOMO



Speak to the **right** people
in the **right** place
in the **right** way

*Everyone is
now a digital
audience.*

The shift.

There's no such thing as a purely **offline** audience anymore.

- Even your most 'traditional' visitor is digital somewhere.
- Reviews, weather apps, whatsapp, strictly, doctors appointments

Digital isn't a channel, it's the environment audiences live in.



Digital channels

Digital allows you to track activity and digital advertising provides the quickest way to drive return

- **Google** still best converting intent (20/40:1)
- **Meta** brilliant for inspiration and conversion (7/15:1)
- **TikTok** now key conversion channel not just awareness (similar returns as Meta)
- **One to watch - Reddit** is now the third biggest social channel overtaking Tiktok in the UK



**It's key to *understand*
your audience and
*communicate effectively***

Gen Z's rewrite

Gen Z are entering peak spending years.

- 40% use TikTok/Instagram as their first search engine.
- Reddit is significantly rising in popularity due to influence within AI
- 3x more likely to trust “someone like me.”
- 70% say sustainability drives choice (ethics, transparency, community).



The hidden power Segment

Most under-marketed, most valuable.

- 70% of the nation's housing wealth, making them the single most powerful discretionary-spend segment in the market.
- <10% of attraction ads target them.
- Barriers = complexity, not cost.
- Want simplicity, trust, visible value.

They're not just tagging along, they're paying for everyone else.



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Search rewired (again)



- TikTok is now a search engine.
- Google's AI overviews summarises attractions before people click.
- ChatGPT plans full days out.
- Visibility now depends on:
 - Clear structured data
 - Fresh and relevant content
 - Strong reviews

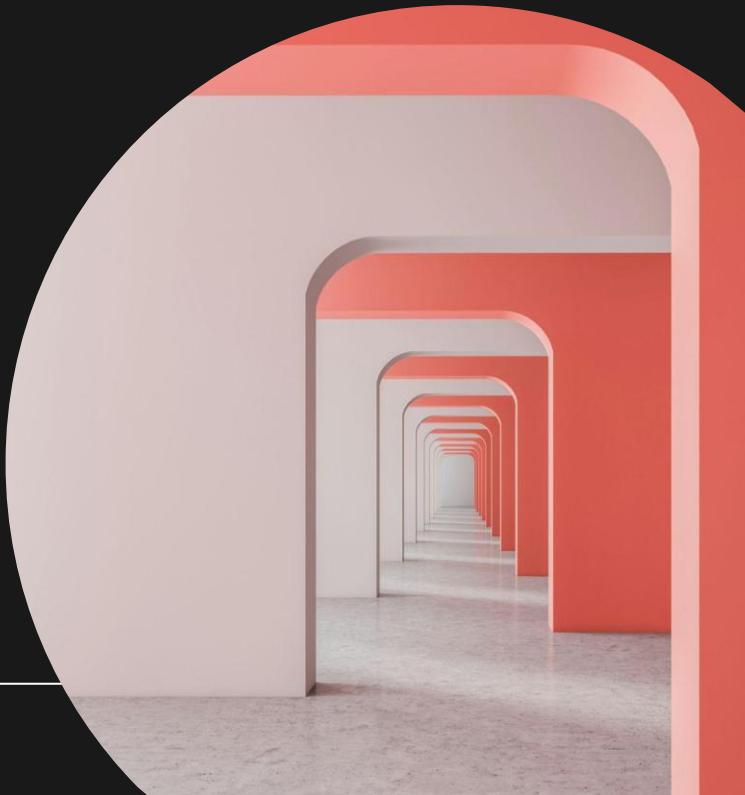
Be ready for the AI search revolution

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Pricing

2026 is the year pricing stops being a fire extinguisher and starts being a strategy.

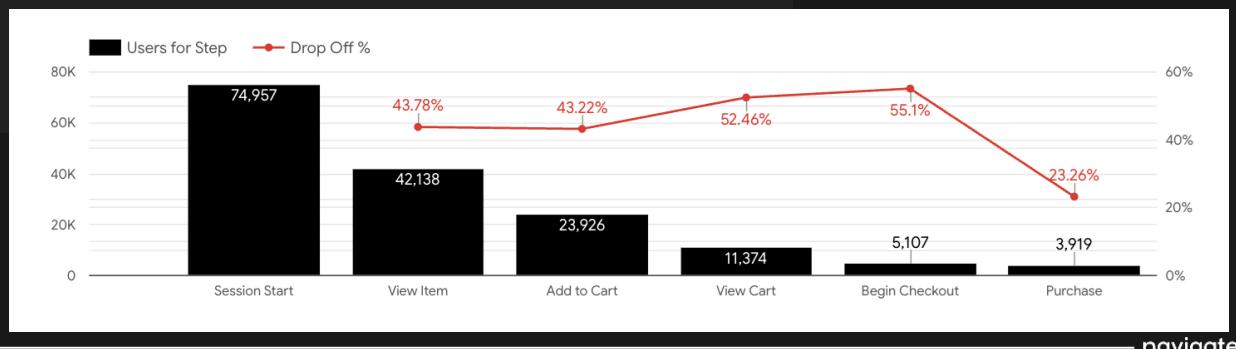
- Early = cheaper. Movable = premium. Flexibility becomes a feature, not a favour.
- Build hotel-style tiers: advance saver, standard, fully flexible. Reward commitment, monetise spontaneity.



Booking journey

If your visitor can't go from "ooh that looks good" to "booked" in under 60 seconds, the algorithm will send them somewhere else.

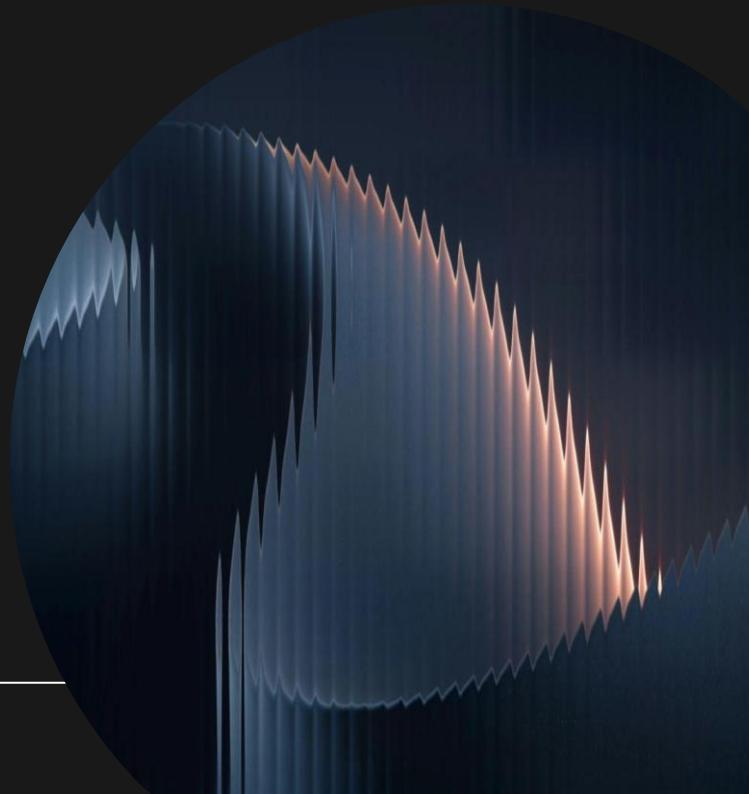
- Convert as much as possible from your offering, and **know your problem areas**



E-commerce

If you have an online shop, are you promoting this effectively - a great way to generate additional money from those not visiting

- Treat online retail as seriously as in person.
- The audience isn't local, **it's worldwide.**



Summary.

- Flexibility, weather and personal circumstances shape when bookings happen.
- Unmissable events drive action. Create time-limited moments create urgency and make decisions easier.
- Digital can decide the visit. Search, social and AI now shape discovery, inspiration and conversion.
- Remove friction, add flexibility. Smarter pricing, faster booking journeys and better conversion win demand.
- Additional revenue streams - Consider things like E-commerce, that can drive new revenue streams

Stay ahead of the visitor curve.

Get weekly insights that shape the visitor economy, direct to your inbox.



Thank you

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