

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of George Washington Memorial Parkway – Lady Bird Johnson Park (Columbia Island) visitors during July 28 – August 3, 2013. A total of 684 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 319 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 46.6% response rate.

Group size and type	Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups were visiting alone and 34% of visitor groups consisted of two or three people. Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups were alone and 25% consisted of family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 19 states and the District of Columbia and comprised 95% of total visitation during the survey period, with 63% from Virginia and 18% from the District of Columbia. There were too few international visitors to provide reliable data.
Frequency of visits	Sixty-eight percent of visitors visited the park 1-10 times in the past 12 months. Fifty-two percent of visitors visited the park 1-10 times in their lifetime, 32% had visited 31 or more times, and 16% visited 11-30 times.
Age, ethnicity, race, and educational level	Thirty-five percent of visitors were ages 36-55 years, 28% were 21-35 years old, 22% were 56 years or older, and 11% were ages 15 years or younger. Nine percent were Hispanic or Latino. Eighty-seven percent of visitors were White, 6% were Black or African American, and 5% were Asian. Fifty-nine percent of respondents had completed a graduate degree and 33% had a bachelor's degree.
Awareness of park prior to visit	Fifty percent of visitor groups were aware Columbia Island is managed by the National Park Service as part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.
Information sources	Forty-three percent visitor groups obtained information about the park prior to their visit most often through previous visits (58%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (43%), and maps/brochures (32%). Most visitor groups (87%) received the information they needed. Sixty-one percent of visitor groups prefer to use the Columbia Island website to obtain information for a future visit, while 38% prefer to use maps/brochures, 38% prefer to use friends/relatives/word of mouth, and 37% prefer to use previous visits.
Park website	Eight-three percent of visitor groups rated the quality of the information on the park website as "very good" or "good." Ninety-six percent of visitor groups found the information they needed on the park website.
Park as destination	During the on-site interview, 68% of visitor groups said the park was their primary destination and for 29%, the park was one of several destinations.
Transportation	Forty-five percent of visitor groups used a bicycle they owned to travel between overnight accommodations or home and the park, 34% traveled on foot, and 28% traveled by private vehicle. Forty-six percent of visitor groups used one bicycle to travel to the park, 23% did not travel by bicycle, and 21% used two bicycles. Sixty-three percent of visitor groups used one motor vehicle to travel to the park, while 34% did not travel by motor vehicle.
Local attractions visited	Seventy percent of visitor groups visited nearby sites on this visit. Of those visitor groups that visited nearby sites, 50% visited Gravelly Point, 45% visited the National Mall, and 30% visited Theodore Roosevelt Island.

Executive Summary (continued)

Sites visited in and around Columbia Island	The sites most commonly visited by visitor groups in and around Columbia Island were Mount Vernon Trail (82%), Gravelly Point (41%), and Arlington Memorial Bridge (36%).
Use of connector trails to access Columbia Island	The most common connector trails used to access Columbia Island by visitor groups were Four Mile Run Trail (49%), Custis Trail (38%), and Washington & Old Dominion Trail (28%).
Length of visit	Fifty-eight percent of visitor groups spent one or two hours in the park, while 36% spent less than one hour. The average length of visit was 0.8 hours. Sixty-five percent of visitor groups spent one or two hours on the Mount Vernon Trail between the Navy and Marine Memorial and LBJ Memorial Grove, while 26% spent less than one hour. The average length of visit on the Mount Vernon Trail was 1 hour.
Activities on this visit	The most common activities were bicycling (56%), jogging (35%), stopping at scenic overlooks (21%), and walking for exercise (20%). The most common activities that were the primary reason for visiting the park were bicycling (432%), jogging (28%), and walking for exercise (11%).
Activities on a future visit	The most common activities to participate in on a future visit were bicycling (74%), jogging (50%), stopping at scenic overlooks (42%), and walking for exercise (40%).
Information services and facilities	The information services and facilities most often used by visitor groups were the Mount Vernon Trail tent info station (57%), park brochure/map (32%), and assistance from park staff (30%).
Visitor services and facilities	The visitor services and facilities most often used by visitor groups were restrooms (67%), garbage disposal/recycling (40%), and highway directional signs in park (31%).
Marina services and facilities	Five percent of visitor groups used marina services/facilities on this visit.
Protecting park resources and attributes	The highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings of protecting park resources and attributes included clean air - visibility (92%), clean water (87%), and scenic views (84%).
Topics to learn on a future visit	Eighty-three percent of visitor groups were interested in learning about selected topics on a future visit. The most common topics included Potomac River history (73%), natural history (61%), and recreational opportunities (47%).
Methods of learning about the park on a future visit	Eighty-three percent of visitor groups were interested in learning about the park’s cultural and natural history on a future visit. The most preferred methods to use were trailside exhibits (66%), park website (48%), and self-guided tours (36%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (86%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at the park as “very good” or “good.” Three percent of 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>.