

## Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Yellowstone National Park (NP) visitors during July 23-29, 2011. In total, 1314 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 900 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 68.5% response rate.

<b>Group size and type</b>	Thirty-four percent of visitor groups consisted of two people and 22% consisted of four people. Seventy-eight percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
<b>State or country of residence</b>	United States visitors were from 48 states and Washington, DC and comprised 88% of total visitation during the survey period, with 8% from California. International visitors were from 30 countries and comprised 12% of total visitation during the survey period with 27% from Canada.
<b>Frequency of visits</b>	Most visitors (88%) were visiting the park for the first time in the past 12 months and 55% were visiting the park for the first time in their lifetime. Fifteen percent had visited twice in their lifetime.
<b>Age, ethnicity, race, and education</b>	Forty-three percent of visitors were ages 41-65 years, 23% were ages 15 years or younger, 17% were ages 21-40, and 5% were 71 or older. Three percent were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-two percent of visitors were White and 5% were Asian. Fifty-five percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree or graduate degree.
<b>Preferred language</b>	Most visitor groups (97%) preferred speaking and reading English. Twenty-four percent of visitor groups wanted services provided in another language.
<b>Physical conditions</b>	Nine percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions affecting their ability to access or participate in activities and services. Of those visitor groups, 82% had problems with mobility.
<b>Household size and income</b>	Forty-two percent of the households were comprised of two people. Twenty-two percent had four people in their household. Forty percent of households had an income of \$75,000 to \$149,999. Sixteen percent had a household income of \$50,000 to \$74,999.
<b>Information sources</b>	Most visitors (91%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit through friends/relatives/word of mouth (59%), the park website (56%), and maps/brochures (55%). Most visitors (96%) received the information they needed. Seventy-four percent of visitor groups prefer to use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
<b>Park as destination</b>	For 50% of visitor groups, the park was one of several destinations, and for 47%, the park was the primary destination.
<b>Primary reason for visiting the area</b>	Four percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (within 150 miles of the park). The most common primary reasons for visiting the park area among non-resident visitor groups were to visit the park (71%) and visit relatives/friends in the area (7%).
<b>Transportation and road signs</b>	Eighty-five percent of visitor groups used one vehicle to arrive at the park. Most visitor groups (92%) found the park signs adequate, 90% found state highways adequate, and 81% found interstate signs to be adequate.

## Executive Summary (continued)

<b>Park entries</b>	Thirty-five percent of visitor groups entered the park one time during their stay and 25% entered the park twice. Fifty-five percent of the entries were through the West Yellowstone entrance, 40% were through the South Entrance, and 29% came through the North Entrance.
<b>Overnight stays</b>	Most visitor groups (91%) stayed overnight in the area within 150 miles of the park or within the park. Of those that stayed in the park, 27% stayed five or more nights. Twenty-three percent of visitor groups stayed six or more nights outside the park in the area (within 150 miles of the park).
<b>Accommodations</b>	Sixty-four percent of visitor groups that stayed in the park used a lodge, hotel, motel, cabin, or B&B and 39% camped in a developed campground. Four percent of the visitor groups stayed overnight at the Old Faithful Inn. Those visitor groups that stayed outside the park used a lodge, motel, cabin, rented condo/home, or bed and breakfast (71%) and 29% camped in a developed campground.
<b>Length of stay</b>	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the park, the average length of stay was 9.9 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more, the average length of stay was 5 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 67.1 hours, or 2.8 days.
<b>Locations visited in the park</b>	Seventy-five percent of visitor groups visited all the locations in the park that they had planned to visit. Ninety percent of visitor groups visited Old Faithful, 69% visited Mammoth Hot Springs, and 66% visited Canyon Village.
<b>Time spent at park sites</b>	The most common length of time spent at each location was 1-2 hours. Twenty-two percent of visitor groups spent five or more hours at Old Faithful. The highest average number of days spent was four days at Madison.
<b>Activities on this visit</b>	The most common activities were sightseeing/taking a scenic drive (91%), viewing wildlife/birdwatching (82%), boardwalk/geyser basin (78%), and shopping in park stores (76%). Thirty-three percent of visitor groups visited two park visitor centers or museums on this trip.
<b>Primary reason for visiting the park</b>	Forty-three percent of visitor groups listed sightseeing/taking a scenic drive as their primary reason for visiting the park.
<b>Locating commercial services</b>	Eight percent of visitor groups indicated that they had difficulty finding commercial services. The most common reason for having difficulty finding services was signs (28%).
<b>Commercial services used</b>	Seventy-five percent of visitor groups purchased gifts/souvenirs and 75% ate at a restaurant or used other food services. Forty one percent of visitor groups purchased gas.
<b>Rating commercial services</b>	More than half of all visitor groups were able to get their first choice of lodging, campgrounds or food services. Most also indicated that the services/activities met their expectations while 15% or less services/activities were rated “worse than expected.”

## Executive Summary (continued)

<b>Concession services and activities</b>	Seventy-eight percent of visitor groups were able to use the services/activities that they had planned prior to visiting the park. Specifically, 31% planned to participate in a trail ride (28% did participate), 19% planned a scenic motorized tour (18% did), 19% planned a scenic boat tour (17% did), and 17% planned a cookout (14% did).
<b>Concession value for money paid</b>	The concession services that received the highest combined “very good” and “good” ratings for money paid were campgrounds (68%), lodging (50%), and purchasing gifts/souvenirs (44%).
<b>Expenditures</b>	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the park within 150 miles) was \$1268. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$700, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$416.
<b>Technology access on future visits</b>	Seventy-four percent of visitor groups would like to have cell phone access in developed areas of the park on future visits. Fifty-six percent of visitor groups would like to have internet access.
<b>Overall quality</b>	Most visitor groups (91%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Yellowstone NP as “very good” or “good.” Two percent of groups rated the overall quality as “very poor” or “poor.”

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho at (208) 885-7863 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.