traveltracker
A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE – DIVISION OF TOURISM, FILM AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

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Strategic tourism marketing and policy decisions depend on accurate, consistent tracking of business indicators such as lodging statistics, attraction and welcome center visitation, transportation statistics and more. The intent of the North Carolina Travel Tracker is to provide up-to-date and relevant tourism indicators for both the state and individual regions within the state. With data from the Travel Tracker, program areas and industry partners can strategically plan, implement and evaluate processes and programs.

The following report analyzes a variety of tourism indicators by 1) State, 2) the three geographic marketing regions (coastal, piedmont and mountain), and for some indicators 3) the seven economic development regions. As well as providing a review of the current state of business, the report provides a year-to-date analysis and comparisons to previous years where applicable.

With regards to the lodging data found in this report; while virtually every chain in the United States provides Smith Travel Research (STR) with data on almost all of their properties, there are still some hotels that don't submit data. However, every year STR examines listings and directories for information on hotels that don't provide data. STR calls each hotel in the database every year to obtain "published" rates for multiple categories. Based on this information all hotels are grouped - those that report data and those that don't - into groupings based off of price level and geographic proximity. They then estimate the non-respondents based on nearby hotels with similar price levels.

Following is a guide to charts and graphs for this report:

Section 1: Statewide Tourism Indicator Analysis for January 2010

Chart 1 – Hotel/Motel Occupancy in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2010

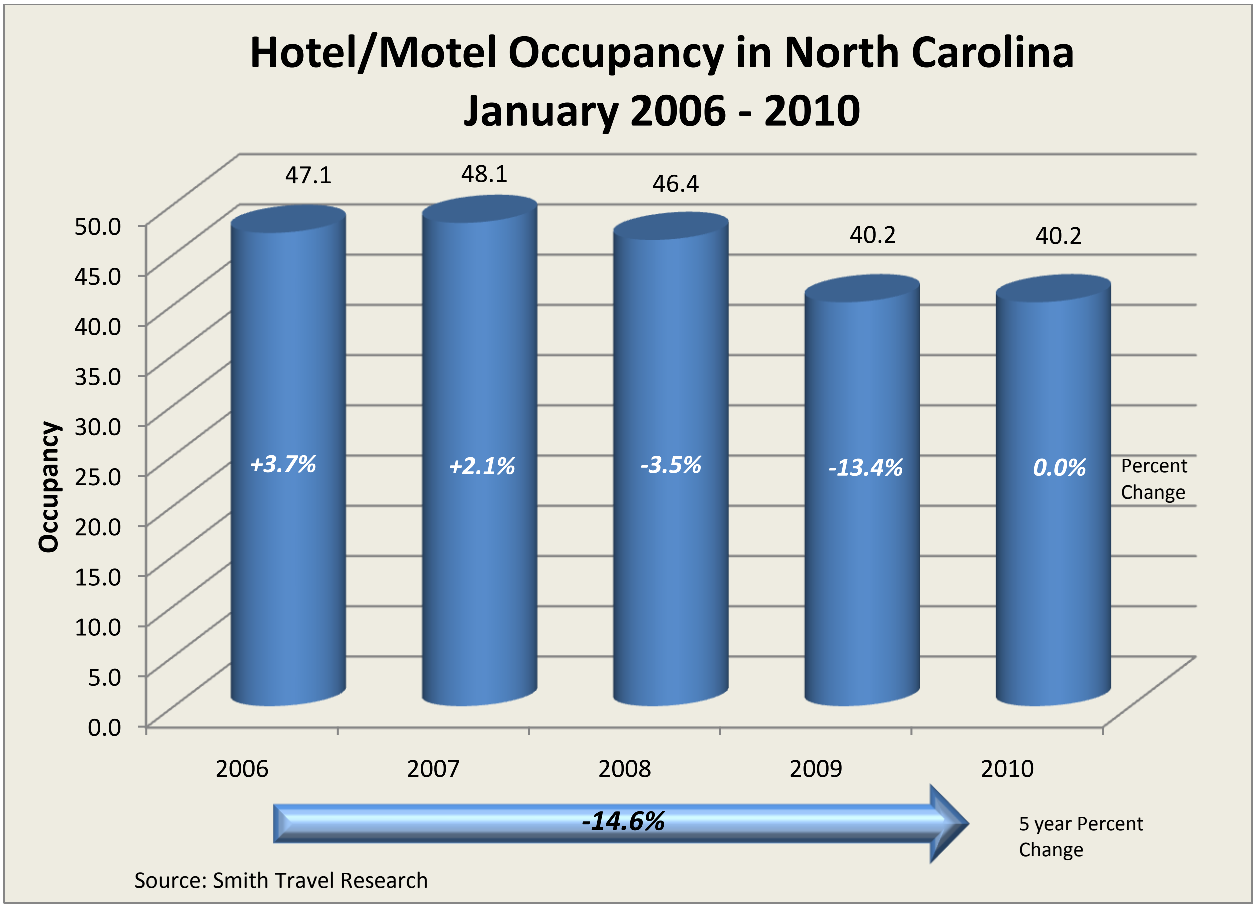


Chart 1 provides a comparison over a five year period to show the trend of occupancy in the state for the month of January. Occupancy for January 2010 was flat from January 2009. *Occupancy at the national level was close to flat (-0.4%) in January 2010 from the previous year.*

Chart 2 – Hotel/Motel Average Daily Room Rate in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2010

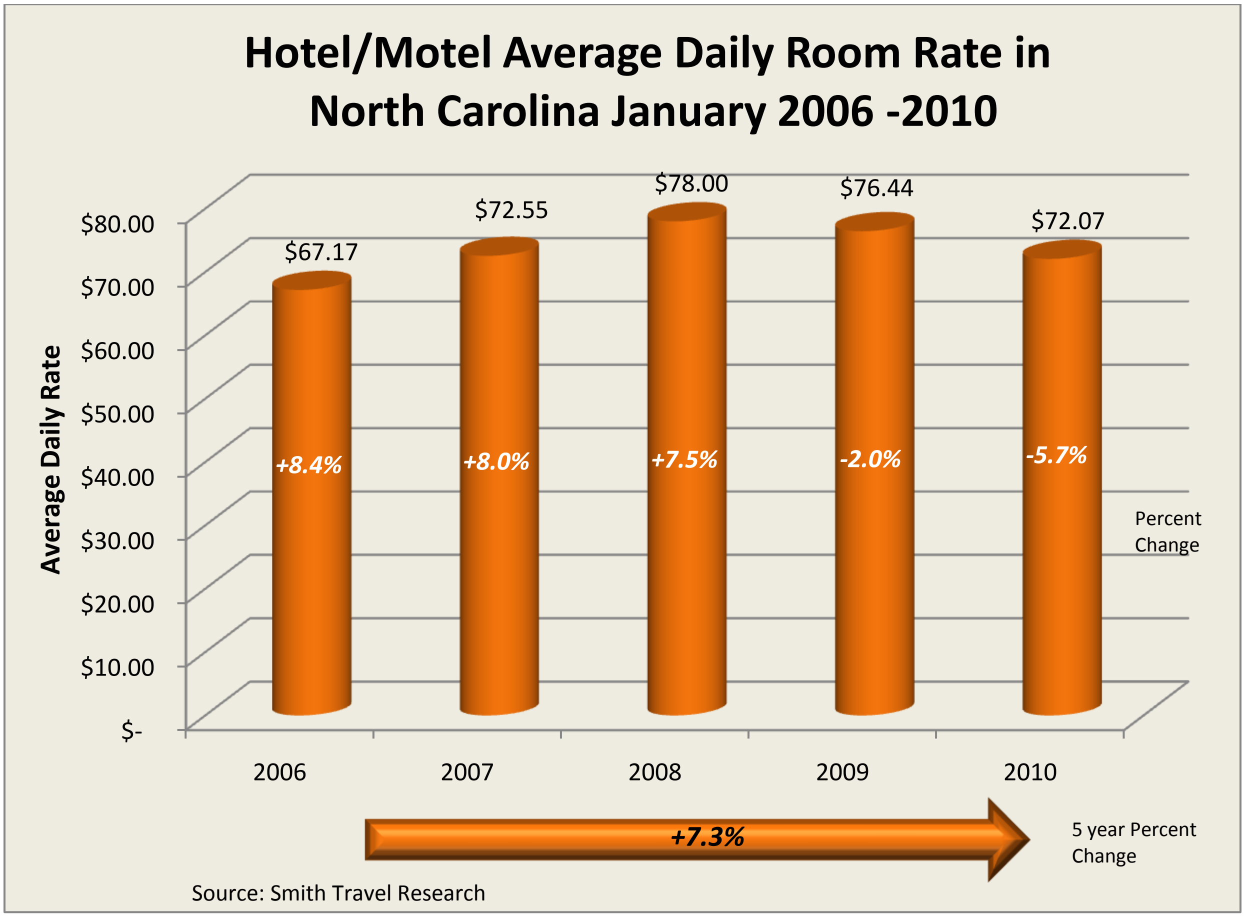
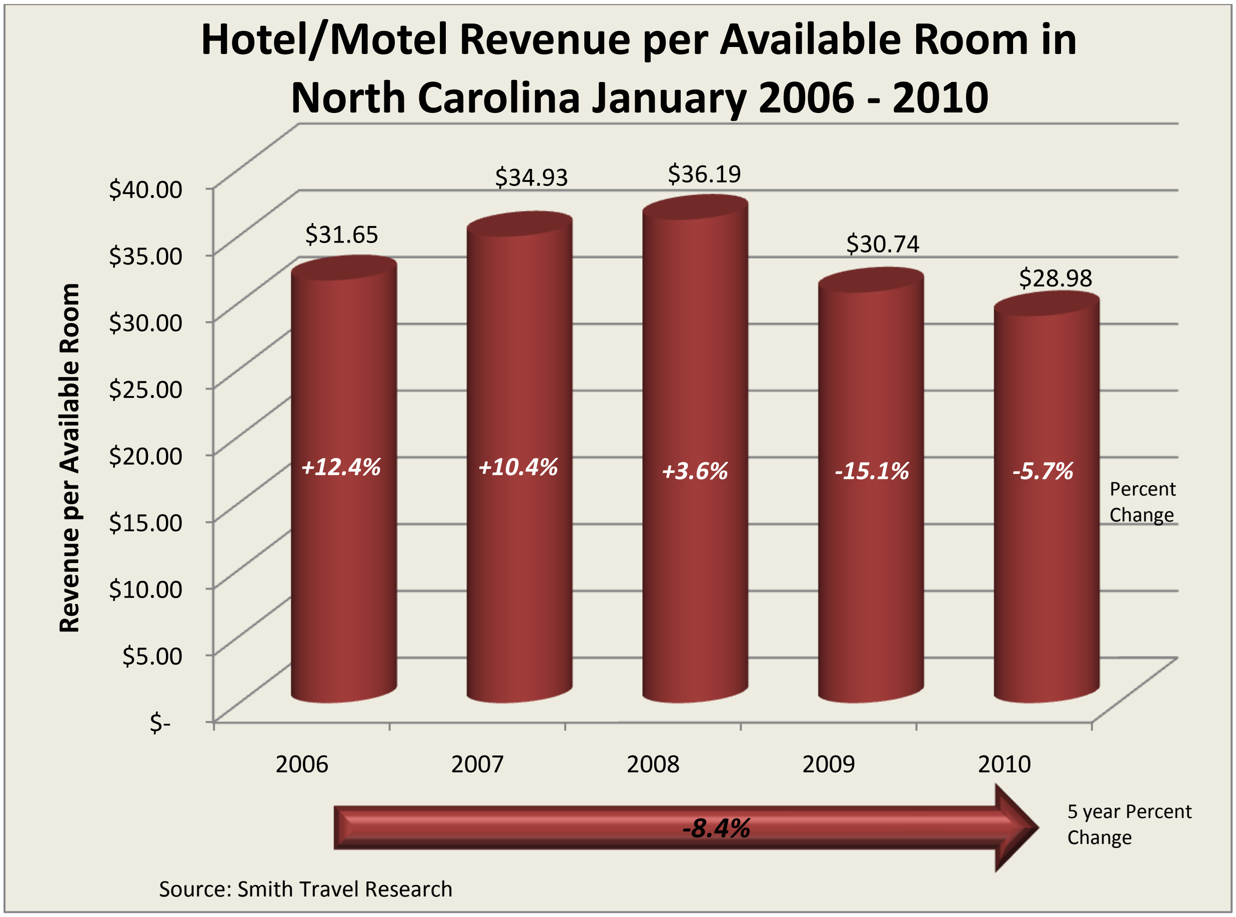


Chart 2 provides a comparison over a five year period to show the trend of average daily room rate (ADR) in the state for the month of January. After peaking in January 2008, ADR for past two years has decreased over 7 percent. It is still slightly below 2007 levels. *ADR at the national level was down -7.10% in January 2010 from the previous January.*

Chart 3 – Hotel/Motel Revenue per Available Room in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2010



In Chart 3 an analysis of Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) is provided. RevPAR is an industry term that describes the revenue that a hotel earns on the basis of just the rooms available for a given night. In other words, rooms not available either due to renovation or other reasons are not included in this equation. Mathematically, RevPAR can be determined dividing total room revenue by rooms available (occupancy times average room rate will closely approximate RevPAR). As with previous charts, Chart 3 shows a comparison over a five year period to show the trend of RevPAR in the state for the month of January. As with the ADR, RevPar was down for January 2010 relative to the previous year, and well below 2006 RevPAR. *RevPAR at the national level was down -7.4% in January 2010 from the previous January.*

Chart 4 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2010

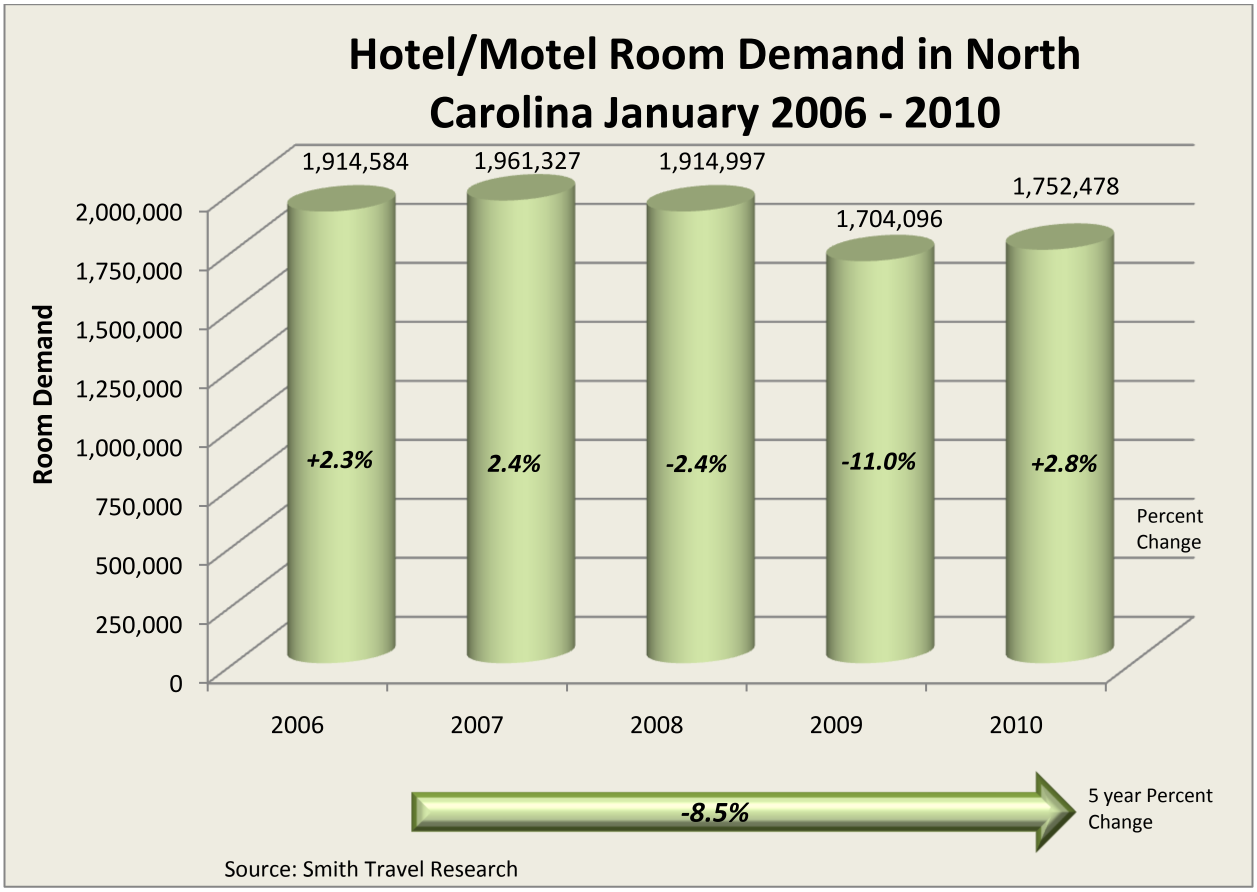


Chart 4 depicts hotel/motel demand for the month of January 2010 with comparisons to the previous four years. Demand is the number of rooms sold excluding complimentary rooms. Room Demand for January was up 2.8% from January 2009. *Room Demand at the national level saw a small increase of 2.6% change in January 2010 from the previous January.*

Chart 5 – North Carolina Lodging Statistics Monthly Percent Change 2008 – 2010

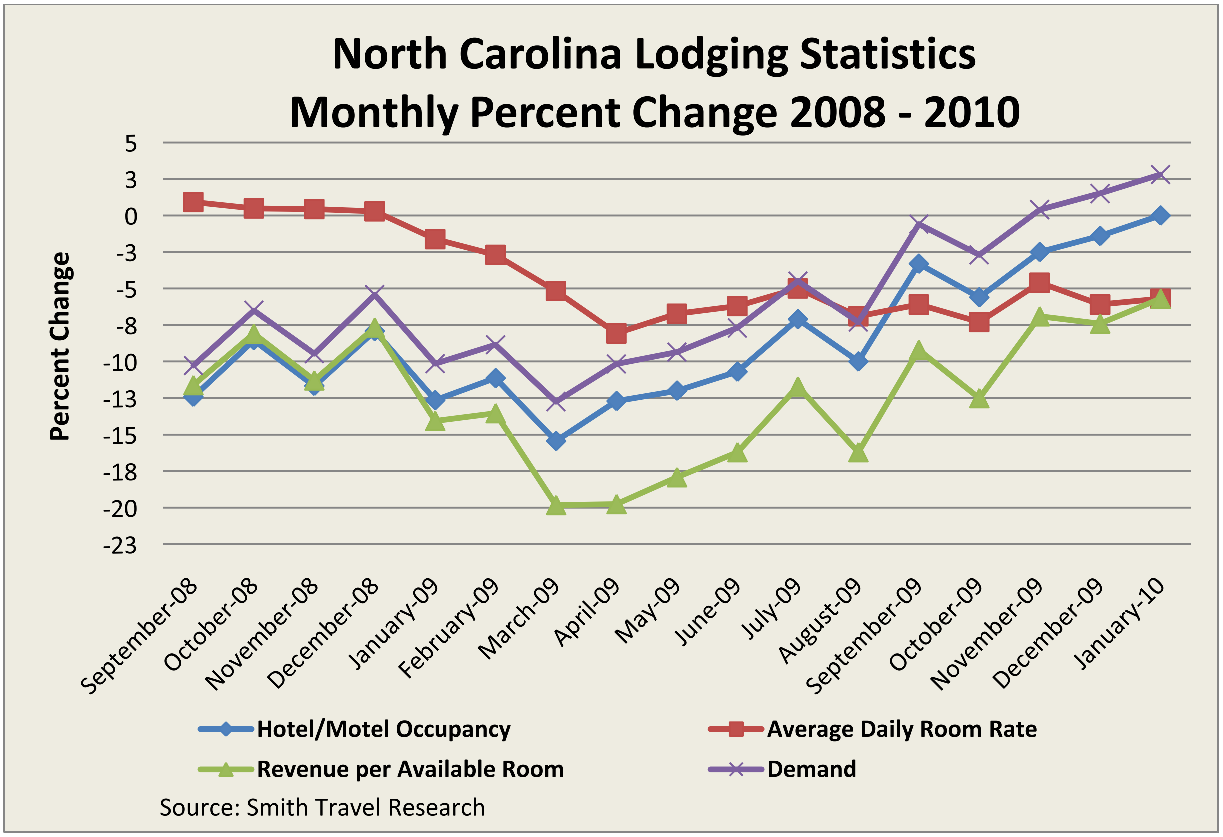


Chart 5 provides a monthly percent change for the four major lodging indicators. The chart allows for a 16 month trend-line analysis that clearly depicts that the major indicators show a steady negative change. After over a year of negative percent change for all indicators, demand has shown relative increases the last few months.

Chart 6 – Statewide Visitation to Attractions - January 2006 – 2010

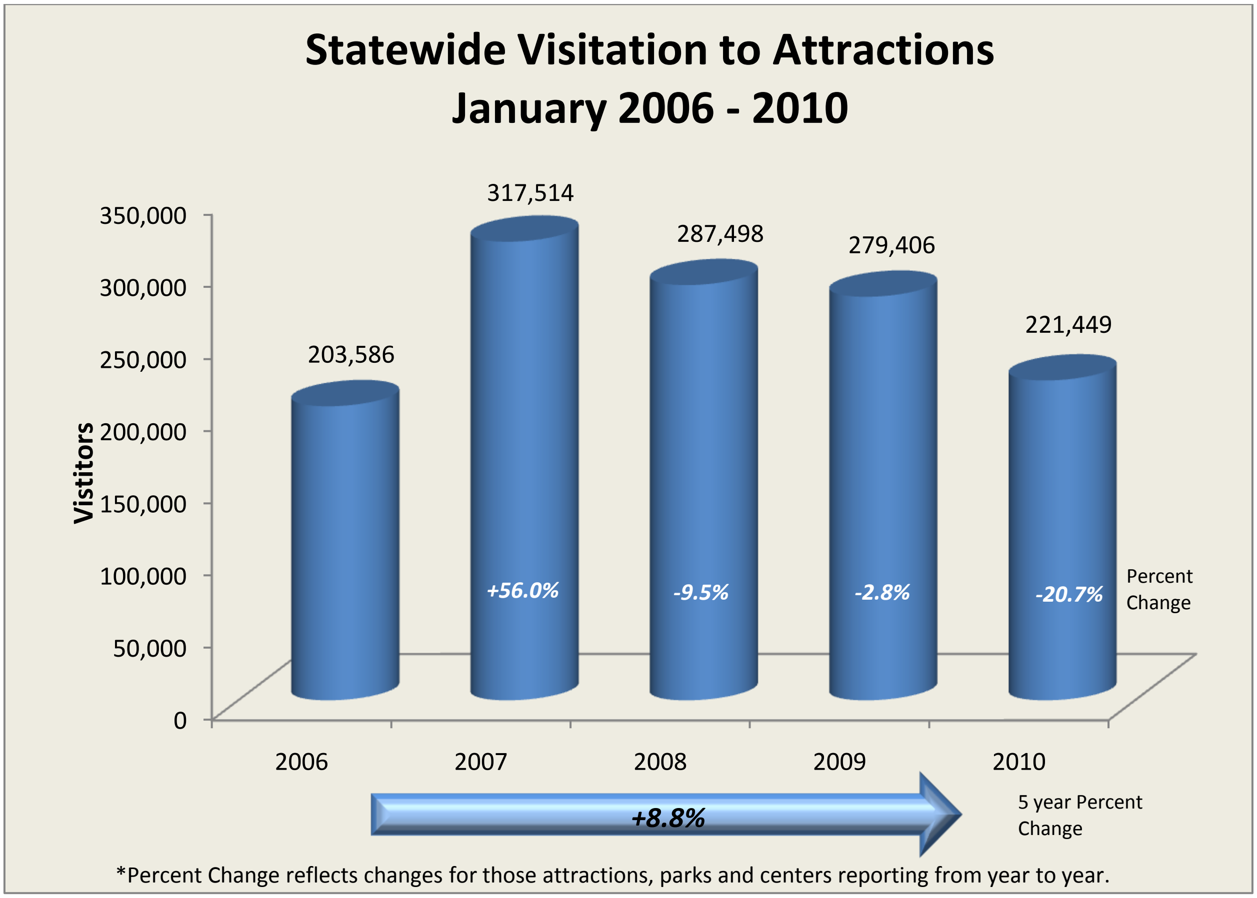


Chart 6 provides a status of the attractions industry in North Carolina for the month of January for the last five years. The numbers represent only a sample of North Carolina attractions that provide their attendance data, and are not intended to be considered a complete list of attractions. However, the wide variation of type and location of the participating attractions allow for a valid aggregate trend analysis on a monthly basis, particularly when tracking percent change. Missing values for attractions who regularly report have been estimated until visitation can be verified. These estimates are not included in percent change calculations from January 2009 to January 2010.

There was a large decline in attraction visitation from January 2009 to January 2010. Inclement weather is most likely the reason for the drastic drop in attraction attendance from 2009 for the month.

Chart 7 – Statewide Visitation to Attractions Monthly History 2006 – 2010

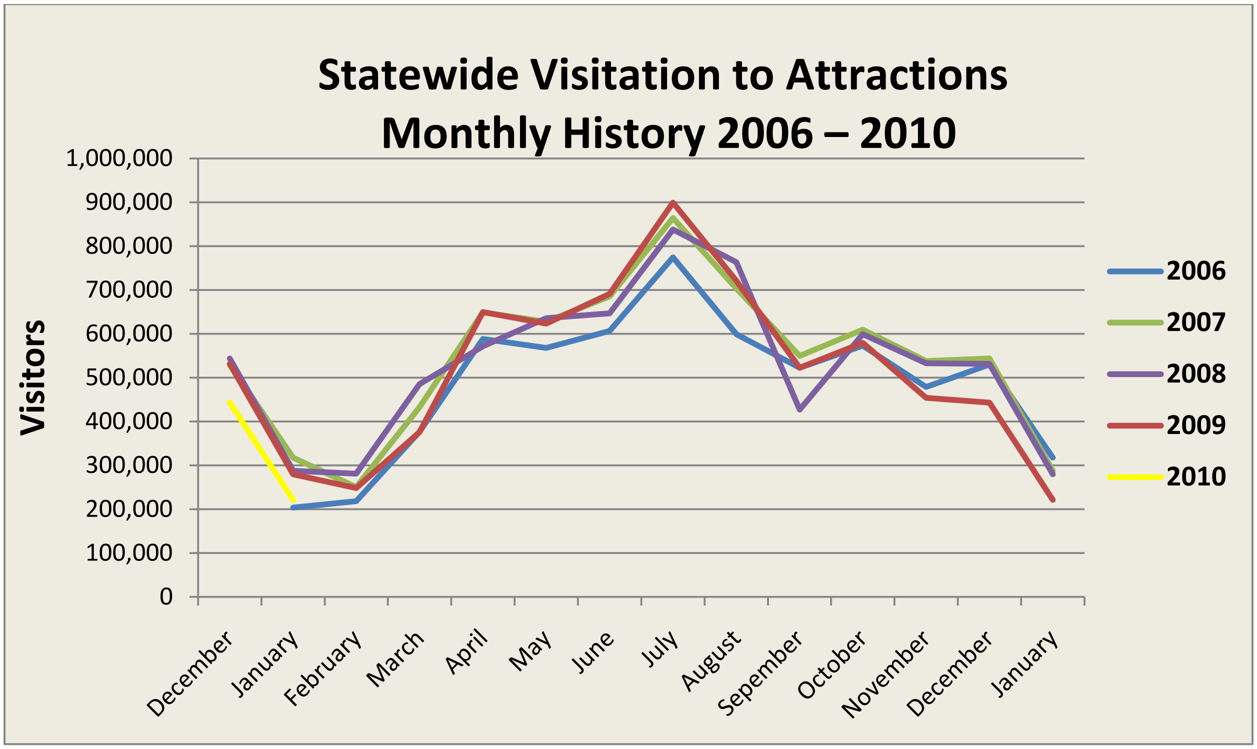


Chart 7 shows a monthly trend of attraction visitation for each of the last five years. This chart allows for a view of the ebb and flow of monthly attraction attendance, while also providing a look at how attendance compares to the same month of the previous years. Not surprisingly, the summer months see higher visitation numbers at statewide attractions. However, it is helpful to view how visitation is allocated by month for strategic planning purposes.

Again, the numbers represent only a sample of North Carolina attractions that provide their attendance data, and are not intended to be considered a complete list of attractions. However, the wide variation of type and location of the participating attractions allow for a valid aggregate trend analysis on a monthly basis.

While January is typically the slowest month for attractions statewide, the numerous days of inclement weather in January 2010 led to an larger than usual drop this year for the month of January.

Chart 8 – State Welcome Center and Local Visitor Center Attendance - January 2006 – 2010

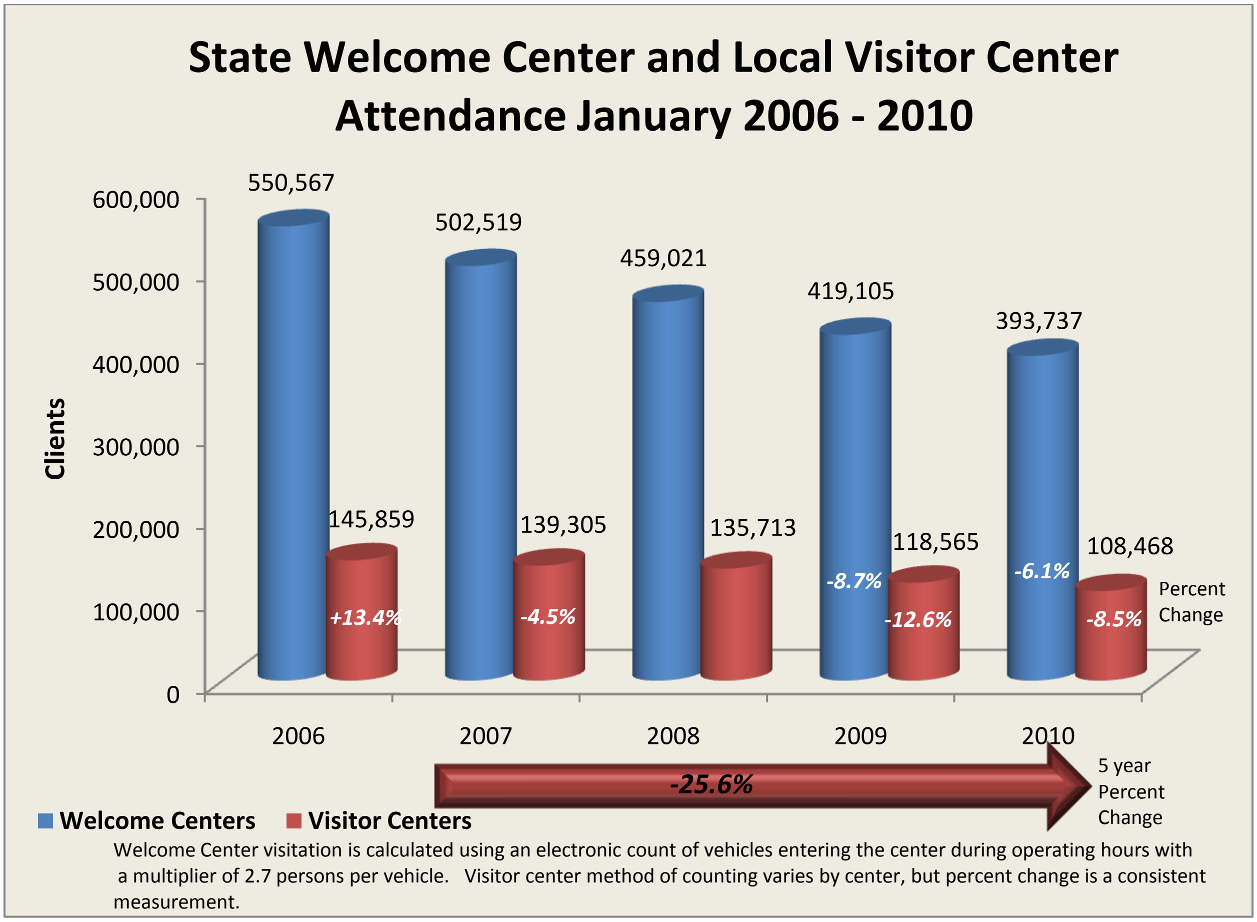


Chart 8 provides January visitation statistics for State Welcome Centers, as well as Local Visitor Centers throughout North Carolina. It should be noted that while there is a percent change indicated for welcome centers for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, 2008 was the first year a percent change could accurately be provided. The NCDOT spent several years changing the counting mechanism at the state welcome centers making comparisons between years inaccurate from the time the DOT began installation until December 2008. Therefore, previous years' percent changes are not included in this particular chart.

It should also be noted that the western North Carolina rock slide and the subsequent temporary closure of the I-40 Welcome Center clearly affected January visitation, particularly in the mountains.

Chart 9 – Statewide National and State Park Visitation - January 2006 – 2010

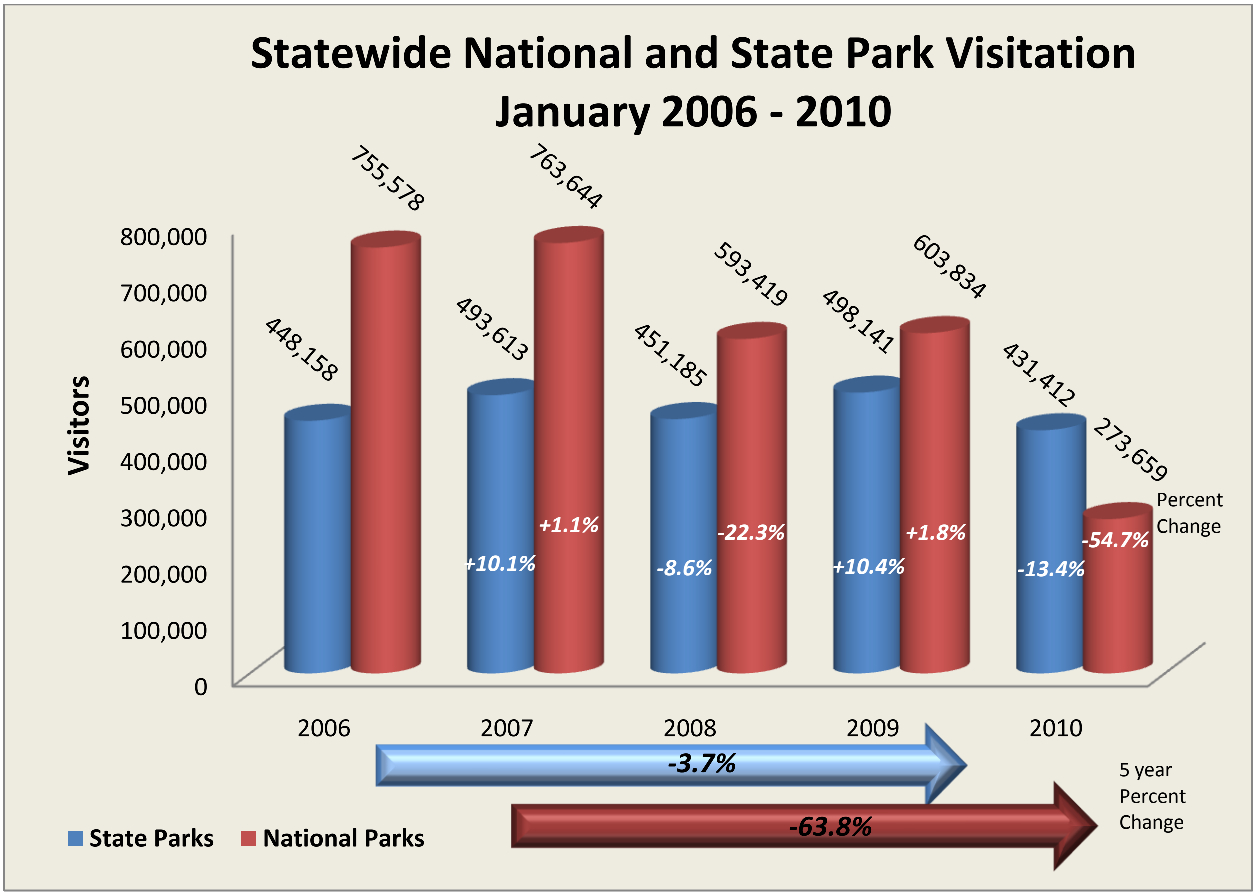
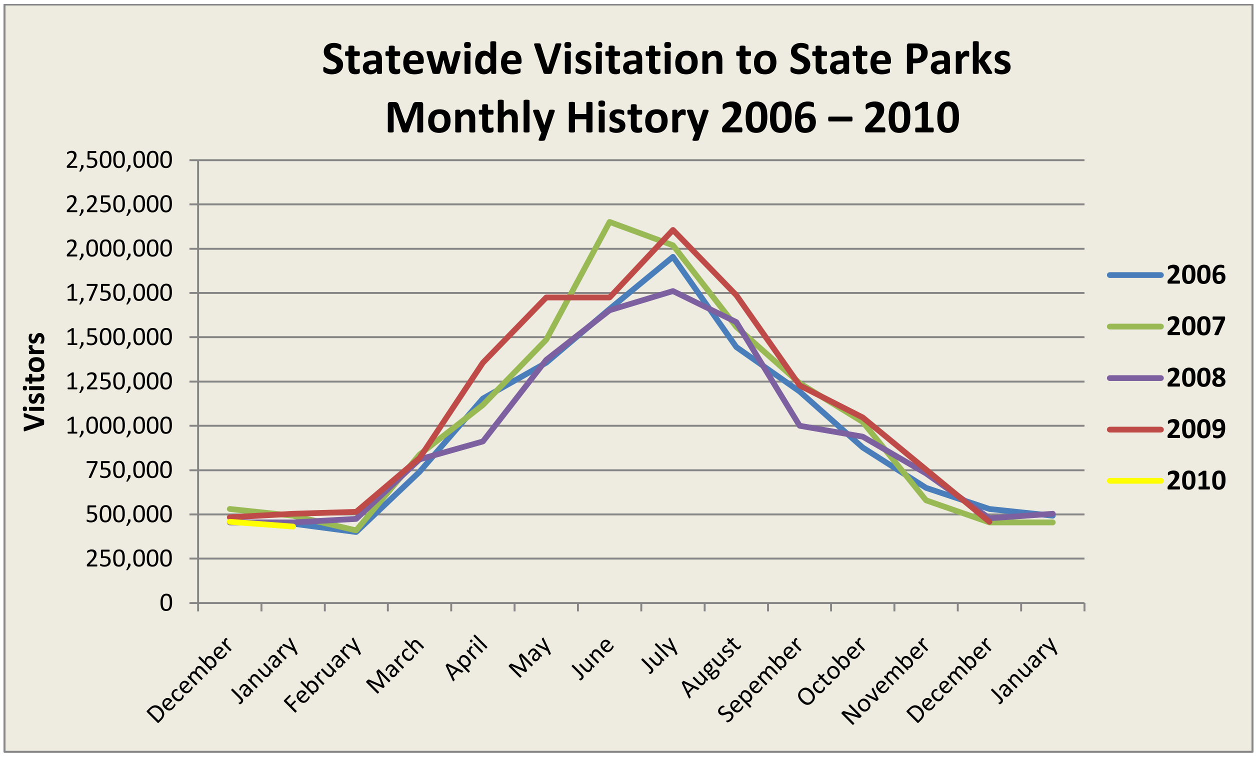


Chart 9 depicts visitation to state and national parks in North Carolina for the last four Januarys. Both state and national parks experienced decreases from January of 2009. As with attraction attendance, outdoor attractions suffer when the weather is bad, as it was in January, thus leading to large decreases for the month.

Chart 10 – Statewide Visitation to State Parks Monthly History 2006 – 2010



Similar to Chart 7, Charts 10 and 11 provide a monthly trend of state and national park visitation for each of the last five years. These charts help monitor the flow of monthly attraction attendance, while also providing a look at how attendance compares to the same month of the previous years. It is important to note that there are many extraneous variables that can affect visitation at attractions, and particularly at outdoor attractions. Weather, temperature and holidays are variables that should be noted when viewing unusual highs or lows in attendance.

Chart 11 – Statewide Visitation to National Parks Monthly History 2006 – 2010

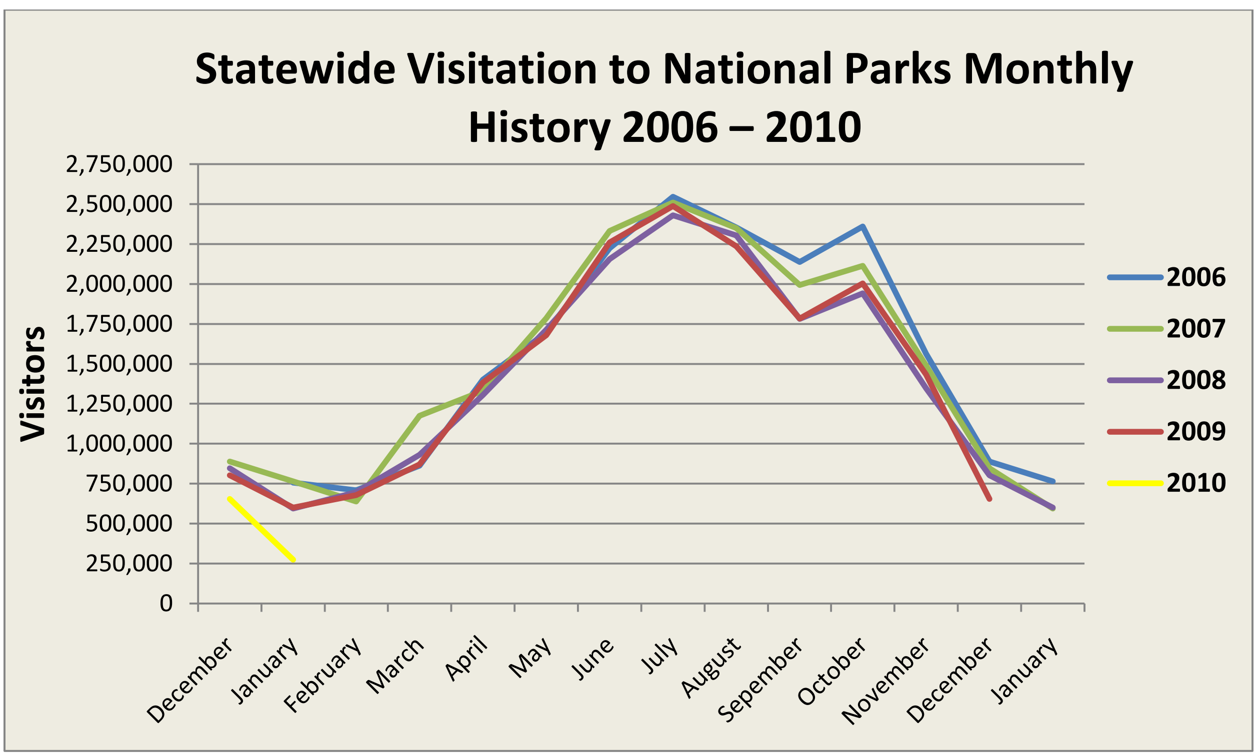


Chart 12 – Statewide Airport Arrivals and Departures - January 2006 – 2010

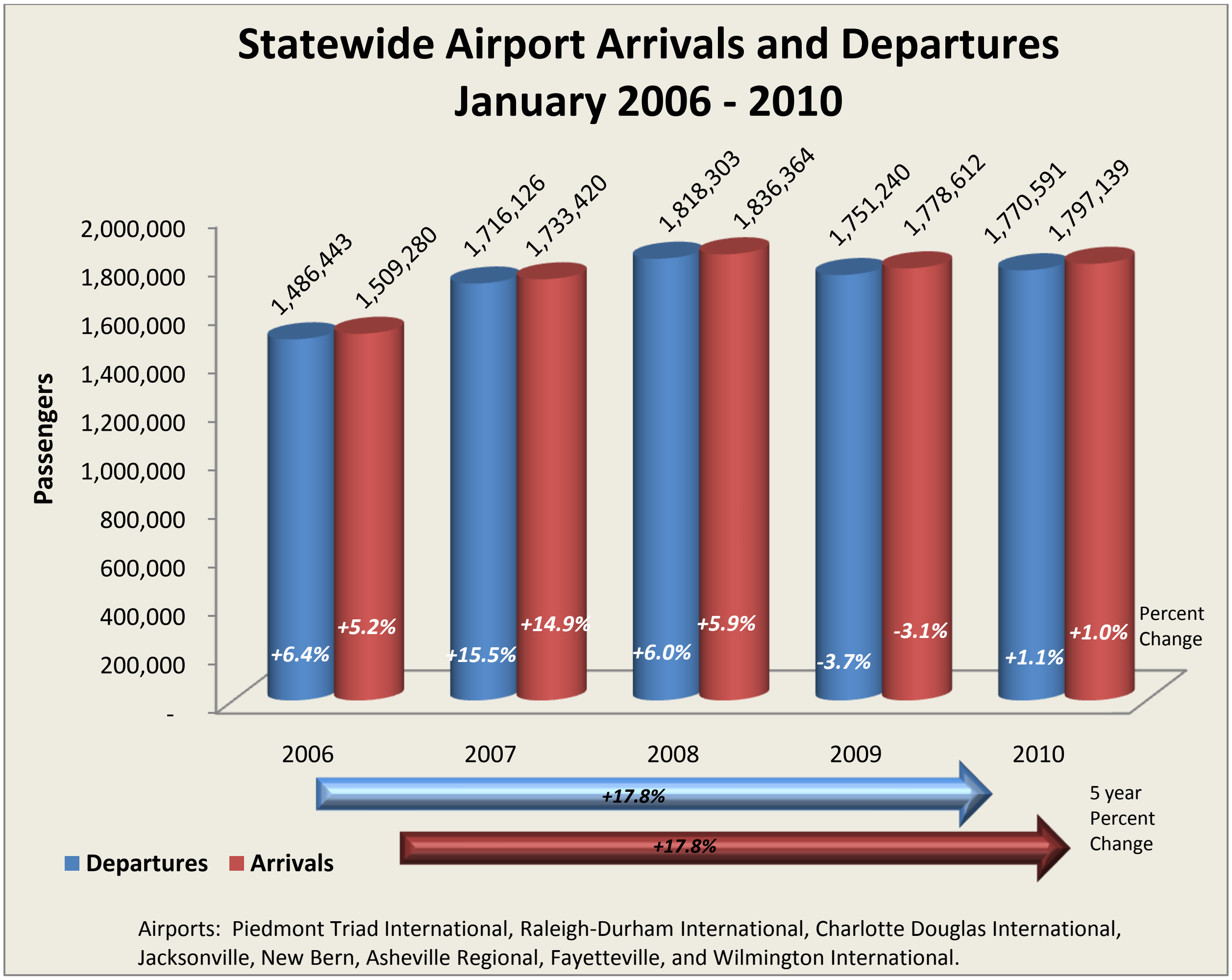


Chart 12 shows January airport arrivals and departures for each of the previous five years. The arrivals and departures data was at a slight increase from last January, and there has been a positive five-year increase in both.

Chart 13 – Lower Atlantic Average Monthly Retail Gas Prices for Unleaded – January 2006 – 2010

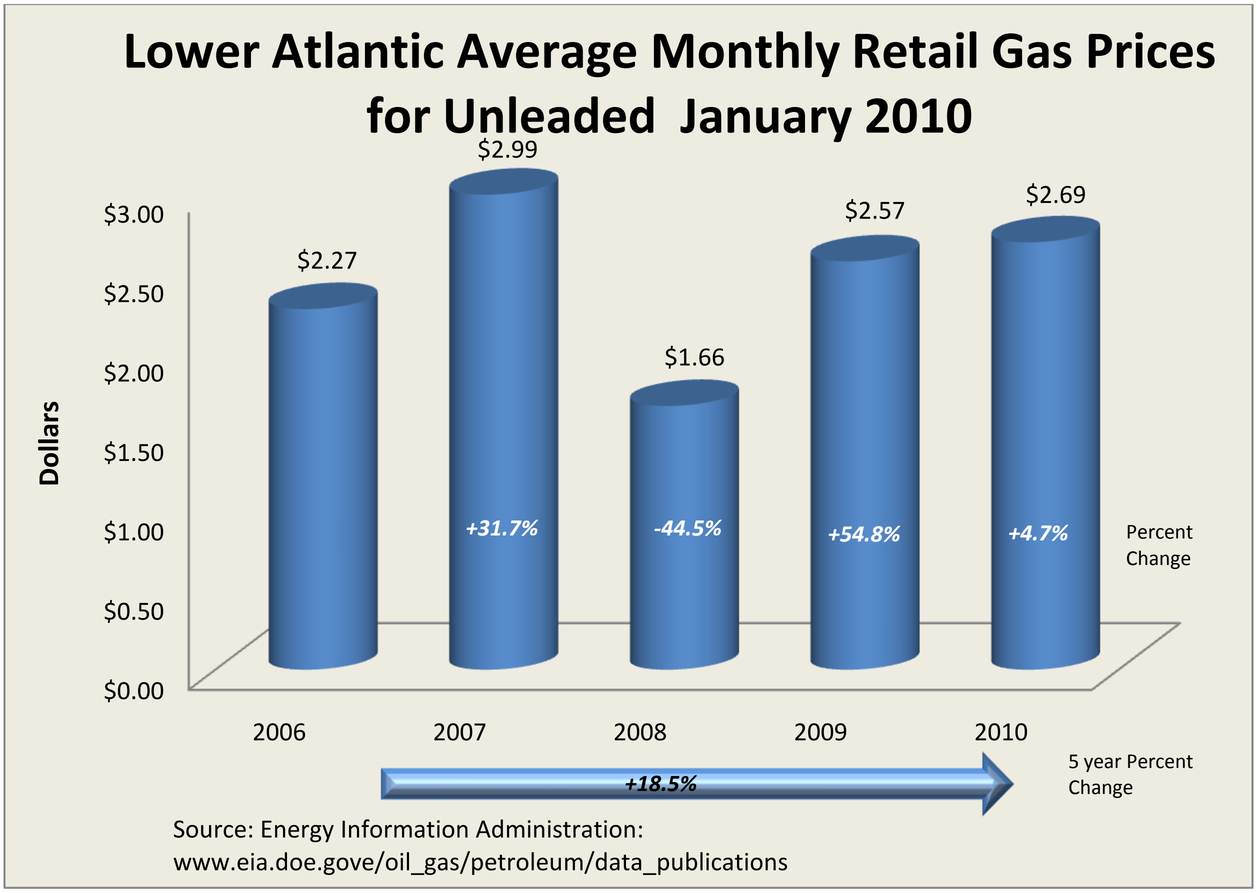


Chart 13 provides the average price per gallon of unleaded gasoline for January 2010 and the four previous Januarys. The data provided above, when compared with other indicators such as attraction attendance and visitor spending data, can be very helpful in the analysis of general travel trends. Fuel prices in January 2010 were up from last January, though still ten percent below 2007 prices.

Chart 14 – North Carolina Average Temperature and Precipitation – January 2009 – 2010

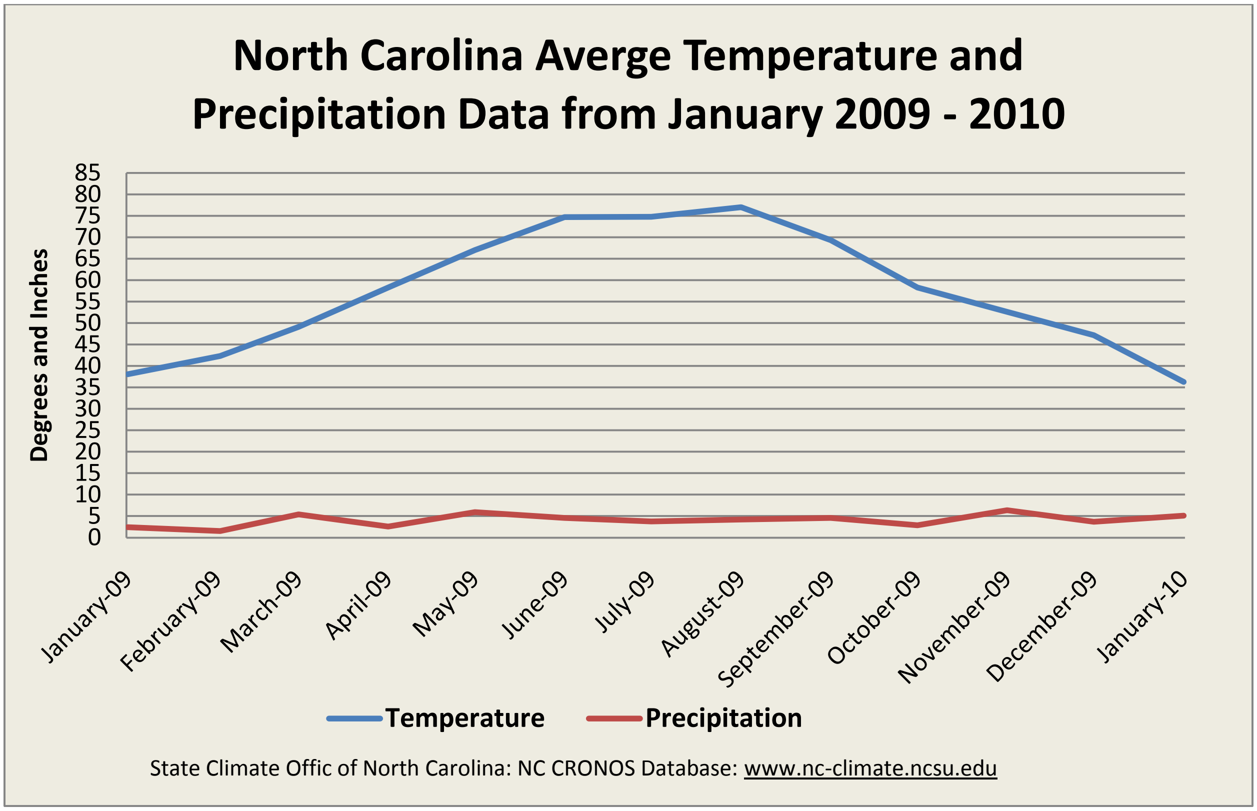


Chart 14 provides 13 months of air temperature and precipitation. This data, when analyzed together with gas price data and other tourism indicators, can be valuable in determining possible reasons for significant increases and/or decreases in indicators. For instance, greater than normal precipitation during a particular month can often help explain decreases in attendance at outdoor attractions.

Though January 2010 had only a slightly lower average temperature (36.3 vs.38.1), it had almost three inches more precipitation than last January, most likely contributing to the decrease in attraction attendance from the same time last year.

Section 2 – Geographic Marketing Region (Coastal/Piedmont/Mountain) Tourism Indicator Analysis for January 2010

Chart 15 – Hotel/Motel Statistics by Geographic Region - January 2010

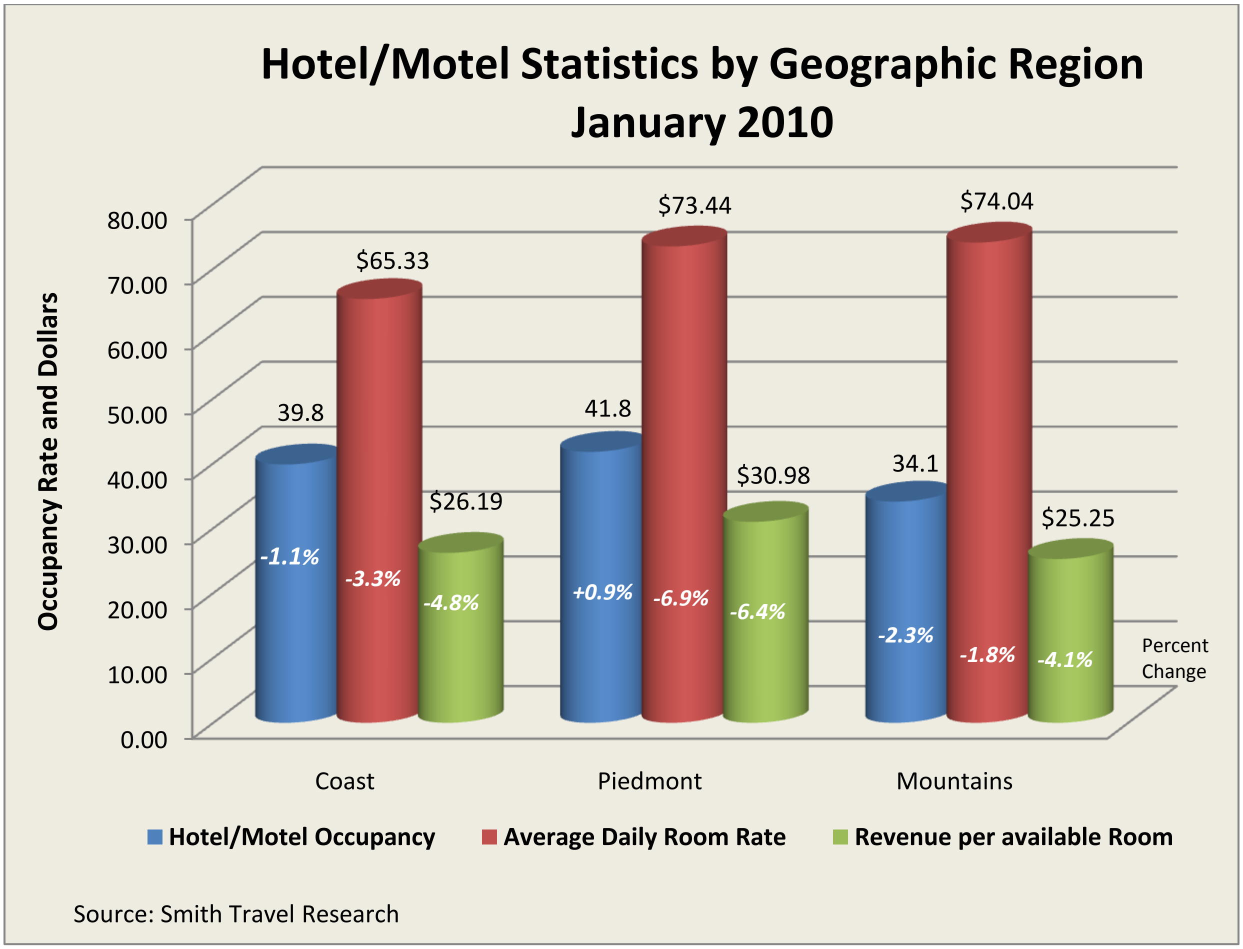


Chart 15 provides a one year comparison in lodging statistics for the three geographic marketing regions of North Carolina in January. Occupancy rate in January 2010 decreased in the coastal and mountain regions, but the Piedmont Region showed a slight increase of almost one percent in January.

Chart 16 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand by Geographic Region - January 2010

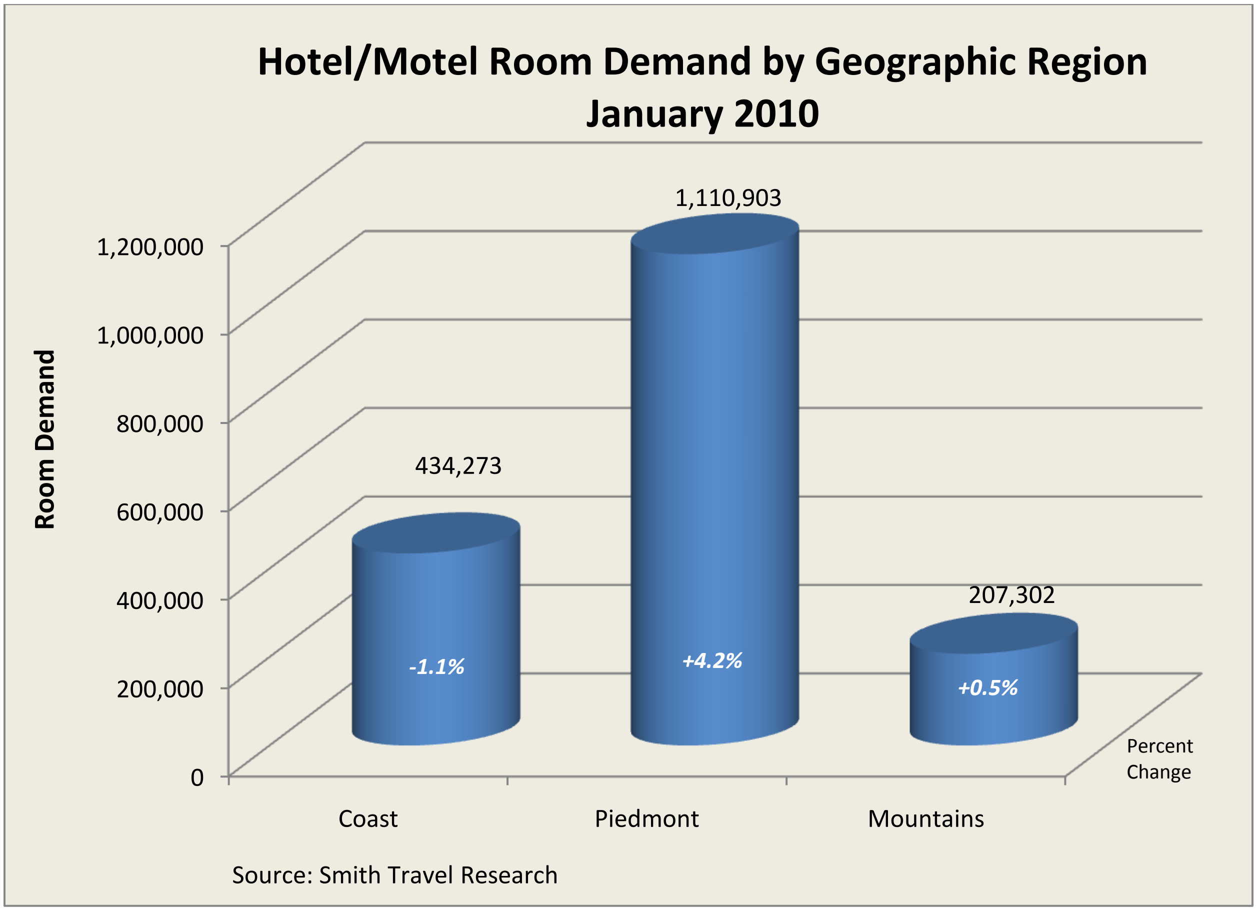


Chart 16 provides hotel/motel demand by geographic region for January 2010. Demand differs from occupancy in that it is the total number of rooms sold, not accounting for differences in room supply. The Piedmont Region experienced a four percent positive change in demand from January 2009 to January 2010, and the Mountain Region had a slight increase over the same time period as well. The Coastal Region demand was down one percent from January 2009.

Chart 17 – Visitation to Attractions and Parks by Geographic Region – January 2010

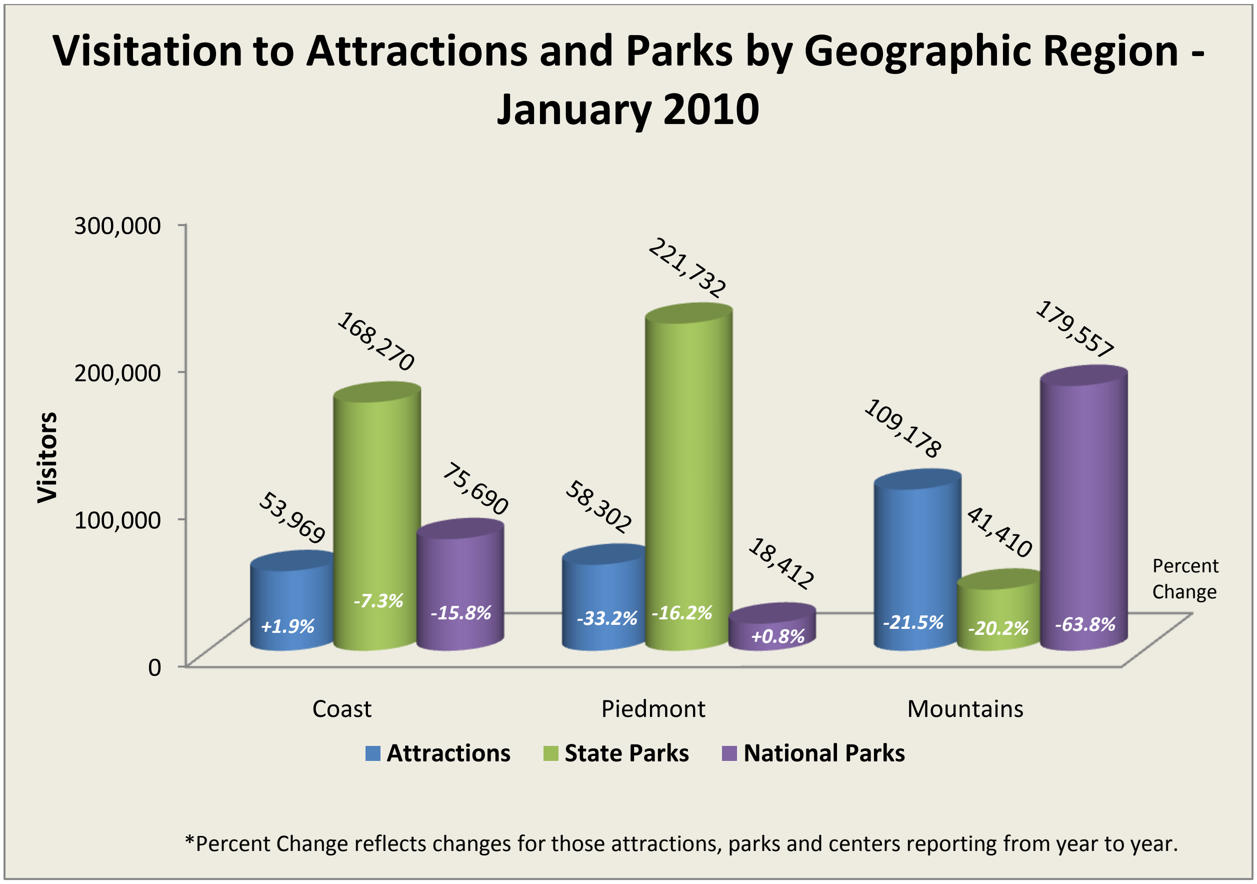


Chart 17 provides a look at the attractions industry in North Carolina in January 2010 by geographic region. As with the statewide numbers, the following data represents only a sample of North Carolina attractions that provide their attendance data, and are not intended to be considered a complete list of attractions. However, the wide variation of type and location of the participating attractions allow for a valid aggregate trend analysis on a monthly basis.

Due to weather, the Mountain Region experienced a difficult January in terms of attraction and park attendance. The other regions did not fare much better, though the Coastal Region did see a slight increase in attraction attendance.

Chart 18 – State Welcome Center and Local Visitor Center Attendance by Geographic Region – January 2010

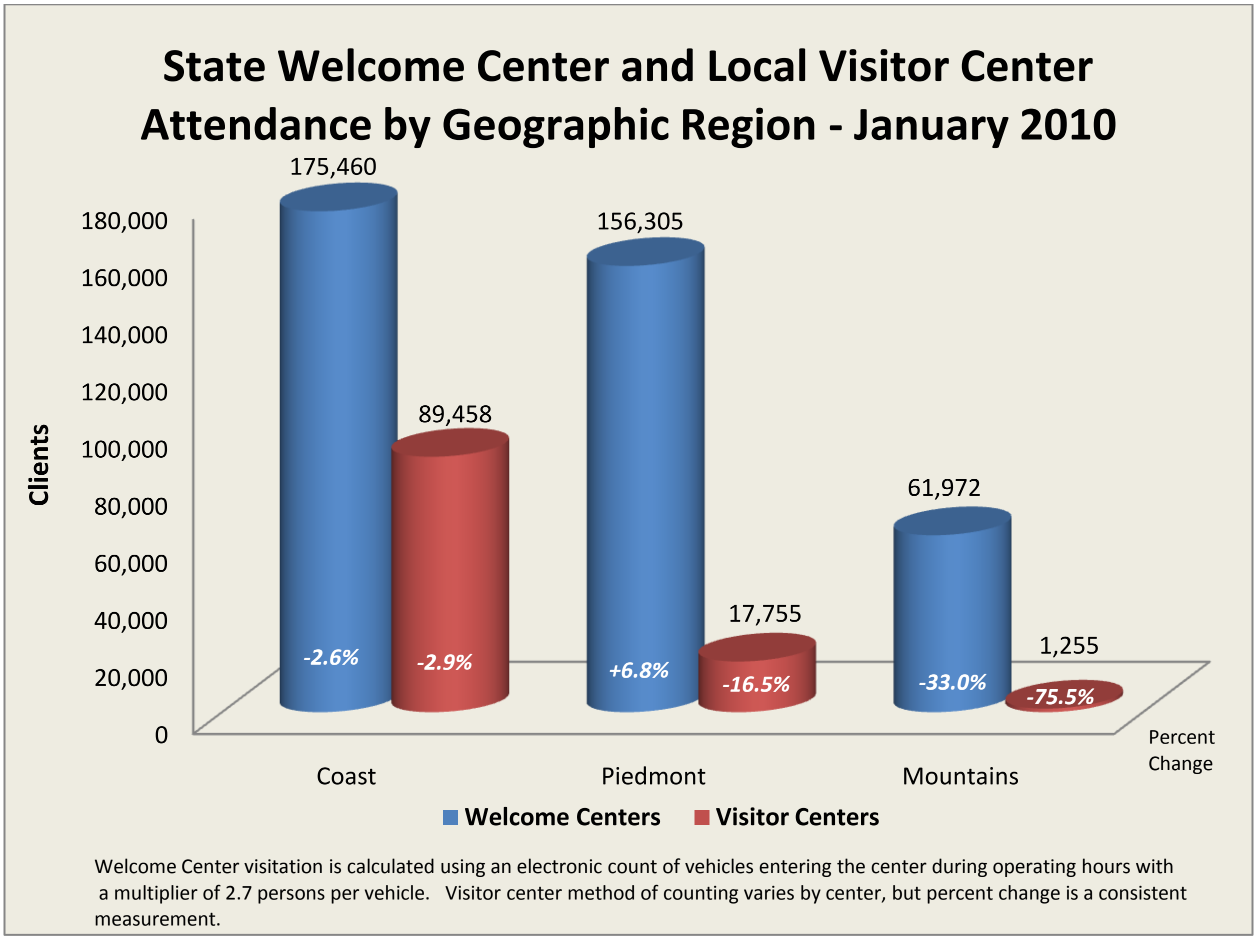


Chart 18 shows welcome center and visitor center attendance by geographic region and offers comparisons from January 2009. The Piedmont region experienced a healthy increase in welcome center numbers in January, while the visitor centers in the mountains and coast saw decreases. The mountains decrease can be attributed to worse than typical winter weather as well as the rock slide near the NC/TN border that temporarily closed the I-40 West Welcome Center.

Chart 19 – Airport Arrivals and Departures by Geographic Region – January 2010

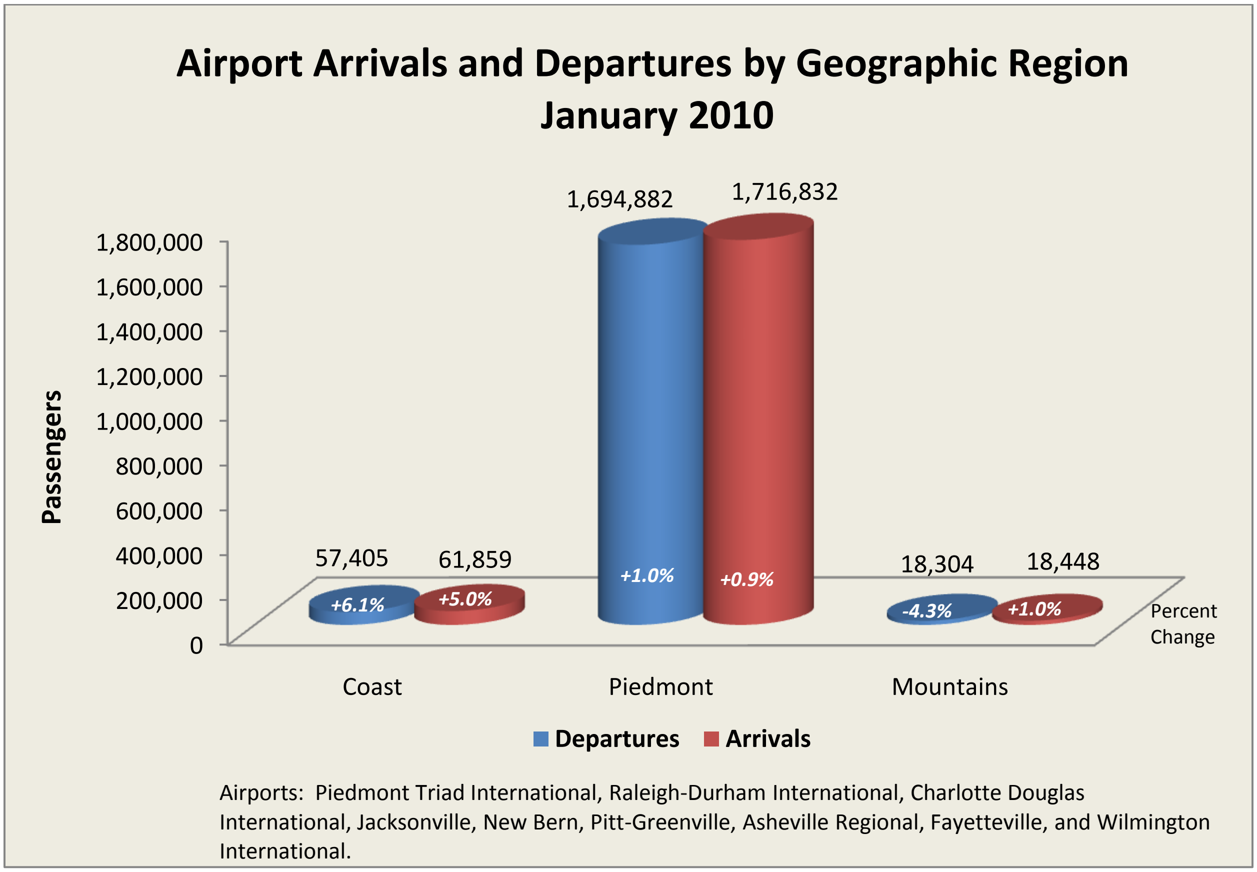


Chart 19 provides a breakdown of air travel statistics by geographic region. While the majority of air traffic is through the Piedmont Region, it is helpful to maintain a trend of other regional airport usage. The Coastal Region showed growth of five percent in air traffic during the month of January, while the other regions saw smaller increases from last year.

Section 3: Economic Development Region Tourism Indicator Analysis – January 2010

The seven economic regions include:

1 – Northeast (Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Martin, Tyrrell, Washington).

2 – Eastern (Carteret, Craven, Jones, Onslow, Pamlico, Duplin, Edgecombe, Green, Lenoir, Nash, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson).

3 – Southeast (Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender, Bladen, Cumberland, Hoke, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland).

4 – Triangle (Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, Vance, Wake, Warren, Chatham, Durham, Granville, Lee, Moore, Orange, Person).

5 – Triad (Alamance, Caswell, Guilford, Montgomery, Randolph, Rockingham, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Yadkin).

6 – Carolinas (Alexander, Catawba, Cleveland, Iredell, Rowan, Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Stanly, Union).

7 – Western (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey).

Chart 20 – Hotel/Motel Statistics by Economic Development Region - January 2010

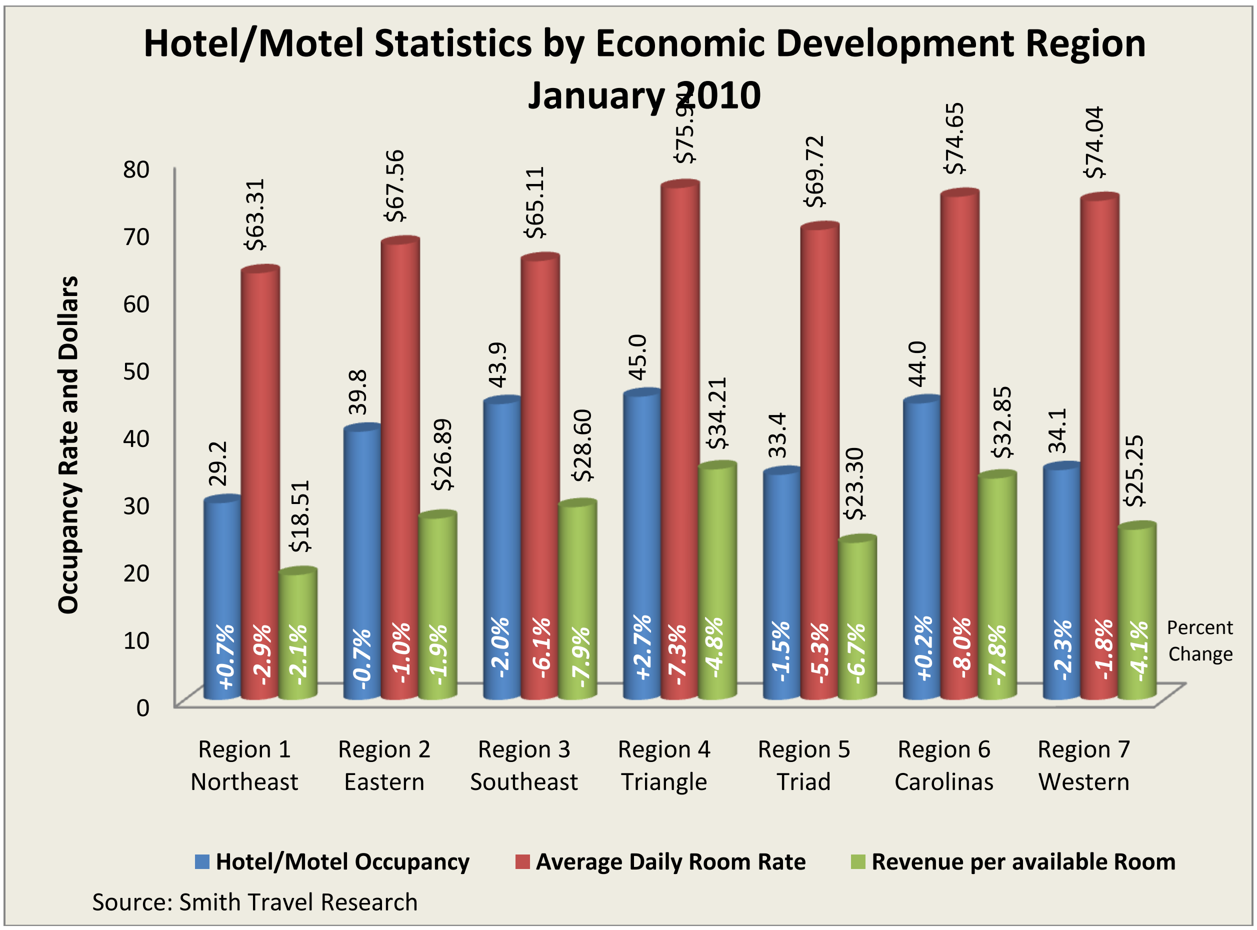


Chart 20 provides lodging indicators for January 2010 by economic development region. Also shown are percent changes from January 2009. This graph allows individual regions within the state to track indicators specific to their general destinations, while still being able to compare their data to the state data shown in Section 1.

Chart 21 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand by Economic Development Region - January 2010

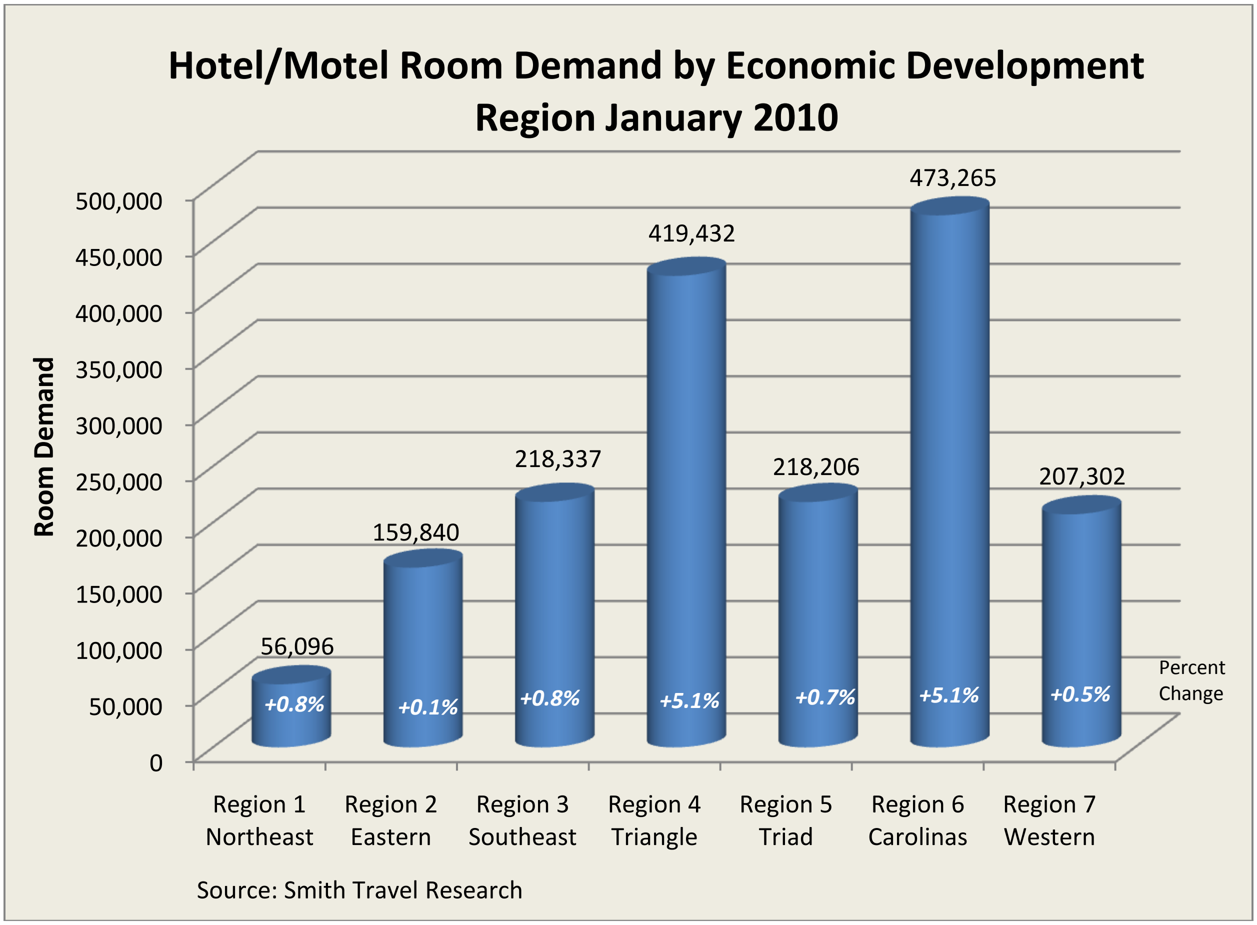


Chart 21 depicts hotel/motel demand for the month of January 2010 by economic development region. Demand is the number of rooms sold excluding complimentary rooms. All regions showed increased demand from January 2009 to 2010. The Triangle Region and Carolinas Region had particularly positive (+5.1%) increases in demand.

Section 4: National Travel Price Index

The Travel Price Index (TPI) measures the seasonally unadjusted inflation rate of the cost of travel away from home in the United States. The TPI is based on U.S. Department of Labor price data collected for the monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI). The TPO is released monthly and is directly comparable to the CPI.

Variables included in calculating the TPI:

Recreation Services	Food Away from Home	Airline Fares
Food and Beverage	Other Lodging (Include Hotel/Motel)	Intra-city Public Transportation
Alcohol Away From Home	Transportation	Motor Fuel
		Other Intercity Transportation

Chart 22 – National Travel Price Index December 2006 – January 2010

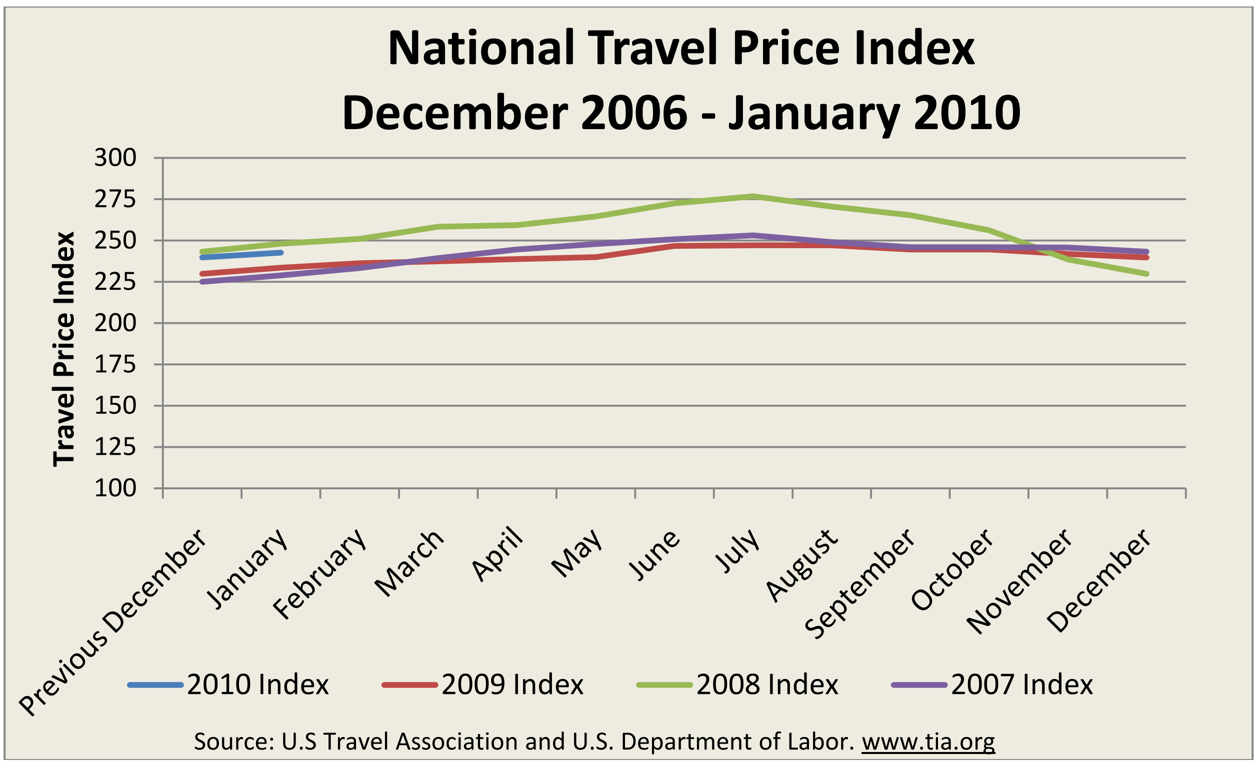


Chart 22 provides a two year trend of the National Travel Price Index (TPI). Steady growth was experienced through mid-2008; however in November 2008, it is clear that as the TPI fell below 2007 levels, the tourism industry began feeling the full effect of the recession. Into 2009, the TPI remained slightly below the 2007 level, though for the last two months of 2009 peaked above the 2008 index. Into January 2010 the TPI is still slightly below the same time period in 2008.