
Visitor Services Project
New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park
Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NHP) during July 20-26, 1999. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 284 questionnaires for a 68% response rate.
 - This report profiles New Bedford Whaling NHP visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
 - Over one-half (62%) of the visitor groups were family groups. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups were groups of two; 50% were in groups of 3 or more. Thirty-five percent were aged 41-55; 22% were 15 years of age or younger. Over one-half of the visitors (54%) were female and 46% were male. Thirty percent of visitors had graduate or professional degrees and 34% had a college degree. For 95% of the visitors, English was their primary language.
 - United States visitors were from Massachusetts (43%), Florida (6%), and 34 other states, plus Washington D.C. Seven percent of the visitors were from an international origin including Canada (43%), Germany (27%), Switzerland (14%), and 6 other countries.
 - Seventy-five percent of visitors were making their first visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP. Most of the visitor groups (90%) spent less than a day in New Bedford. Sixty-four percent of the visitors spent between 2 and 4 hours in town.
 - Prior to their visit, over one-half of the visitor groups (57%) were aware that the park existed. Forty-one percent of the visitors said New Bedford Whaling NHP was their "primary destination" and 42% said it was "one of several destinations." The most common sources of information used to plan their visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP were friends or relatives (28%) and previous visits (20%).
 - On this visit, the most common reasons for visiting were to visit the New Bedford Whaling Museum (58%), learn about whaling and maritime history (29%), and visit New Bedford Whaling NHP (25%). The least common reason for visiting was to research family history (3%).
 - On this visit, the most commonly visited sites in New Bedford Whaling NHP were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (79%), park visitor center (52%) and Seaman's Bethel (50%). The least visited site was the Rotch-Jones-Duff House (11%). The sites most often visited first were the park visitor center (41%) and the New Bedford Whaling Museum (36%).
 - With regard to the use, importance and quality of services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The services and facilities most used by 240 visitor groups were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (76%), NPS Visitor Center (57%), assistance from park staff (31%) and the Waterfront Visitor Center (25%). The most important services and facilities were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (86% of 158 respondents) and the NPS brochure (78% of 40 respondents). The highest quality services and facilities were NPS staff assistance (94% of 67 respondents), NPS brochure (87% of 38 respondents), New Bedford Whaling Museum (86% of 156 respondents) and NPS Visitor Center (86% of 121 respondents).
 - The New Bedford area services and facilities most used by 236 visitor groups were restrooms (61%), street parking (55%) and restaurants (48%). According to visitors, the most important services and facilities were restrooms (92% of 138 respondents), street parking (86% of 120 respondents), and garage/lot parking (85% of 69 respondents). The highest quality services and facilities were garage/lot parking (84% of 68 respondents), street parking (81% of 116 respondents) and benches (80% of 51 respondents).
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- Ninety-one percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at New Bedford Whaling NHP as "very good" or "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.