

## Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Mesa Verde National Park (NP) visitors during July 27-August 2, 2012. A total of 676 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 477 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 70.5% response rate.

<b>Group size and type</b>	Fifty-three percent of visitor groups consisted of two or three people and 44% were in groups of four or more. Eighty-two percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
<b>State or country of residence</b>	United States visitors comprised 81% of total visitation during the survey period. Of these, 17% were from Colorado, 10% were from Texas, 45 other states and Washington DC. International visitors comprised 19% of total visitation during the survey period. Of these, 21% were from France, 20% were from Germany and 21 other countries.
<b>Frequency of visits</b>	During the past 3 years, most visitors (92%) visited the park only once. For many visitors (74%), this was their first visit in their lifetime. Twenty-one percent had visited two or three times in their lifetime.
<b>Age, ethnicity, and race</b>	The most common age groups included 28% aged 41-55, 23% aged 15 years or younger, and 22% aged 56-70 years. Six percent were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-four percent of visitors were White and 4% were Asian.
<b>Language for speaking and reading</b>	Most visitor groups (81%) preferred English for speaking and 82% preferred English for reading. Twenty-two percent of visitor groups felt there were services in the park that need to be provided in languages other than English.
<b>Physical conditions</b>	Sixteen percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions affecting their ability to access or participate in activities or services.
<b>Household income and household size</b>	The most common household income levels reported by respondents included 17% with an income of \$100,000-\$149,999, 16% had an income of \$50,000-\$74,999 and 15% had an income of \$75,000 to \$99,999. Nineteen percent did not want to answer the household income question. Forty-two percent of respondents had two people in their household, and 34% had four or more.
<b>Information sources</b>	Most visitor groups (92%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit. The most commonly used sources were the park website (51%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (51%), and maps/brochures (37%). Most visitor groups (89%) received the information they needed. Many visitor groups (75%) found the information they needed on the park website. Seventy-five percent of visitor groups would prefer to use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
<b>Park as destination</b>	In the on-site interview, 81% of visitor groups said the park was one of several destinations. The park was the primary destination for 15% of visitor groups.

## Executive Summary (continued)

<b>Timing of visit and primary reason for visiting the area</b>	Forty-five percent of visitor groups made the decision to visit Mesa Verde NP one to six months before the visit. Five percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (within 50 miles of the park). Fifty-three percent of visitor groups indicated that visiting the park was the primary reason nonresident members came to the area.
<b>Services used in nearby communities</b>	Eighty-two percent of visitor groups obtained support services in nearby communities. The communities most commonly used to obtain support services were Durango (56%) and Cortez (53%). Most visitor groups (97%) were able to obtain all the services they needed in nearby communities.
<b>Transportation</b>	Fifty-six percent of non-resident visitor groups used a car to travel most of the distance from their home to the park area and 15% used an airplane. Most visitor groups (93%) used one vehicle to arrive at the park.
<b>Number of park entries</b>	Eighty-five percent of visitor groups entered the park once and 12% entered twice.
<b>Overnight stays</b>	Many visitor groups (67%) stayed overnight either inside the park or in the area within 50 miles of the park. Of those, 46% stayed one night inside the park. Forty percent stayed one night outside the park. Inside the park, 44% of visitor groups stayed in the lodge, while 29% RV/trailer camped and 28% tent camped in a developed campground. Outside the park, 78% of visitor groups stayed in a lodge, hotel, motel, vacation rental, B&B, etc.
<b>Length of stay</b>	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the park (74%), the average length of stay was 5.6 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more (24%), the average length of stay was 2.1 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 17.2 hours, or 0.7 days.
<b>Local attractions visited</b>	Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups visited other local attractions on this visit. Forty-four percent of visitor groups visited other archeological sites in the Four Corners Region.
<b>Sites visited and trails hiked</b>	The most common places visited in the park were Far View Visitor Center (69%), Spruce Tree House (66%), and Cliff Palace (62%). Forty-four percent of visitor groups hiked trails in the park. The most common trails hiked were Spruce Canyon Trail (64%), Petroglyph Point Trail (24%), and Soda Canyon Overlook Trail (22%).
<b>Activities on this visit</b>	The most common activities were taking a self-guided cliff dwelling tour (69%), visiting Far View Visitor Center (67%), and walking/hiking (55%). Fifty-eight percent of visitor groups took a ranger-guided cliff dwelling tour. The most common activities that were the primary reason for visiting the park were taking a self-guided cliff dwelling tour (45%) and visiting mesa top archeological sites (14%). The most common activities in which visitor groups would prefer to participate on future visits were taking a self-guided cliff dwelling tour (71%) and walking/hiking (67%).
<b>Information services and facilities</b>	The information services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the park brochure/map or newspaper (76%), ranger-guided cliff dwelling tours (58%), assistance from park staff in purchasing tour tickets (58%), and assistance from park staff (53%).

## **Executive Summary (continued)**

<b>Importance and quality of information services and facilities</b>	The most important information service was ranger-guided cliff dwelling tours, which 94% rated as “extremely important” or “very important.” The highest quality service was assistance from park staff, which 94% rated as “very good” or “good.”
<b>Protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences</b>	The highest combined proportions of ‘extremely important’ and “very important” ratings of protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences included preservation of cliff dwellings (98%), historic sites and buildings (93%), clear water (93%), and clean air (visibility) (91%).
<b>Expenditures</b>	The average visitor group expenditure (combined inside and outside the park within 50 miles of the park) was \$484. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$247, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$171.
<b>Overall quality</b>	Most visitor groups (94%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Mesa Verde NP as “very good” or “good.” No visitor 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) 885-2585 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.