



January 2011

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.

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Section 1: Statewide Tourism Indicator Analysis for January 2011

Chart 1 – Hotel/Motel Occupancy in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2011

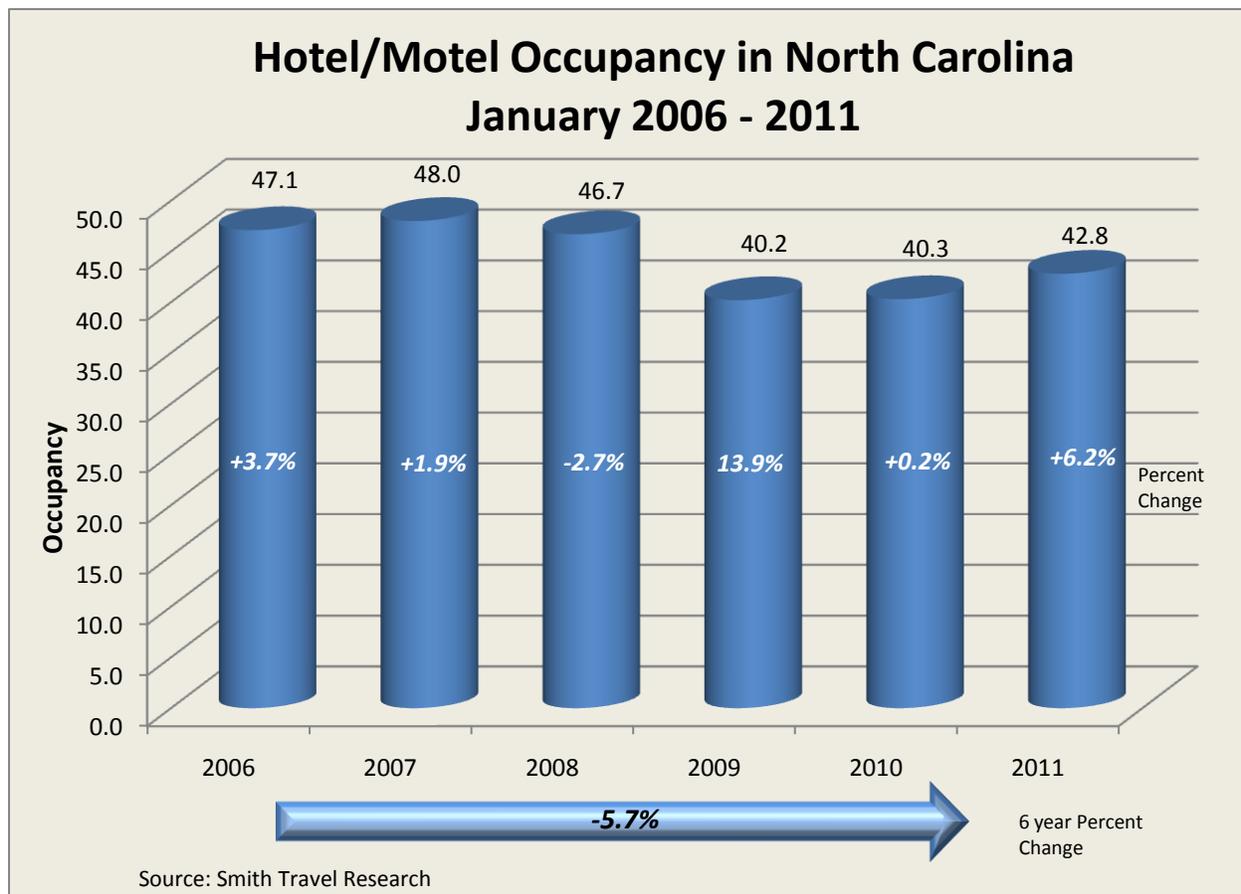


Chart 1 provides a comparison over a six year period to show the trend of occupancy in the state for the month of January. Occupancy for January 2011 was up over six percent from January 2010. This was the twelfth consecutive month of year over year positive occupancy growth. *Occupancy at the national level increased by almost six (+5.8%) percent in January 2011 from the previous year.*

Chart 2 – Hotel/Motel Average Daily Room Rate in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2011

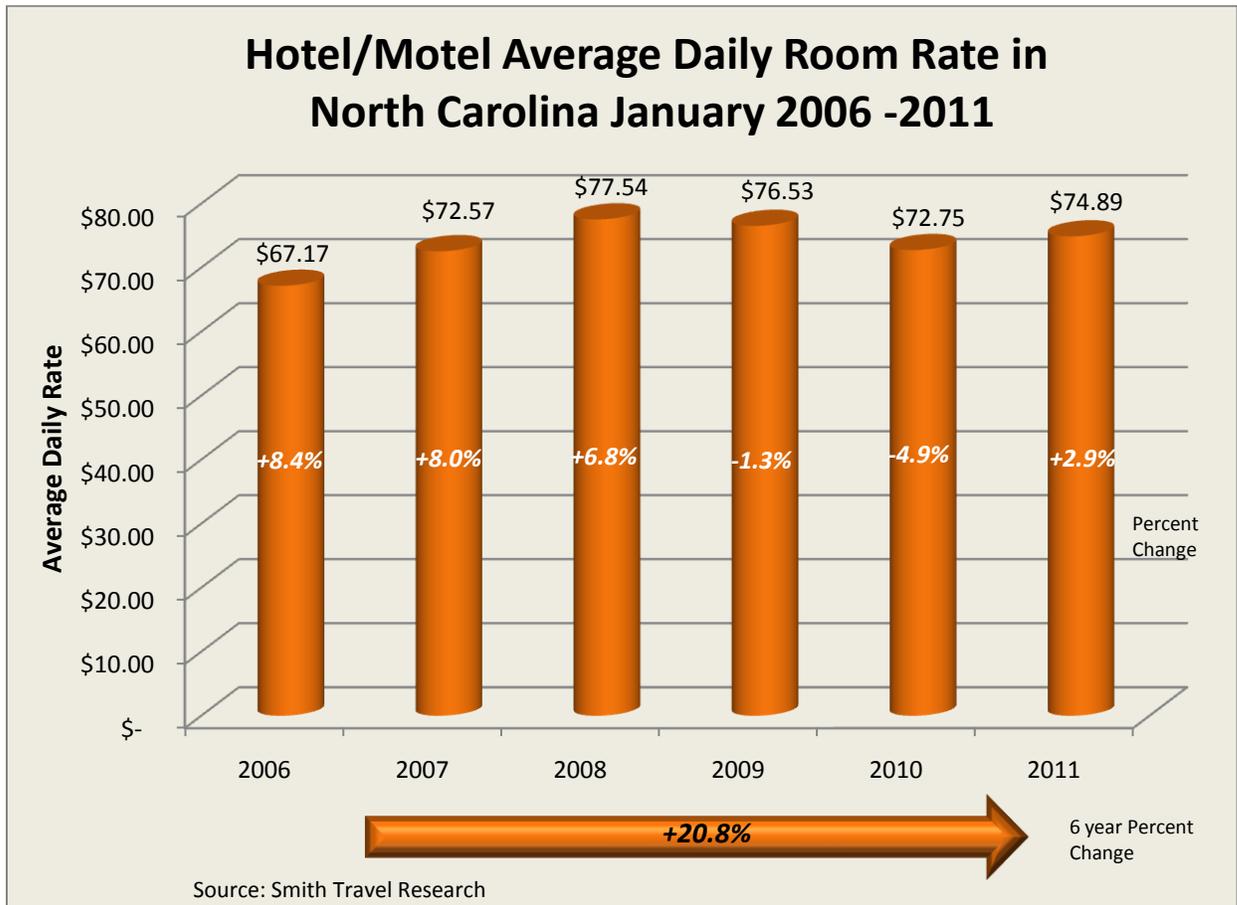
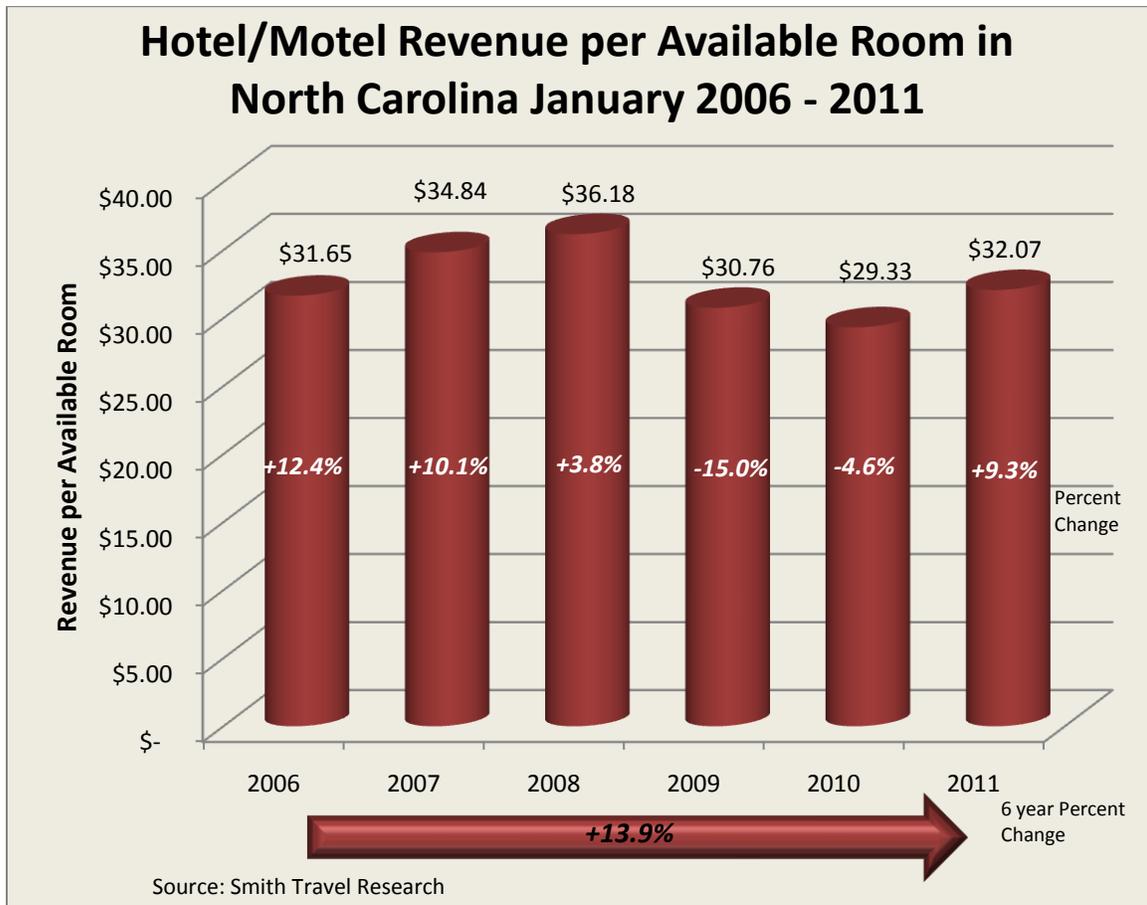


Chart 2 provides a comparison over a six year period to show the trend of average daily room rate (ADR) in the state for the month of January. After peaking in January 2008, ADR decreased over six percent in the subsequent two years, but gained nearly three percent back in January 2011. *ADR at the national level was up 2.8% in January 2010 from the previous January.*

Chart 3 – Hotel/Motel Revenue per Available Room in North Carolina - January 2006 – 2011



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 six year period to show the trend of RevPAR in the state for the month of January. RevPAR was up 9.3% in January 2011, continuing the positive growth that began nearly one year ago. *RevPAR at the national level was up 8.7% in January 2010 from the previous January.*

Chart 4 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand in North Carolina – January 2006 – 2011

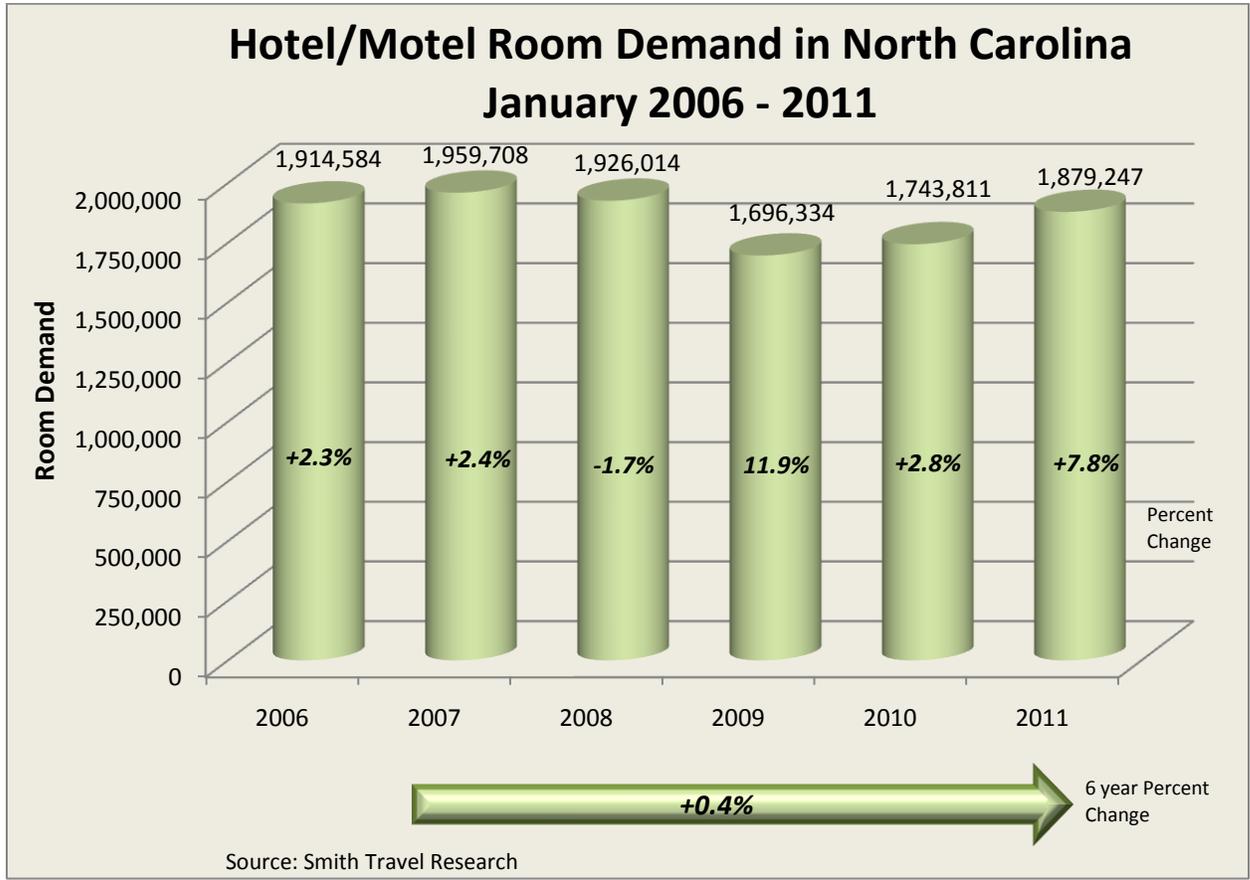


Chart 4 depicts hotel/motel demand for the month of January 2011 with comparisons to the previous five years. Demand is the number of rooms sold excluding complimentary rooms. Room demand for January was up almost eight percent from January 2010. *Room Demand at the national level saw an increase of 7.0% change in January 2011 from the previous January.*

Chart 5 – North Carolina Lodging Statistics Monthly Percent Change 2008 – 2011

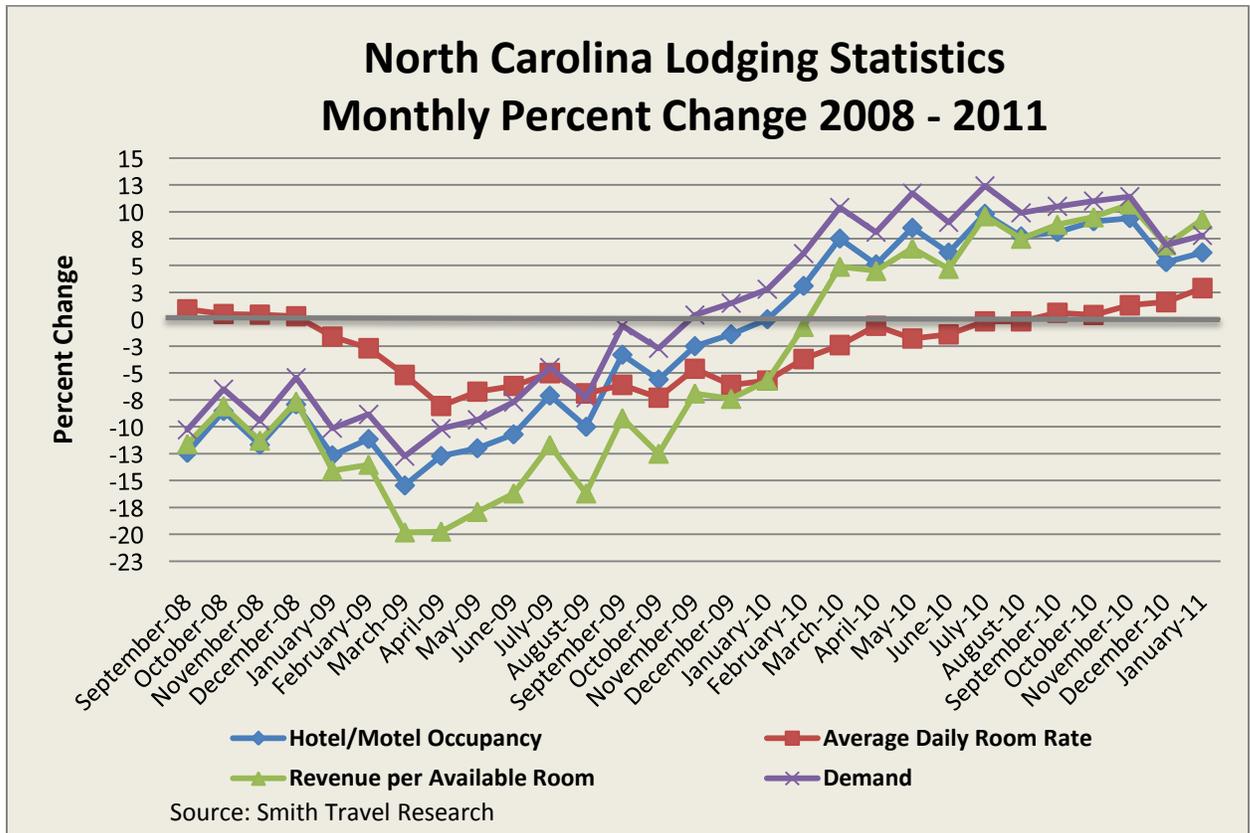


Chart 5 provides a monthly percent change for the four major lodging indicators. The chart allows for a 28 month trend-line analysis that clearly depicts that the major indicators have shown a steady positive change since early 2010, and are continuing in the near year. ADR, the last indicator to begin to rebound, is finally moving into a steady growth phase with a 2.9% increase from last January.

Chart 6 – Statewide Visitation to Attractions - January 2006 – 2011

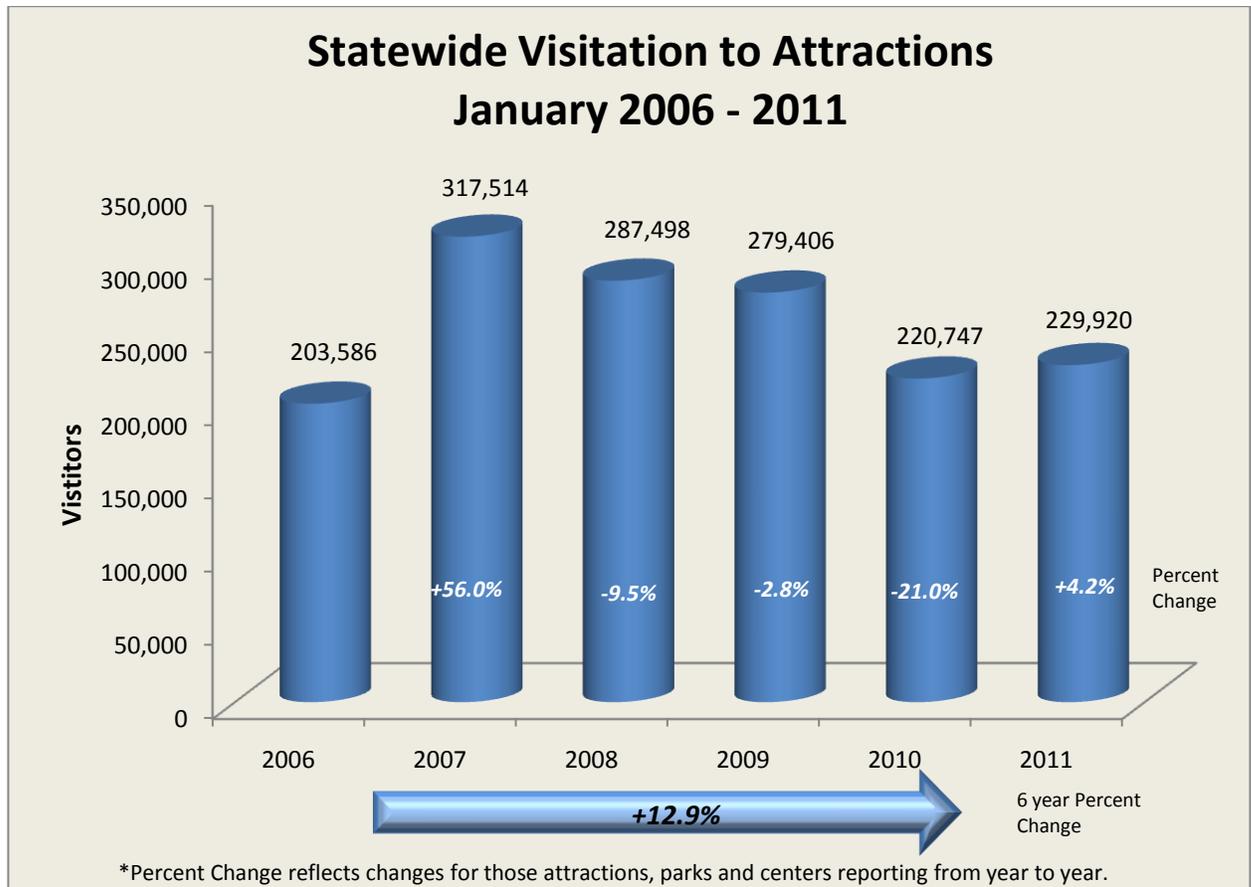


Chart 6 provides a status of the attractions industry in North Carolina for the month of January for the last six years. The numbers represent only a sample of North Carolina attractions that provide their attendance data, and are not intended to be considered a complete list of attractions. However, 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 2010 to January 2011.

January was another positive month for NC attractions. While still well below January 2009 attendance, there was an increase of four percent in attraction visitation since January 2010.

Chart 7 – Statewide Visitation to Attractions Monthly History 2006 – 2011

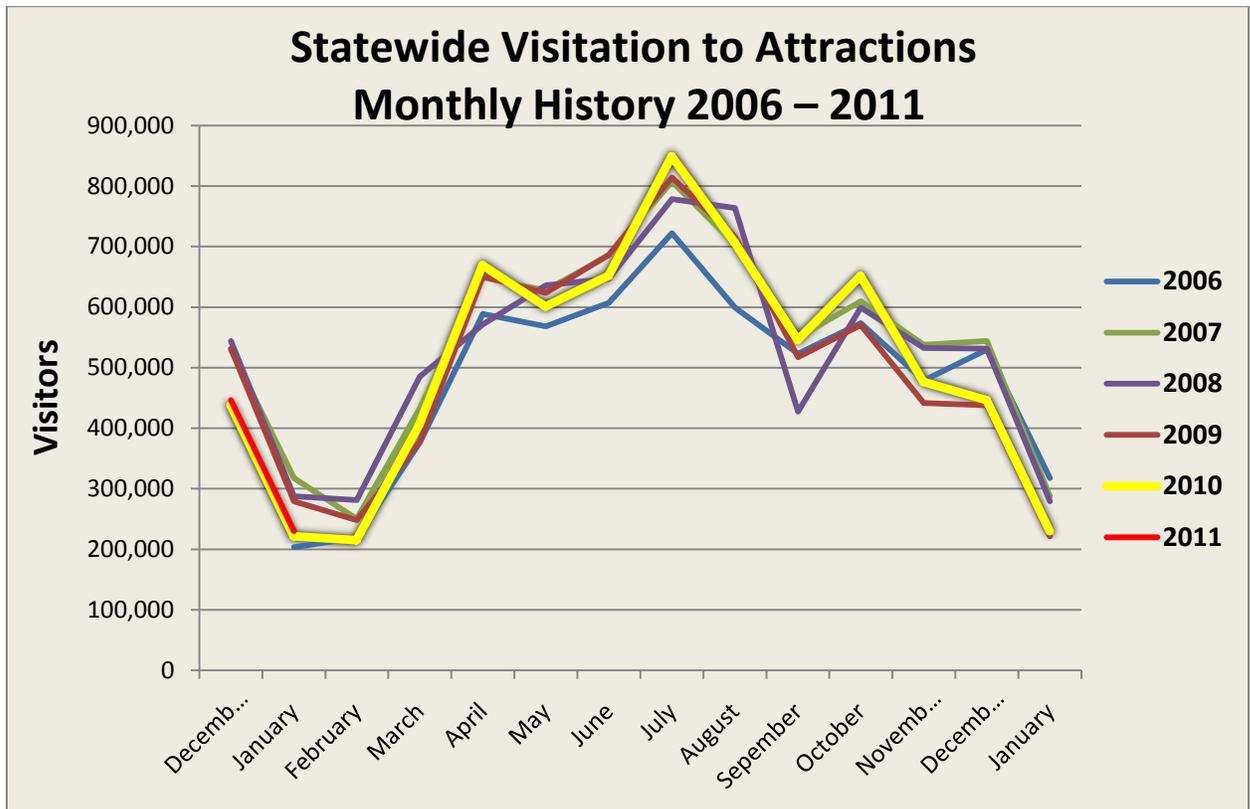


Chart 7 shows a monthly trend of attraction visitation for each of the last six years. This chart allows for a view of the ebb and flow of monthly attraction attendance, while also providing a look at how attendance compares to the same month of the previous years. Not surprisingly, the winter months see lower 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.

Chart 8 – State Welcome Center and Local Visitor Center Attendance - January 2006 – 2011

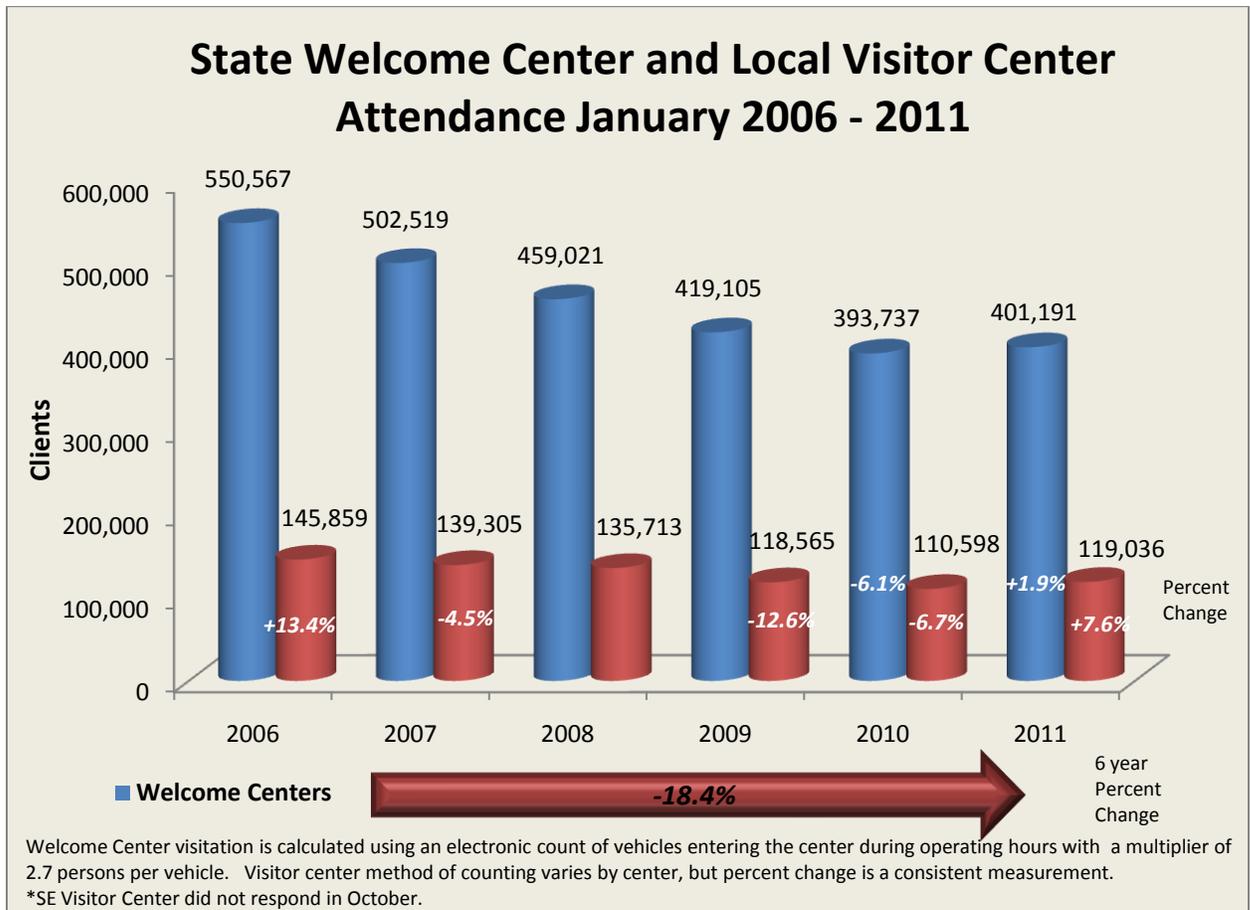


Chart 8 provides January visitation statistics for State Welcome Centers, as well as Local Visitor Centers throughout North Carolina. It should be noted that while there is a percent change indicated for welcome centers for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, 2008 was the first year a percent change could accurately 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.

Both welcome centers and local visitor centers saw increased attendance from January 2010 to January 2011. It should be noted however, that the I-40 Welcome Center was closed in January 2010 as a result of the rock slide in western North Carolina.

Chart 9 – Statewide National and State Park Visitation - January 2006 – 2011

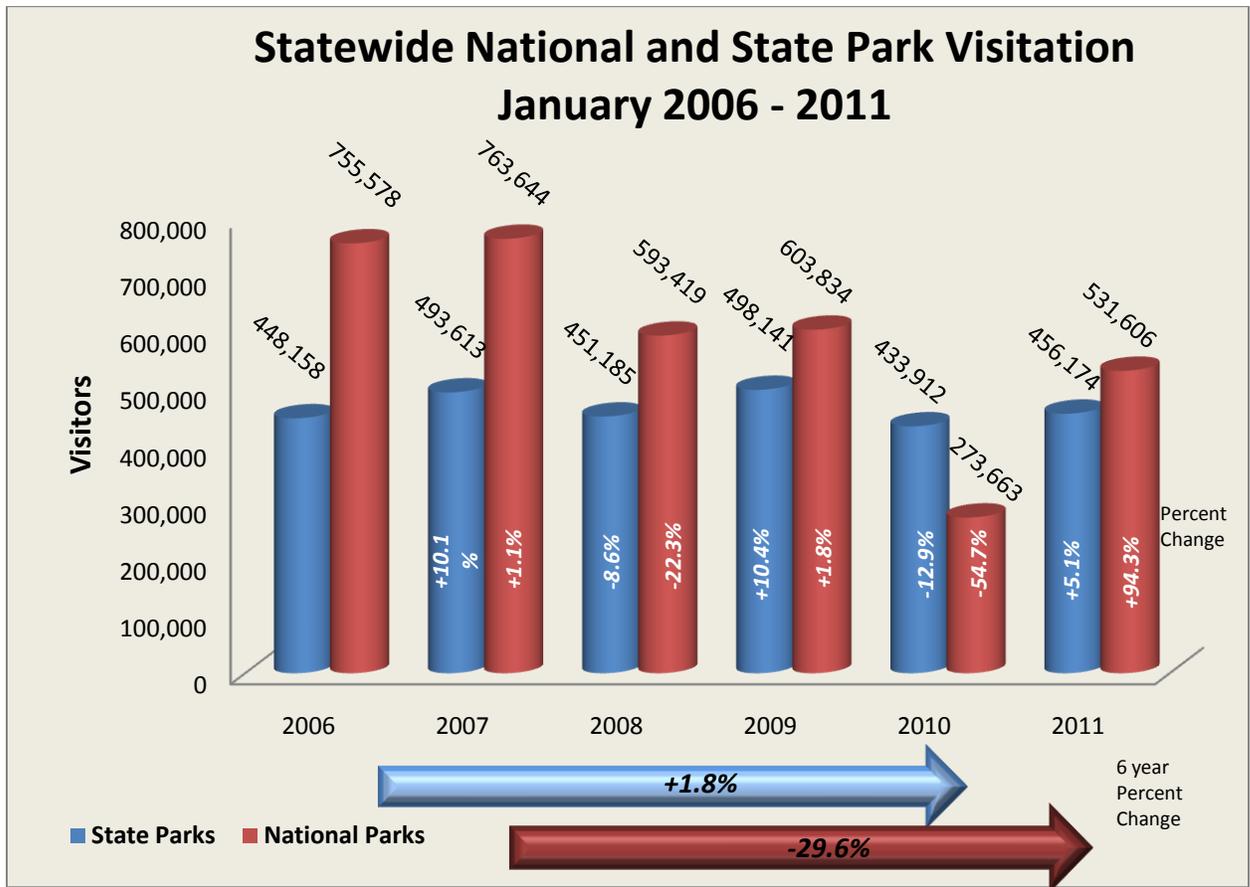
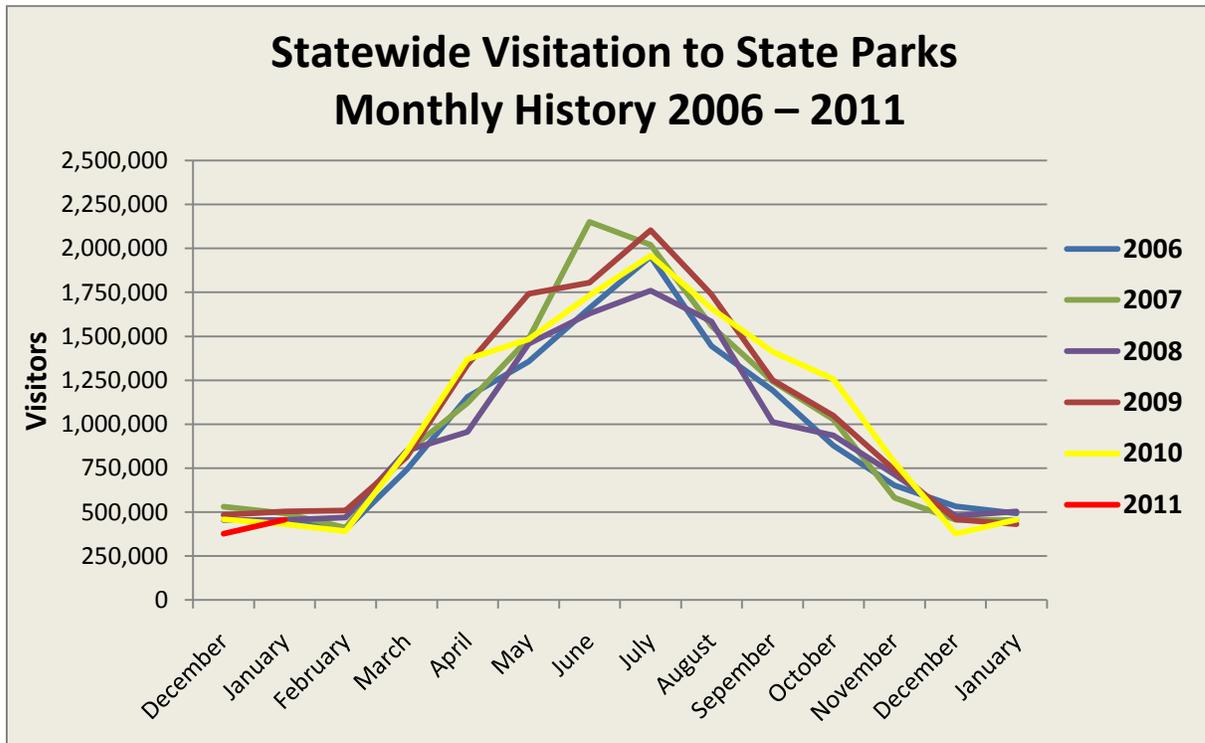


Chart 9 depicts visitation to state and national parks in North Carolina for the last six years months of January. Both state and national parks had increases in January from the previous year.

The substantial increase in national park visitation in January can be partially attributed to the abundance of inclement weather North Carolina experienced during the winter of 2010. Examining a percent change from two years ago, attendance was still down slightly.

Chart 10 – Statewide Visitation to State Parks Monthly History 2006 – 2011



Similar to Chart 7, Charts 10 and 11 provide a monthly trend of state and national park visitation for each of the last six 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 – 2011

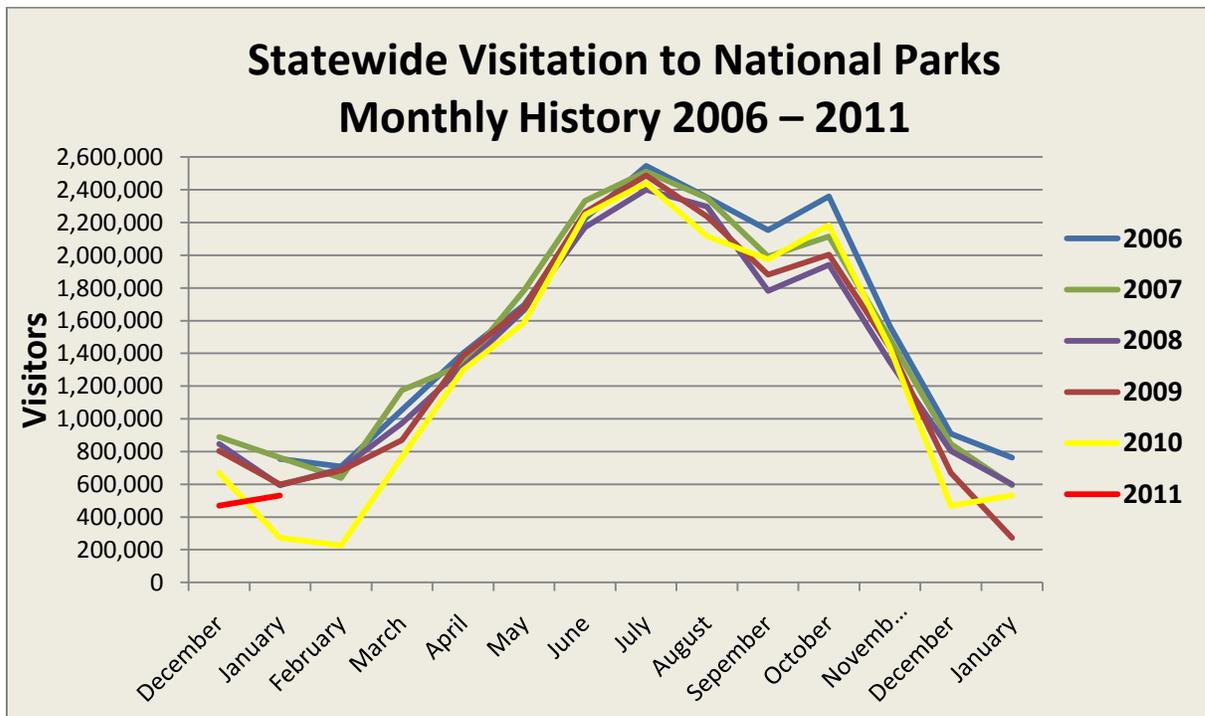


Chart 12 – Statewide Airport Arrivals and Departures - January 2006 – 2011

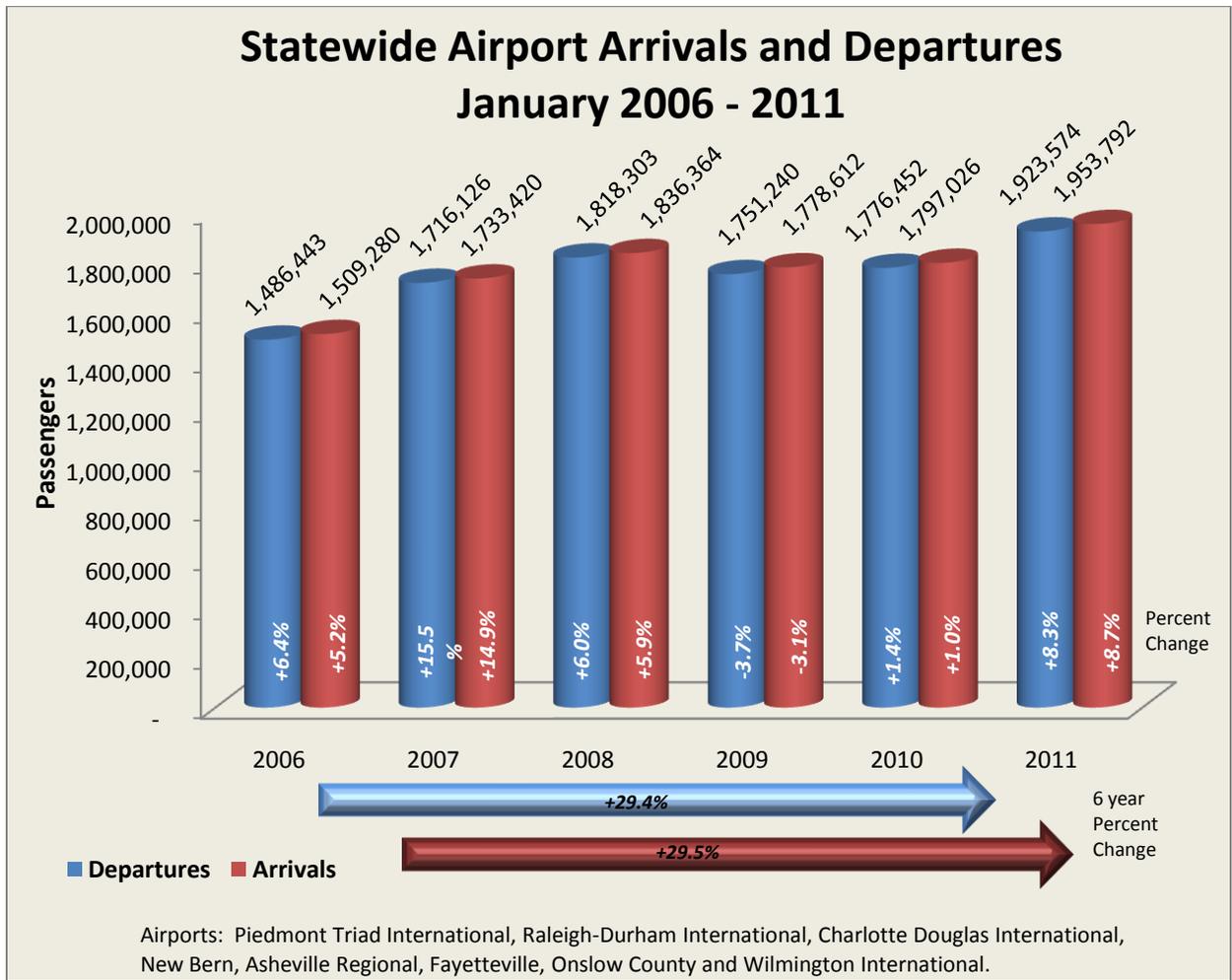


Chart 12 shows January airport arrivals and departures for each of the previous six years. The arrivals and departures increased over eight percent from last January, and there has been a substantial six-year increase in both for the month of January.

Chart 13 – Lower Atlantic Average Monthly Retail Gas Prices for Unleaded – January 2006 – 2011

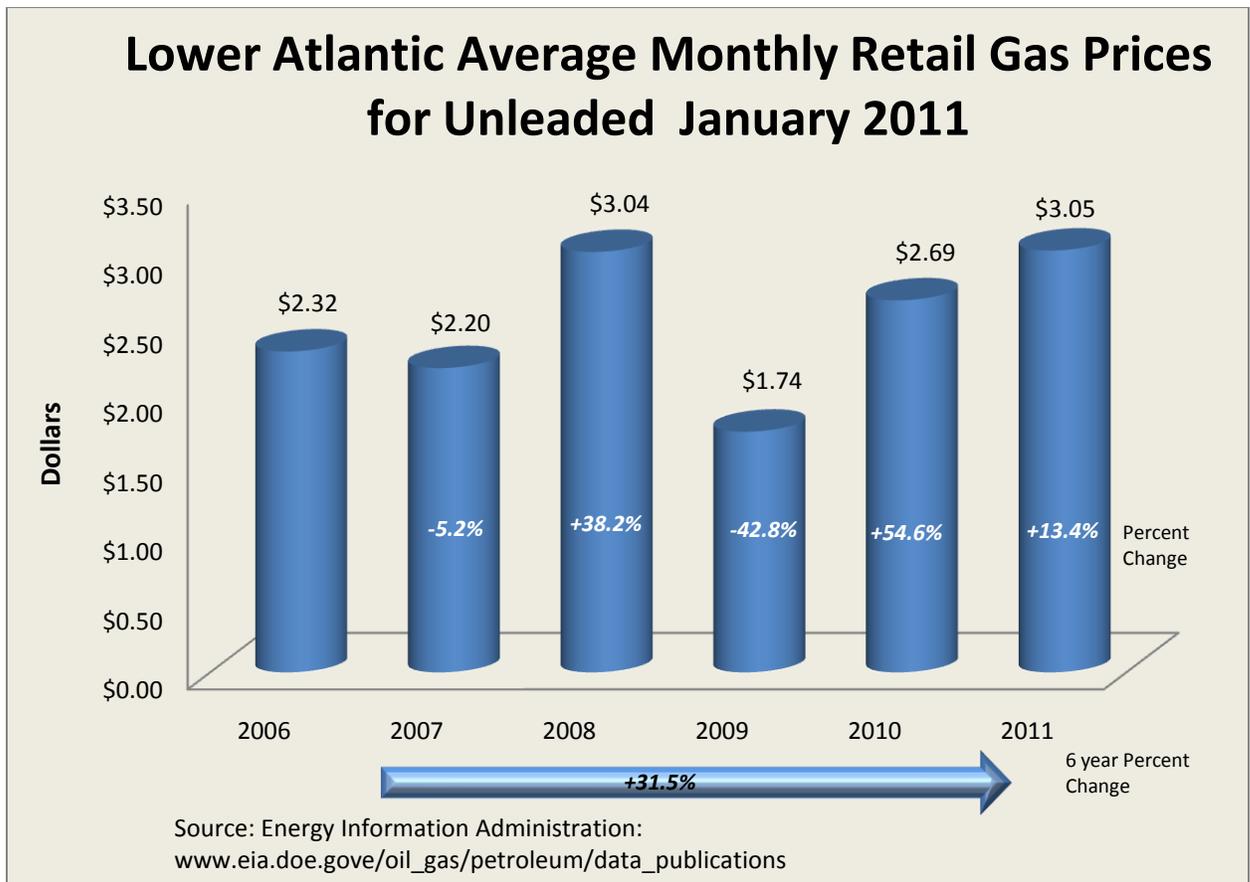


Chart 13 provides the average price per gallon of unleaded gasoline for January 2011 and the same month from the five previous years. The data provided above, when compared with other indicators such as attraction attendance and visitor spending data, can be very helpful in the analysis of general travel trends. Fuel prices in January 2011 were back to 2008 levels, up over thirteen percent from last January.

Chart 14 – North Carolina Average Temperature and Precipitation – January 2010 – 2011

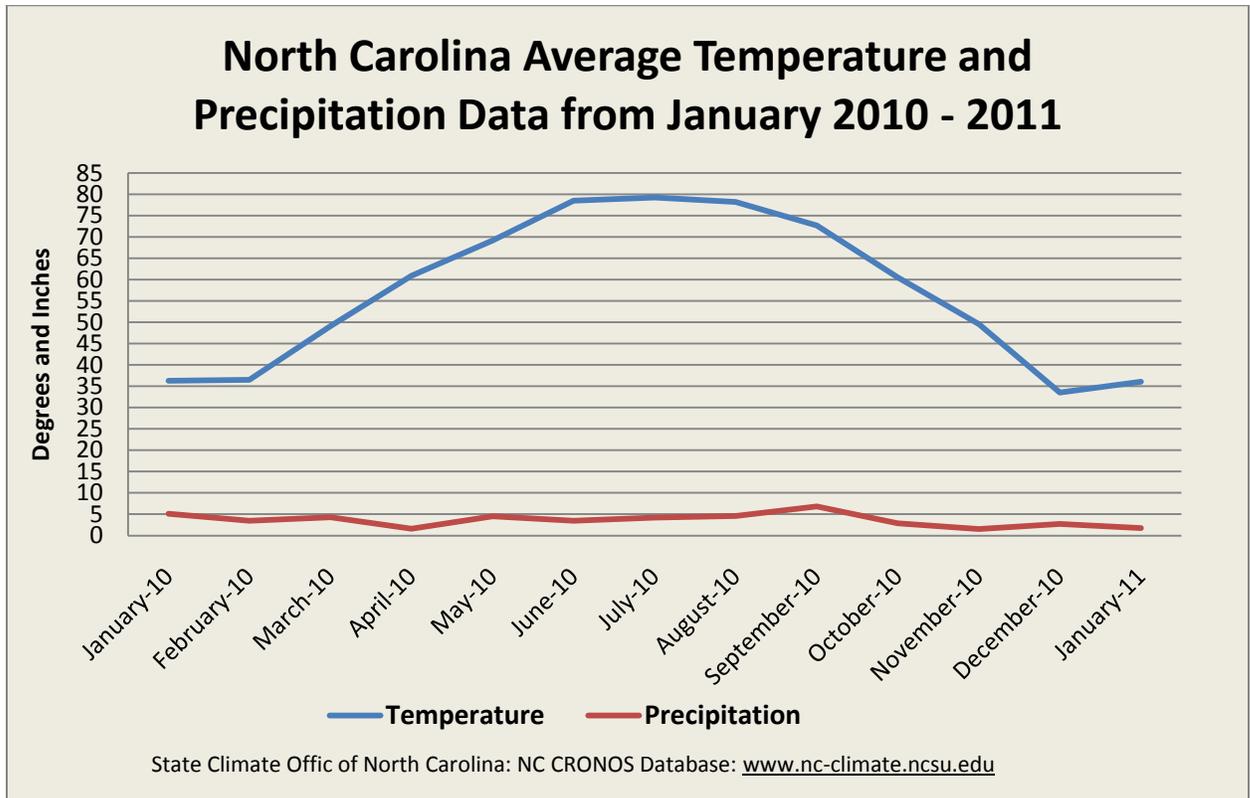


Chart 14 provides 13 months of air temperature and precipitation. This data, when analyzed together with gas price data and other tourism indicators, can be valuable in determining possible reasons for significant increases and/or decreases in indicators. For instance, greater than normal precipitation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

While the temperature was the same for the month of January in both 2010 and 2011, there were three inches less rain in 2011 as compared to 2010.

Section 2 – Geographic Marketing Region (Coastal/Piedmont/Mountain) Tourism Indicator Analysis for January 2011

Chart 15 – Hotel/Motel Statistics by Geographic Region - January 2011

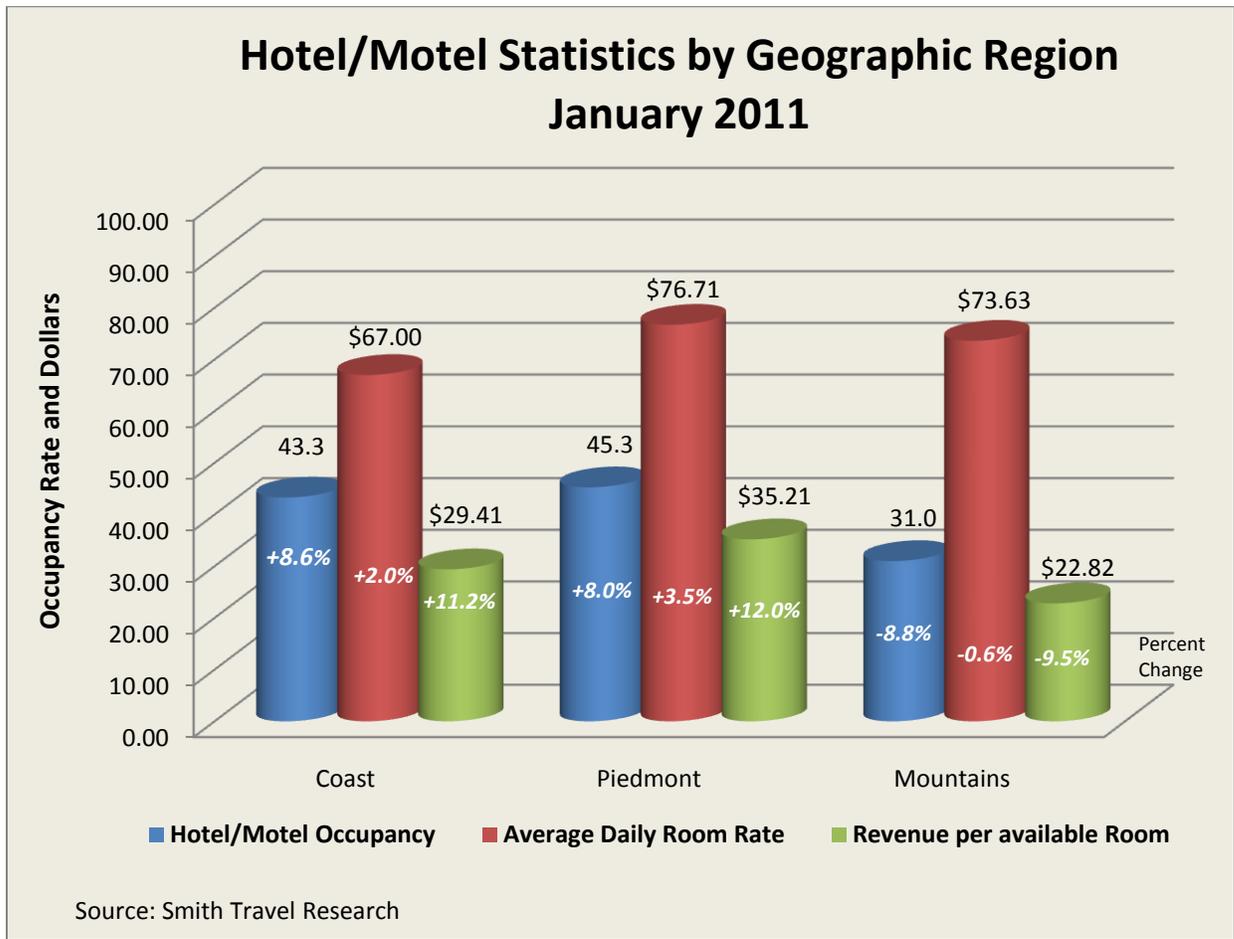


Chart 15 provides a one year comparison in lodging statistics for the three geographic marketing regions of North Carolina in January. All major indicators showed increases in the Coastal and Piedmont regions in January 2011 as compared to 2010; however the Mountain Region experienced decreases in the indicators as compared to last January. Another cold winter can be partially to blame for these decreases.

Chart 16 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand by Geographic Region - January 2011

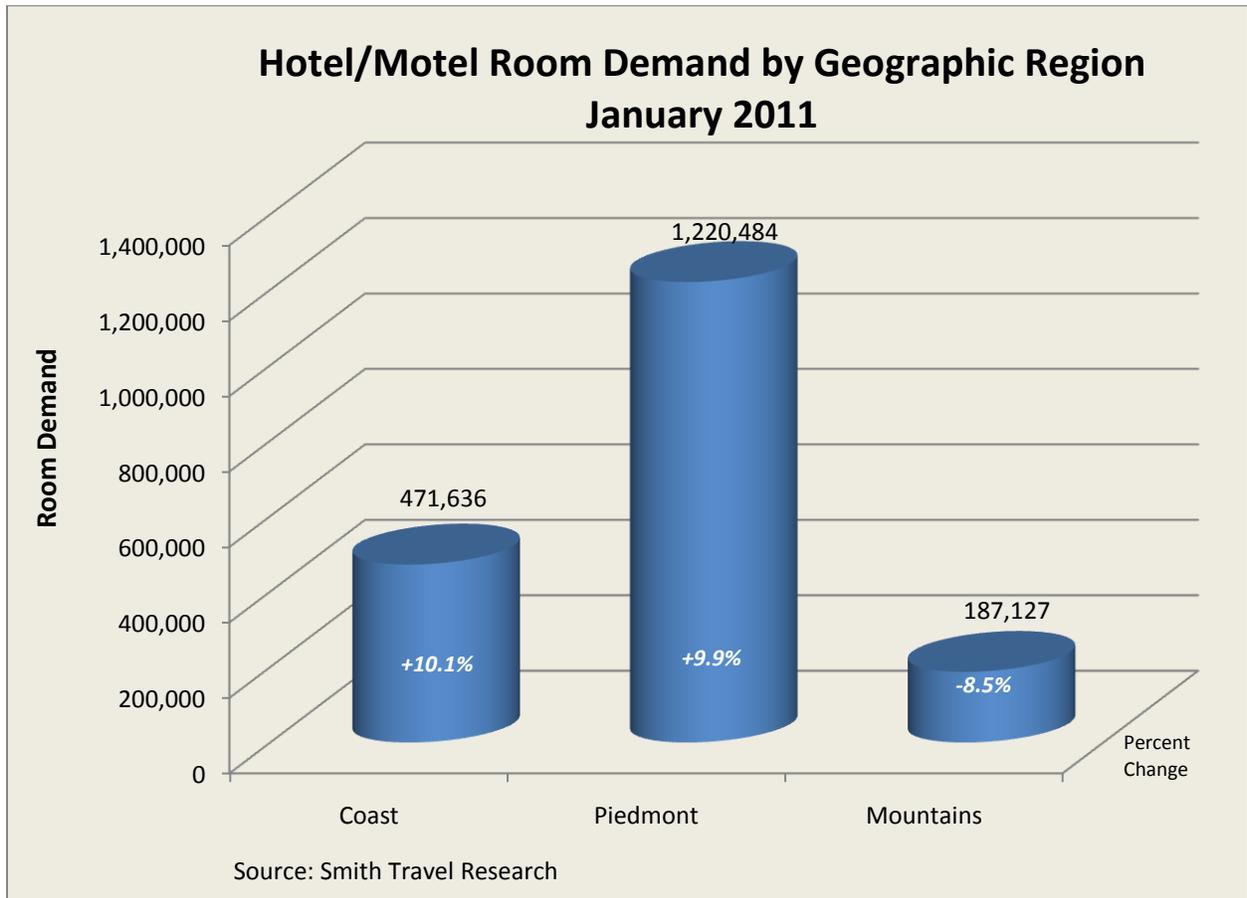


Chart 16 provides hotel/motel demand by geographic region for January 2011. Demand differs from occupancy in that it is the total number of rooms sold, not accounting for differences in room supply. The Coastal and Piedmont regions had demand growth of ten percent from January 2010 to January 2011, though the Mountain Region had an eight percent decrease from 2010.

Chart 17 – Visitation to Attractions and Parks by Geographic Region – January 2011

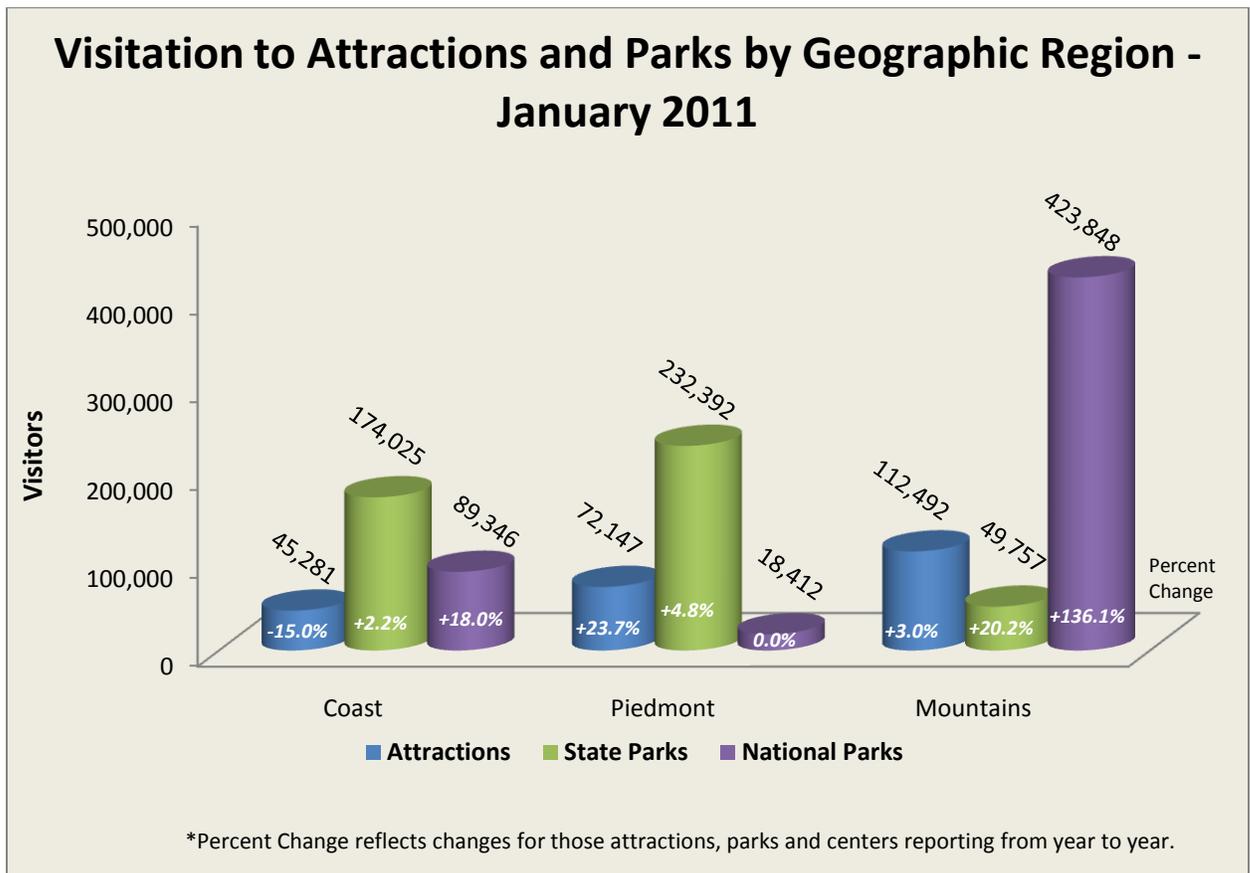


Chart 17 provides a look at the attractions industry in North Carolina in January 2011 by geographic region. As with the statewide numbers, the following data represents only a sample of North Carolina attractions that provide their attendance data, and are not intended to be considered a complete list 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.

State Park attendance throughout the state showed increases in all regions from 2010 to 2011, as did attraction attendance in the Piedmont and Mountain regions. National park attendance in the Mountain Region in 2010 was greatly (negatively) affected by the weather that winter, hence the substantial increase in January 2011.

Chart 18 – State Welcome Center and Local Visitor Center Attendance by Geographic Region – January 2011

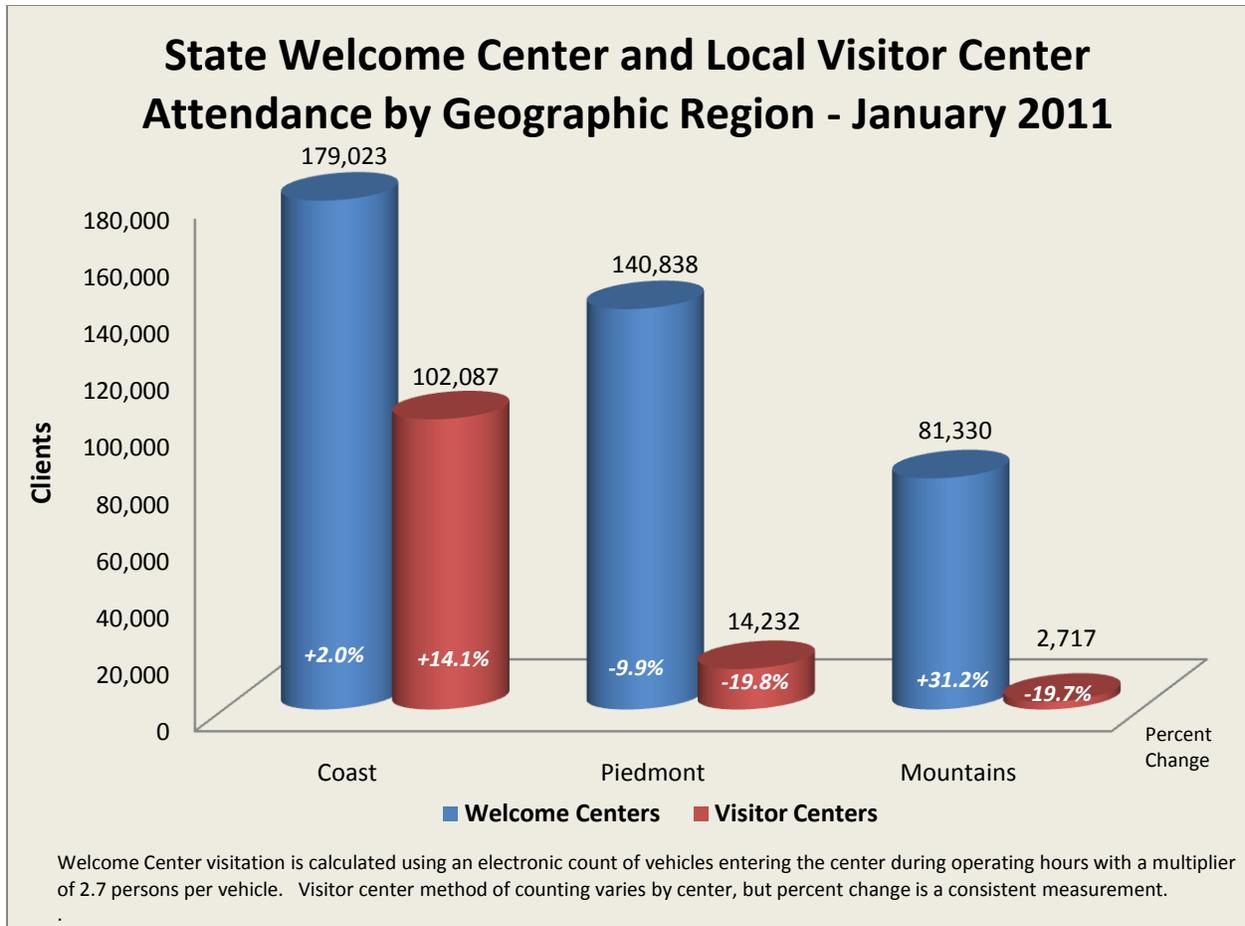


Chart 18 shows welcome center and visitor center attendance by geographic region and offers comparisons from January 2010. The Coastal and Mountain region welcome centers experienced increases from January 2010, though part of the increase in the Mountain Region can be explained by the reopening of the I-40 Welcome Center after the rock slide. The centers in the Piedmont Region saw large decreases in visitation from January 2010 to January 2011.

Chart 19 – Airport Arrivals and Departures by Geographic Region – January 2011

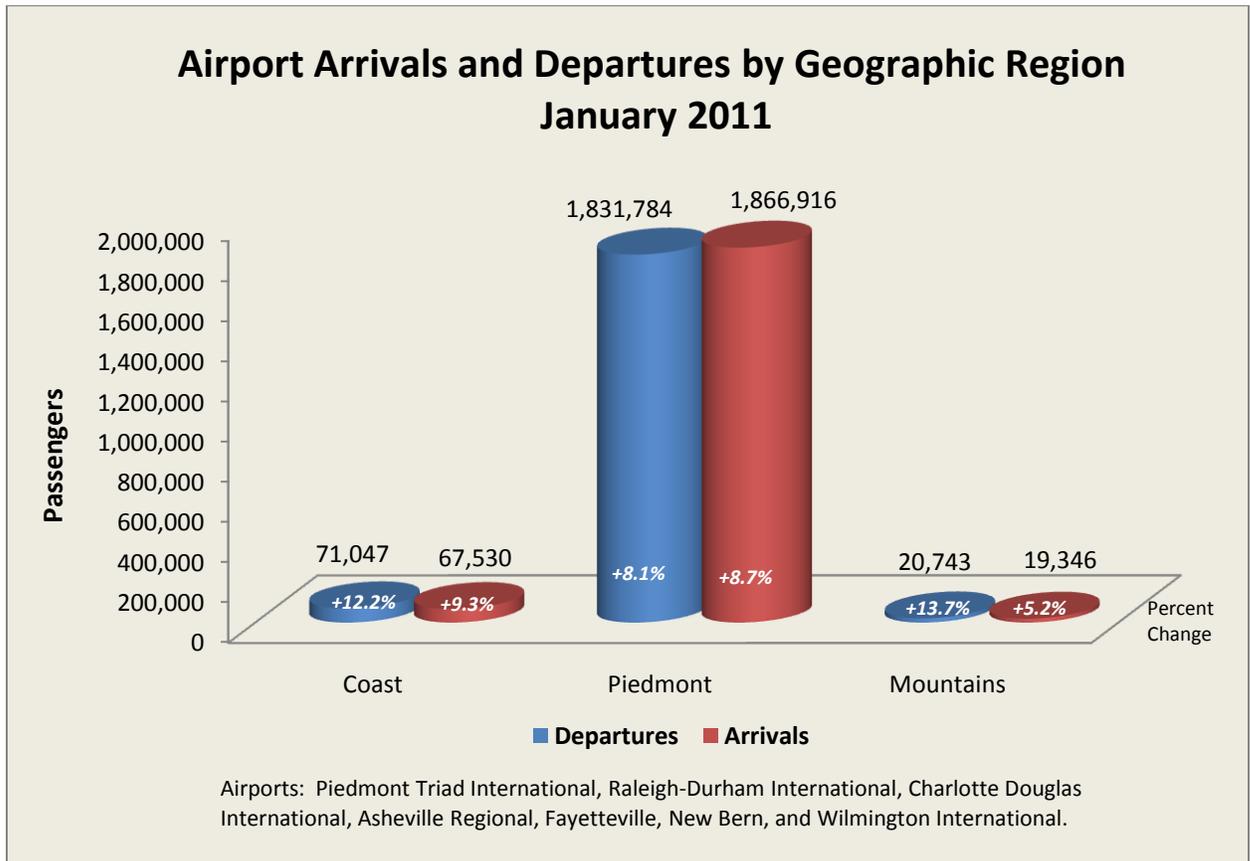


Chart 19 provides a breakdown of air travel statistics by geographic region. While the majority of air traffic is through the Piedmont Region, it is helpful to maintain a trend of other regional airport usage. The coastal and mountain regions showed strong growth during the month of January, as did the Piedmont Region.

Section 3: Economic Development Region Tourism Indicator Analysis – January 2011

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 2011

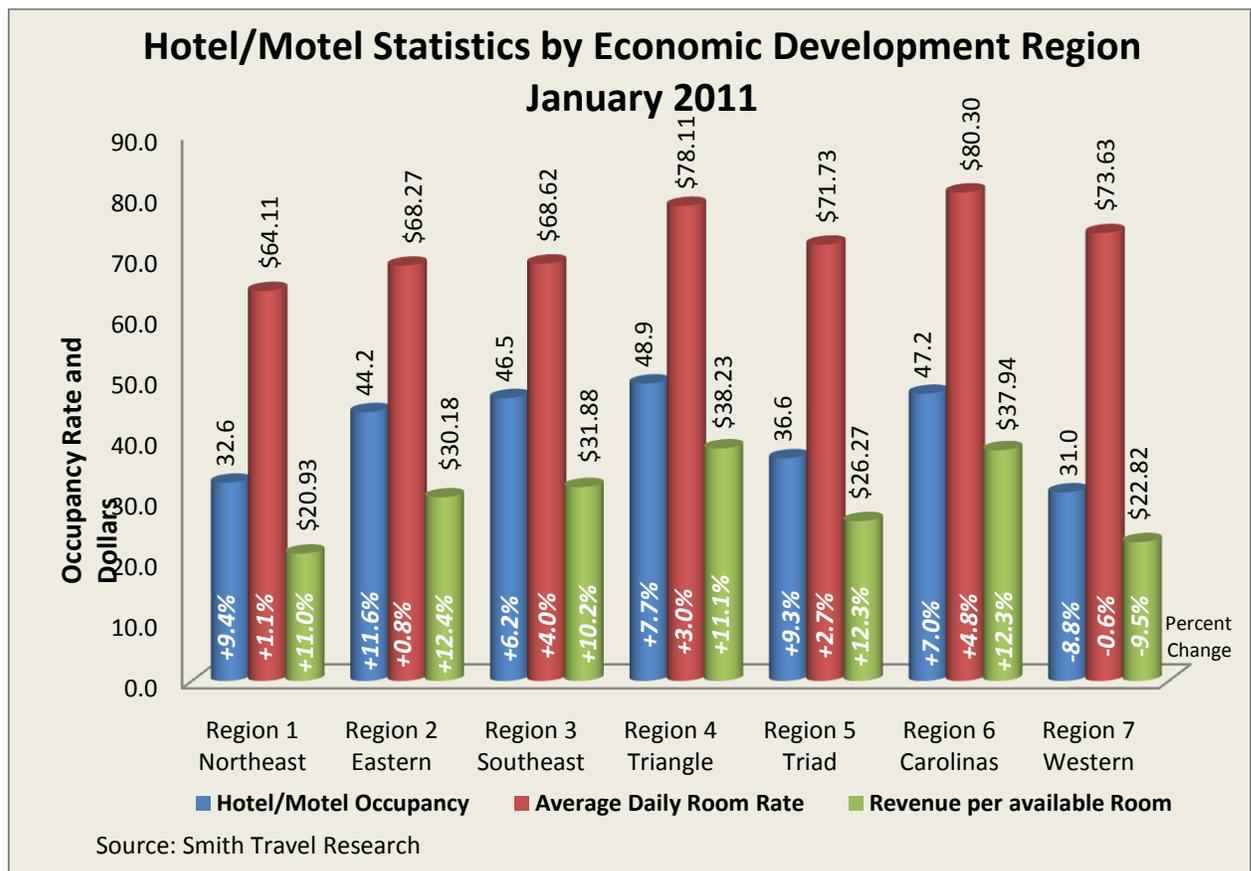


Chart 20 provides lodging indicators for January 2011 by economic development region. Also shown are percent changes from January 2010. This graph allows individual regions within the state to track indicators specific to their general destinations, while still being able to compare their data to the state data shown in Section 1.

Chart 21 – Hotel/Motel Room Demand by Economic Development Region - January 2011

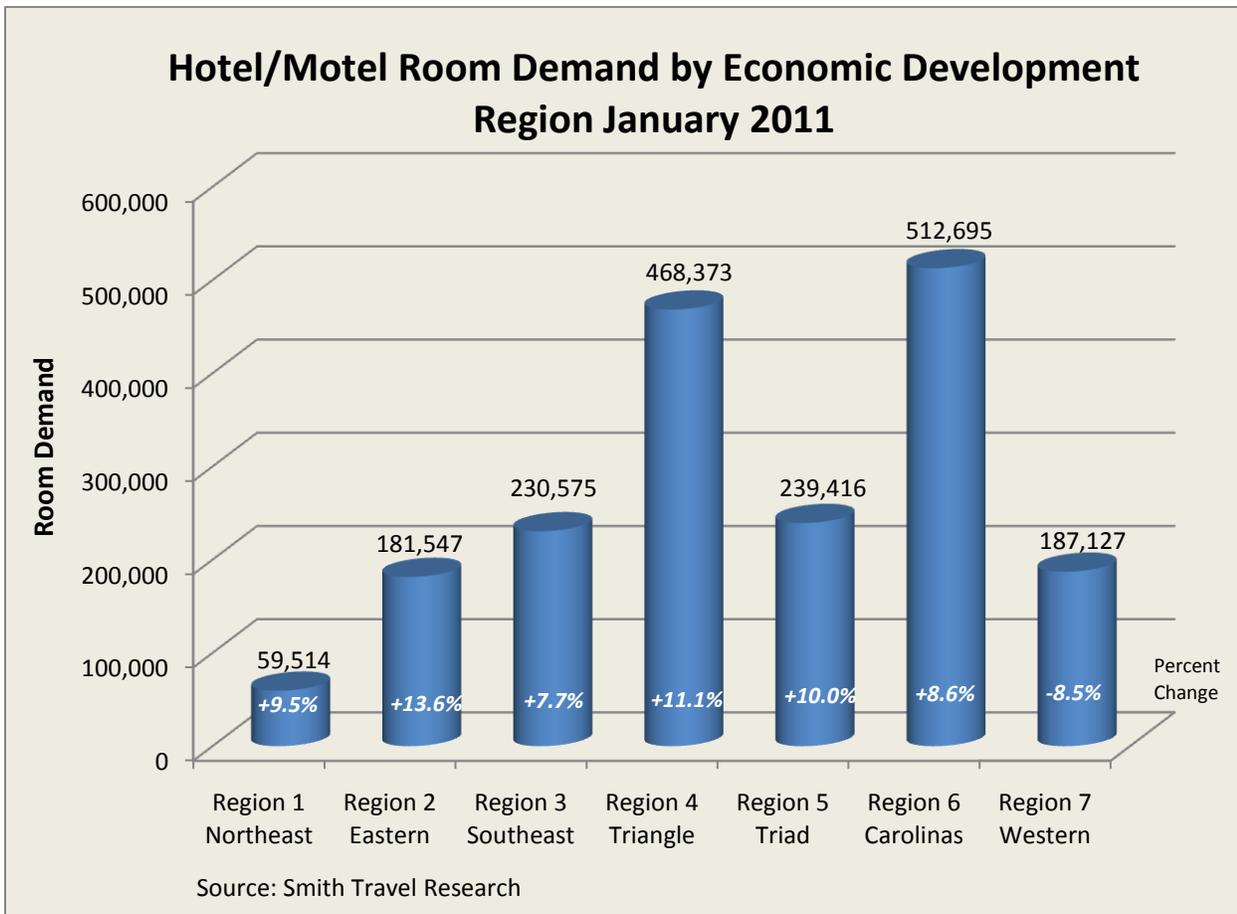


Chart 21 depicts hotel/motel demand for the month of January 2011 by economic development region. Demand is the number of rooms sold excluding complimentary rooms. All regions but the Western Region showed increased demand from January 2010 to 2011. The Southeast, Triangle, Eastern and Triad regions had increases of over ten percent in demand from January 2010 to January 2011.

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 TPI 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 2011



Chart 22 provides a five 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. For most of 2009, the TPI remained slightly at or below the 2007 level. In December 2010, the TPI finally inched above the each of the previous Decembers from 2007, and has continued that year-over-year growth into January.

*Hotel/Motel statistics are from Smith Travel Research, Inc.; all other figures are from the Division of Tourism.
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