

Introduction

The diverse resources and history of Mount Rainier National Park (NP) offer a variety of educational and recreational opportunities for visitors to experience. Over 1.3 million people visited Mount Rainier National Park during 2000. A visitor study was conducted in order to learn more about park visitors, their reasons for visiting, the activities they participated in and their opinions about a variety of issues.

The National Park Service Visitor Services Project, based at the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, conducted the visitor study during August 18-27, 2000. Of the 1,043 stamped, mail-back questionnaires distributed to visitors, 790 were returned for a 75.7% response rate.

This brochure shares some of the visitor study results with the public. The results displayed here are for individuals (see N= number at the top of Figure 1), while other results are shown for group types (see Figure 2).



Who were Mount Rainier’s visitors?

Mount Rainier NP summer visitors were typical of many visitors to units of the National Park System. For example, over one-half of visitors (56%) were family groups. Forty-two percent were in groups of two; another 32% were in groups of three or four. Fifty-seven percent were visitors aged 26-55 years, while 18% were children aged 15 years or younger.

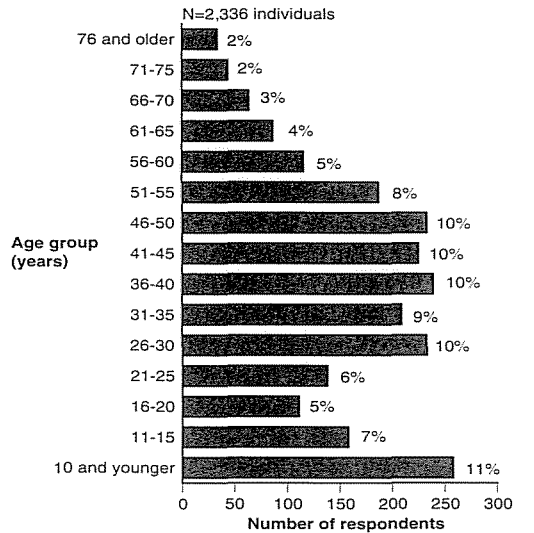


Figure 1: Visitor ages

Most visitors (94%) were from the United States including Washington (64%), California (6%) and 44 other states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Six percent were international visitors from Japan (20%), Germany (15%) and 25 other countries.

Fifty-one percent of the visitors were male; 49% were female. Visitors were highly educated: 32% had Bachelor’s degrees, 26% had graduate degrees and another 27% had some college.

Two percent of respondents were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Racial backgrounds of respondents included White (94%), Asian (6%) and 5% of other backgrounds. Most visitors (90%) spoke English as their primary language; 10% spoke other languages.

Most visitors (70%) were visiting Mt. Rainier NP for the first time in the past 12 months. Over one-half of the visitors (52%) visited more than once during the past two to five years.

How long did visitors stay?

Most visitors (69%) stayed less than 24 hours in the park. Of the visitors who spent one day or more, 19% spent two or three days.

How did visitors learn about the park?

Visitors most often (53%) relied on previous visits as their source of information to plan their visit. Travel guides/tour books, friends and relatives, and the Mount Rainier NP home page were the next most-used sources. Less than 1% of visitors wrote inquiries to the park.

What sites did visitors visit?

The most visited park locations were Paradise (62%), Longmire (38%) and Sunrise (27%). The least visited site was Westside Road (5%) of which only three miles is open to public use due to frequent glacial outburst floods.

In what activities did visitors participate?

Common visitor activities included dayhiking (73%), viewing wildflowers (65%), and driving to view scenery (63%), photography (56%), and visiting visitor centers (53%), as shown in Figure 2. The least common activity was bicycling (1%).

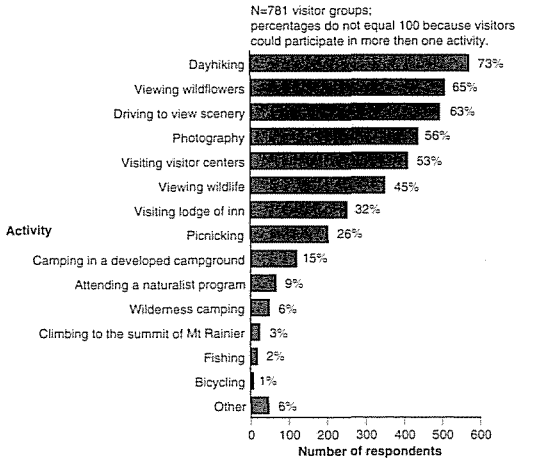


Figure 2: Visitor activities

What type of overnight accommodations did visitors use?

About one-third of the visitors (34%) stayed overnight away from home within 30 miles of the park. Of the visitors staying in the park, 57% stayed one or two nights. Most visitors (62%) who stayed outside the park, but within 30 miles, also stayed one or two nights. In the park, 52% of visitors stayed in campgrounds, while outside the park most visitors (64%) stayed in lodges, motels, cabins, etc. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Most used accommodations

Type of Lodging	In Park	Outside Park
Campground	52%	19%
Lodge/motel/cabin	33%	64%
Wilderness camp	20%	4%

How much did visitors spend?

Visitors were asked to list the amount of money they spent in Mount Rainier NP and the surrounding area (within 30 miles of the park). Expenditure information for lodging, camping fees, restaurants/bars, groceries/take-out food, gas/oil, other transportation expenses, admissions/ recreation/ entertainment, and all other purchases were requested.

The average visitor group expenditure in the park and surrounding area during this visit was \$205. The average per capita expenditure was \$69. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of groups spent more; 50% spent less) was \$53.

Most visitor groups (61%) spent up to \$100, although 12% spent \$351 or more. The greatest expenditures were for hotels, motels, cabins, bed and breakfasts.



How important were park attributes?

Visitors were asked, “For each of the following attributes of Mount Rainier NP, please rate its importance (from 1 to 5, or ‘don’t know’) in planning for the preservation of the park for future generations. The attributes receiving the highest combined ratings of “extremely important” and “very important” were clean air/water (96%), natural quiet/sounds of nature (92%), wildlife (91%) and native plants (90%), as shown in Figure 3.

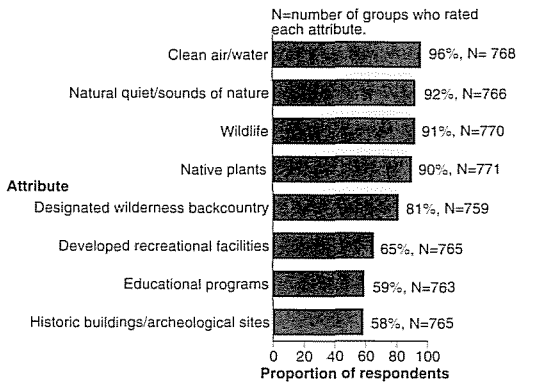


Figure 3: Combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings of park attributes

How do visitors want entrance fee monies spent in the future?

When asked about their preferences regarding how entrance fees should be used in the future, visitors wanted funding spent to study and monitor ecological issues in order to give people a better understanding of how to protect the park (61%), to manage wilderness and backcountry (60%) and to manage visitor

activities for the protection of park resources (57%). Management of historic buildings and archaeological sites (38%) was the least preferred use of future entrance fees.



How did visitors rate the overall quality of services?

Most visitor groups (90%) rated visitor services as “very good” or “good.” on this trip. No groups rated services as “very poor.”

A visitor’s comment:

We were impressed with how primitive the park was. We never felt like we were in a “tourist trap.” We thoroughly enjoyed the quietness both of sound and scenery.

For more information, please contact:
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Visitor Services Project

Mount Rainier National Park Visitor Study

Conducted in August 2000



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.