

Visitor Services Project
Death Valley National Monument
Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a study of visitors to Death Valley National Monument during July 18-24, 1990. English (393) and French (55) questionnaires were distributed and a total of 353 questionnaires were returned--a 79% response rate.
- This report profiles Death Valley visitors. A separate appendix has their comments about the park and their visit. A summary of these comments is included in this report and the appendix.
- Visitors were commonly families (62%); often in groups of two (40%) or four (24%). Thirty-three percent of visitors were 36-50 years old. Most (82%) were on their first Death Valley visit.
- Visitors from foreign countries comprised 72% of the total visitation and commonly came from France (29%), Germany (21%), and Switzerland (10%). Americans came from California (21%), Texas (10%), and many other states. The languages visitors understood and fluently spoke included English (86%), French (48%), German (40%) and others.
- Seventy-two percent of the visitors spent less than one day in the park. Most visitors viewed scenery (96%), took photographs (91%), and shopped (50%). At Death Valley, most visitors went to Furnace Creek, Zabriskie Point, and Sand Dunes. More of the visitors stopped first at Stovepipe Wells, Zabriskie Point, and Furnace Creek.
- Of the visitors who stayed at least one night, most stayed in motels rather than RV or tent campgrounds. Of the visitors staying in motels, 82% stayed one night.
- Fifty-eight percent of visitors said they were unable to see or do something they had planned to see or do during their Death Valley visit. The flashflooding which had closed the roads was the most common reason listed which prevented visitors from meeting their expectations.
- Eight-four percent of visitors said experiencing the desert was an extremely or very important feature to their visit. Visitors often purchased sales items at the visitor center or Scotty's Castle bookstores (59%). The most useful interpretive or information services that visitors identified were the park map/brochure, visitor center bookstore, visitor center museum, information signs, and ranger personnel. Visitors often cited viewing desert scenery (79%) as the primary reason they visited.
- Sixteen percent of the visitors visited Scotty's Castle. The excellent guides and guided tour were commonly listed as what visitors liked most about the castle's tours and services. Of the items visitors liked least, several listed "nothing;" others said the tour was too hot. They made many additional comments about their Death Valley visits.

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83843 or call (208) 885-7129.