

---

# Death Valley National Park

## Visitor Study

Fall 1996



Visitor Services Project Report 90  
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



---

# Death Valley National Park

## Visitor Study

Fall 1996

Visitor Services Project Report 90  
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



University of Idaho



---

# Death Valley National Park Visitor Study

Fall 1996

Margaret Littlejohn

**Report 90**

April 1997

---

Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Chris Wall, the Death Valley '49ers, Inc. and the staff and volunteers of Death Valley National Park for their assistance with this study. The VSP acknowledges the Public Opinion Lab of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, for its technical assistance.

---

---

---

## Visitor Services Project Death Valley National Park Report Summary

- This report describes part of the results of a visitor study at Death Valley National Park during September 15-21, 1996. A total of 1,002 questionnaires were distributed. Visitors returned 805 questionnaires for an 80% response rate.
- This report profiles Death Valley visitors. A separate appendix has visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix contain a comment summary.
- Fifty-one percent of the visitors were in family groups. Sixty-one percent of Death Valley visitors were in groups of two; 24% were in groups of three or four. Six percent of visitors were in guided tour groups; no visitors were in school groups. Many visitors (41%) were aged 21-35, 36% were aged 46-65 and less than 3% were aged 15 years or younger.
- Among Death Valley visitors, 69% were international visitors. They were from Germany (42%), United Kingdom (17%), Holland (9%) and 22 other countries. United States visitors were from California (23%), Nevada (9%), Florida (7%) and 39 other states.
- Most visitors (82%) were visiting Death Valley for the first time. Two-thirds of the visitors (66%) stayed less than one day; 29% stayed one to two days. Common activities at Death Valley were sightseeing (96%), photography (92%) and hiking less than two hours (42%). The most often listed reason for visiting Death Valley (96%) was to view desert scenery.
- Most visitors (89%) said the park was one of several destinations on this trip. Many visitors (82%) stopped in Las Vegas, Nevada, on their way to or from the park. Las Vegas, Nevada was also the most common starting point and destination on the days visitors arrived at and left Death Valley. Panamint Springs and Death Valley Junction were the two most commonly used entrances and exits to Death Valley.
- Visitors listed the number of nights they stayed in different types of accommodations in and outside the park. The most used type of accommodation was motels in and outside the park. One-third of visitor groups (33%) stayed in a motel for one night in the park. Many groups (82%) stayed one or more nights in motels outside the park.
- The most visited places in Death Valley were Furnace Creek (82%), Zabriskie Point (72%) and the Sand Dunes (66%). The most important features or qualities to visitors were scenic vistas, wilderness/open space and the desert experience.
- For the use, importance and quality of services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups who responded to each question. The most used services or facilities by 726 respondents were roads (86%), restrooms (81%) and the park brochure/map (80%). According to visitors, the most important services were roads (93% of 598 respondents), campgrounds (93% of 97 respondents) and park directional signs (89% of 415 respondents). The best quality services were the park brochure/map (87% of 541 respondents), visitor center (86% of 478 respondents), visitor center bookstore (86% of 165 respondents), roads (86% of 588 respondents) and museum exhibits (86% of 298 respondents).
- Outside the park, the average visitor group expenditure in the park area was \$257. The average per capita expenditure was \$119. Inside the park, the average visitor group expenditure in the park area was \$102. The average per capita expenditure was \$76.
- Most visitors (90%) rated the overall quality of services in the park as "good" or "very good." Visitors made many additional comments.

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the  
University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7129 or 885-7863

---

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS	2
VISITOR RESULTS	4
Visitors contacted	4
Demographics	4
Length of stay	10
Activities	11
Was park primary destination?	12
Visits to surrounding towns	13
Entrances/exits used	14
Visit starting points/destinations	16
Nights stayed/types of accommodations used	20
Reasons for visiting	25
Places visited	26
Feature/quality importance	27
Visitor facilities/services: use, importance and quality	33
Expenditures	52
Overall rating of service quality	60
What visitors liked most	61
What visitors liked least	63
Planning for the future	66
Comment summary	69
ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS	71
QUESTIONNAIRE	72

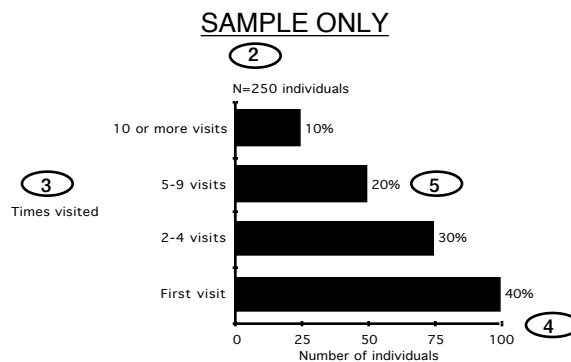
---

## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors to Death Valley National Park (referred to as "Death Valley"). This visitor study was conducted September 15-21, 1996 by the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP), part of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho.

A **Methods** section discusses the procedures and limitations of the study. A **Results** section follows, including a summary of visitor comments. Next, an **Additional Analysis** page helps managers request additional analyses. The final section has a copy of the **Questionnaire**. The separate appendix includes comment summaries and visitors' unedited comments.

Many of this report's graphs resemble the example below. The large numbers refer to explanations following the graph.



1 Figure 4: Number of visits

- 1: The figure title describes the graph's information.
- 2: Listed above the graph, the 'N' shows the number of visitors responding and a description of the chart's information. Interpret data with an 'N' of less than 30 with **CAUTION!** as the results may be unreliable.
- 3: Vertical information describes categories.
- 4: Horizontal information shows the number or proportions in each category.
- 5: In most graphs, percentages provide additional information.

---

## METHODS

---

### Questionnaire design and administration

The questionnaire design used the standard format of previous Visitor Services Project studies. A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this report.

Interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed at Visitor Center, Zabriskie Point, Dante's View, Furnace Creek Ranch General Store, Stovepipe Wells Store and Panamint Springs Store.

<u>Location:</u>	<u>Questionnaires distributed</u>	
	Number	%
Visitor Center	210	21
Furnace Creek Ranch Store	204	20
Scotty's Castle	201	20
Panamint Springs Store	105	11
Zabriskie Point	104	10
Stovepipe Wells Store	74	7
Badwater	55	6
Dante's View	49	5
GRAND TOTAL		
	1002	100

Visitor groups were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study and asked to participate. If visitors agreed, the interview took approximately two minutes. These interviews included determining group size, group type and the age of the adult who would complete the questionnaire. This individual was asked his or her name, address and telephone number for the later mailing of a reminder-thank you postcard.

Two weeks following the survey, a reminder-thank you postcard was mailed to all participants. Replacement questionnaires were mailed to participants who had not returned their questionnaires four weeks after the survey. Eight weeks after the survey, a second replacement questionnaire was sent to a random sample of visitors who had not returned their questionnaires.

---

---

Returned questionnaires were coded and the information entered into a computer. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated using a standard statistical software package. Respondents' comments were summarized.

### **Data analysis**

---

This study collected information on both visitor groups and individual group members. Thus, the sample size ('N'), varies from figure to figure. For example, while Figure 1 shows information for 803 groups, Figure 5 presents data for 2,019 individuals. A note above each figure's graph specifies the information illustrated.

### **Sample size, missing data and reporting errors**

Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered questions create missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure. For example, although 805 questionnaires were returned by visitors, Figure 1 shows data for only 803 respondents.

Questions answered incorrectly due to carelessness, misunderstanding directions and so forth, turn up in the data as reporting errors. These create small data inconsistencies.

---

Like all surveys, this study has limitations which should be considered when interpreting the results. **Limitations**

1. It is not possible to know whether visitor responses reflect actual behavior. This disadvantage applies to all such studies and is reduced by having visitors fill out the questionnaire soon after they visit the park.
2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of September 15-21, 1996. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors during other times of the year.
3. Caution is advised when interpreting any data with a sample size of less than 30, as the results may be unreliable. If the sample size is less than 30, the word "**CAUTION!**" is included in the graph, figure or table.

---

During the study week, weather conditions at the survey locations in Death Valley were fairly typical of September, with highs in the 90's to 100's on most days and in the 60's to 70's most nights. Scotty's Castle always has somewhat cooler temperatures than the main valley.

### **Special Conditions**

---



---

## DEATH VALLEY RESULTS

---

### Visitors contacted

At Death Valley, 1,171 visitor groups were contacted; 86% (1,002) accepted questionnaires. A total of 805 visitor groups completed and returned their questionnaires, an 80% response rate.

Table 1 compares information collected from the total sample of visitors contacted and the actual respondents who returned questionnaires. The non-response bias was insignificant.

---

**Table 1: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents**

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondent (years)	994	41.9	788	42.7
Group size	991	3.6	803	3.9

---

### Demographics

Figure 1 shows group sizes, which varied from one person to 50 people. Sixty-one percent of visitors came in groups of two; 24% came in groups of three or four. Fifty-one percent were families (see Figure 2). "Other" groups included coach tour, co-workers, girlfriend and various tour groups. Six percent of the visitors were traveling with a guided tour group (see Figure 3). No visitors (0%) were traveling with a school/college group (see Figure 4).

The most common visitor ages were 21-35 years (41%), as shown in Figure 5. Over one-third (36%) were aged 46-65. Less than three percent of visitors were aged 15 years or younger. When asked about the number of visits to Death Valley during the past year, most visitors (82%) said they were first-time visitors (see Figure 6).

International visitors comprised 69% of Death Valley visitors. They were from Germany (42%), United Kingdom (17%), Holland (9%) and 22 other countries, as shown in Table 2. United States visitors were from California (23%), Nevada (9%), Florida (7%) and 39 other states, as shown in Map 1 and Table 3.

---

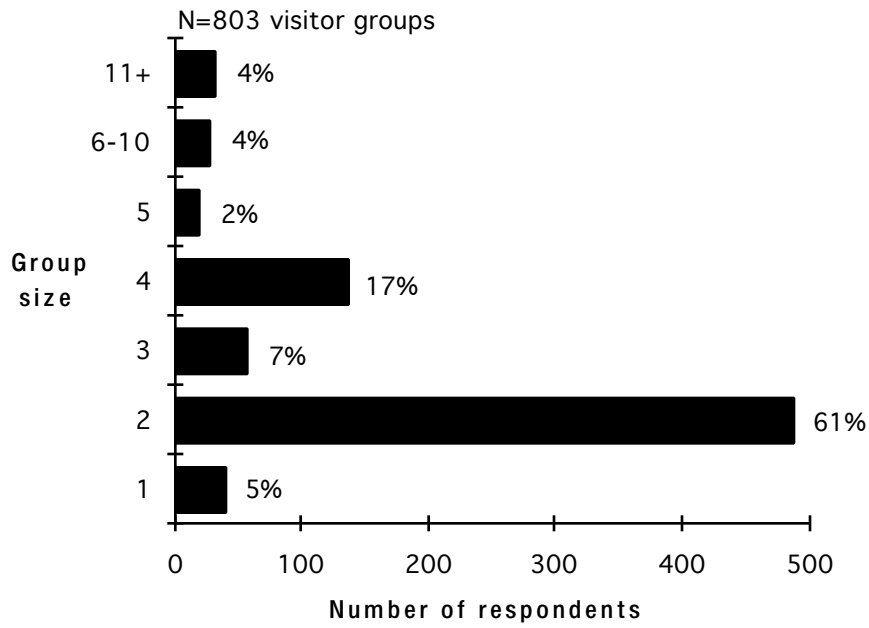


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

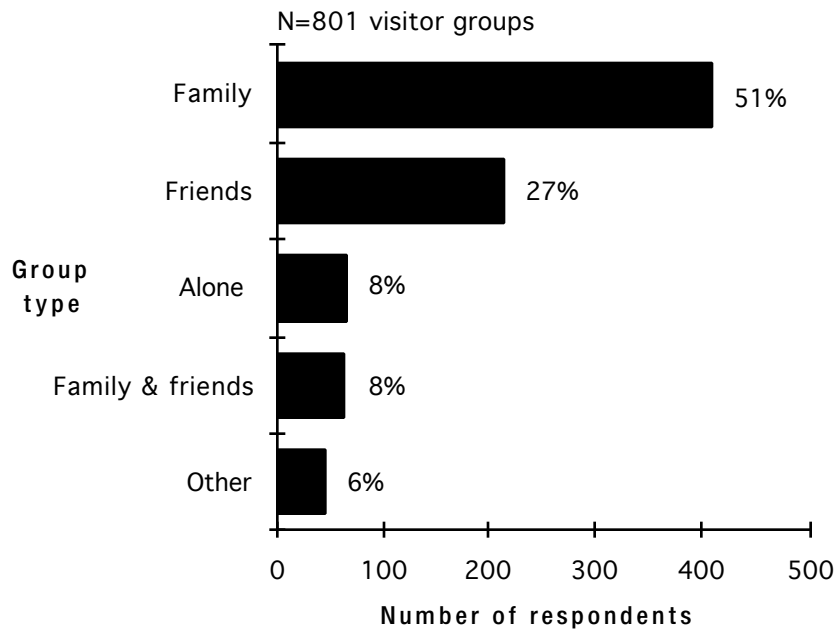
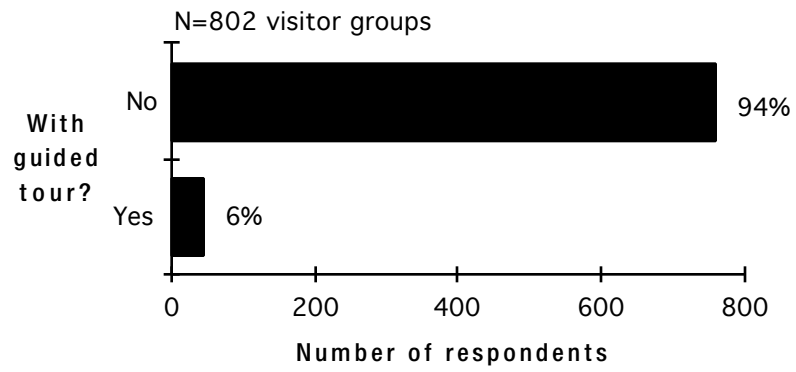
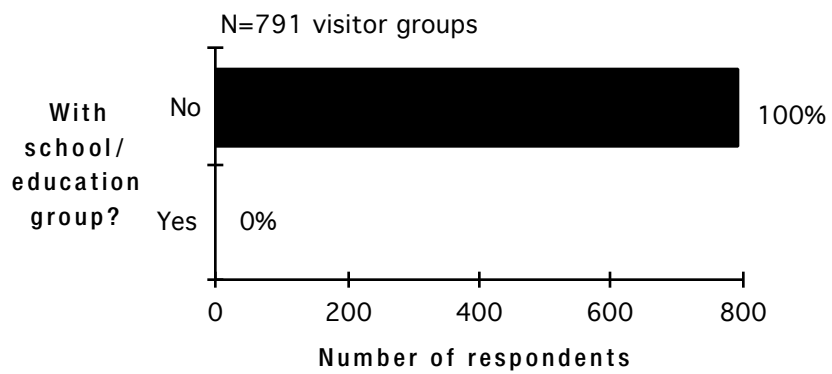


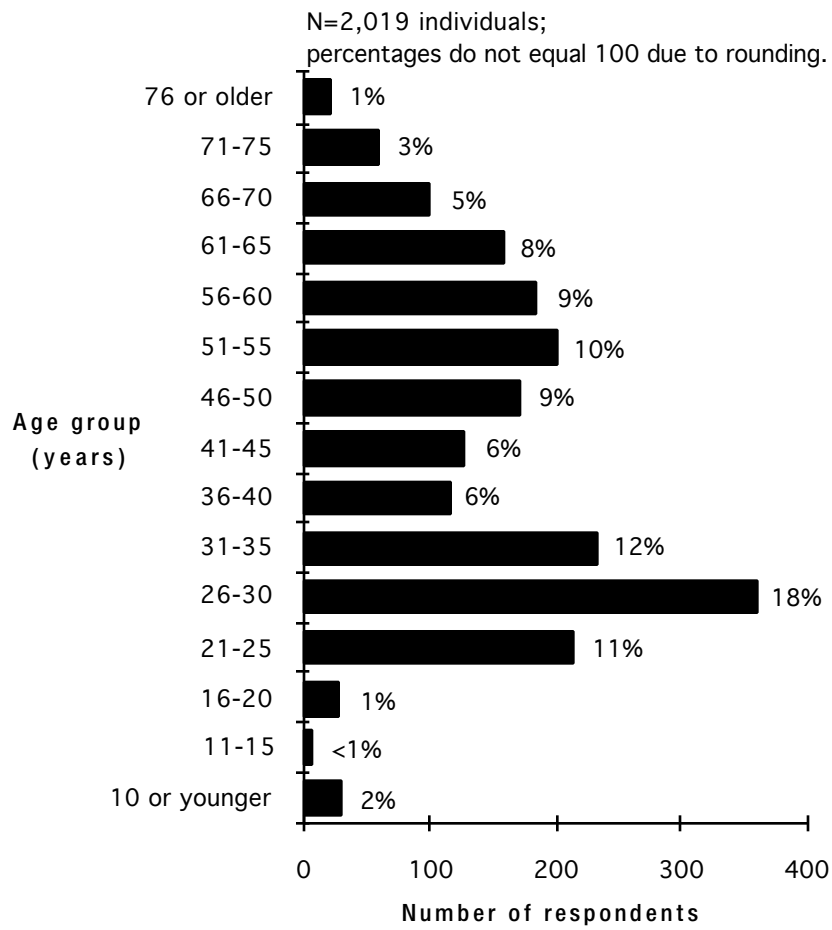
Figure 2: Visitor group types



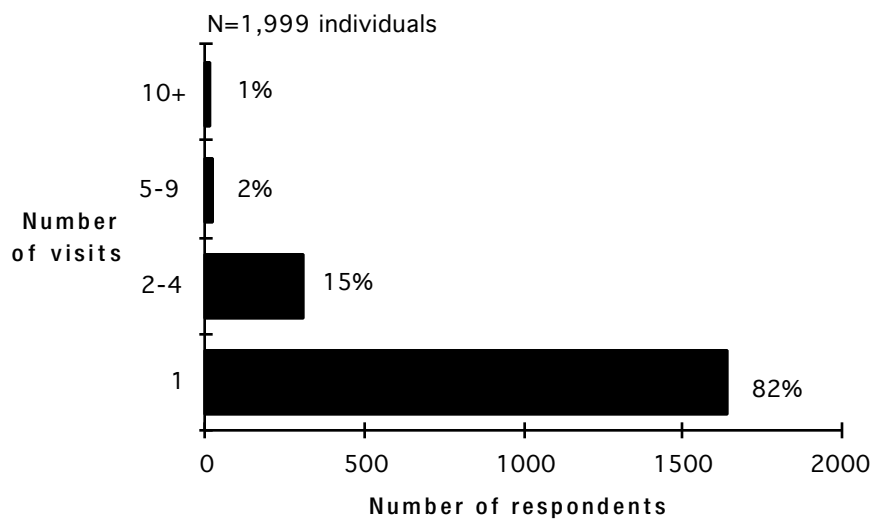
**Figure 3: Traveling with guided tour group (bus tour, etc.)?**



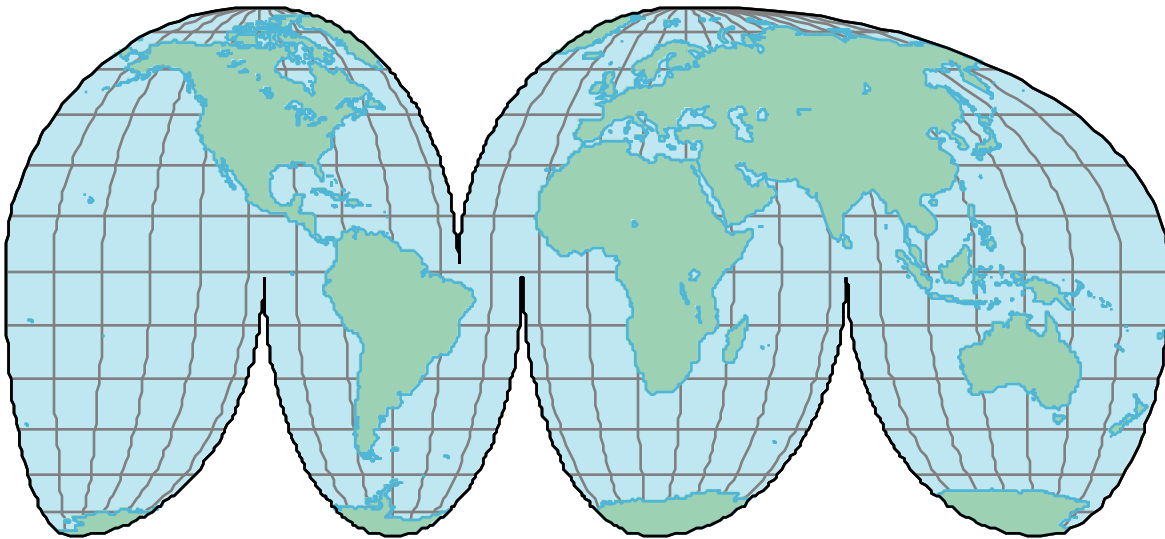
**Figure 4: Traveling with a school/educational group?**



**Figure 5: Visitor ages**



**Figure 6: Number of visits**

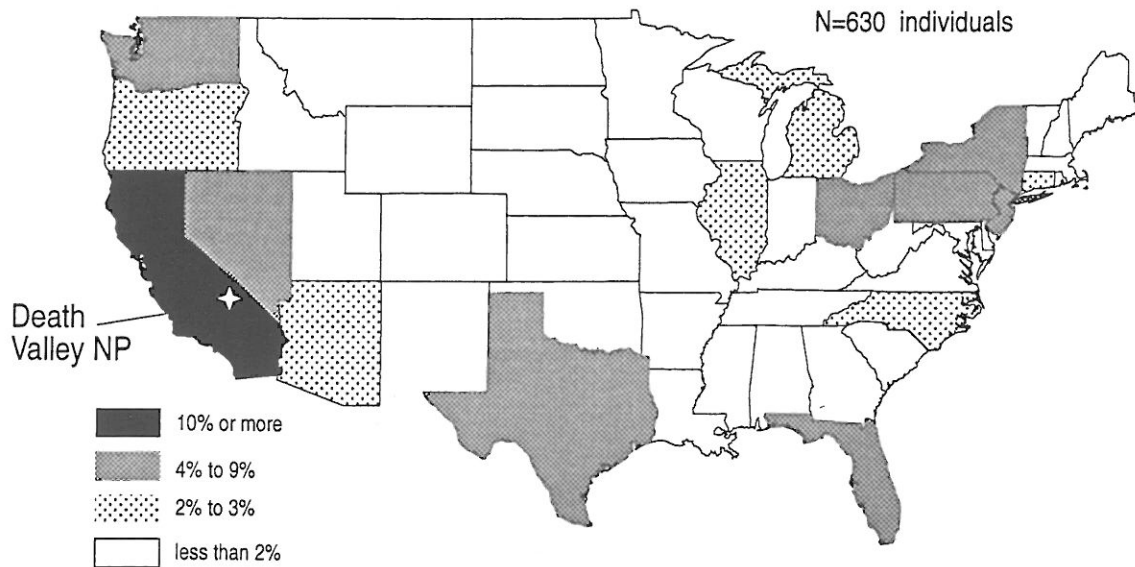


The world

**Table 2: Proportion of visitors from each foreign country**

N=1,370 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	% of international visitors	% of total visitors
Germany	577	42	29
United Kingdom	236	17	12
Holland	125	9	6
Switzerland	88	6	4
Belgium	81	6	4
France	66	5	3
Austria	44	3	2
Australia	37	3	2
Canada	31	2	2
Italy	30	2	2
Denmark	9	1	1
Czechoslovakia	8	1	less than 1%
Japan	8	1	↓
Luxembourg	8	1	
Norway	4	<1	
Sweden	3	<1	
Ireland	2	<1	
Korea	2	<1	
New Guinea	2	<1	
New Zealand	2	<1	
Poland	2	<1	
Spain	2	<1	
Brazil	1	<1	
Columbia	1	<1	
Croatia	1	<1	



**Map 1: Proportion of United States visitors from each state**

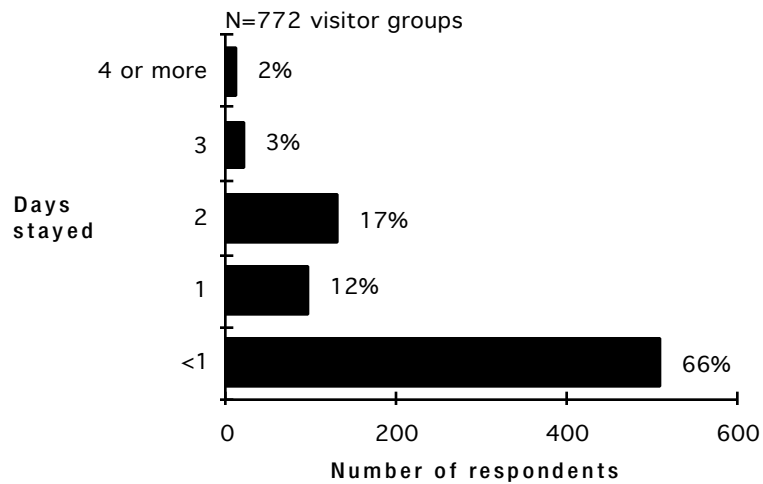
**Table 3: Proportion of United States visitors from each state**

N=630 individuals

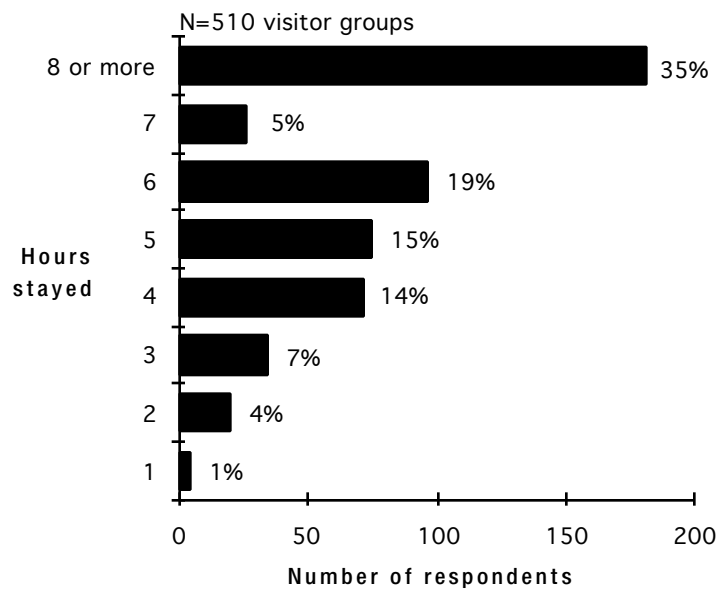
State	Number of individuals	% of U.S. visitors	% of total visitors
California	147	23	7
Nevada	57	9	3
Florida	44	7	2
Pennsylvania	32	5	2
Texas	30	5	2
New Jersey	25	4	1
New York	24	4	1
Ohio	24	4	1
Washington	22	4	1
Oregon	21	3	1
Michigan	20	3	1
Illinois	18	3	1
Arizona	17	3	1
North Carolina	14	2	1
Connecticut	10	2	1
Maryland	9	1	all others 1% or less ↓
Wisconsin	9	1	
Missouri	8	1	
Tennessee	8	1	
Alaska	6	1	
Kentucky	6	1	
New Hampshire	6	1	
Virginia	6	1	
Indiana	5	1	
South Carolina	5	1	
Other states (17)	57	9	

**Length of stay**

Visitors were asked how long they stayed at the park. About two-thirds of the visitors (66%) stayed less than one day in Death Valley (see Figure 7). Twenty-nine percent of visitors stayed one to two days. Of those visitors groups who spent less than a day in the park, 35% of the visitor groups stayed eight hours or more (see Figure 8). Almost half (48%) stayed four to six hours.



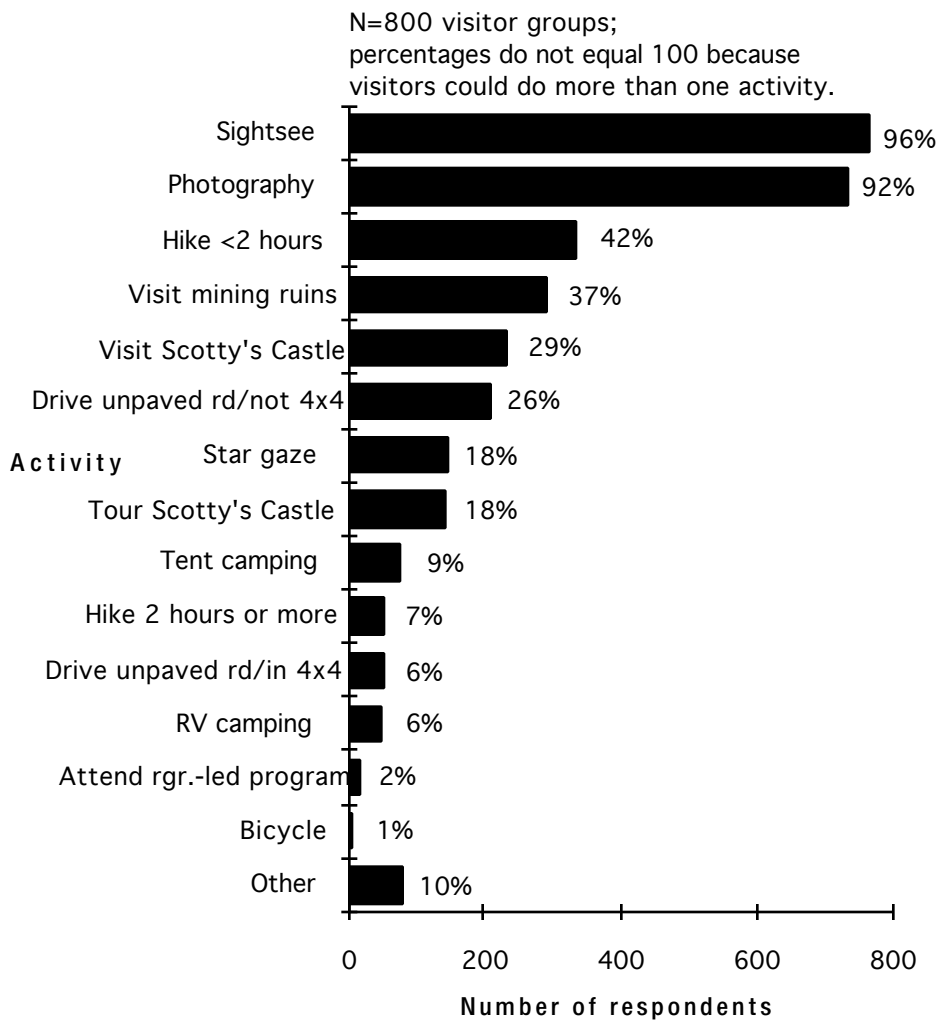
**Figure 7: Length of stay in Death Valley (days)**



**Figure 8: Length of stay in Death Valley (hours)**

**Activities**

Common visitor activities included sightseeing (96%), photography (92%), and hiking less than two hours (42%), as shown in Figure 9. The least common activity was bicycling (1%). On this visit, visitors identified "other" activities they did including visiting the visitor center, visiting the museum, watching the film, swimming, visiting Artists Palette, staying in park lodging, picnicking, and dining.

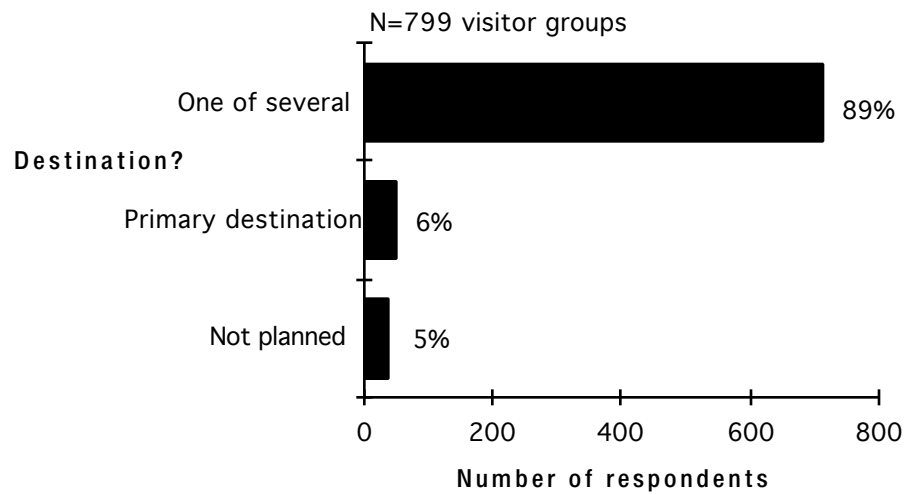


**Figure 9: Visitor activities**



**Was park primary destination?**

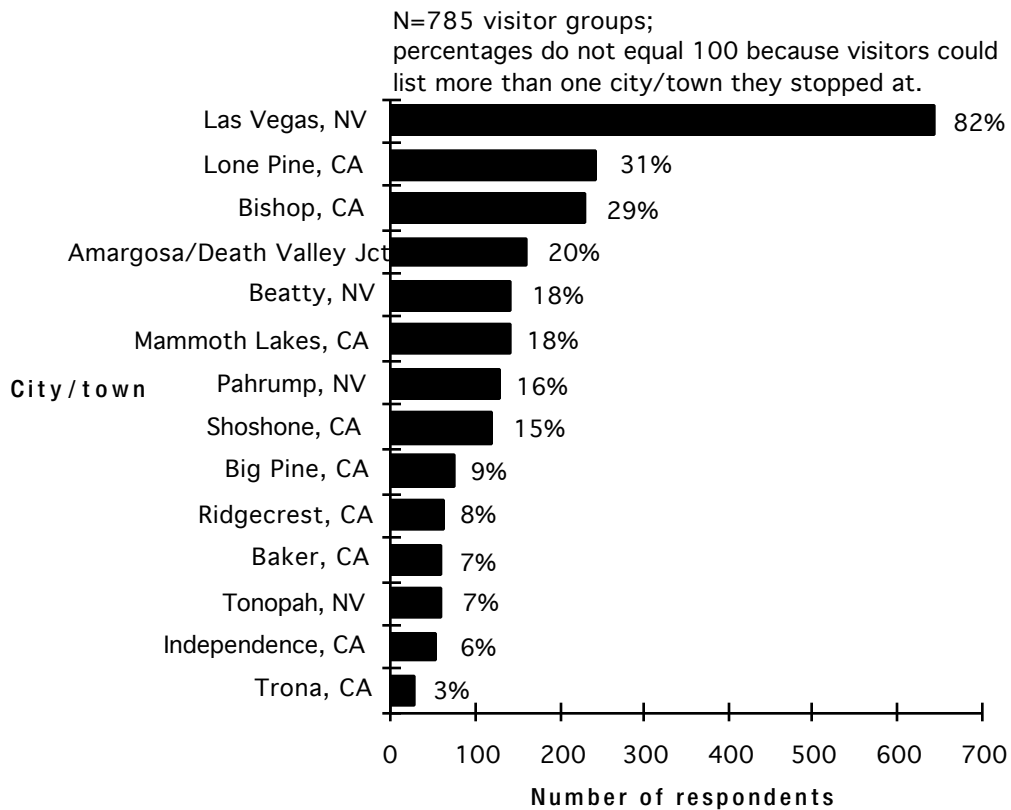
Most of the visitor groups (89%) said Death Valley National Park was one of several destinations (see Figure 10). Six percent of the visitors said the Death Valley was their primary destination and 5% said Death Valley was not a planned destination.



**Figure 10: Was park primary destination?**

Visitors were asked "On your way to or from Death Valley National Park on this visit, did you stop at any of the following cities/towns?" Many groups (82%) stopped at Las Vegas, Nevada (see Figure 11). The next most visited towns included Lone Pine (31%) and Bishop (29%) in California and Amargosa Valley, Nevada/Death Valley Junction, California (20%). The least visited town was Trona, California (3%).

**Visits to surrounding towns**



**Figure 11: Visits to surrounding towns**

**Entrances/  
exits used**

Visitors were asked to list the name of the place where they first entered Death Valley on this visit. The place where most visitors entered was Panamint Springs, followed by Death Valley Junction, Scotty's Castle/Scotty's Junction, Shoshone and Beatty (see Table 4).

They also listed the name of the place where they left Death Valley for the last time on this visit. The most commonly listed places where visitors left Death Valley were Panamint Springs, Death Valley Junction, Shoshone, Scotty's Castle/Scotty's Junction and Beatty (see Table 5).

---

**Table 4: Places where visitors entered Death Valley**

N=730 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Panamint Springs	261
Death Valley Junction	247
Scotty's Castle/Scotty's Junction	62
Shoshone	55
Beatty	50
Stovepipe Wells	22
Route 178 to Shoshone	18
Furnace Creek	13
Lathrop Wells	12
Highway 190	9
Trona	7
Pahrump	5
Big Pine	3
Sand dunes	3
Wildrose	3
Eureka Valley	2
Ballarat	1
Father Crowley Point	1
Furnace Creek Airport	1
Las Vegas Highway 95	1
Lone Pine dirt road	1
Marble Canyon	1
Titus Canyon	1
Ubehebe Crater	1

---

**Table 5: Places where visitors exited Death Valley**

N=775 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Panamint Springs	242
Death Valley Junction	207
Shoshone	106
Scotty's Castle/Scotty's Junction	54
Beatty	46
Route 178 to Shoshone	31
Furnace Creek	14
Highway 190	14
Lathrop Wells	11
Sand dunes	9
Stovepipe Wells	8
Trona	8
Las Vegas	5
Father Crowley Point	4
Pahrump	3
Wildrose	3
Eureka Valley	2
Wildrose to Trona	2
Rhyolite	1
Ubehebe Crater	1
Dumont Dunes	1
Saratoga Springs	1
Mosaic Canyon	1
Furnace Creek Airport	1

**Visit starting points/destinations** Visitors were asked to write the name of the nearest town and state where they spent the night before they arrived at Death Valley. The most often listed places were Las Vegas, Nevada; Lone Pine, Bishop and Yosemite National Park in California (see Table 6).

They were also asked to write where they planned to spend the night when they left Death Valley. The most often listed destinations were Las Vegas, Nevada; Mammoth Lakes, Bishop and Yosemite National Park in California. (see Table 7).

**Table 6: Places where visitors started before visiting Death Valley**

N=758 places

Place	Number of times mentioned
Las Vegas, NV	316
Lone Pine, CA	59
Bishop, CA	55
Yosemite National Park, CA	41
Beatty, NV	31
Mammoth Lakes, CA	26
Ridgecrest, CA	21
Tonopah, NV	13
Bakersfield, CA	12
Pahrump, NV	11
Panamint Springs, CA	8
Independence, CA	7
Lee Vining, CA	7
Zion National Park, UT	7
Olancho, CA	6
Reno, NV	6
Amargosa Valley, NV	5
Barstow, CA	5
Kingman, AZ	5
Laughlin, NV	5
Sequoia National Park, CA	5
Shoshone, CA	5
Baker, NV	4
Big Pine, CA	3
Ely, NV	3
Furnace Creek, CA	3
Grand Canyon National Park, CA	3
Indian Springs, CA	3
Kernville, CA	3
Lake Isabella, CA	3
Los Angeles, CA	3
San Francisco, CA	3
Three Rivers, CA	3

---

Place (continued)	Number of times mentioned
Boulder City, NV	2
Bryce Canyon National Park, UT	2
Bullhead, AZ	2
Death Valley Junction, CA	2
Fresno, CA	2
June Lake, CA	2
Mariposa, CA	2
Mesquite, NV	2
Minden, NV	2
Mojave National Preserve, CA	2
St. George, UT	2
Stovepipe Wells, CA	2
Tecopa Hot Springs, CA	2
Wells, NV	2
Williams, AZ	2
Bass Lake, CA	1
Bridgeport, CA	1
Burbank, CA	1
Cedar City, UT	1
Detroit, MI	1
Four Corners	1
Goldfield, NV	1
Hawthorne, NV	1
Henderson, NV	1
Irvine, CA	1
Kennedy Meadows, CA	1
Klamath Falls, OR	1
Lake Elsinore, CA	1
Lake Mead, NV	1
Lake Tahoe, CA	1
Lancaster, CA	1
Long Beach, CA	1
Merced, CA	1
Mt. Carmel Junction, UT	1
Newberry Springs, CA	1
Oakhurst, CA	1
Overton, NV	1
Palm Springs, CA	1
Panguitch, UT	1
Porterville, CA	1
Red Rock Canyon SP,	1
Salton Sea/Luido, CA	1
San Diego, CA	1
Scottsdale, AZ	1
Sedona, AZ	1
Silver Oak, CA	1
Springdale, UT	1
The Dalles, OR	1
Trona, CA	1
Visalia, CA	1
Walker Lake, NV	1
Winnemucca, NV	1
Wofford Heights, CA	1

---

**Table 7: Destinations where visitors planned to go after leaving Death Valley**

N=743 places

Place	Number of times mentioned
Las Vegas, NV	315
Mammoth Lakes, CA	48
Bishop, CA	42
Yosemite National Park, CA	40
Lone Pine, CA	37
Pahrump, NV	16
Lee Vining, CA	15
Beatty, NV	11
Sequoia National Park, CA	11
Ridgecrest, CA	10
Tonopah, NV	9
Mariposa, CA	9
Bakersfield, CA	8
Oakhurst, CA	8
Barstow, CA	7
Shoshone, CA	7
Los Angeles, CA	6
Olancho, CA	6
St. George, UT	6
Visalia, CA	6
Amargosa Valley, NV	5
Big Pine, CA	5
Grand Canyon National Park, CA	5
Laughlin, NV	5
Anaheim, CA	4
Death Valley Junction, CA	4
Independence, CA	4
Modesto, CA	4
Mojave National Preserve, CA	4
Zion National Park, UT	4
Boulder City, NV	3
Bullhead, AZ	3
Reno, NV	3
South Lake Tahoe, CA	3
Apple Valley, CA	2
Baker, CA	2
Bridgeport, CA	2
Cerro Gordo, CA	2
Ely, NV	2
Fresno, CA	2
Kingman, AZ	2
Lake Isabella, CA	2
Long Beach, CA	2
San Bernardino, CA	2
San Francisco, CA	2
Tecopa Hot Springs, CA	2
Williams, AZ	2

---

Place (continued)	Number of times mentioned
Alturas, CA	1
Buena Park, CA	1
Burbank, CA	1
Cedar City, UT	1
Chicago, IL	1
Delta, CA	1
Dumont Dunes, CA	1
El Portal, CA	1
Folsom, CA	1
Half Moon Bay, CA	1
Henderson, NV	1
Hesperia, CA	1
Hurricane, UT	1
Indian Springs, CA	1
June Lake, CA	1
Kernville, CA	1
La Mesa, CA	1
Lancaster, CA	1
Lofton, NV	1
Longstreet, CA	1
Manhattan Beach, CA	1
Markleville, CA	1
Mesquite, NV	1
Minden, NV	1
Moab, UT	1
Murrieta, CA	1
Panaca, NV	1
Perris, CA	1
Pineville, CA	1
Rainbow Basin, CA	1
Redondo Beach, CA	1
San Diego, CA	1
Santa Monica, CA	1
Searchlight, NV	1
Sonora, CA	1
Stovepipe Wells, CA	1
Temecula, CA	1
Three Rivers, CA	1
Tipton, CA	1
Trona, CA	1
Twentynine Palms, CA	1
Victorville, CA	1
Walker, CA	1
Westland, MI	1

---



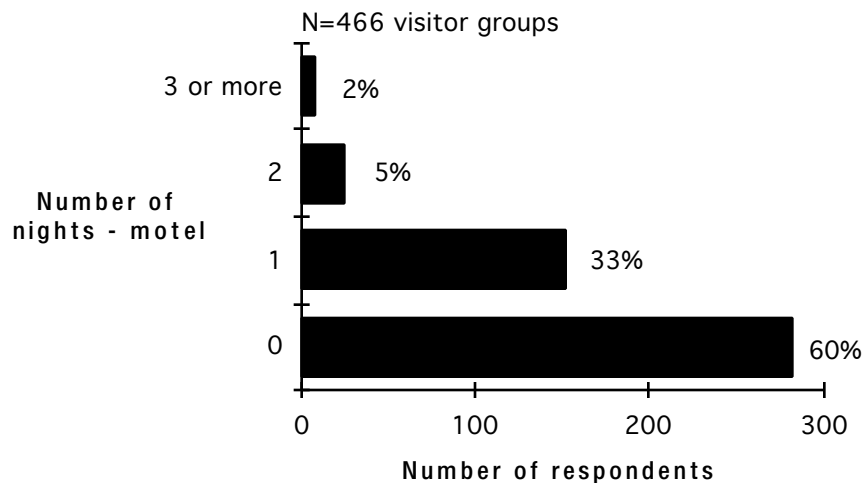
**Nights stayed/types of accommodations used**

Visitors were asked to list the number of nights they stayed in each type of accommodation in Death Valley during this visit, both in and outside the park.

**Inside the park:** In motels, 60% of the visitor groups stayed no nights; 33% spent one night (see Figure 12). In RV campgrounds, 88% of the groups did not spend any nights; 9% spent one night (see Figure 13). In tent campgrounds, 77% of the visitor groups stayed no nights; 17% stayed one night (see Figure 14). In other accommodations, 88% of the groups stayed no nights; 9% stayed one night (see Figure 15).

**Outside the park:** In motels, 32% of the visitor groups stayed one night; 28% stayed two nights (see Figure 16). In RV campgrounds, 73% of the groups did not spend any nights; 11% stayed one night (see Figure 17). In tent campgrounds, 81% of the visitor groups stayed no nights; 13% stayed one night (see Figure 18). In other accommodations, 66% of the groups stayed no nights; 13% stayed one night and 13% stayed three or more nights (see Figure 19).

"Other" types of accommodations that visitors listed included hotels, Furnace Creek Inn, Furnace Creek Ranch, with family, with friends, and parked at a viewpoint.



**Figure 12: Number of nights at motel inside park**

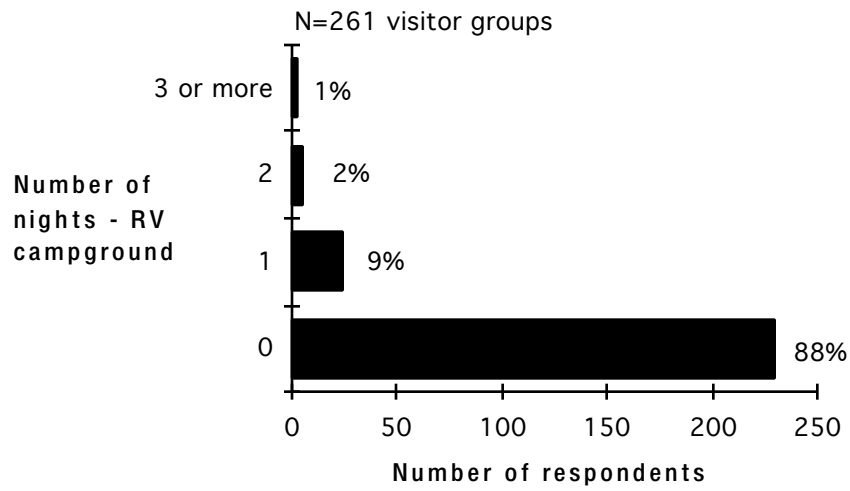


Figure 13: Number of nights at RV campground inside park

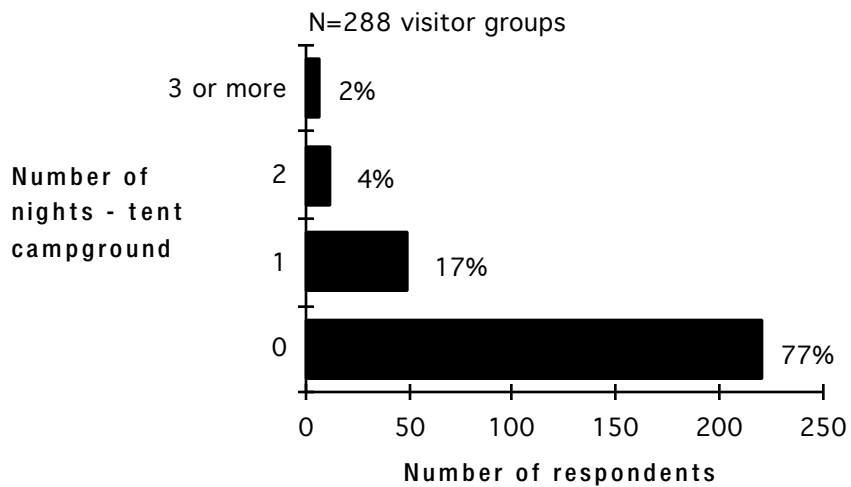
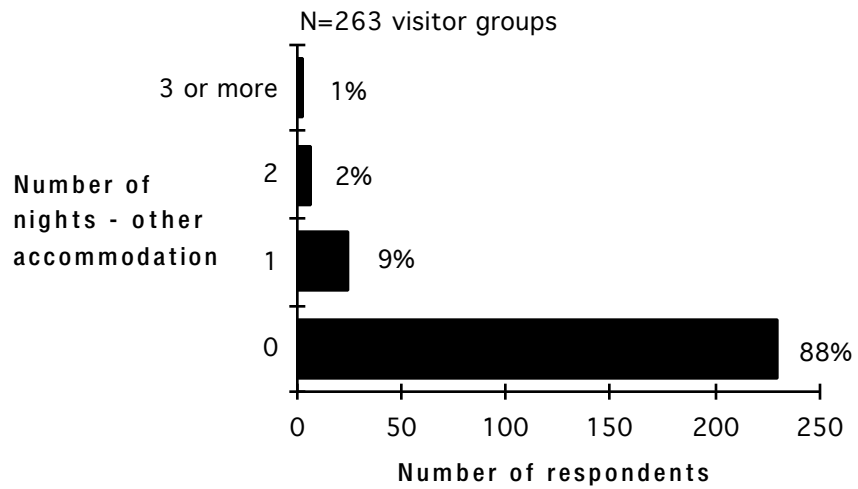
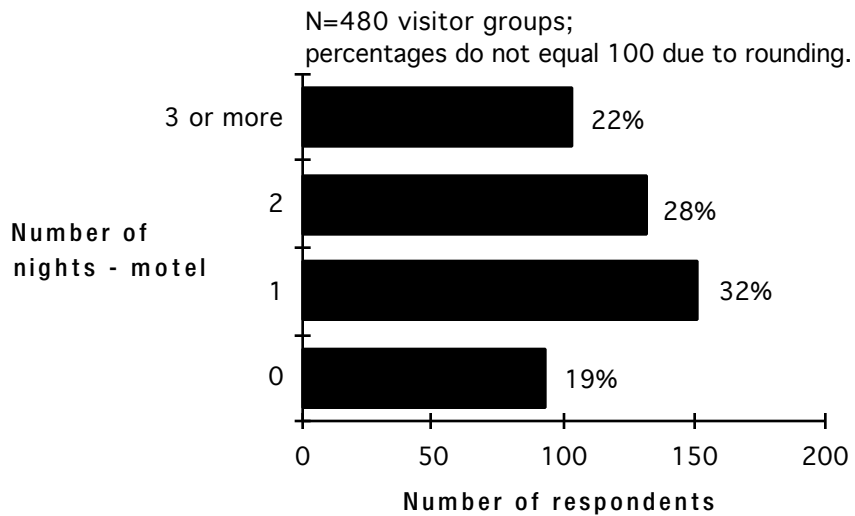


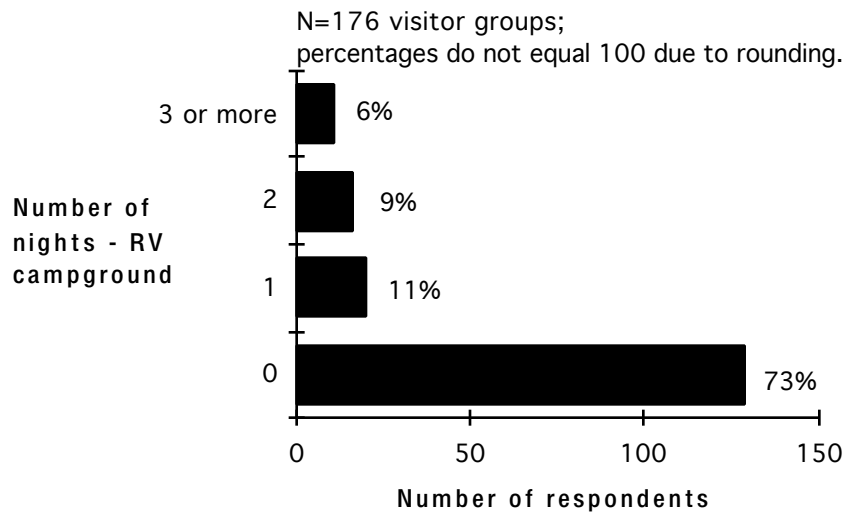
Figure 14: Number of nights at tent campground inside park



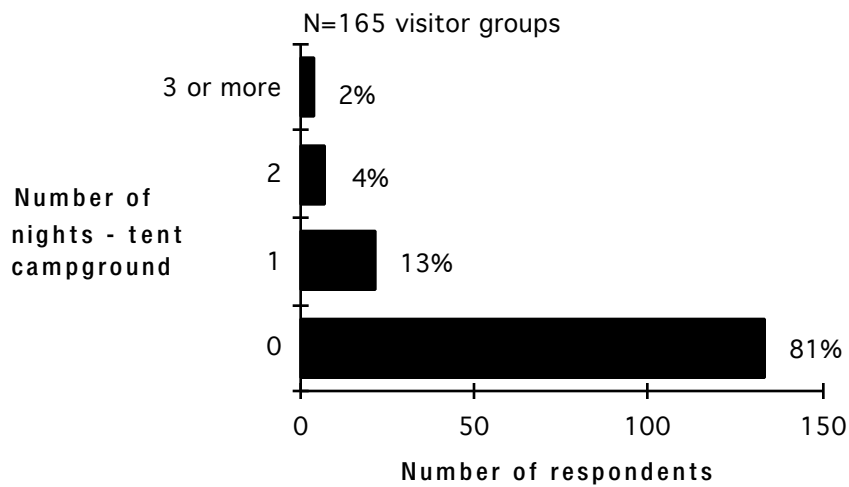
**Figure 15: Number of nights at other accommodations inside park**



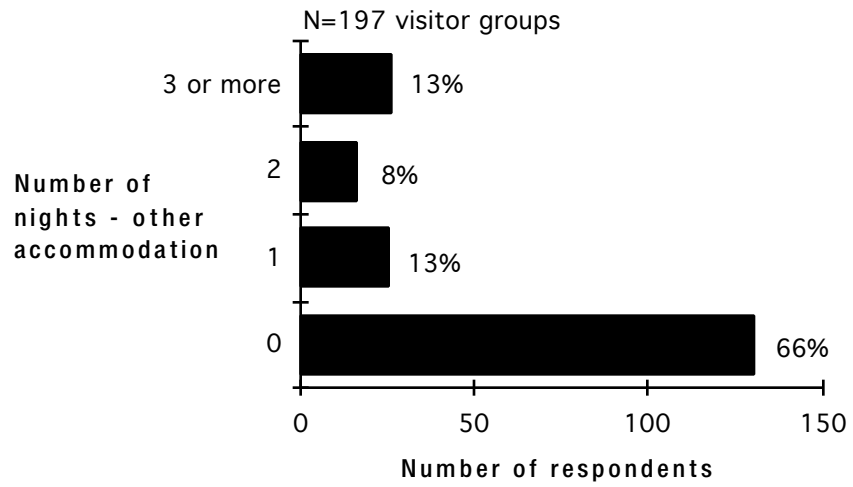
**Figure 16: Number of nights at motel outside park**



**Figure 17: Number of nights at RV campground outside park**



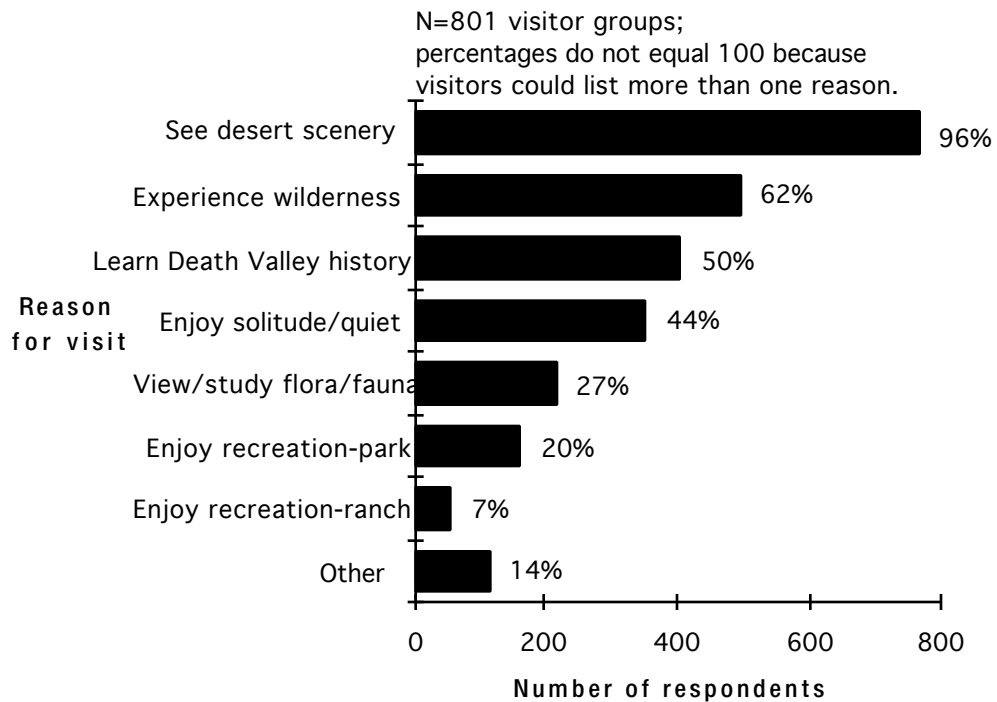
**Figure 18: Number of nights at tent campground outside park**



**Figure 19: Number of nights at other accommodations outside park**

Visitors were asked to list their reasons for visiting the park. The most frequently listed reason was to see desert scenery (96%), as shown in Figure 20. Other reasons included experiencing the wilderness, learning Death Valley history and enjoying solitude and quiet. The reason least often identified was to enjoy recreation at the ranch (golf, swim, etc.). "Other" reasons that visitors came were to experience the heat, visit Scotty's Castle, visit the lowest point in the United States, take photographs, see the geology, show park to guests, and to see it for themselves.

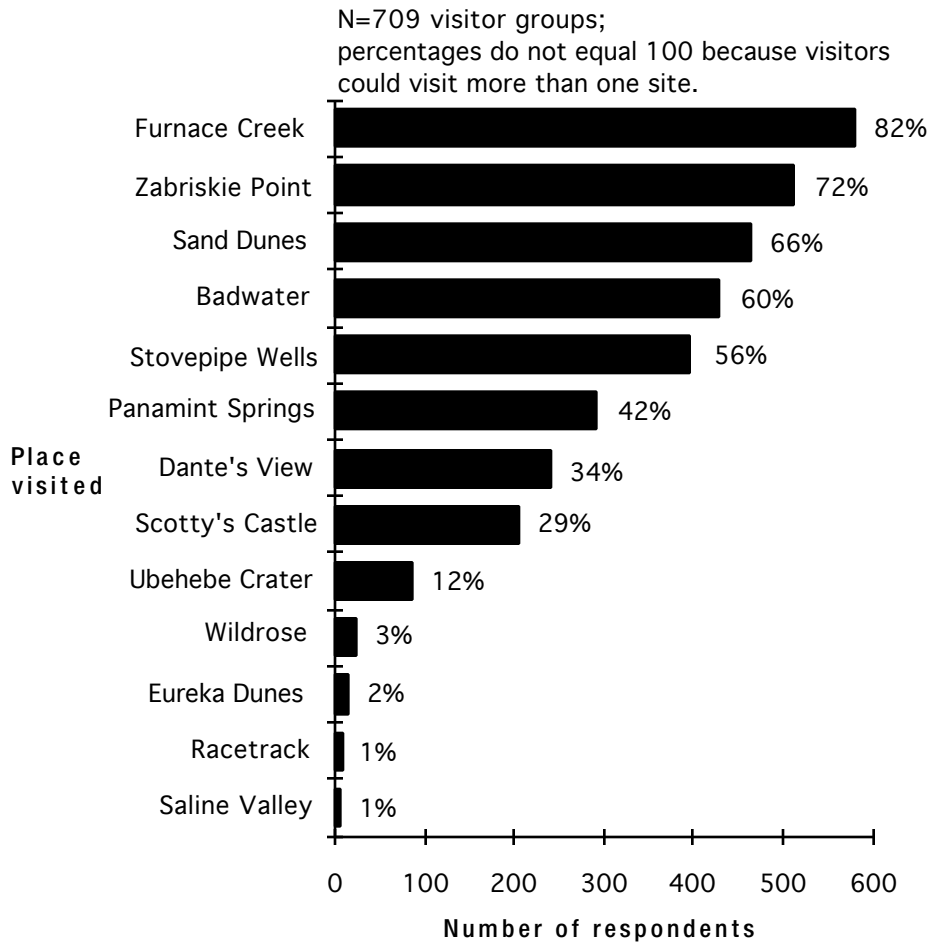
**Reasons for visiting**



**Figure 20: Reasons for visiting**

**Places visited**

Visitors were asked to list the places they visited in Death Valley National Park on this trip. The most visited places were Furnace Creek (82%), Zabriskie Point (72%), the Sand Dunes (66%), Badwater (60%) and Stovepipe Wells (56%), as shown in Figure 21. The least visited sites were the Racetrack and Saline Valley (each 1%).



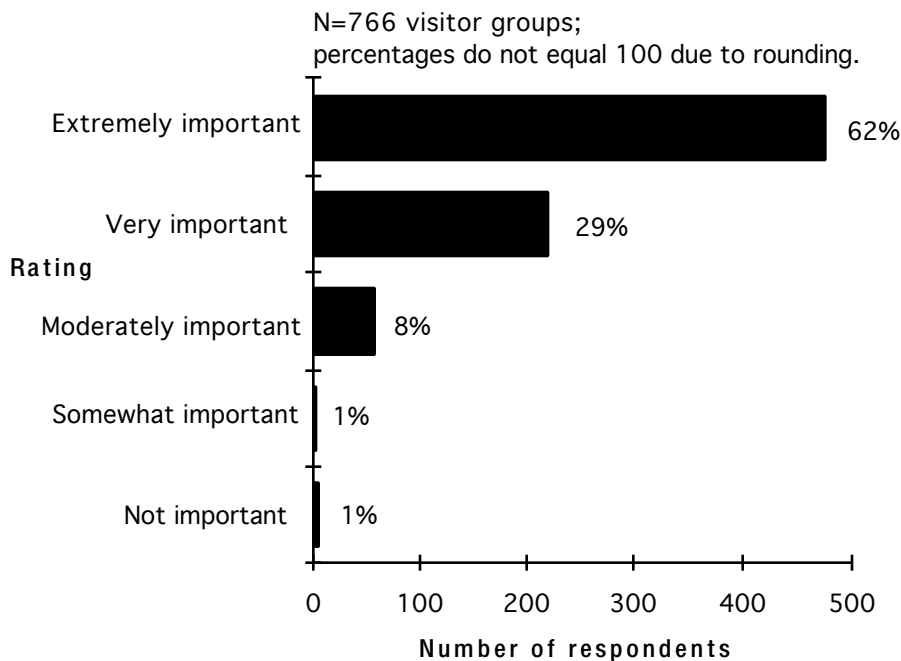
**Figure 21: Places visited**

Visitors were asked to rate the importance of certain features or qualities to this trip to Death Valley National Park. The features or qualities they rated were scenic vistas, desert experience, clean air, quiet, wilderness/open space, star gazing/night sky, and historic and prehistoric site preservation (see Figures 22 to 29).

**Feature/  
quality  
importance**

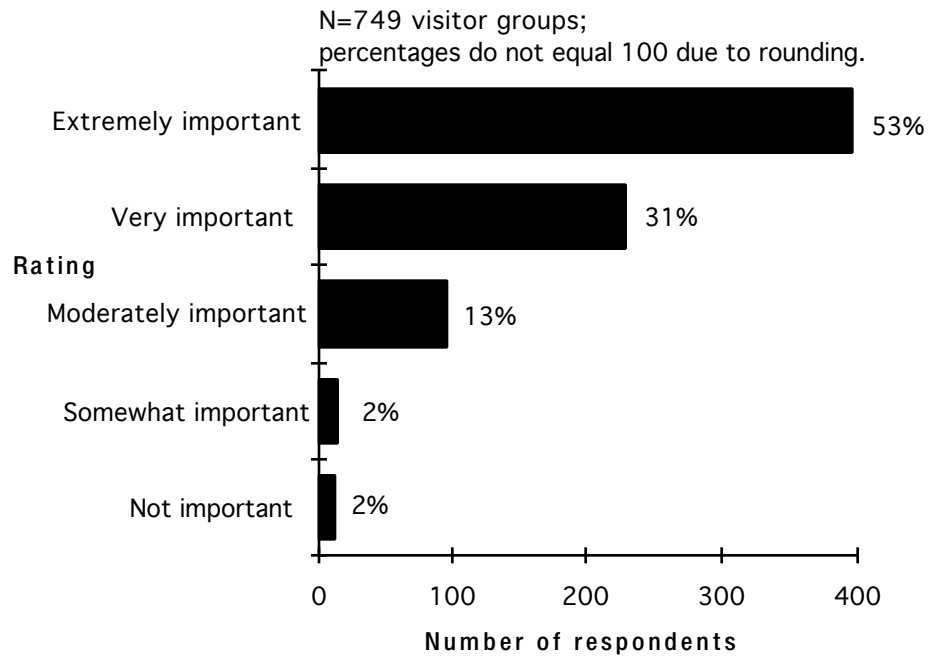
The highest "very important" to "extremely important" ratings were for scenic vistas (91%), desert experience (84%) and wilderness/open space (83%). The highest "not important" rating was for star gazing/night sky (19%).

Visitors were asked if anything detracted from their enjoyment of the above features or qualities. Most groups (86%) said that nothing detracted from their enjoyment, but 14% said something did detract from their enjoyment of these features or qualities (see Figure 30). Table 8 lists the ways that visitors' enjoyment of these features and qualities was diminished. Too many people and too many tour buses were the most listed reasons which reduced visitors' enjoyment of the features and qualities.

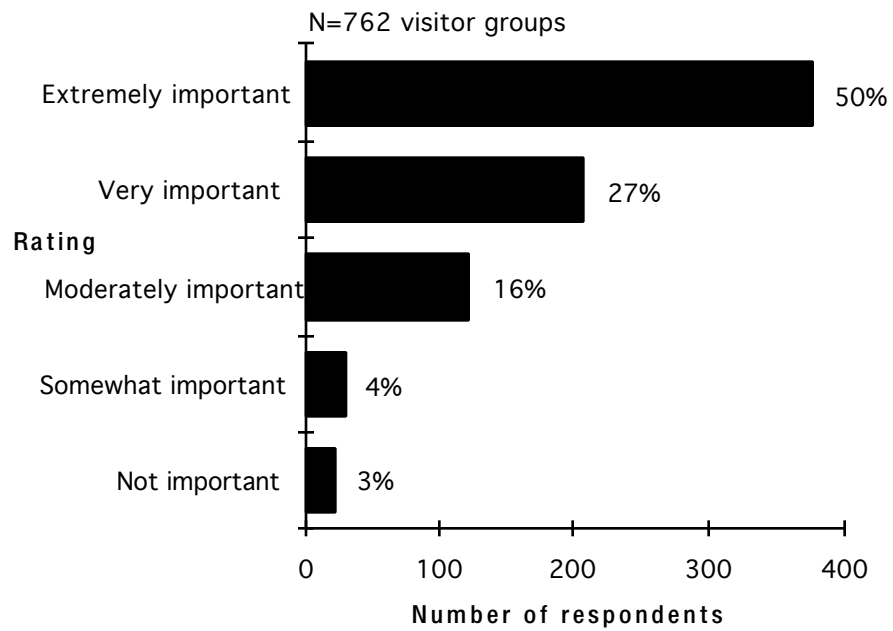


**Figure 22: Importance of scenic vistas**

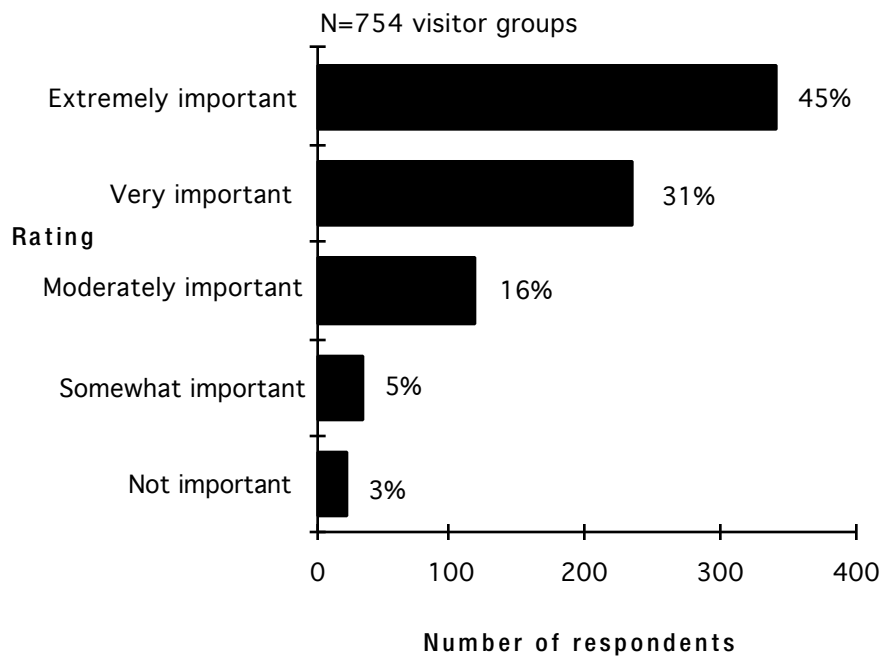




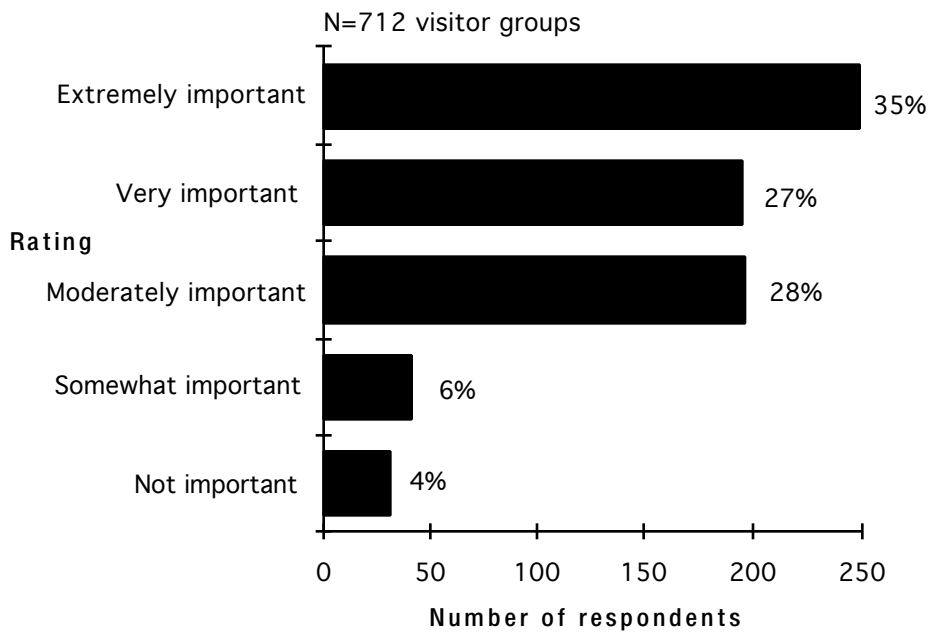
**Figure 23: Importance of desert experience**



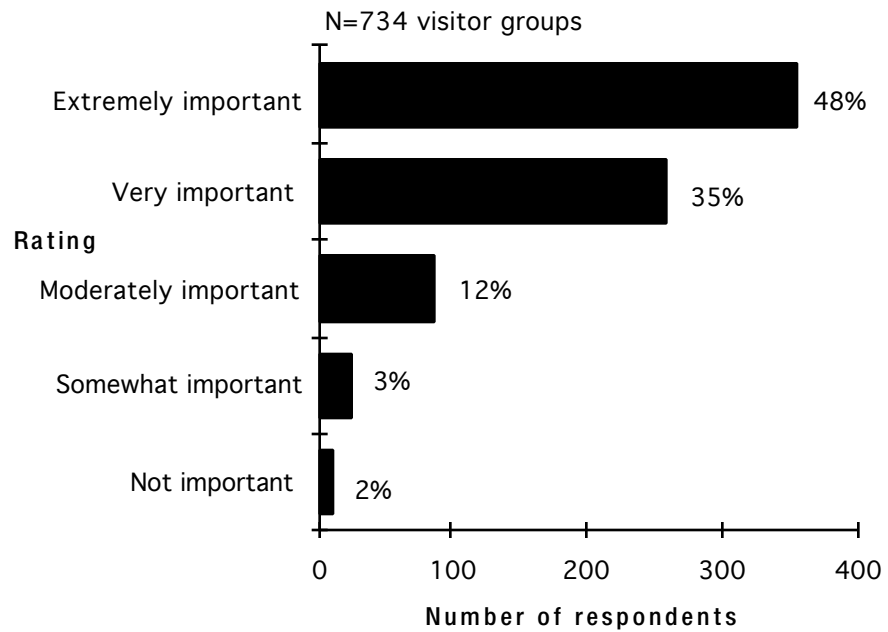
**Figure 24: Importance of clean air**



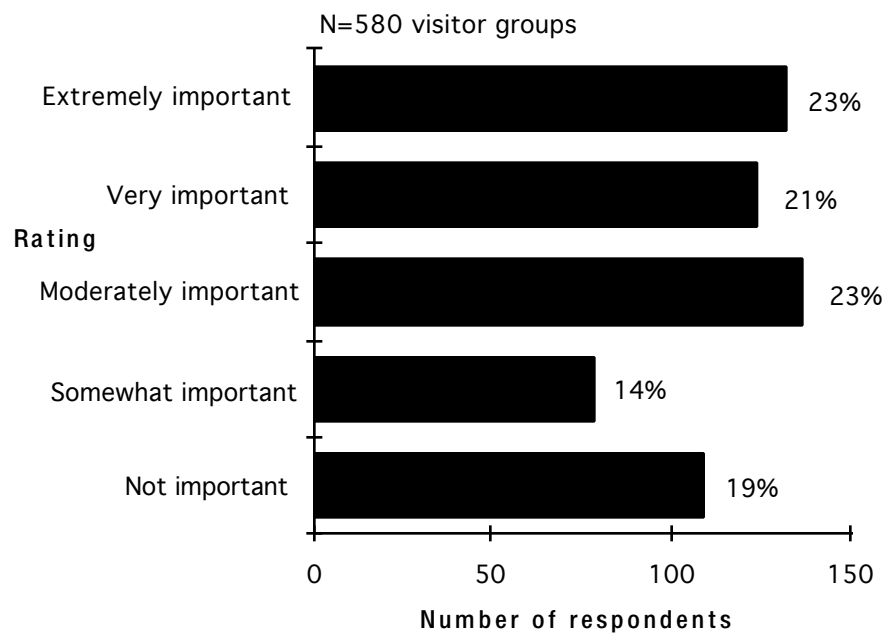
**Figure 25: Importance of quiet**



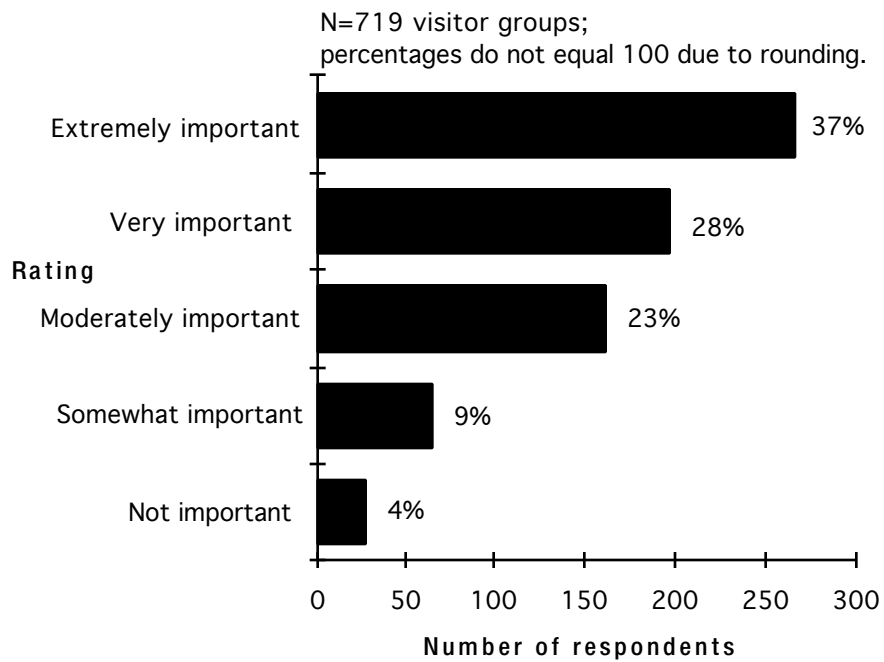
**Figure 26: Importance of solitude**



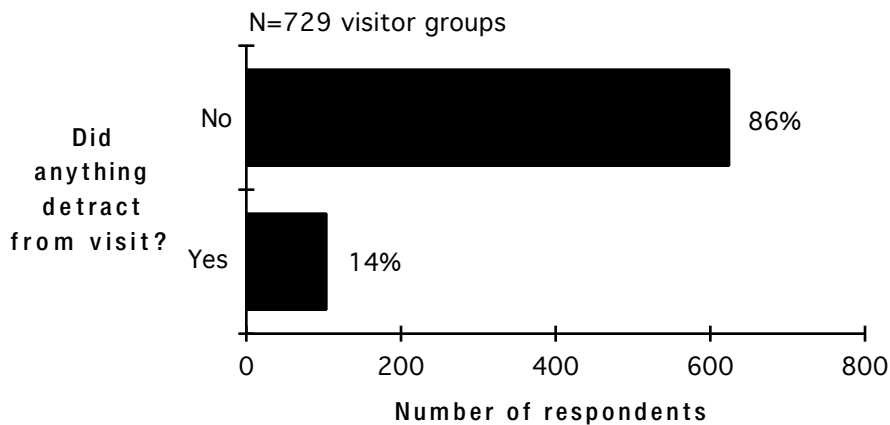
**Figure 27: Importance of wilderness/open space**



**Figure 28: Importance of star gazing/night sky**



**Figure 29: Importance of historic and prehistoric site preservation**



**Figure 30: Did anything detract from enjoyment of above features/qualities**

---

**Table 8: Ways that visitors' enjoyment of features/qualities was diminished**

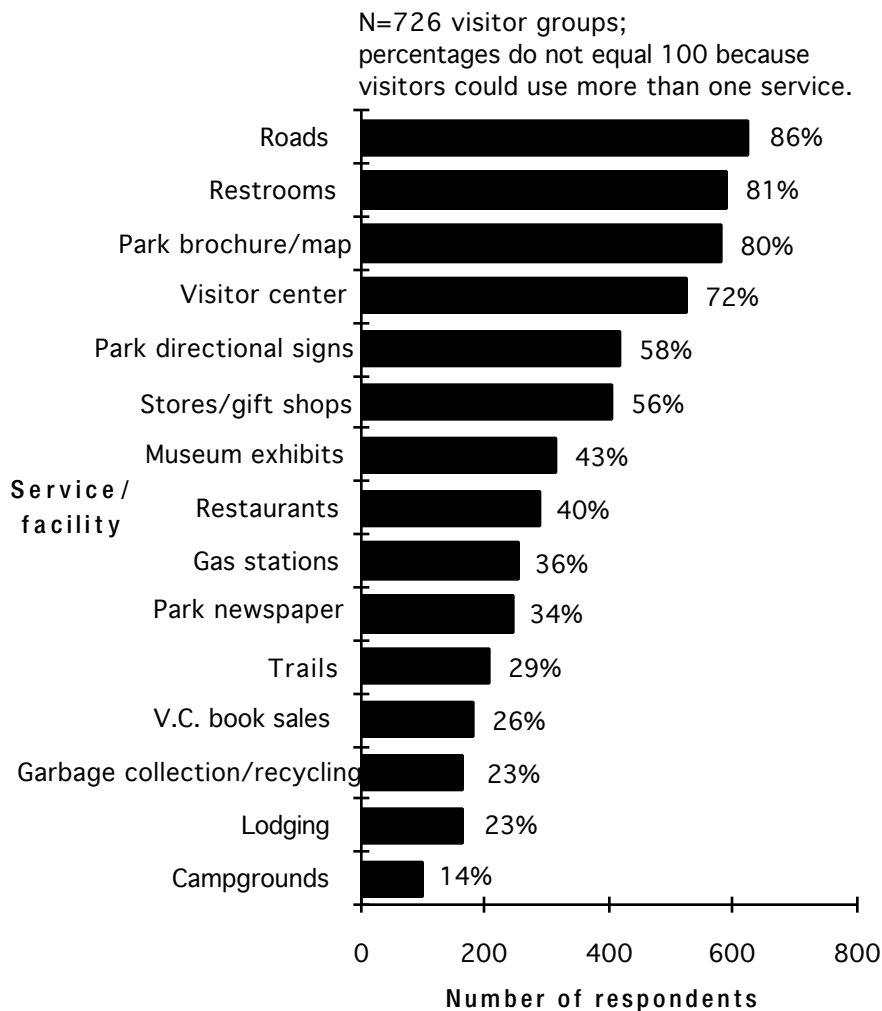
N=82 comments;  
some visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Too many people/crowded	14
Too many tour buses	10
Temperature too hot	7
Not enough time	5
Noisy campers nearby	5
Poorly maintained roads	4
Campground full	3
Furnace Creek restaurant closed	2
Strong wind	2
Trash/cigarette butts	2
Lacked information needed	2
Campgrounds need improved	2
Other comments	24

---

The most commonly used visitor services and facilities at Death Valley were the roads (86%), restrooms (81%), park brochure/map (80%), visitor center (72%) and park directional signs (58%), as shown in Figure 31. The least used facility was the campgrounds (14%).

**Visitor services and facilities: use, importance and quality**



**Figure 31: Use of visitor services and facilities**

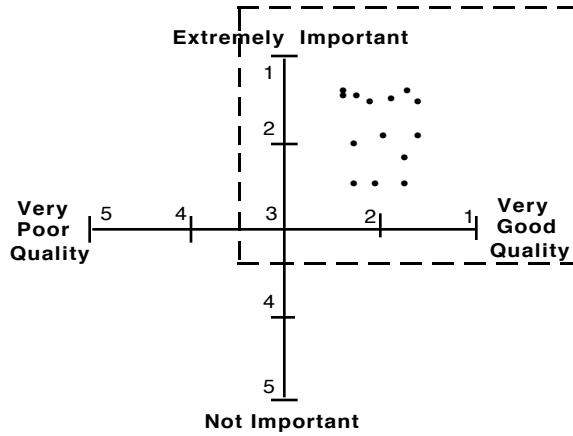
Visitors rated the importance and quality of each of the visitor services and facilities they used. They used a five point scales (see boxes below).

IMPORTANCE	QUALITY
1=extremely important	1=very good
2=very important	2=good
3=moderately important	3=average
4=somewhat important	4=poor
5=not important	5=very poor

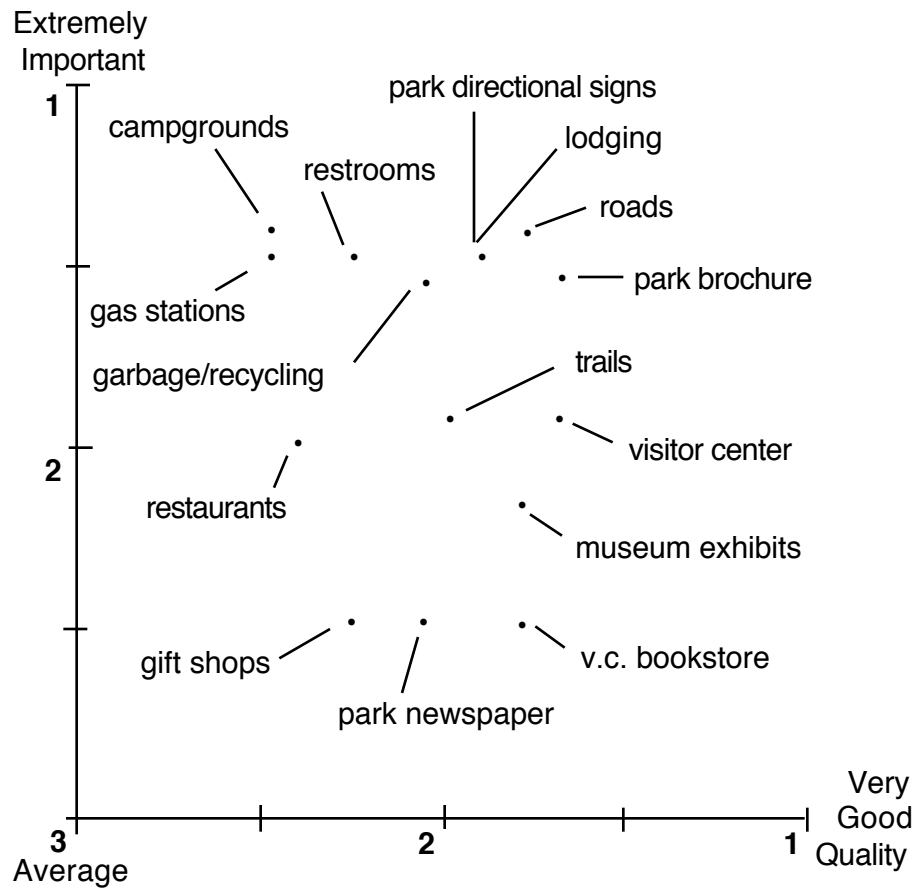
Figure 32 shows the average importance and quality ratings for each service. An average score was determined for each service based on ratings by visitors who used that service. This was done for both importance and quality. The results were plotted on the grid shown in Figure 32. All services were rated above average in importance and quality.

Figures 33-47 show that several services received the highest "very important" to "extremely important" ratings: roads (93%), campgrounds (93%), and park directional signs (89%). The highest "not important" rating was for the park newspaper (4%).

Figures 48-62 show that several services were given high "good" to "very good" quality ratings: park brochure/map (87%), visitor center (86%), visitor center bookstore (81%), roads (81%) and museum exhibits (81%). The service which received the highest "very poor" quality rating was the gas stations (7%). Figure 63 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

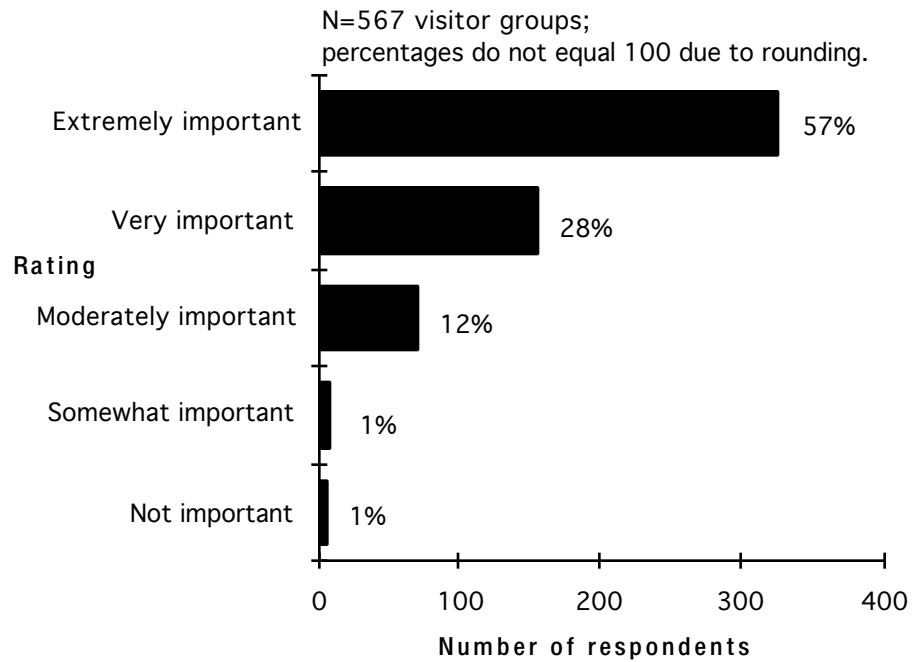


**Figure 32: Average ratings of visitor service and facility importance and quality**

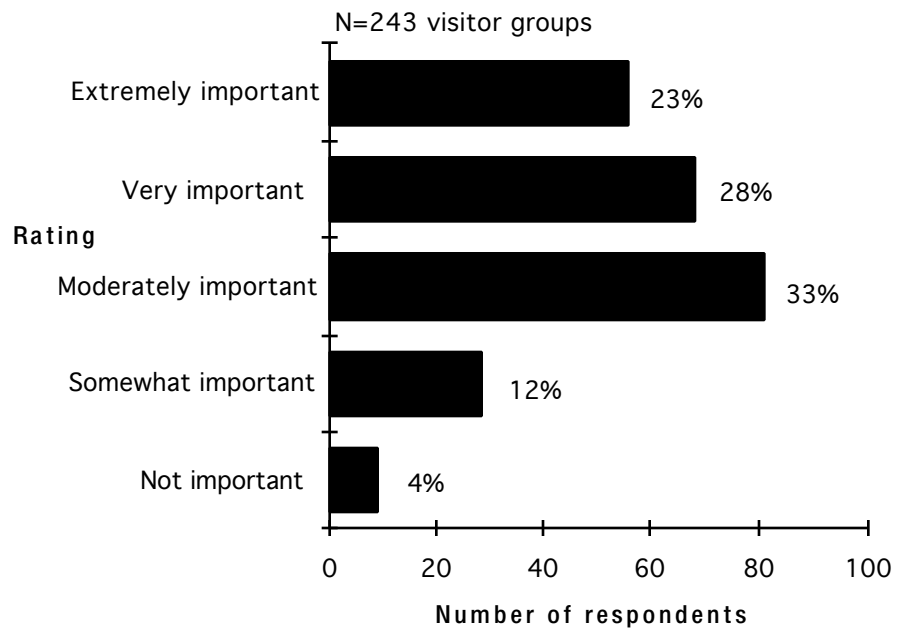


**Figure 32: Detail**

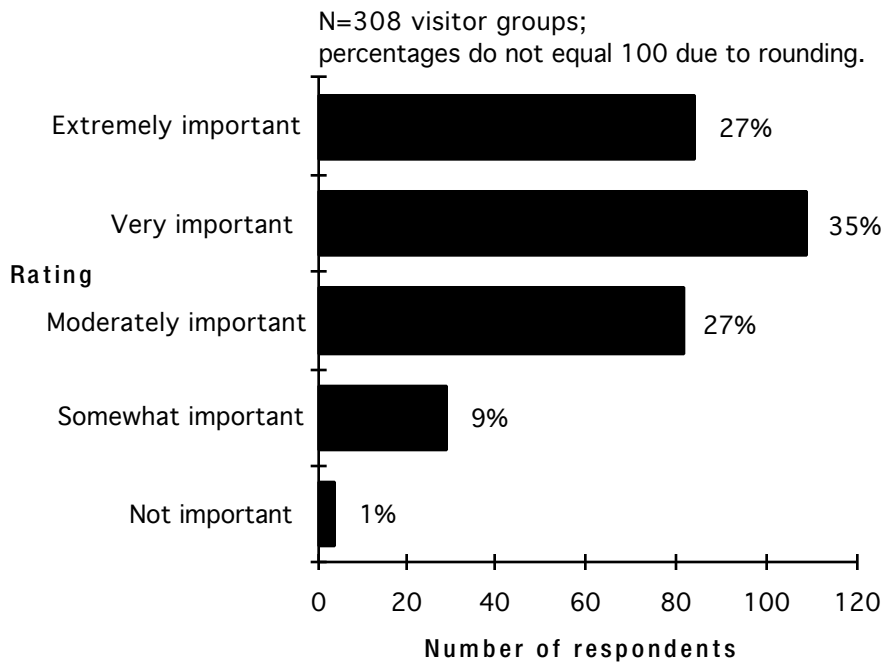




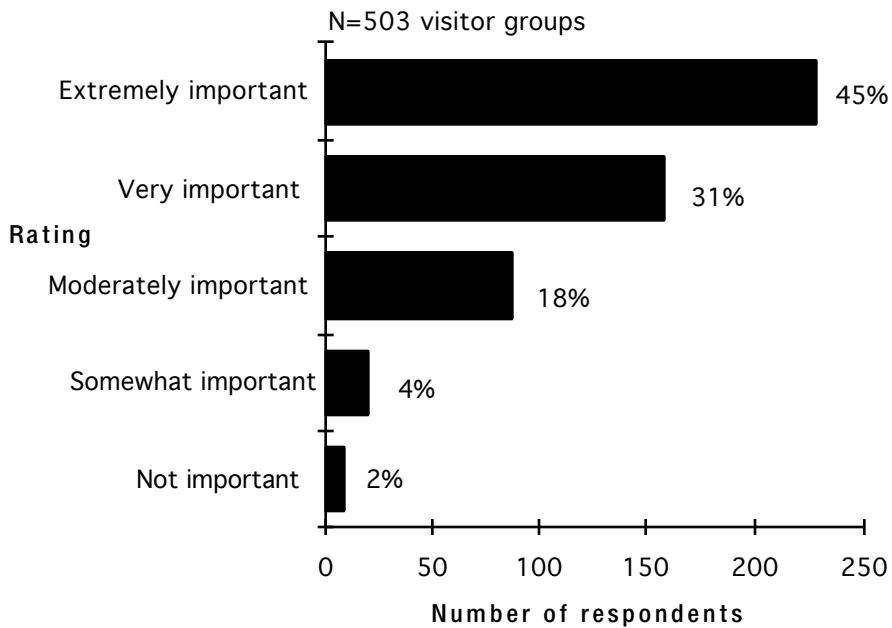
**Figure 33: Importance of park brochure/map**



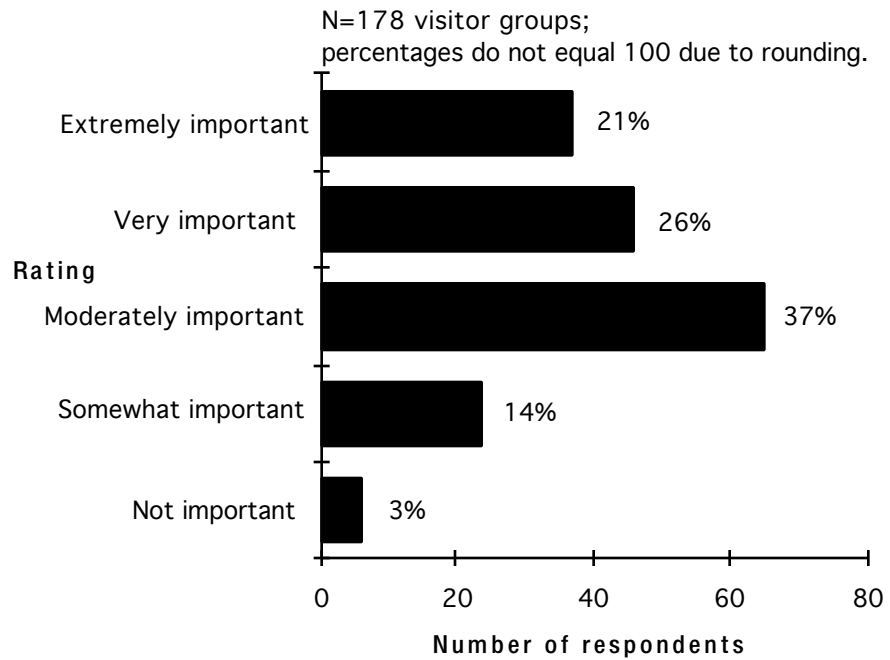
**Figure 34: Importance of park newspaper (*Visitor Guide*)**



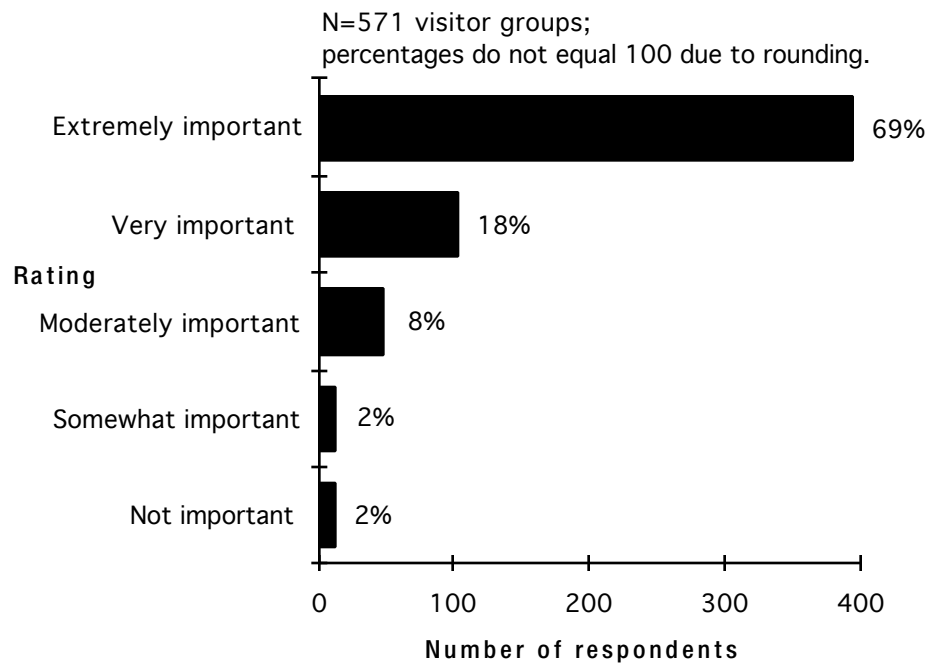
**Figure 35: Importance of museum exhibits**



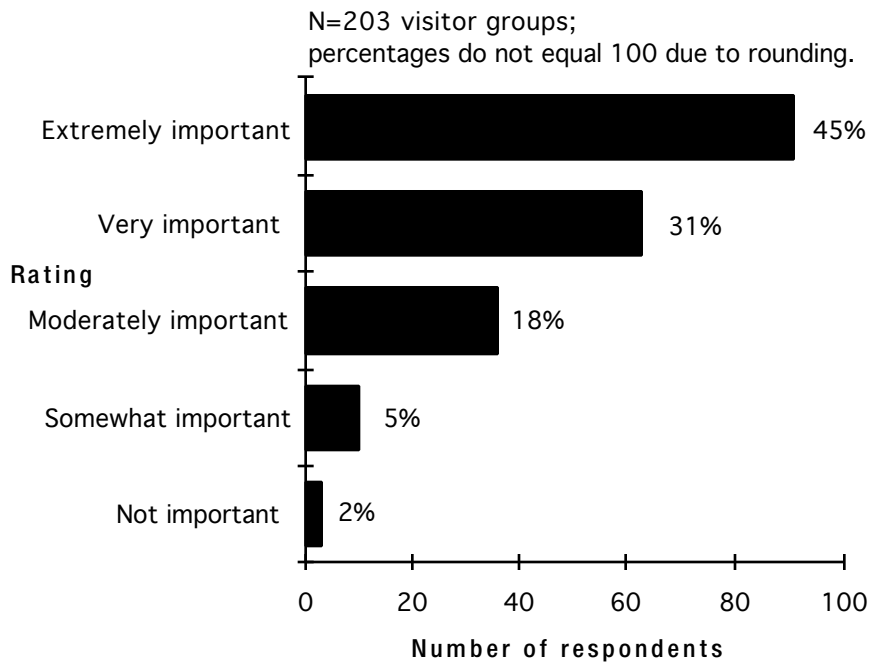
**Figure 36: Importance of visitor center**



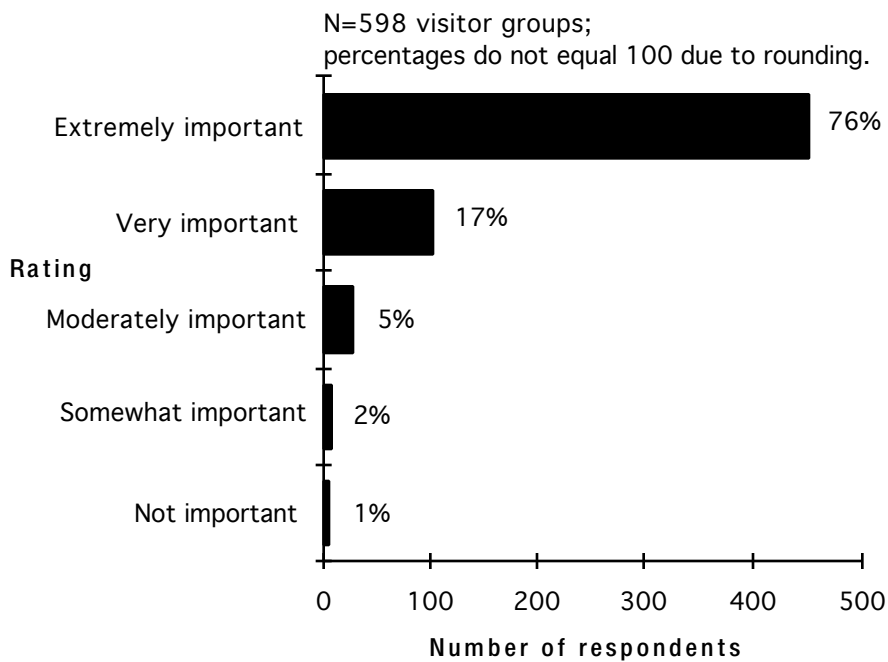
**Figure 37: Importance of visitor center book sales**



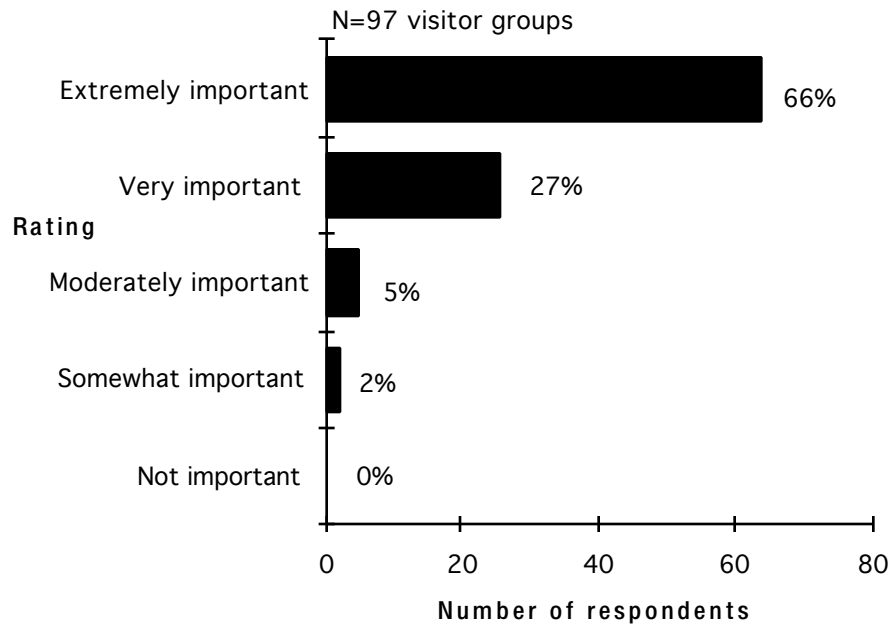
**Figure 38: Importance of restrooms**



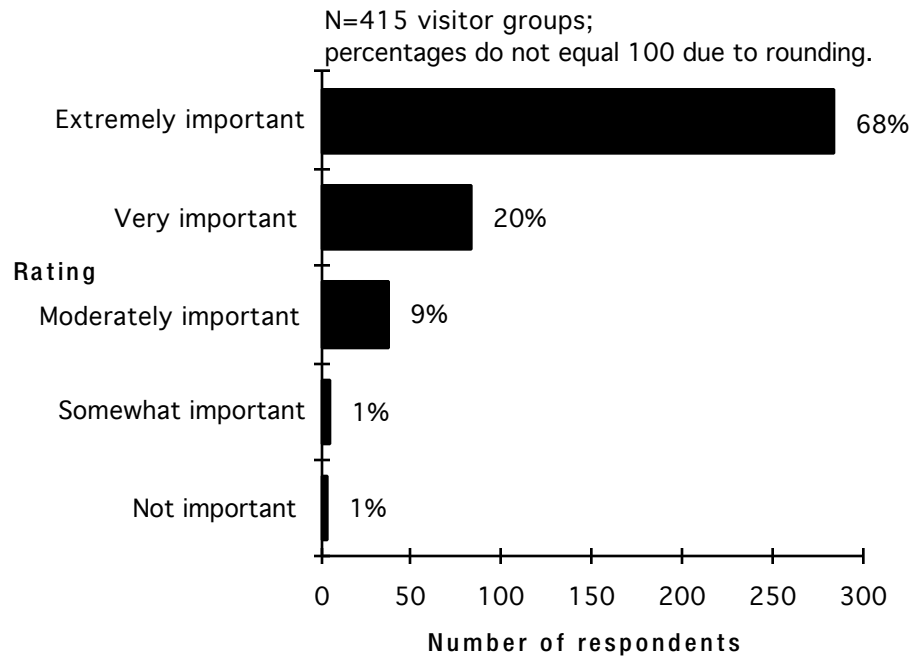
**Figure 39: Importance of trails**



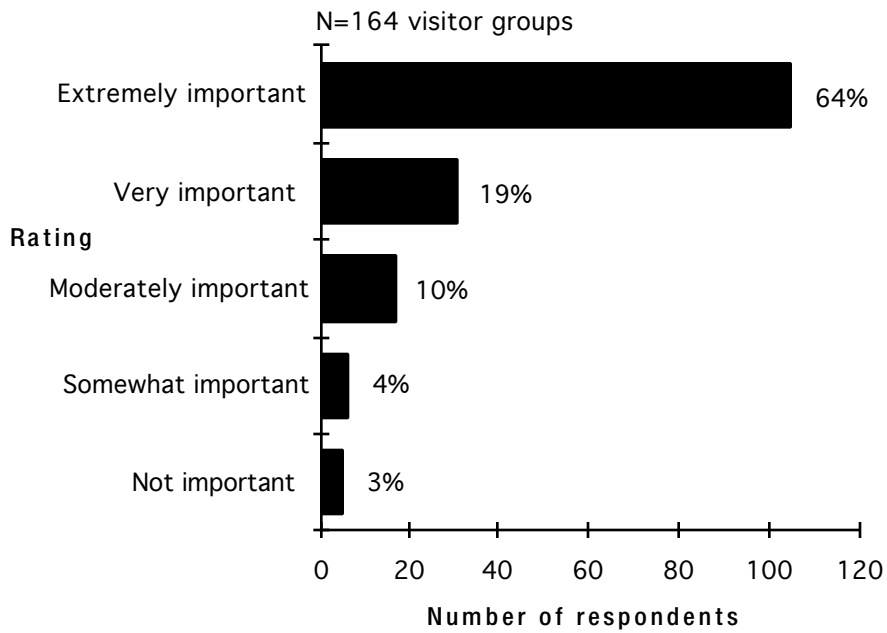
**Figure 40: Importance of roads**



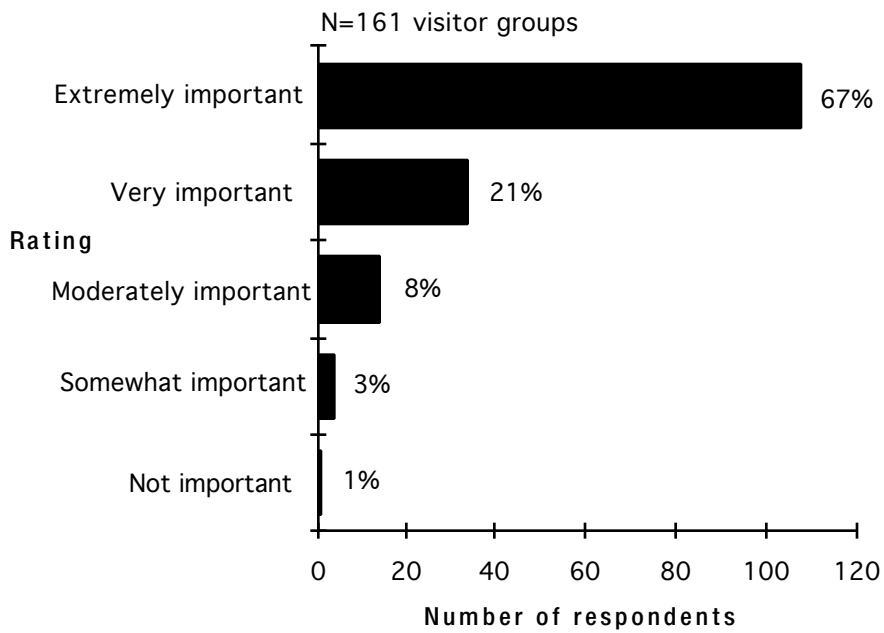
**Figure 41: Importance of campgrounds**



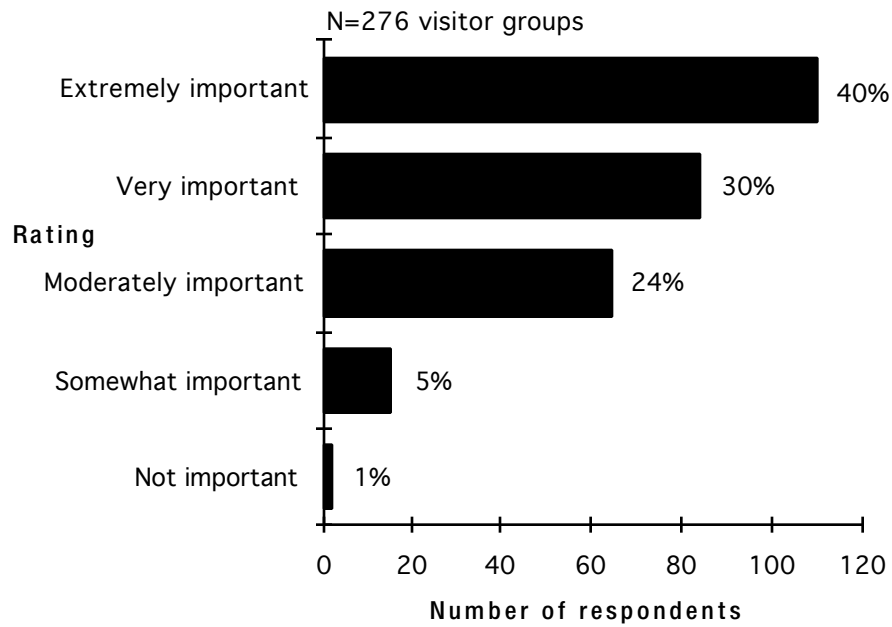
**Figure 42: Importance of park directional signs**



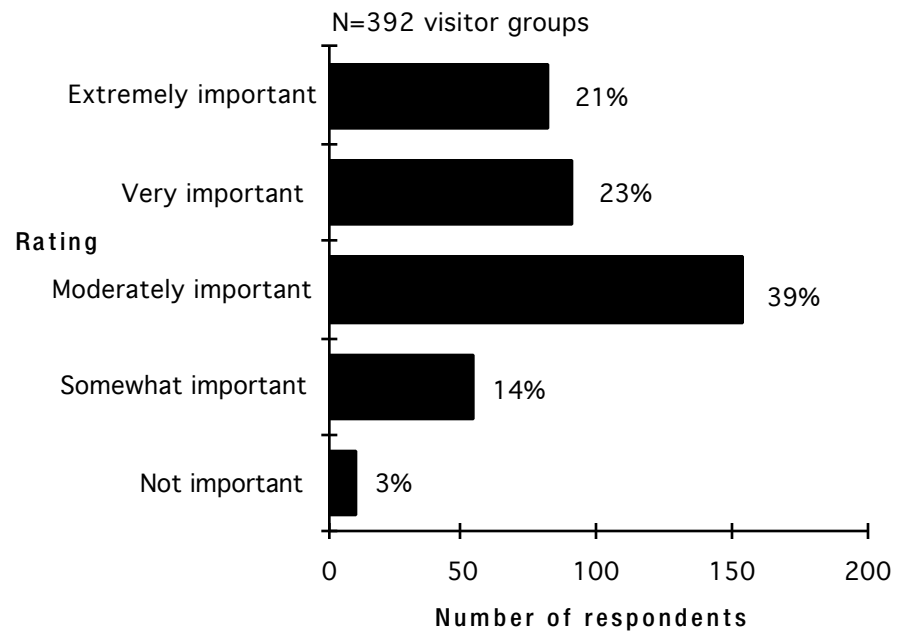
**Figure 43: Importance of garbage collection/recycling**



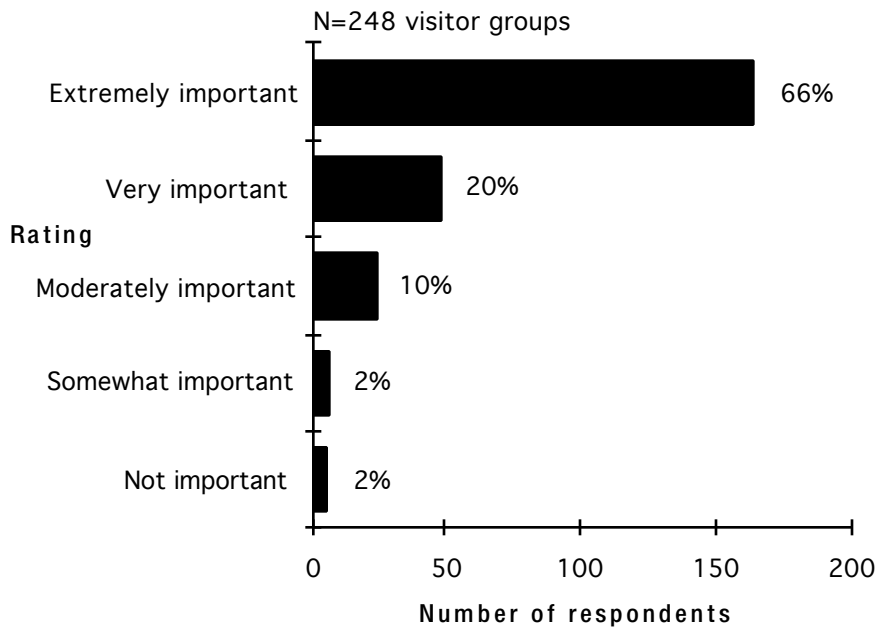
**Figure 44: Importance of lodging**



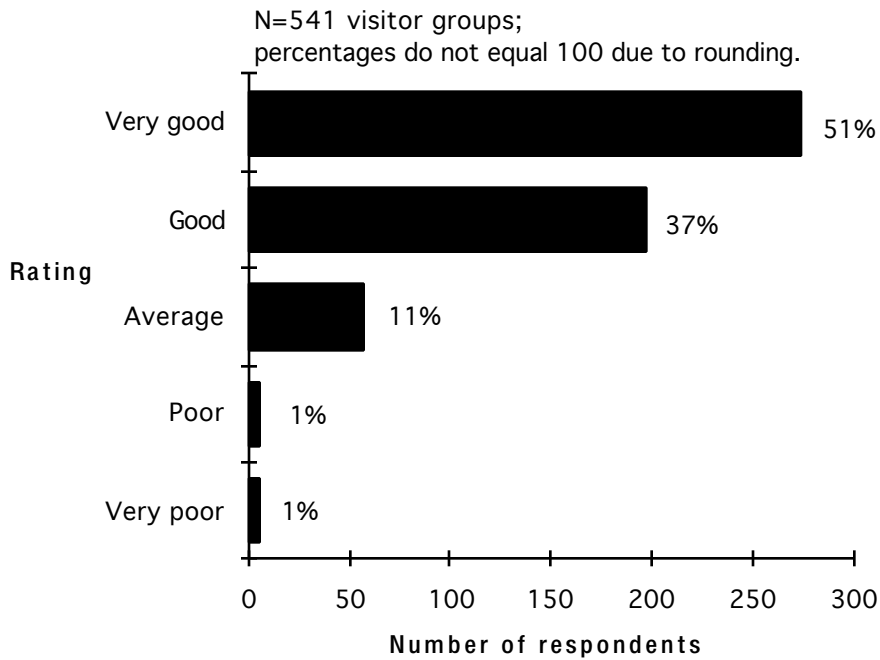
**Figure 45: Importance of restaurants**



**Figure 46: Importance of general stores/gift shops**



**Figure 47: Importance of gas stations**



**Figure 48: Quality of park brochure/map**



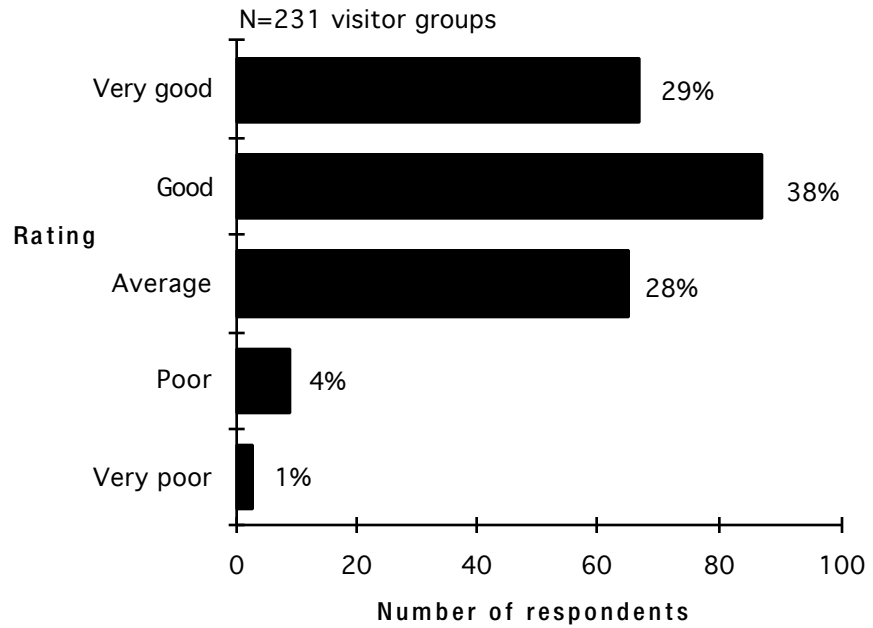


Figure 49: Quality of park newspaper (*Visitor Guide*)

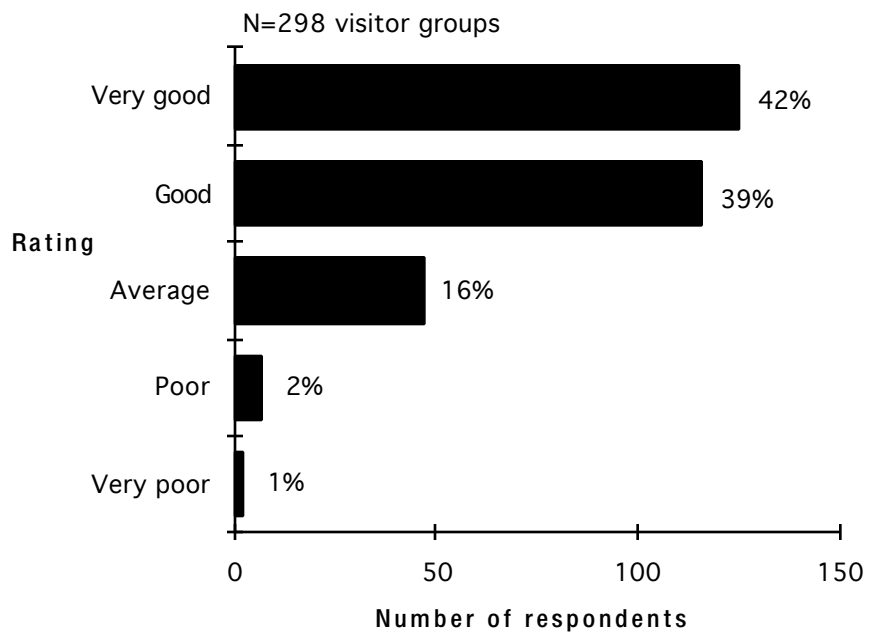
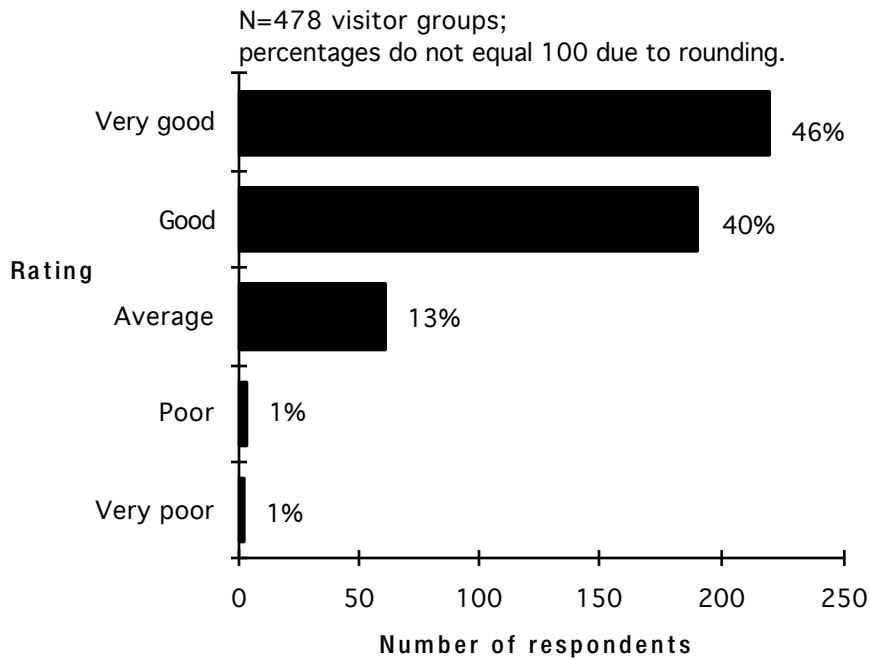
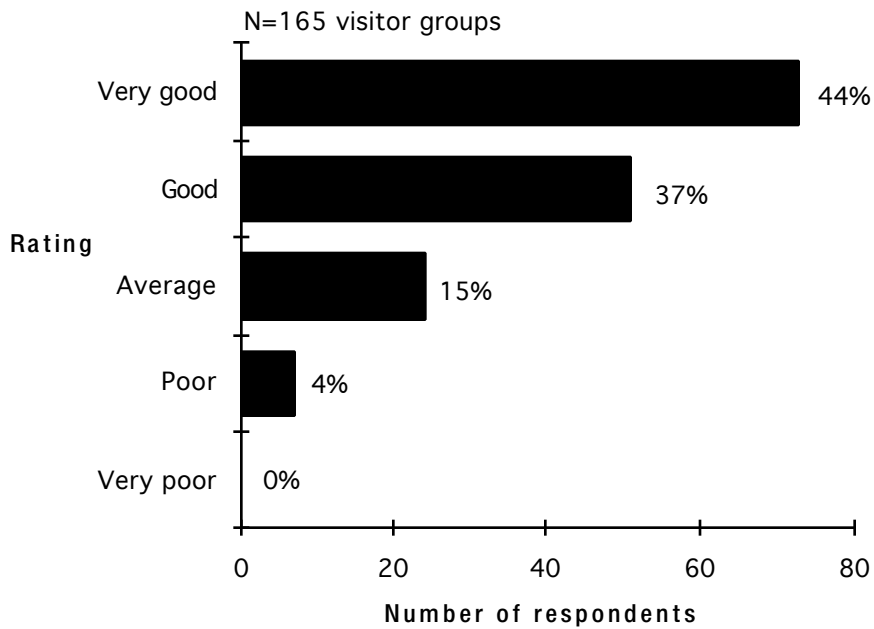


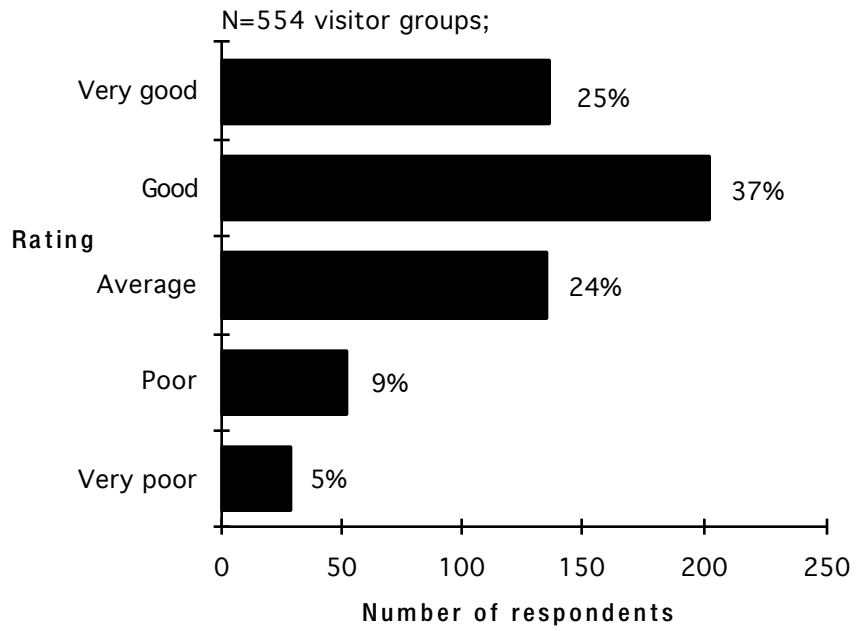
Figure 50: Quality of museum exhibits



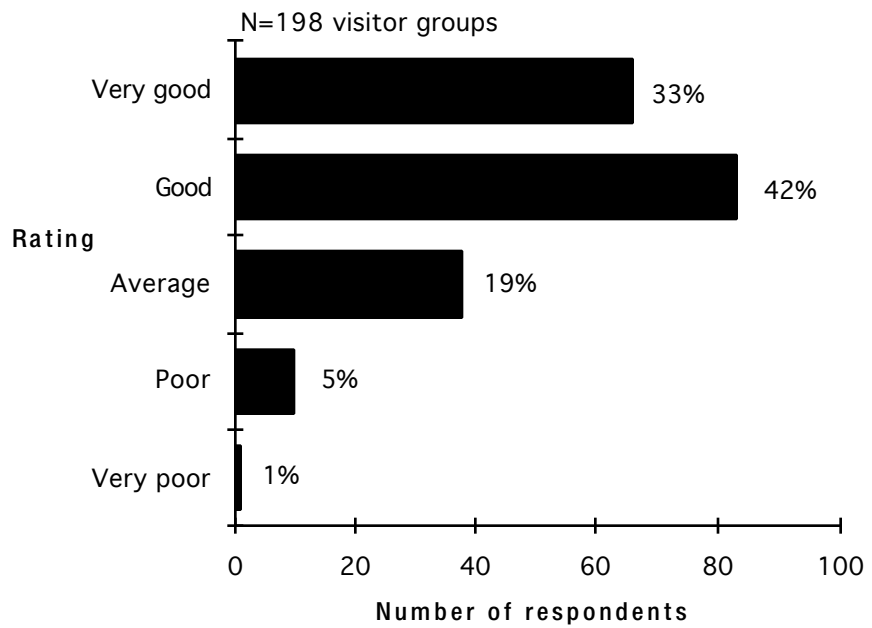
**Figure 51: Quality of visitor center**



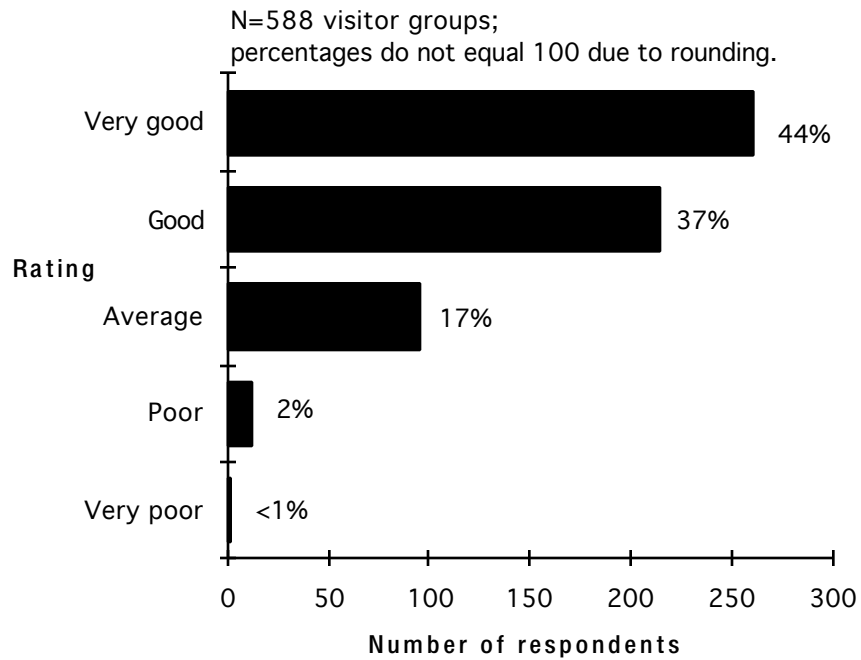
**Figure 52: Quality of visitor center book sales**



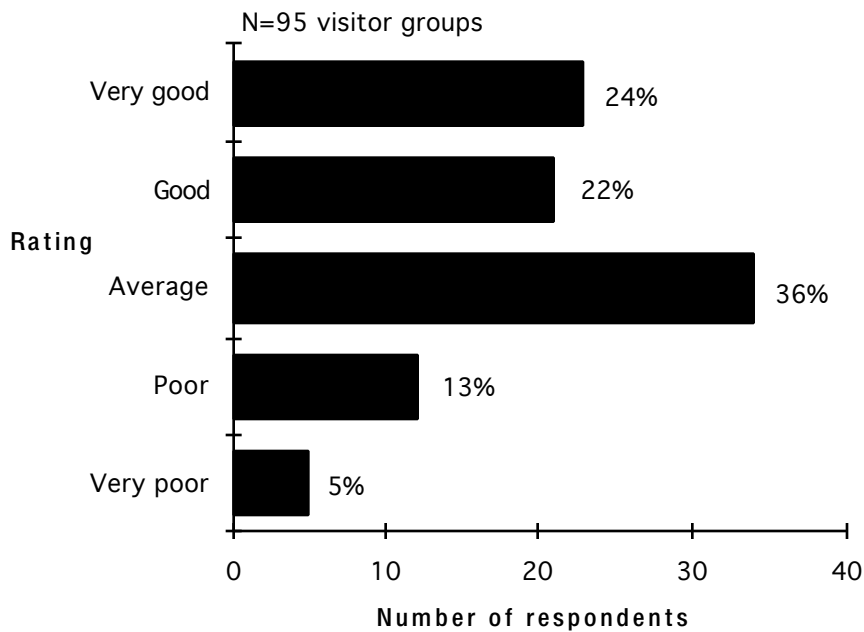
**Figure 53: Quality of restrooms**



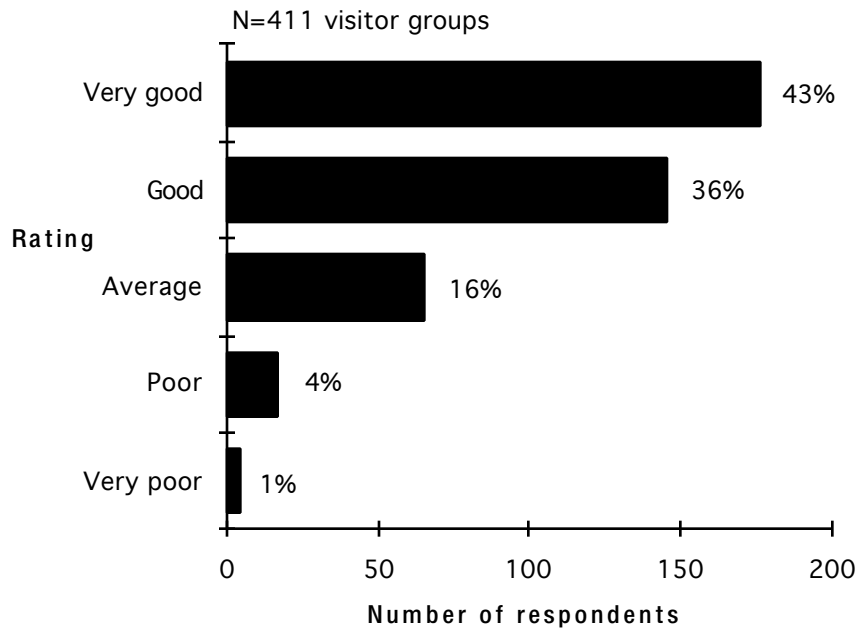
**Figure 54: Quality of trails**



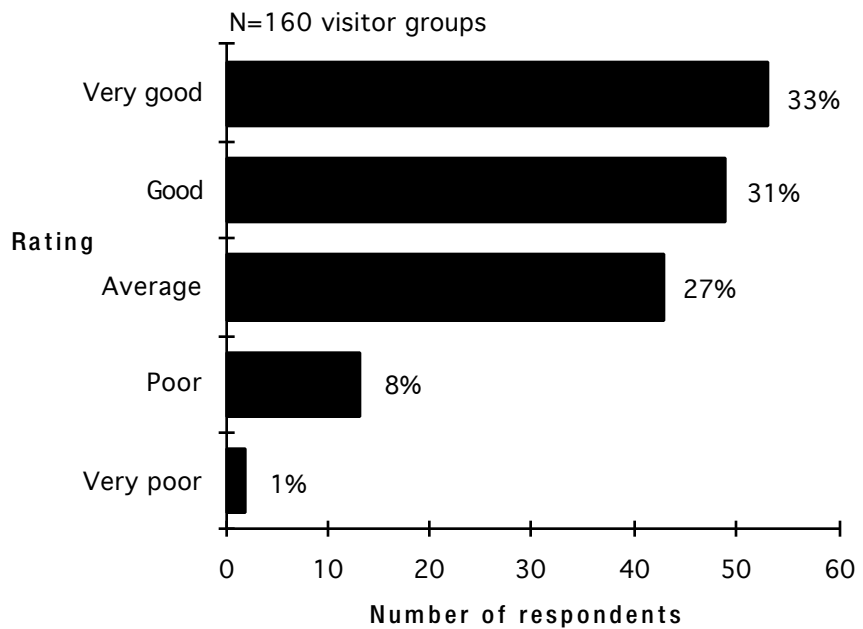
**Figure 55: Quality of roads**



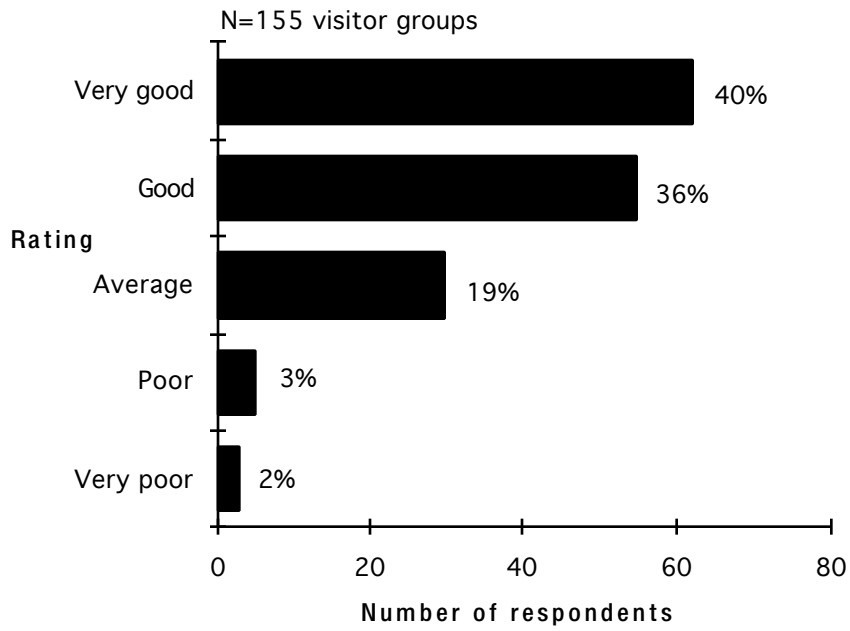
**Figure 56: Quality of campgrounds**



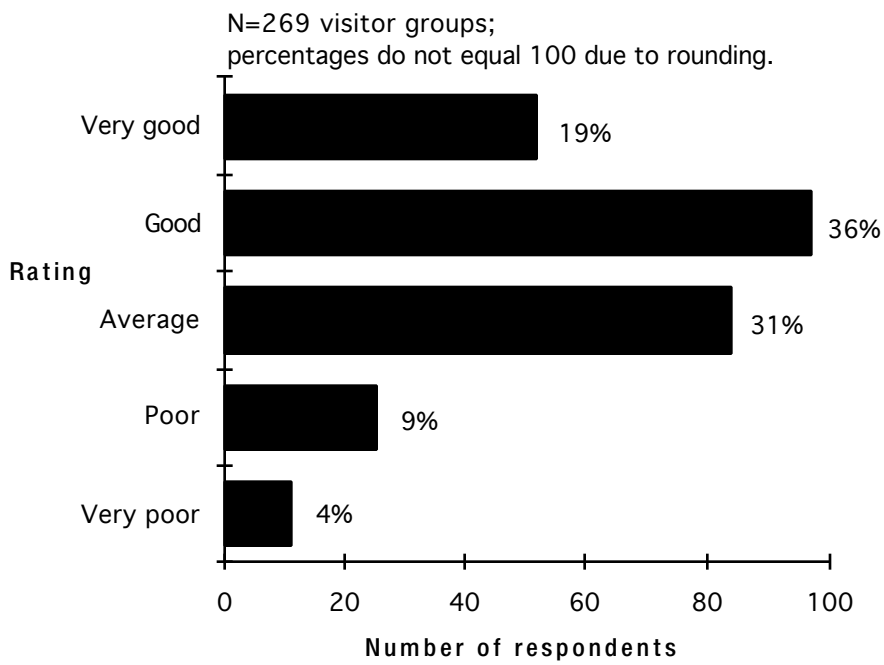
**Figure 57: Quality of park directional signs**



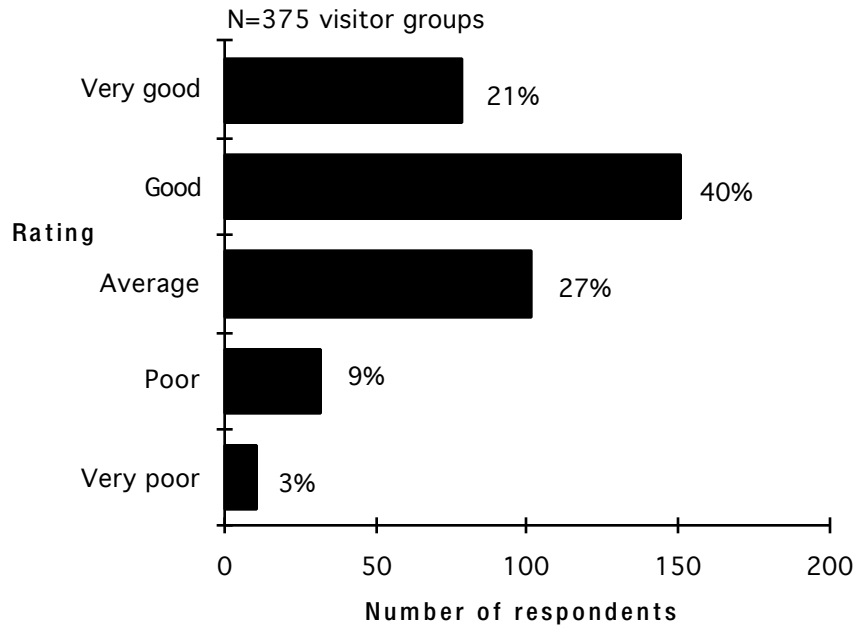
**Figure 58: Quality of garbage collection/recycling**



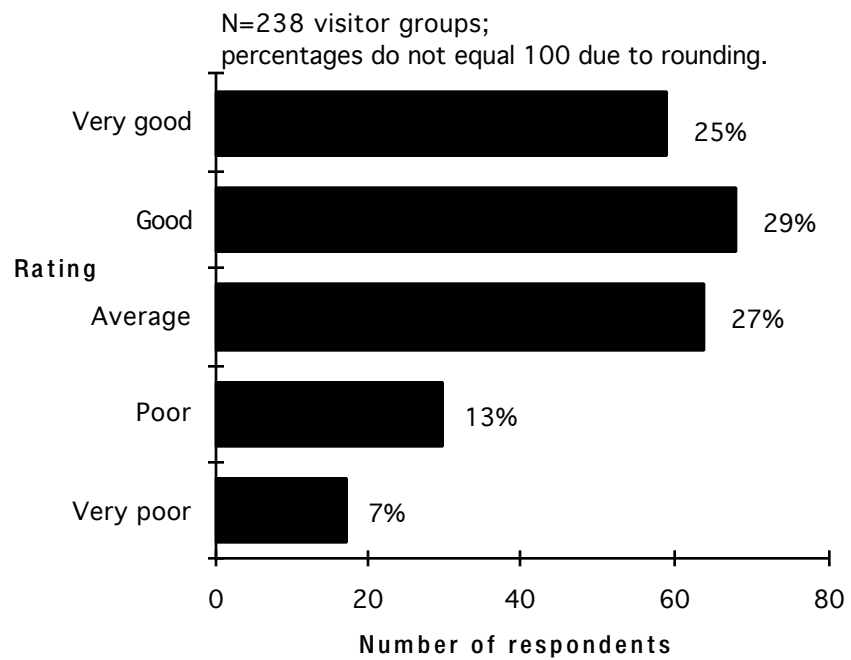
**Figure 59: Quality of lodging**



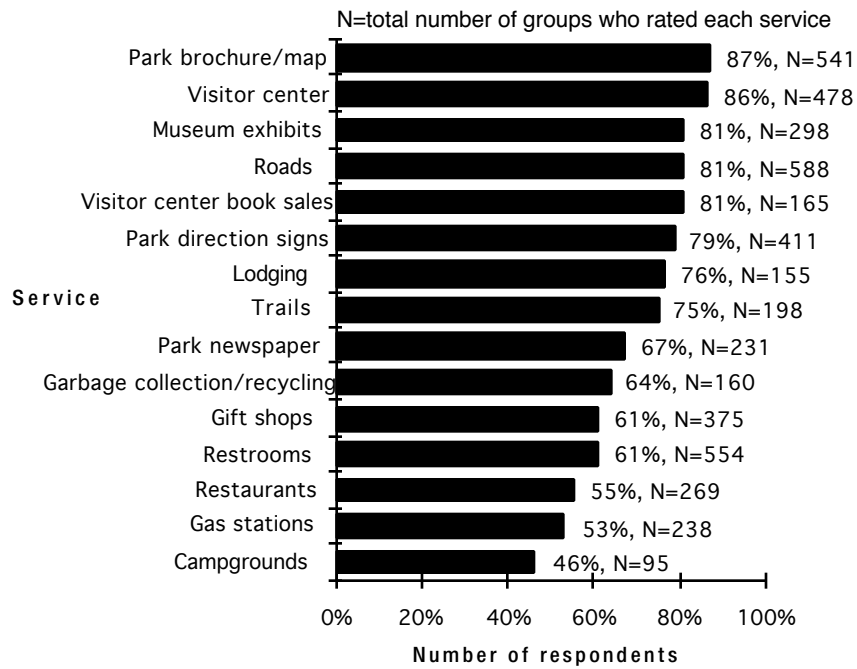
**Figure 60: Quality of restaurants**



**Figure 61: Quality of general stores/gift shops**



**Figure 62: Quality of gas stations**



**Figure 63: Combined proportions of "very good" and "good" quality ratings for services used by visitors**



**Expenditures**

Visitors were asked to list their expenditures in the park and outside the park (within 50 miles) during their visit. They were asked how much money they spent for lodging (motel, camping, etc.), travel (gas, bus fare, etc.), food (restaurant, groceries, etc.), and "other" items (film, gifts, etc.).

**Total expenditures in and outside the park:** Almost three-fourths of the visitors (71%) spent up to \$300 in total expenditures on this visit (see Figure 64). Eight percent of the visitors spent \$701 or more.

**Outside the park:** Outside the park, 55% of visitors spent up to \$200 in total expenditures during this visit (see Figure 65). Another 12% of visitors spent \$501 or more.

The largest proportion of visitors' money was spent for lodging (48%) and food (24%) outside the park, as shown in Figure 66.

Over half of the visitors (58%) spent up to \$150 for lodging (see Figure 67). Another 15% spent \$251 or more for lodging. For travel, 68% of the groups spent up to \$50 (see Figure 68). For food, 71% of the groups spent up to \$100 (see Figure 69). Forty-five percent of the groups spent no money for "other" items (see Figure 70). Another 37% spent up to \$50.

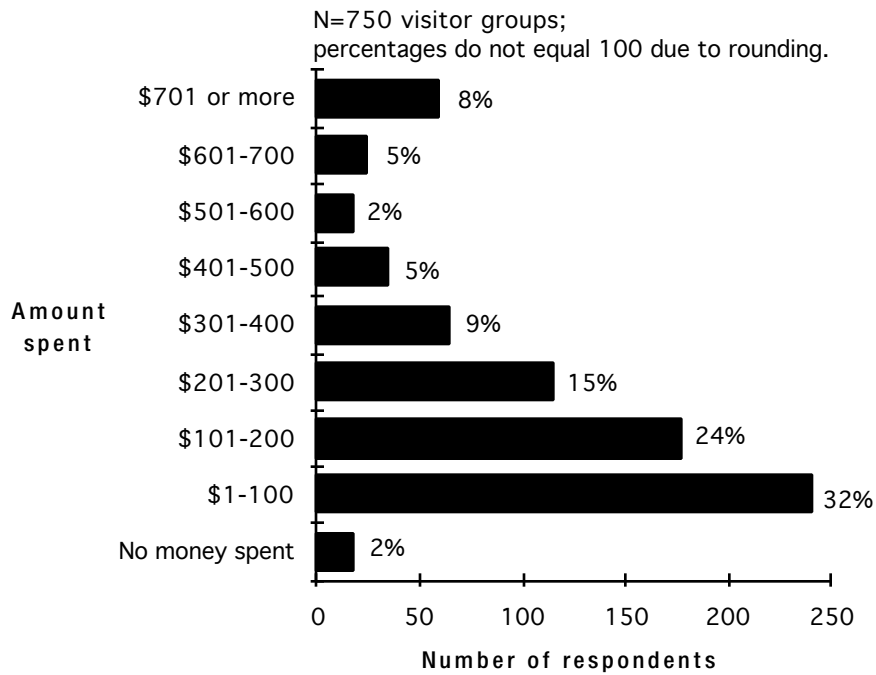
Outside the park, but within 50 miles of the park, the average visitor group expenditure during this visit was \$257. The average per capita expenditure was \$119. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of groups spent more; 50% spent less) was \$120.

**Inside the park:** Inside the park, 63% of the visitors spent up to \$100 in total expenditures during this visit (see Figure 71). Another 22% spent \$201-300 during their visit.

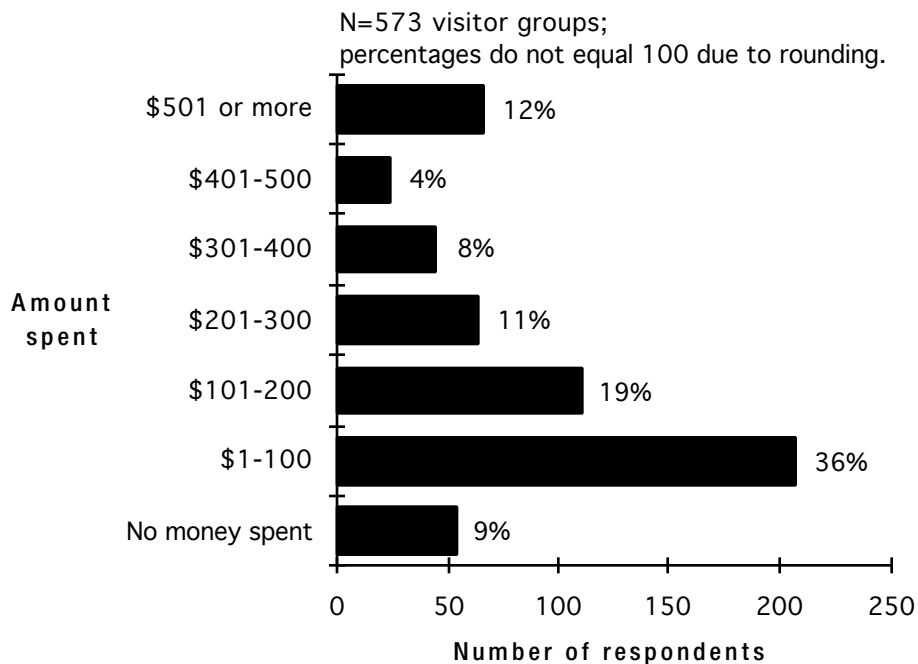
The largest proportion of visitors' money was spent for lodging (42%) and food (31%) inside the park, as shown in Figure 72.

Less than half of the visitors (44%) spent no money for lodging in the park (see Figure 73). Another 37% spent up to \$100. For travel, 60% of the visitor groups spent up to \$50; 36% spent no money (see Figure 74). For food, 63% of the groups spent up to \$50 (see Figure 75). About two-thirds (67%) of the groups spent up to \$50 for "other" items (see Figure 76). In the park, the average visitor group expenditure during this visit was \$102. The average per capita expenditure was \$76. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of groups spent more; 50% spent less) was \$43.

---

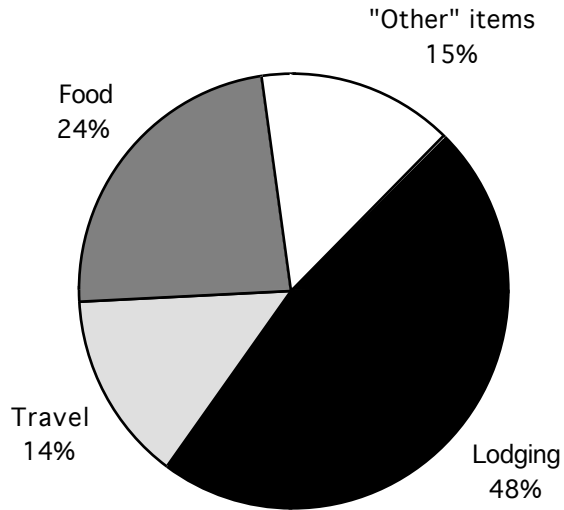


**Figure 64: Total expenditures (in and outside the park)**

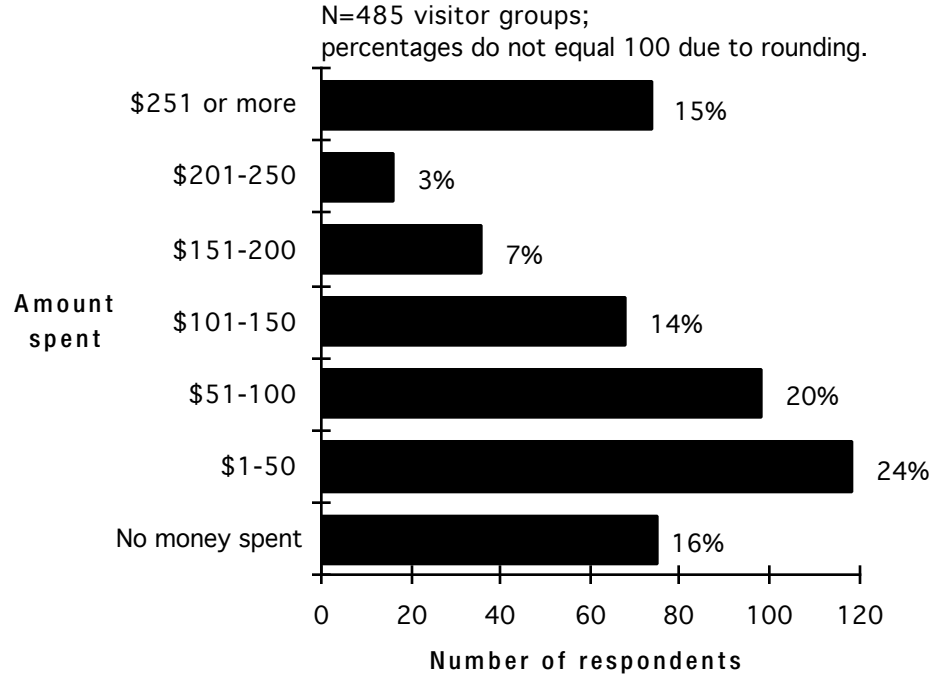


**Figure 65: Total expenditures (outside the park)**

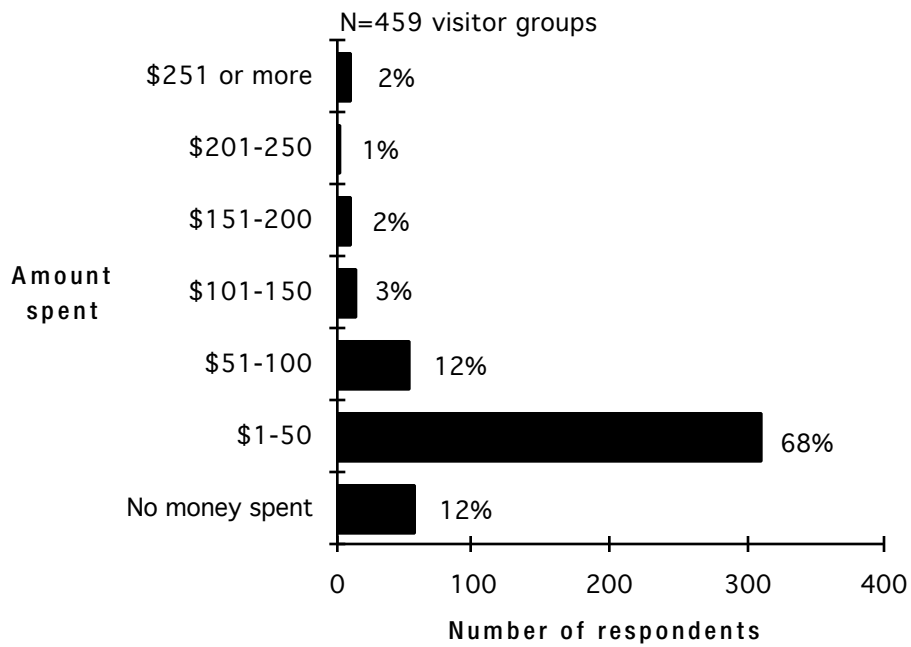
N=573 visitor groups;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.



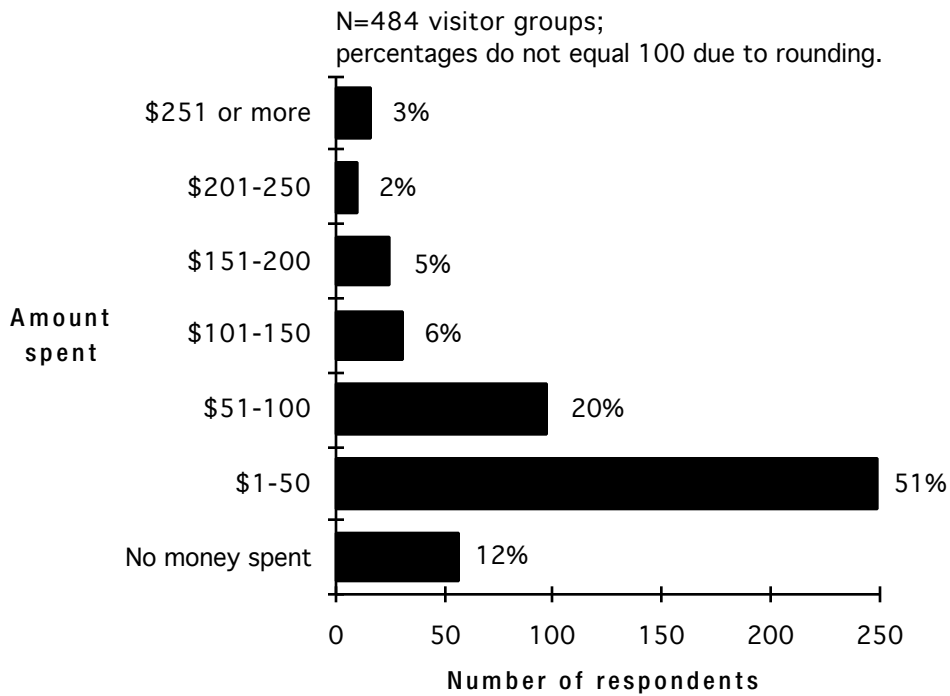
**Figure 66: Proportion of expenditures (outside the park)**



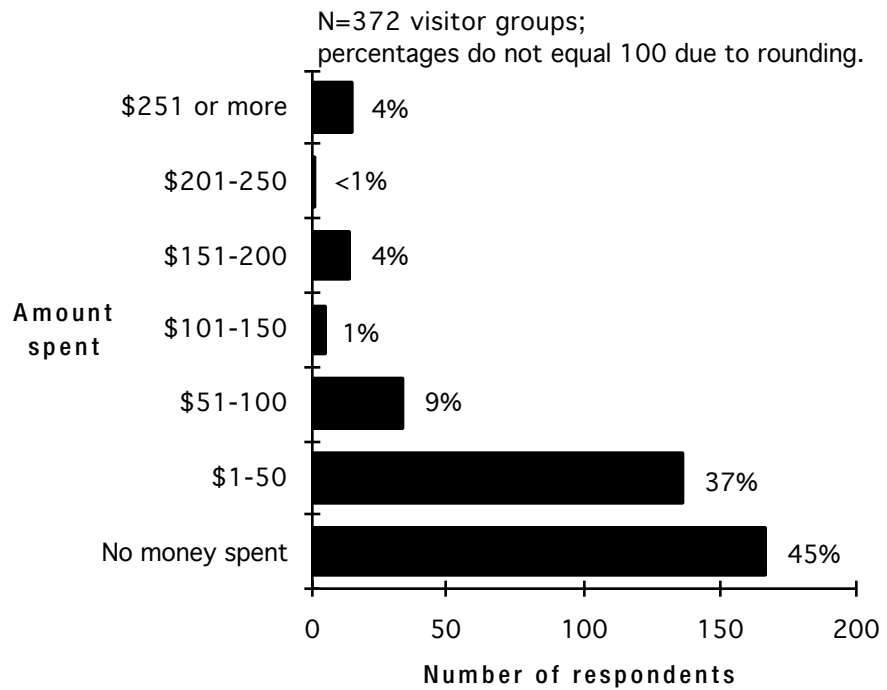
**Figure 67: Expenditures for lodging (outside the park)**



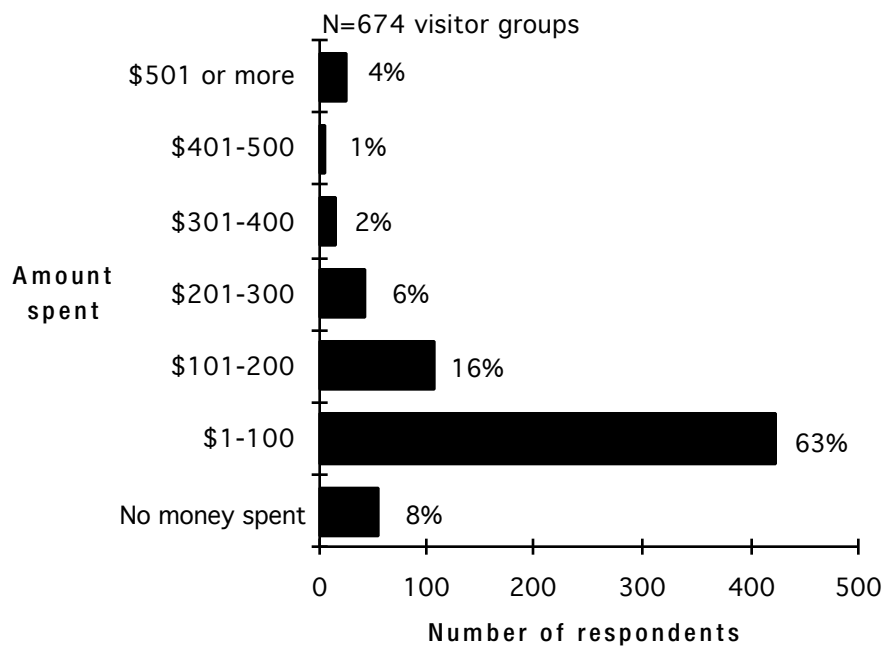
**Figure 68: Expenditures for travel (outside the park)**



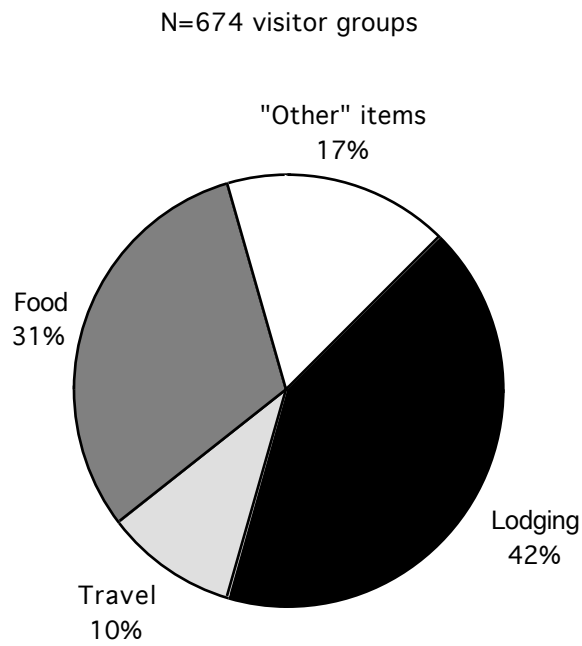
**Figure 69: Expenditures for food (outside the park)**



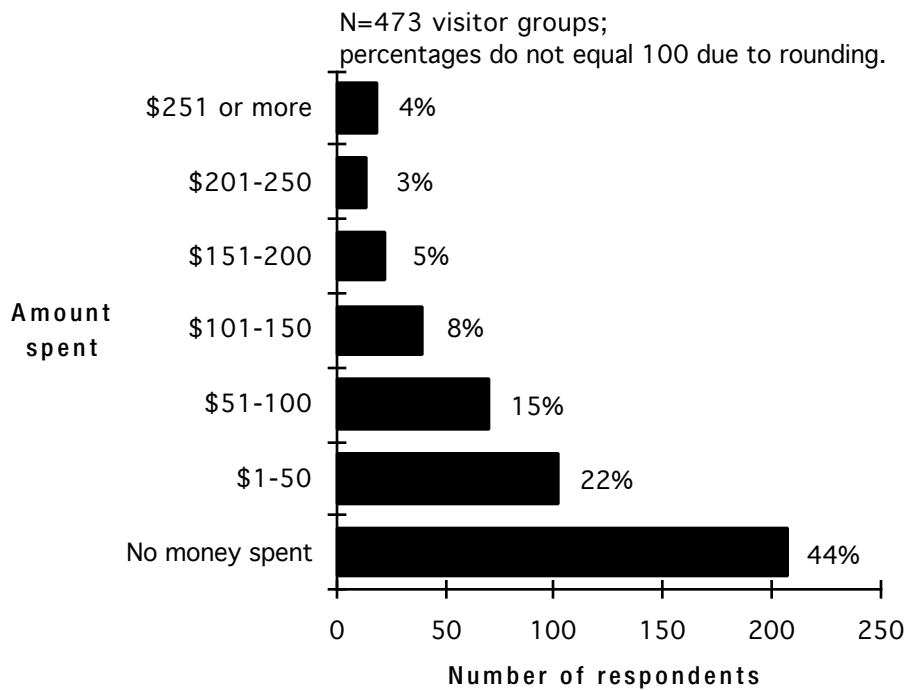
**Figure 70: Expenditures for "other" items (outside the park)**



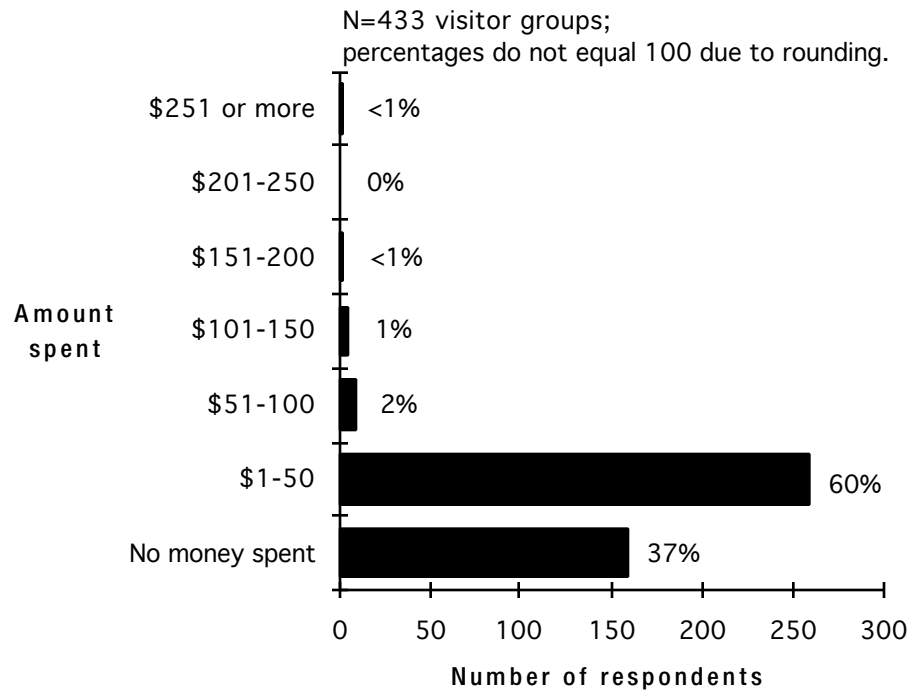
**Figure 71: Total expenditures in the park**



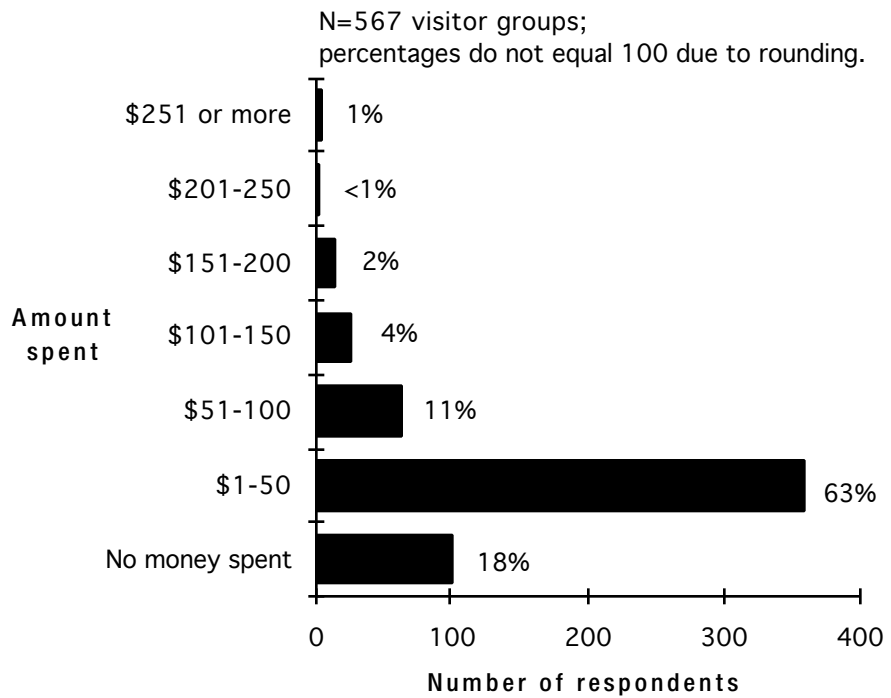
**Figure 72: Proportions of expenditures spent in the park**



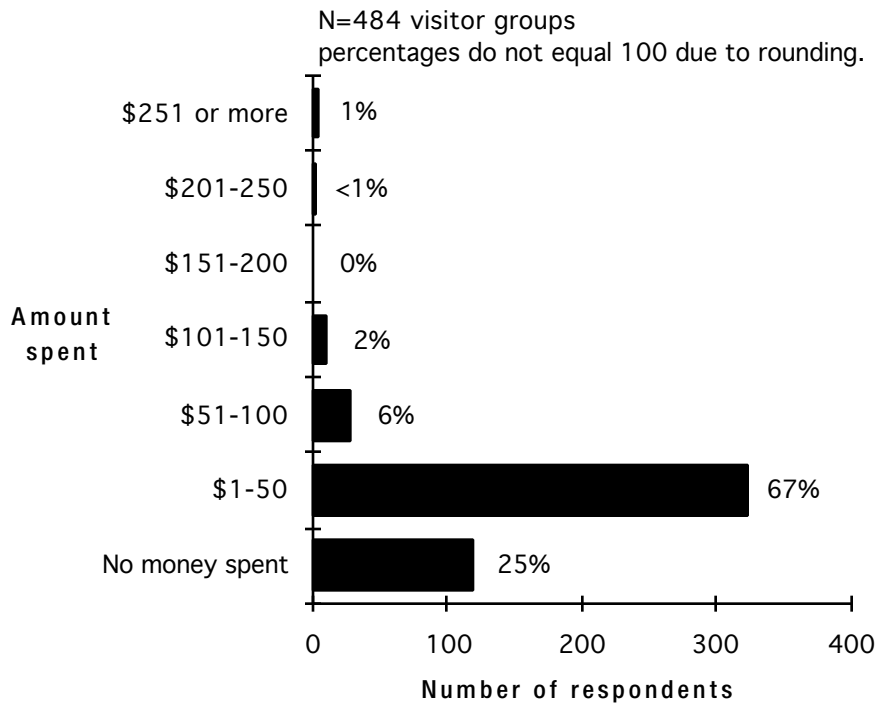
**Figure 73: Expenditures for lodging (in the park)**



**Figure 74: Expenditures for travel (in the park)**



**Figure 75: Expenditures for food (in the park)**

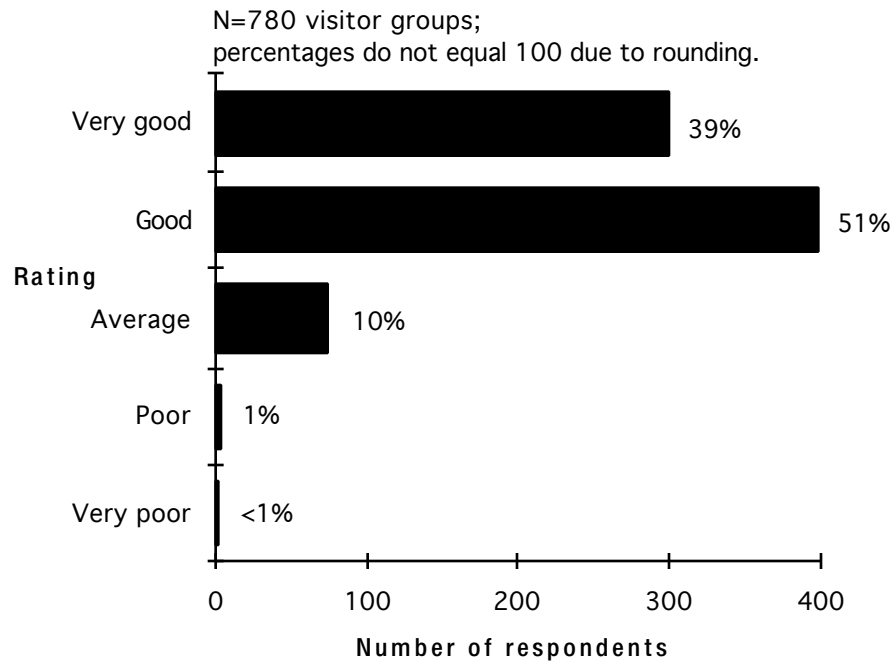


**Figure 76: Expenditures for "other" items (in the park)**



**Overall rating  
of service  
quality**

Visitors were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided at Death Valley during this visit. Most visitors (90%) rated the services as "good" or "very good," (see Figure 77). Less than one percent of the visitors said the overall quality of services was "very poor."



**Figure 77: Overall quality rating of services**

Visitors were asked what they liked most about their visit to Death Valley National Park. A total of 736 groups responded; their comments are listed in Table 9 below and in the appendix.

**What  
visitors  
liked most**

**Table 9: Visitors' likes**

N=1,320 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Rangers/staff friendly/courteous	10
Other comment	1
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Scotty's Castle tour	8
Visitor center museum/exhibits	6
Visitor center	5
Other comments	4
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Good roads	9
Exploring/driving unpaved roads	4
Park clean	3
Campground	2
Historic preservation	2
Good accessibility	2
Other comments	4
<b>CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS</b>	
Furnace Creek	8
Motel	7
The inn	6
The ranch	4
Other comments	6
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Wilderness	26
Nature	17
Unspoiled landscape/preserved	13
Clean air	10
Wildlife	10
Uncrowded	8
Plants/flowers	4
Commercial development is limited	2

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Scenery	256
Desert	96
Quiet/silence	67
Scotty's Castle	56
Zabriskie Point	45
Landscape/geography	45
Badwater	44
Spaciousness/open space	44
Dante's View	41
Sand dunes	38
Beauty	34
Climate/weather	33
History	33
Stars/night sky	26
Artists Palette	25
Everything	22
Colors	20
Uniqueness	20
Solitude	18
Devils Golf Course	15
Hiking	12
Salt lake/flats	12
Sightseeing	10
Viewpoints/panoramic views	10
New experience	9
Friendly atmosphere	8
Sunset	8
Borax mine	7
Geology	7
Scenic drive	7
Sunrise	6
Being at lowest point in U.S.	5
Mosaic Canyon	5
Meeting friendly people	4
Golden Canyon	4
Long roads	4
Natural Bridge	4
Twenty Mule Team Canyon	4
Admire pioneers	2
Golden Canyon to Zabriskie hike	2
Learning climate's effect on wildlife	2
Leaving	2
Ubehebe Crater	2
Starkness	2
Swimming	2
Other comments	21

---

Visitors were asked what they liked least about their visit to Death Valley National Park. A summary of their responses (554 groups) is listed in Table 10 below and in the appendix. **What visitors liked least**

**Table 10: Visitors dislikes**

N=708 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Concession personnel surly	2
Scotty's Castle tour guide	2
Other comments	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Lack of information at park entrances	5
Scotty's Castle tour needs improved	2
Lack of detailed information about park	2
Scotty's Castle tour wasn't informative	2
Other comments	5
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Driving unpaved roads	19
Restrooms	13
Lack of road directional signs	10
Lack of showers at campground	8
Roads	7
Campground needs improvement	6
Confusing road directional signs	5
Lack of guard rails along mountain roads	5
Steep/narrow roads in park	5
Litter	4
Lack of cold water	4
Lack of phones/existing phone needs fixed	3
Lack of picnic areas	3
Dirty restrooms	3
Lack of restrooms	3
Not enough pullouts	3
Smelly restroom at Badwater	3
Bird droppings on picnic tables	2
Lack of recycling	2
Lights out in campground restroom	2
Scotty's Castle needs improved (air circulation, lighting)	2
Other comments	11

**CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS**

Gas too expensive	15
Lodging too expensive	11
Food too expensive	10
Lack of motels	10
Golf course doesn't belong in desert park/wastes water	9
Restaurants	8
Long wait to be served in restaurant	7
Ranch too expensive	6
Restaurant food poor quality	5
Restaurants need more food choices	5
Not enough restaurants	4
Motel room needs better cleaning/maintenance	4
Services need longer hours	4
Long wait to check in at motel	3
Poor quality service in store	3
Gift shops	3
Improve restaurant air conditioning	2
Motel	2
Poor quality service in gift shop	2
Ranch	2
Restaurants need longer hours	2
Store too expensive	2
Service doesn't belong in park	2
Other comments	8

**POLICIES**

Increase camping fee	9
Speeding cars	2
Other comments	5

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Too crowded	30
Too many bus tours	11
Park overdeveloped/too commercial	9
Traffic	3
Visitors' lack of respect for park resources	3
Poor air quality	2
Other comments	4

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Nothing	155
Heat	82
Long drive to get to/from park	26
Visit was too short	14
Other visitors/tours	10
Badwater	6
Sand dunes	6
Scotty's Castle	5
Devils Golf Course	3
Desert scenery	3
Ghost towns/ruins	3
Car problems	2
Dust	2
Golden Canyon	2

Hard water	2
Leaving	2
Mushroom Rock	2
Natural Bridge	2
Annoying insects	2
Too many Germans	2
Walking/hiking	2
Other comments	22

## Planning for the future

Visitors were asked "If you were planning for the future of Death Valley National Park, what would you propose? Please be specific." A summary of their responses (529 groups) is listed in Table 11 below and in the appendix.

**Table 11: Planning for the future**

N=800 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Provide more staff	2
Other comments	6
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Provide map/information at all park entrances	26
Provide better information on what to see and do in park/time needed	25
Advertise/promote park more	15
Provide more information on history	14
Provide information in other languages	9
Provide more information on wildlife	6
Provide more information on geology	5
Provide more audio-visual exhibits on history	5
Post more thermometers	5
Visitor center is too far into park	4
Provide more guided tours	4
Provide more roadside information	4
Offer more types of guided activities year round	4
Update the visitor center	3
Provide more information on plants	3
Provide more information on ecology	3
Provide more information on hiking	3
Provide more information on American Indians	3
Provide self-guided tours	3
Offer small group tours to less accessible areas	3
Provide better maps	2
Stagger tour bus arrivals	2
Provide more rules/education signs about littering, staying on trail	2
Improve educational outdoor exhibits	2
Preserve history	2
Educate people about need for water	2
Provide safety information pamphlets	2
Provide a small zoo	2
Other comments	13

**FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE**

Improve road directional signs	34
Improve road maintenance	33
Provide more restrooms	14
Provide more pullouts	11
Add showers to campgrounds	10
Update campsites	8
Provide water at more places	8
Improve restroom cleanliness	7
Provide more recycling bins	6
Provide more covered areas in campgrounds	5
Provide covered picnic areas	5
Provide more campsites	5
Provide more hiking trails	5
Provide more dirt road access	5
Provide more road access to points of interest	4
Provide emergency phones	4
Keep park clean	3
Do not provide 4 wheel drive roads	3
Provide more RV hookups	3
Do not allow mt. bikes/ATVs in park	2
Improve trails	2
Provide elevation markers	2
Campgrounds too expensive	2
Do not pave roads	2
Reduce amount of litter	2
Improve landscaping	2
Provide more trash cans	2
Other comments	19

**CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS**

Offer more choices for lodging	21
Need more restaurants	9
Offer more concessions throughout park	8
Too expensive	8
Provide more accommodations	7
Offer cheaper lodging	7
Gas too expensive	6
Improve restaurants	5
Restaurants too expensive	5
Reduce long lines	4
Improve customer service	3
Need more gas stations	3
Add a coffee shop	3
Provide concessions at visitor center	3
Advertise lodging options	3
Improve souvenir shops	2
Monitor rates charged	2
Rent off-road vehicles	2
Improve hotel maintenance	2
Other comments	11



**POLICIES**

Restrict number of people visiting park	15
Monitor traffic	14
Collect fees at all entrances	13
Allow no more buildings	12
Remove golf course	9
Restrict numbers and times of bus tours	4
Control groups better	3
Do not waste water	3
Add a shuttle bus	3
No more roads	2
Provide better access	2
Provide more free campgrounds	2
Enforce penalty for littering	2
Other comments	14

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Keep park natural	50
Keep park as it is	48
No more commercialization	20
Reduce negative impacts of visitors	16
Preserve it for the future	14
Keep park simple	4
Do not allow Death Valley to become a Disney World	4
Use solar power	3
Everything should be ecologically friendly	3
Add more scenic viewpoints	2
Remove buildings and return to most natural state	2
Improve air quality	2
Use shuttle buses to viewpoints	2
Other comments	6

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Keep managing as you are	14
Other comments	6

---

Many visitors wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. The comments made by 328 groups are summarized in Table 12 below and in the appendix. Some comments offer specific suggestions on how to improve the park; others describe what visitors enjoyed or did not enjoy about their visit.

## Comment Summary

**Table 12: Visitor Comment Summary**

N=525 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Personnel friendly/helpful/courteous	41
Poor customer service at concessions	3
Good service at concessions	2
Better personnel than at other national parks	2
Other comment	1
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Scotty's Castle tour well done	10
Enjoyed visitor center	6
Advertise amount of time to visit park	6
Advertise more widely	6
Needed more information	5
Disappointed in Scotty's Castle tour	4
Received good information about park	4
Commend park for educating visitors	4
Educational	4
Scotty's Castle tour too expensive	2
Visitor center film old/uninformative	2
Enjoyed museum	2
Provide more information on American Indians	2
Provide more information on borax uses	2
Provide more information for foreign visitors	2
Have brochures available at entrances	2
Glad of information about overheating cars	2
Open the wife's room in Scotty's Castle	2
Other comments	7
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Park clean	6
Need better signs on hiking trails	4
Keep park clean	3
Expand number of roads to improve access	3
Need better road signs	2
Provide more shade in campsites	2
Roads good	2
Emigrant Pass campground should be signed as tent only	2
Scotty's Castle was poorly preserved	2
Other comments	10

**CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS**

Enjoyed Furnace Creek Ranch	2
Gas too expensive	2
Expensive	2
Other comments	3

**POLICIES**

Need clear boundary signs	4
Raise entrance fees	2
Other comments	4

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Do not change it/preserve for future	15
Good balance of nature and visitor facilities	2
Well preserved	2
Other comments	2

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Enjoyed park	88
Unique/fascinating/awesome	56
Thanks/keep up the good work	43
Plan to return	33
Beautiful	20
Not enough time	18
Surprised by size and vastness	10
Exceeded expectations	8
America's national parks are great	7
Will recommend to others	6
Favorite destination	6
Friendly/helpful survey interviewer	6
Quiet	4
Would like to work for free place to stay in park	2
Came to visit lowest point in U.S.	2
Not a good place to hike	2
Amazed by number of foreign visitors	2
Too hot	2
Always find something new	2
Other comments	11

## Death Valley National Park Additional Analysis

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) staff offer the opportunity to learn more from VSP visitor study data.

### Additional Analysis:

Additional analysis can be done using the park's VSP visitor study data that was collected and entered into the computer. Two-way and three-way cross tabulations can be made of any of the characteristics listed below. Be as specific as possible--you may select a single program/service/ facility instead of all that were listed in the questionnaire. Include your name, address and phone number in the request.

- |                            |                               |   |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| • Primary destination      | • Group type                  | • Anything detract from enjoying feature/quality? |
| • Towns visited            | • Age                         | • Nights in park/accommodations                   |
| • Length of stay           | • Zip code                    | • Nights out park/accommodations                  |
| • Places visited           | • Country of residence        | • Total expenditures - in & out                   |
| • Activity                 | • Number of visits            | • Lodging expenditures - in & out                 |
| • Reason for visit         | • Service/facility use        | • Travel expenditures - in & out                  |
| * Group size               | • Service/facility importance | • Food expenditures - in & out                    |
| • Guided tour group        | • Service/facility quality    | • Other expenditures - in & out                   |
| • School/educational group | • Feature/quality importance  | • Overall quality of services                     |

### Database

A database, which became operational in April 1996, contains all the VSP visitor studies results from 1988 through the present. To use the database it is necessary to have a database catalog, which lists the information contained in the database. Queries to the database will be accepted by phone, mail, cc:Mail, e:mail or fax and the same forms of media can be used to return the answer to you. Through the database, you can learn how the results of this VSP visitor study compare with those across the nation, or within a specific region, with other natural areas, or sorted in many other ways.

Phone/send requests to:

**Visitor Services Project, CPSU  
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range  
Sciences  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133**

**Phone: 208-885-2819  
FAX: 208-885-4261  
cc:Mail: VSP Database  
e:mail: vspdatabase@uidaho.edu**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

---

# **Death Valley National Park**

## **Visitor Study**

### **Appendix**

**Fall 1996**

---

---

# Death Valley National Park Visitor Study

## Appendix

Fall 1996

Margaret Littlejohn

## Report 90

April 1997

This volume contains summaries of visitors' comments for Questions 17, 19 and 20.  
Each summary is followed by their unedited comments.

---

Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Chris Wall, the Death Valley '49ers, Inc. and the staff and volunteers of Death Valley National Park for their assistance with this study. The VSP acknowledges the Public Opinion Lab of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, for its technical assistance.

---

**Table 9: Visitors' likes**

N=1,320 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Rangers/staff friendly/courteous	10
Other comment	1
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Scotty's Castle tour	8
Visitor center museum/exhibits	6
Visitor center	5
Other comments	4
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Good roads	9
Exploring/driving unpaved roads	4
Park clean	3
Campground	2
Historic preservation	2
Good accessibility	2
Other comments	4
<b>CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS</b>	
Furnace Creek	8
Motel	7
The inn	6
The ranch	4
Other comments	6
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Wilderness	26
Nature	17
Unspoiled landscape/preserved	13
Clean air	10
Wildlife	10
Uncrowded	8
Plants/flowers	4
Commercial development is limited	2

---



**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Scenery	256
Desert	96
Quiet/silence	67
Scotty's Castle	56
Zabriskie Point	45
Landscape/geography	45
Badwater	44
Spaciousness/open space	44
Dante's View	41
Sand dunes	38
Beauty	34
Climate/weather	33
History	33
Stars/night sky	26
Artists Palette	25
Everything	22
Colors	20
Uniqueness	20
Solitude	18
Devils Golf Course	15
Hiking	12
Salt lake/flats	12
Sightseeing	10
Viewpoints/panoramic views	10
New experience	9
Friendly atmosphere	8
Sunset	8
Borax mine	7
Geology	7
Scenic drive	7
Sunrise	6
Being at lowest point in U.S.	5
Mosaic Canyon	5
Meeting friendly people	4
Golden Canyon	4
Long roads	4
Natural Bridge	4
Twenty Mule Team Canyon	4
Admire pioneers	2
Golden Canyon to Zabriskie hike	2
Learning climate's effect on wildlife	2
Leaving	2
Ubehebe Crater	2
Starkness	2
Swimming	2
Other comments	21

**Table 10: Visitors dislikes**  
 N=708 comments;  
 many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Concession personnel surly	2
Scotty's Castle tour guide	2
Other comments	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Lack of information at park entrances	5
Scotty's Castle tour needs improved	2
Lack of detailed information about park	2
Scotty's Castle tour wasn't informative	2
Other comments	5
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Driving unpaved roads	19
Restrooms	13
Lack of road directional signs	10
Lack of showers at campground	8
Roads	7
Campground needs improvement	6
Confusing road directional signs	5
Lack of guard rails along mountain roads	5
Steep/narrow roads in park	5
Litter	4
Lack of cold water	4
Lack of phones/existing phone needs fixed	3
Lack of picnic areas	3
Dirty restrooms	3
Lack of restrooms	3
Not enough pullouts	3
Smelly restroom at Badwater	3
Bird droppings on picnic tables	2
Lack of recycling	2
Lights out in campground restroom	2
Scotty's Castle needs improved (air circulation, lighting)	2
Other comments	11
<b>CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS</b>	
Gas too expensive	15
Lodging too expensive	11
Food too expensive	10
Lack of motels	10
Golf course doesn't belong in desert park/wastes water	9
Restaurants	8
Long wait to be served in restaurant	7
Ranch too expensive	6
Restaurant food poor quality	5
Restaurants need more food choices	5

**CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS (continued)**

Not enough restaurants	4
Motel room needs better cleaning/maintenance	4
Services need longer hours	4
Long wait to check in at motel	3
Poor quality service in store	3
Gift shops	3
Improve restaurant air conditioning	2
Motel	2
Poor quality service in gift shop	2
Ranch	2
Restaurants need longer hours	2
Store too expensive	2
Service doesn't belong in park	2
Other comments	8

**POLICIES**

Increase camping fee	9
Speeding cars	2
Other comments	5

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Too crowded	30
Too many bus tours	11
Park overdeveloped/too commercial	9
Traffic	3
Visitors' lack of respect for park resources	3
Poor air quality	2
Other comments	4

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Nothing	155
Heat	82
Long drive to get to/from park	26
Visit was too short	14
Other visitors/tours	10
Badwater	6
Sand dunes	6
Scotty's Castle	5
Devils Golf Course	3
Desert scenery	3
Ghost towns/ruins	3
Car problems	2
Dust	2
Golden Canyon	2
Hard water	2
Leaving	2
Mushroom Rock	2
Natural Bridge	2
Annoying insects	2
Too many Germans	2
Walking/hiking	2
Other comments	22

**Table 11: Planning for the future**

N=800 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Provide more staff	2
Other comments	6
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Provide map/information at all park entrances	26
Provide better information on what to see and do in park/time needed	25
Advertise/promote park more	15
Provide more information on history	14
Provide information in other languages	9
Provide more information on wildlife	6
Provide more information on geology	5
Provide more audio-visual exhibits on history	5
Post more thermometers	5
Visitor center is too far into park	4
Provide more guided tours	4
Provide more roadside information	4
Offer more types of guided activities year round	4
Update the visitor center	3
Provide more information on plants	3
Provide more information on ecology	3
Provide more information on hiking	3
Provide more information on American Indians	3
Provide self-guided tours	3
Offer small group tours to less accessible areas	3
Provide better maps	2
Stagger tour bus arrivals	2
Provide more rules/education signs about littering, staying on trail	2
Improve educational outdoor exhibits	2
Preserve history	2
Educate people about need for water	2
Provide safety information pamphlets	2
Provide a small zoo	2
Other comments	13
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Improve road directional signs	34
Improve road maintenance	33
Provide more restrooms	14
Provide more pullouts	11
Add showers to campgrounds	10
Update campsites	8
Provide water at more places	8
Improve restroom cleanliness	7
Provide more recycling bins	6
Provide more covered areas in campgrounds	5
Provide covered picnic areas	5
Provide more campsites	5

**FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (continued)**

Provide more hiking trails	5
Provide more dirt road access	5
Provide more road access to points of interest	4
Provide emergency phones	4
Keep park clean	3
Do not provide 4 wheel drive roads	3
Provide more RV hookups	3
Do not allow mt. bikes/ATVs in park	2
Improve trails	2
Provide elevation markers	2
Campgrounds too expensive	2
Do not pave roads	2
Reduce amount of litter	2
Improve landscaping	2
Provide more trash cans	2
Other comments	19

**CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS**

Offer more choices for lodging	21
Need more restaurants	9
Offer more concessions throughout park	8
Too expensive	8
Provide more accommodations	7
Offer cheaper lodging	7
Gas too expensive	6
Improve restaurants	5
Restaurants too expensive	5
Reduce long lines	4
Improve customer service	3
Need more gas stations	3
Add a coffee shop	3
Provide concessions at visitor center	3
Advertise lodging options	3
Improve souvenir shops	2
Monitor rates charged	2
Rent off-road vehicles	2
Improve hotel maintenance	2
Other comments	11

**POLICIES**

Restrict number of people visiting park	15
Monitor traffic	14
Collect fees at all entrances	13
Allow no more buildings	12
Remove golf course	9
Restrict numbers and times of bus tours	4
Control groups better	3
Do not waste water	3
Add a shuttle bus	3
No more roads	2
Provide better access	2
Provide more free campgrounds	2
Enforce penalty for littering	2
Other comments	14

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Keep park natural	50
Keep park as it is	48
No more commercialization	20
Reduce negative impacts of visitors	16
Preserve it for the future	14
Keep park simple	4
Do not allow Death Valley to become a Disney World	4
Use solar power	3
Everything should be ecologically friendly	3
Add more scenic viewpoints	2
Remove buildings and return to most natural state	2
Improve air quality	2
Use shuttle buses to viewpoints	2
Other comments	6

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Keep managing as you are	14
Other comments	6

---

**Table 12: Visitor Comment Summary**

N=525 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Personnel friendly/helpful/courteous	41
Poor customer service at concessions	3
Good service at concessions	2
Better personnel than at other national parks	2
Other comment	1
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Scotty's Castle tour well done	10
Enjoyed visitor center	6
Advertise amount of time to visit park	6
Advertise more widely	6
Needed more information	5
Disappointed in Scotty's Castle tour	4
Received good information about park	4
Commend park for educating visitors	4
Educational	4
Scotty's Castle tour too expensive	2
Visitor center film old/uninformative	2
Enjoyed museum	2
Provide more information on American Indians	2
Provide more information on borax uses	2
Provide more information for foreign visitors	2
Have brochures available at entrances	2
Glad of information about overheating cars	2
Open the wife's room in Scotty's Castle	2
Other comments	7
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Park clean	6
Need better signs on hiking trails	4
Keep park clean	3
Expand number of roads to improve access	3
Need better road signs	2
Provide more shade in campsites	2
Roads good	2
Emigrant Pass campground should be signed as tent only	2
Scotty's Castle was poorly preserved	2
Other comments	10
<b>CONCESSIONS/PRIVATE BUSINESS</b>	
Enjoyed Furnace Creek Ranch	2
Gas too expensive	2
Expensive	2
Other comments	3

**POLICIES**

Need clear boundary signs	4
Raise entrance fees	2
Other comments	4

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Do not change it/preserve for future	15
Good balance of nature and visitor facilities	2
Well preserved	2
Other comments	2

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

Enjoyed park	88
Unique/fascinating/awesome	56
Thanks/keep up the good work	43
Plan to return	33
Beautiful	20
Not enough time	18
Surprised by size and vastness	10
Exceeded expectations	8
America's national parks are great	7
Will recommend to others	6
Favorite destination	6
Friendly/helpful survey interviewer	6
Quiet	4
Would like to work for free place to stay in park	2
Came to visit lowest point in U.S.	2
Not a good place to hike	2
Amazed by number of foreign visitors	2
Too hot	2
Always find something new	2
Other comments	11

---