



High Peak Walking & Cycling Audience Research

Conducted by Visit Peak District &
Derbyshire

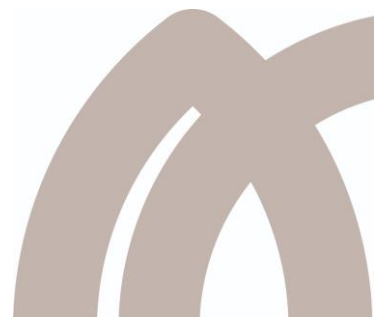


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1. Introduction

The High Peak is an area of dramatic beauty, comprising high moorland plateaus in the Dark Peak area of the Peak District National Park. It has some of the area's finest walking and cycling routes, including routes around the Upper Derwent Valley reservoirs of Ladybower, Bamford and Fernilee, plus popular Peak District walks such as the numerous routes around Kinder Scout and Edale.

The High Peak also has a diverse cultural offer with vibrant market towns, charming villages, independent shops and a strong sense of community. It includes towns such as Buxton, famous for its spa waters, vibrant arts and cultural scene, iconic Victorian and Georgian architecture and newly-refurbished Buxton Crescent Hotel & Thermal Spa; and the towns of Glossop and New Mills, renowned for their industrial heritage and countryside surroundings.

The High Peak is home to some of the Peak's most iconic villages, including Castleton, home of Blue John Stone and numerous show caverns; Edale, one of the most popular places to start a walk in the UK (voted by Ordnance Survey); Hope, with the scenic backdrop of Lose Hill; and Bamford, next to the dramatic Ladybower Reservoir and Bamford Edge.

Visitor attractions in the High Peak include Treak Cliff Cavern, Poole's Cavern, Buxton Crescent Heritage Experience, Buxton Opera House, Buxton Pavilion Gardens and the New Mills' Millennium Walkway.

This survey is intended to help to form a picture of the current usage and opinions of the Borough's outdoor offering to inform and develop the marketing activity for 2024/25.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Research objectives

- Profile visitors (current and potential) in terms of demographics and visitor types (e.g. age, with / without children, where they come from, party size and composition, frequency of rural recreation areas in general)
- Establish amongst visitors the characteristics of their most recent visit (activities undertaken, areas or sites visited, length of stay)
- Identify and profile the audience types with the highest propensity to visit or revisit towns and villages in the High Peak
- Understand the needs, wants and expectations of target audiences (including visitor experiences)
- Capture awareness of the current offer and perceptions held about the High Peak
- Identify motivations for and any barriers to visiting the High Peak
- Rate the visitor experience against their needs and wants.
- Understand how target audiences decide where to visit, when decisions are made and what information sources are most likely to inform or influence a decision.
- The appeal across different audiences of a variety of potential visitor experiences
- Understand what visitors have enjoyed most and any suggestions to enhance their visit.



3. Methodology & sample

3.1 Consumer (i.e. visitor, potential visitor and resident research)

- The target was to survey an overall sample size of at least 100.
- Online survey – targeted at residents & potential visitors – distributed by VPDD's digital channels.
- Survey was open for 4 weeks until 12 Jan 2024 and we had 105 respondents.

3.2 Stakeholder engagement

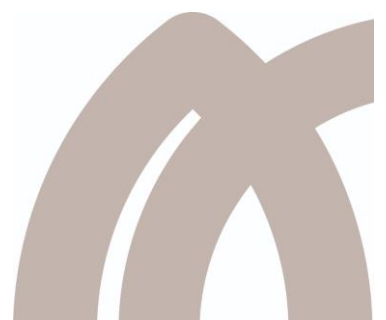
We have spoken to various stakeholders to pull together walking and cycling content including Walkers Welcome New Mills, Move More Glossop, Move More High Peak as well as Sarah and the team at Buxton Town Team who have been working on walking & cycling product from Buxton and other High Peak stations. We conducted an online workshop at the end of October, inviting representatives from all the markets across the High Peak.

Challenges / Ideas:

- Balancing arrival on public transport vs. cars
- Are walks safe – ensuring safety – no busy roads etc
- Business links with tourists
- Steer away from anchor into more hidden gems
- Promote true hero products (some development required)
- Transport & buses an issue – connectivity – competing with the Matlock area
- Promote existing public transport links
- Not all businesses operate 7 days a week – tie in events when businesses are open to avoid disappointment.
- Focus on Buxton – don't see Glossop linked with
- Traffic congestion is a barrier in Buxton
- Number of VPDD members are low in the High Peak – have a B2B campaign to remind benefits of membership.

What would help to market the area

- Buxton is the jewel in the area, fresh air being in nature, halo effect other areas would benefit from uplift in visitors to Buxton
- Industrial Heritage at New Mills
- Have a lot to offer, segment product by different interest groups – dog walk, walks for little legs.
- Evening economy - promote this.
- The area is more than walking.
- Create some itineraries which include more than one town
- Segment the offer – gentle days, history & heritage, family days, adrenaline days, recommended by locals.



3.3 Desk research

The Deloitte Consumer Tracker data for Q3 2023 indicated that consumer confidence has risen since the same time last year and whilst consumers are still displaying recessionary behaviours, spending on leisure, especially on experiences and travel, has been resilient with consumers tending to prioritise holidays over all other discretionary spending.

Summer 2023 also saw a surge in demand for concerts with live music. According to the BBC, more than one million people attended live music events across London in a single week in July.

Net % of UK consumers spending more by category over the last three months

	Q3 2023	% point change QoQ	% point change YoY	% point change vs Q3 2019
Long holidays	2.6%	3.0	4.6	3.0
Short holidays	0.1%	1.8	3.2	1.2
Going to the gym or playing sport	-5.0%	1.2	2.6	-1.7
Attending live sports events	-6.3%	2.4	0.5	-2.9
Betting and gaming	-9.2%	0.8	1.2	-3.6
Eating out	-9.1%	3.9	5.7	0.3
Other leisure activities	-12.1%	1.4	2.3	-3.7
Drinking in pubs/bars	-14.9%	-1.0	-0.5	-2.0
In home leisure activity	-13.7%	2.6	3.7	-4.6
Culture and entertainment	-14.3%	2.3	5.3	-4.0
Drinking in coffee shops/sandwich shops	-16.1%	4.1	2.1	-1.5

Source: The Deloitte Consumer Tracker

4. Consumer research - key findings

4.1 Profile of respondents

48% of respondents lived locally from the High Peak, Derbyshire or Greater Manchester. Respondents were predominately white, female and older. 72% of respondents were 45+.

100% of respondents were white and 48% were aged 55+

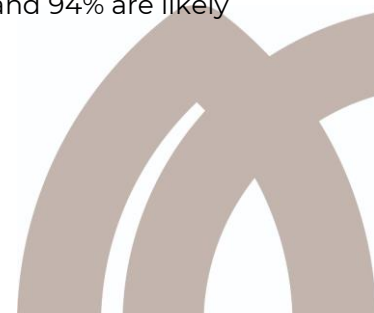
Most people who had visited the High Peak do so often, more than 5 times a year.

4.2 Marketing

The clear influencing factors when choosing destinations for days out were websites, word of mouth and social media. Most make plans within 7 days of visiting with 30% making plans the day before.

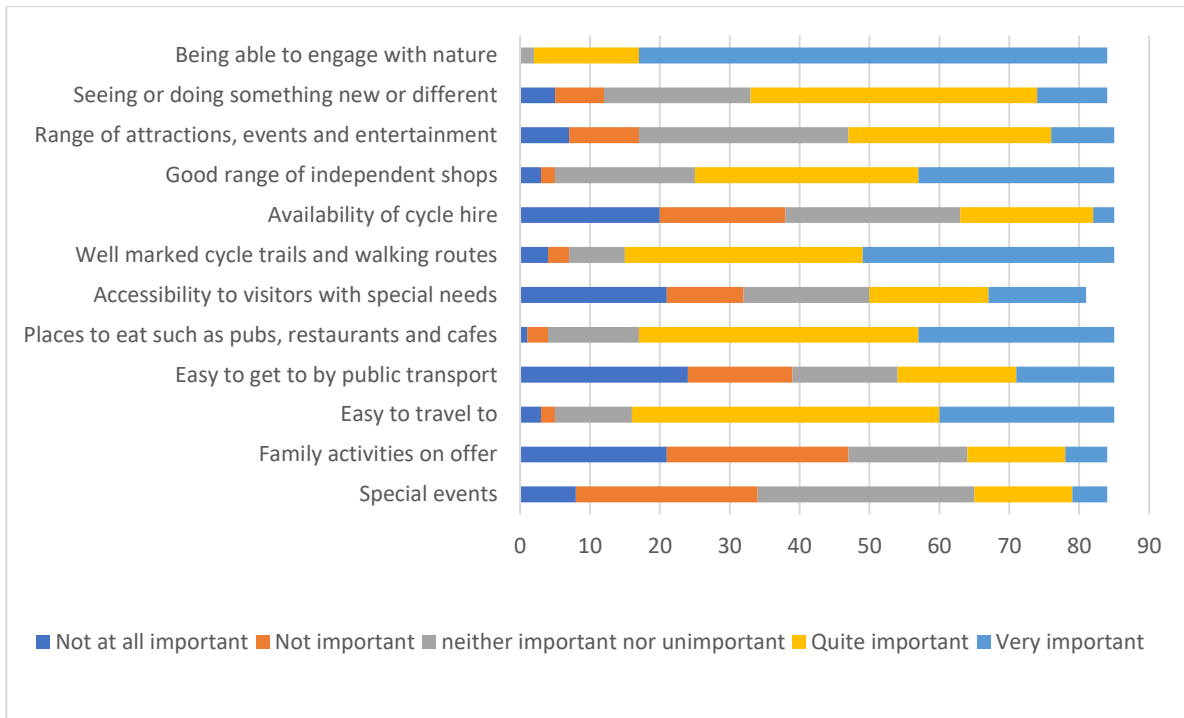
4.3 Visiting the area

92% of respondents would describe their visit to the High Peak as good or very good. The good news is 94% would recommend the area / attractions to a friend and 94% are likely to visit again.



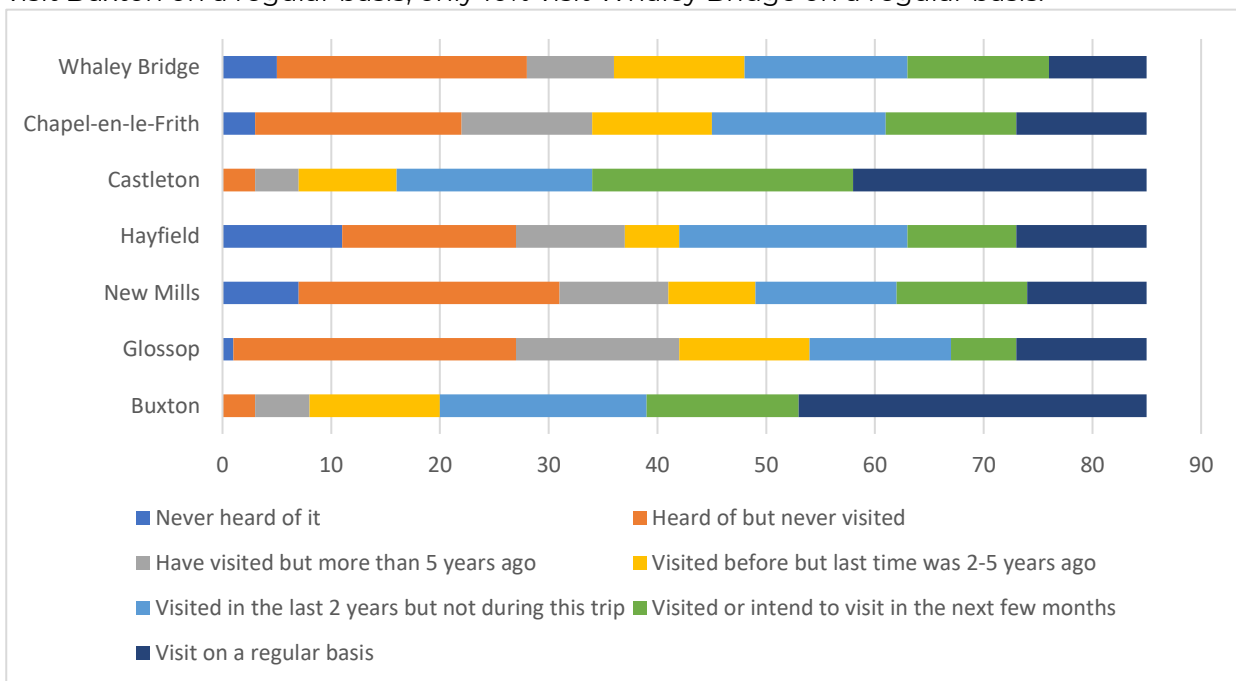
4.4 Important factors on a day out

The least important factors are ease of getting here by public transport and cycle hire, the most important factors are engaging with nature, well marked trails, that it is easy to get to, places to eat and drink and a good range of independent shops..



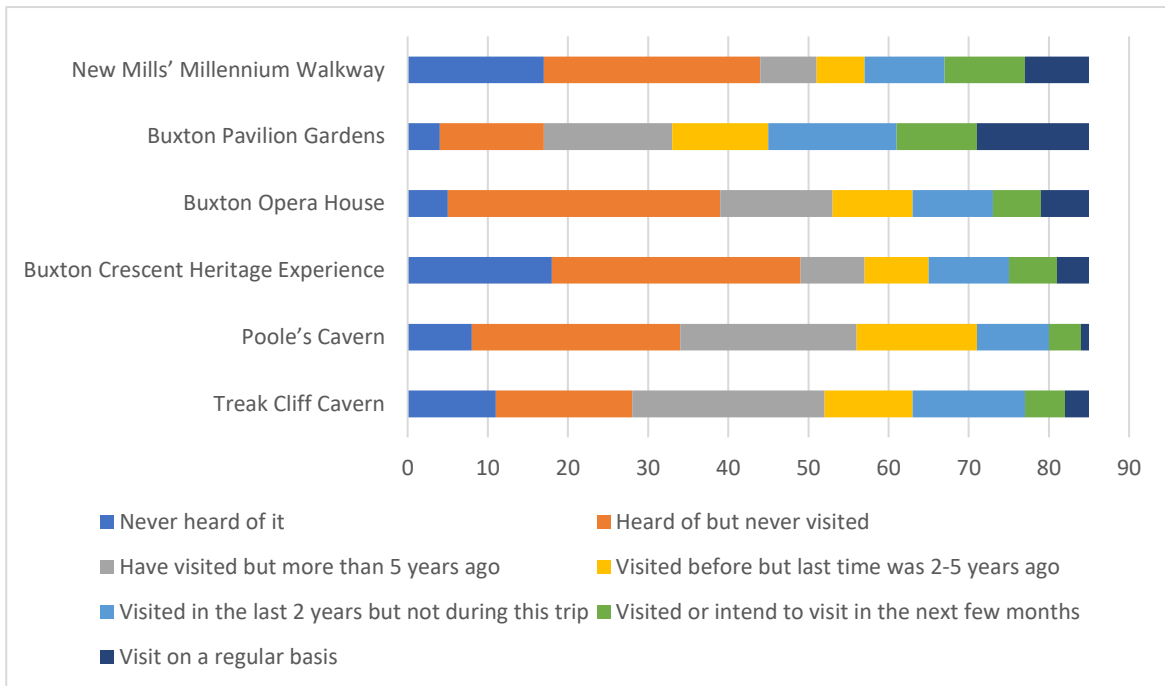
4.5 Awareness of the towns & villages

Overall, 31% of all respondents had not heard of one of the towns and 37% of respondents visit Buxton on a regular basis, only 10% visit Whaley Bridge on a regular basis.



4.6 Awareness of the local attractions & businesses

81% had visited the highlighted attractions in the last 2 years, the most popular were Treak Cliff Cavern and the Buxton Pavillion Gardens.



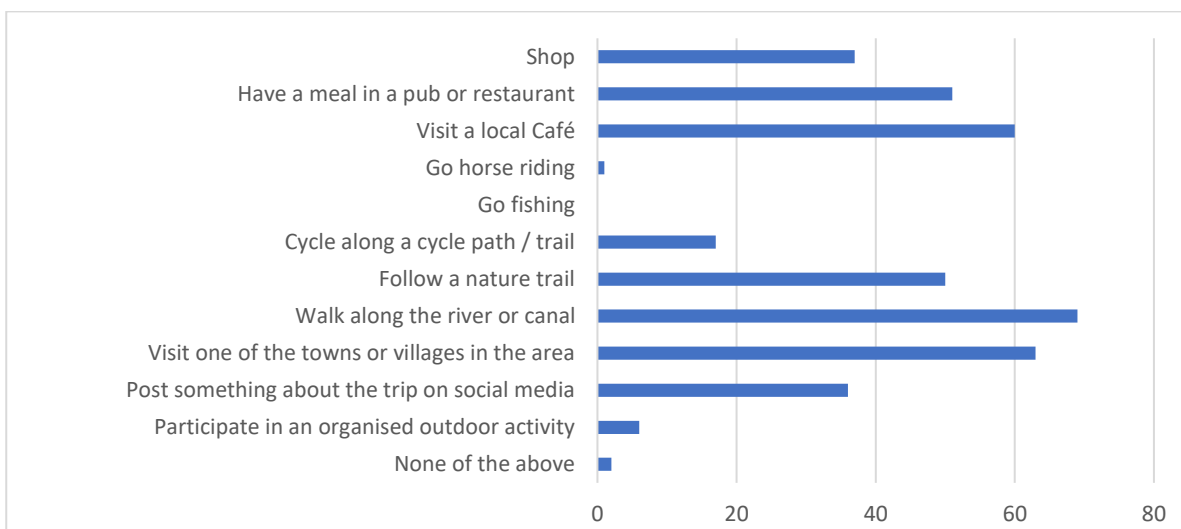
4.7 Reasons to visit

Question: Why would you choose to visit any of the above places & attractions?

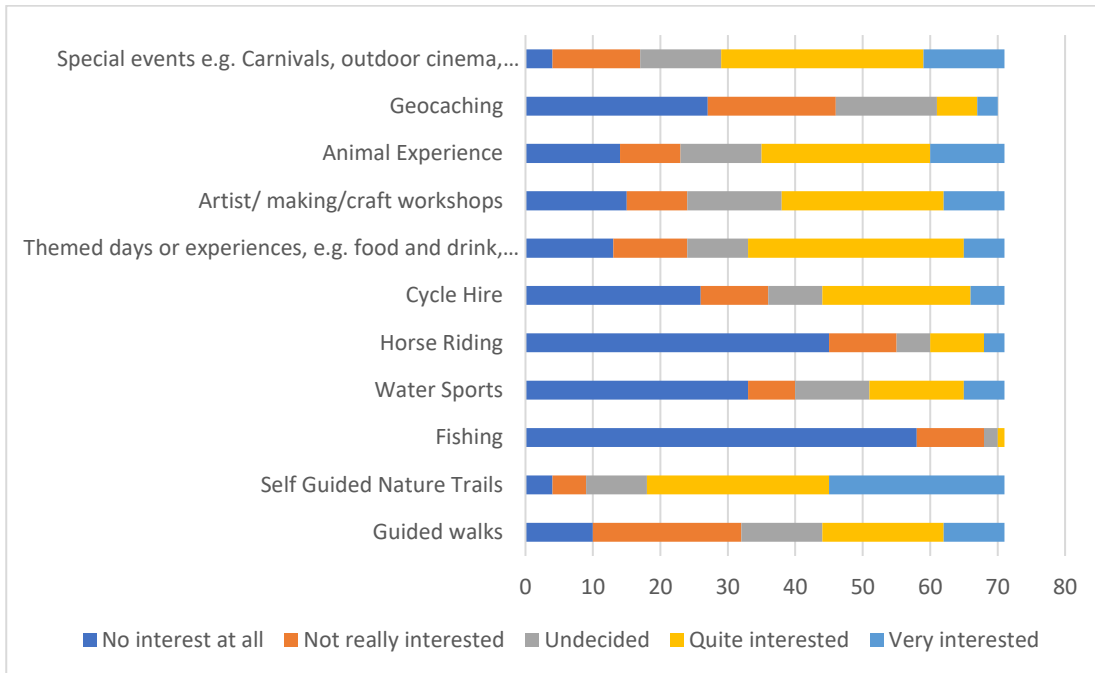
Generally, on a day out in the High Peak 79% of respondents said that to go for a walk, 13% to go for a cycle, 62% because they have enjoyed a day out here before, 59% to experience nature & wildlife, 32% to show friends around and 32% to visit local shops.

Question: Which of the following do you generally do on a day out?

64% would visit a local town or village, 82% would take a walk along a river or canal, 59% would follow a nature trail and 70% would visit a local café.

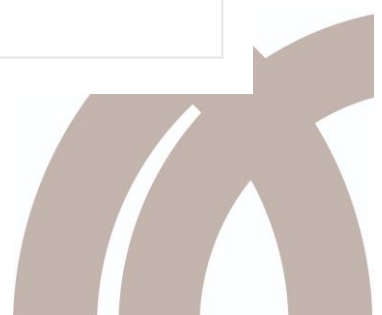


To help encourage future visits, we wanted to understand what type of activities visitors would be interested in, those that answered very or quite interested - 74% said nature trails, 59% said special events and 53% themed days or experiences.



4.8 Suggestions to improve the visitor experience

Suggestions given when asked 'What one thing could the High Peak do to improve the experience for visitors?' included: more toilet facilities, better car parking. The word cloud below highlights the prevalence of certain words and phrases.



5. Conclusions

To caveat the results, the survey did not include a decent sample of younger respondents so young families were under represented.

Most of the respondents had visited the area before and there was a decent level of knowledge of the local towns and attractions.

The area and its amenities and attractions were thought of favourably in general with the outdoor offer – particularly walking, and important part of what make the area a great place to visit.

The High Peak is generally very accessible by public transport with good train routes to all the main towns, however this was not seen as an important factor when visiting.

6. Proposed marketing campaign plans

Focus on the walking offer and highlighting the independent high streets with great places to eat and drink. The 45+ audience is important but look to encourage visits from a younger demographic, by targeting a 25+ audience on public transport links from Manchester & Sheffield.

