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Travelodge to target national park visitors

TRAVELODGE plans to spend about £135 million expanding in and around Britain's national parks because of the high demand for hotels near unspoilt rural locations.

The budget hotel operator said that in the past 12 months it had seen a surge in the number of people staying in or near national parks. Travelodge hotels that are near the parks have achieved high occupancy levels far earlier than usual this year.

In response to this growing trend, the Travelodge property team has been instructed to focus its efforts on finding 37 suitable sites near to the 15 national parks.

Sought-after locations include Aviemore in the Cairngorms, Betws-y-Coed in Snowdonia, Grasmere in the Lake District and

Minehead on Exmoor. The size of the hotels will range from 30 rooms – Travelodge's new 'Metro-style' hotels – to more than 100, depending on the location and building requirements.

Due to strict planning laws governing developments in national parks, the company expects that most of the new hotels will be outside the parks. The expansion is expected to create more than 500 jobs.

Guy Parsons, chief executive of Travelodge, said: 'Traditionally Britons have opted for a coastal or city break, but as more people explore Britain they are rediscovering new holiday hotspots and as a result we have seen a

significant surge in rural breaks.'

Clare O'Connor from the

UK Association of National Park Authorities said: 'In these difficult times tranquil areas of mountains, meadows, moorlands, woods and wetlands provide a chance to take time out from the

stresses of daily life as well as give the opportunity to make the most of the rich diversity of travel destinations within Britain.'

Travelodge has recently bought a former mill building in Glossop,

Derbyshire, known as 'The Gateway to the Peak District'.

The company is planning to turn it into a 62-room hotel with a pub situated beneath.

■ Sarah Bridge



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NATURAL BEAUTY: The Lake District, Cumbria and, right, how the project in Glossop will look when it is completed