TOURISM

More People, More Money

THE Board of Trade statistics on travel and tourism in Britain in 1968 which have just been published (*Board of Trade Journal*, 197, 558. HMSO, 2s) can be no surprise to anyone who has walked through Trafalgar Square this summer or shopped in the West End of London. Between 1967 and 1968 the number of visitors of all kinds increased by 13 per cent to 4.8 million and the amount of money they spent increased by 20 per cent to £282 million. Added to this, British air and sea carriers earned another £101 million.

Of the 4.8 million visitors, 45 per cent were on holiday and 20 per cent were on business. The rest were visiting friends, coming for football matches or to study and so on. Sixteen per cent of Europeans were on package tours compared with 12 per cent in 1967, but a smaller proportion of North Americans, 24 per cent instead of 26 per cent, were on galloping grand tours. For all visitors the average length of stay, 16.3 days in 1968, has continued the decline which was first noticed in 1964 when it was 19.8 days. Each visitor seems to spend an average of £56. Almost half of the total visitors arrived in the third quarter of the year, 60 per cent by air and 33 per cent by sea.

The number of Britons going overseas increased by 1 per cent while the amount of money they spent abroad decreased by 1 per cent to £271 million. The most significant change in British foreign holiday making, which doubtless reflects currency restrictions, was the large increase in travel to Spain with concomitant decreases in the number of Britons going to France, Italy, Switzerland and Austria. 14.9 days on Majorca is fast replacing Wakes Week in Blackpool.

All this is, of course, reflected in the changing patterns of air transport. According to the Central Statistical Office (*Economic Trends*, Number 190. HMSO, 8s), capacity on scheduled flights of the world's airlines increased five-fold between 1957 and 1967, with British airlines a distant second to US airlines. But the package tour holiday, pioneered in Britain by the independent airlines, has increased in volume five-fold in only five years; in 1968, British airlines carried nearly 3 million people on inclusive tour flights.

CONSERVATION

Red River Dam

from our Geomagnetism Correspondent

THE plan to build a dam across the Red River Gorge, a region of unique ecology in Kentucky, has been abandoned. Ironically, although conservationists have finally had their way, they owe their victory to an event entirely beyond their control. At a critical stage in the dam project, a cut-back in public spending instituted by the Johnson administration delayed the start of construction and thus robbed the dam's proponents of their most effective weapon, a fait accompli.

The Red River rises in the Cumberland Plateau and flows westwards into the Kentucky River. Over the years it has cut its way through the Pottsville conglomerate to form a series of more than thirty natural

bridges and arches—the greatest concentration east of Utah. The chief importance of the Red River Gorge is not, however, its physical beauty, but the diversity of the plant and animal species it contains. Ninety per cent of all species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles found in Kentucky are present in the gorge. Some plant species occur nowhere else in Kentucky; and one (*Solidago albopilosa*) occurs nowhere else in the world.

The gorge owes its unique ecology to the low temperature which has resulted in a protected environment for plant species normally found only much farther north. Species brought south during the Pleistocene glaciation have thus been able to flourish here but not in the more exposed surrounding areas. An example is the Canadian mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) which is usually only found in cold, high altitudes. On the animal side, the Red River is the only place where fourteen species of darter, a small freshwater fish, can be observed in a single stream. Apart from their natural beauty, darters are useful as indicators of pollution because of their sensitivity to environmental disturbance. Their presence in such variety suggests that conditions in the Red River basin have changed little since its formation.

The threat to the gorge first came at the beginning of the decade when the US Corps of Engineers decided it was an excellent site for a dam. Congress authorized construction in 1962 but failed to provide funds until 1967 and 1968. In the meantime the Sierra Club, a conservation and recreation society whose influence has grown remarkably during the past few years, heard about the scheme and made its opposition plain. Then in 1967 the Kentucky Academy of Sciences called for the cancellation of the project. They also sought and received the cooperation of the more powerful American Association for the Advancement of Science which appealed directly to the President and other federal officials to halt construction pending an impartial enquiry. Despite these efforts the Corps of Engineers pressed on with the plan. It was at this point in 1968 that fate intervened in the form of a general freeze on public works funds.

The temporary respite gave the opponents of the dam the breathing space they required. In May 1968, Senator John Cooper joined the opposition and arranged for a hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Works Appropriations. The outcome was a bill directing the Corps of Engineers to study the feasibility of other downstream sites before beginning construction in the gorge. Unfortunately the bill passed the Senate but not the House. Then early in 1969 the new Governor of Kentucky requested the Corps not to proceed. Shortly afterwards, President Nixon cancelled the appropriation necessary for the dam but granted a small budget for the planning of a new dam at a downstream site. The corps has now announced that the original site will be abandoned.

According to Mary Wharton, professor of biology at Georgetown College, Kentucky, "from now on, hopefully, the Corps of Engineers will want to consult environmental biologists and others who know the scientific values at stake before proceeding very far with plans for damming or draining projects". This is probably a little optimistic. The anti-conservation school ("when you've seen one giant redwood you've seen them all") is still powerful.