

Executive Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Shenandoah National Park during the weeks of July 26 -August 1 and October 4-10, 1987. Questionnaires were given to 2960 visitor groups and 1017 were returned, a 34% response rate.
- The survey provides a profile of the people who visited Shenandoah. Their general comments about the park are found in Volume 2 of the report; this volume has a summary of their comments.
- Visitors were most likely to be in family groups of two to four people. A majority were visiting Shenandoah for at least their second time. The majority of visitors came from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.
- Most visitors stayed at least one day. Stopping at overlooks, using gas stations/stores/gift shops, hiking for less than 2 hours and visiting the Big Meadows Visitor Center were the most common activities.
- The sites that received the greatest use (in order) were Big Meadows, Skyland and the Dickey Ridge Visitor Center. Community and state origins from which visitors commonly started from on their arrival day were Front Royal and Virginia respectively. The exits used most by departing visitors were Front Royal and Thornton Gap.
- Information services most used by visitors included brochures and booklets and the wayside/overlook exhibits. Services rated most useful included the brochures and booklets and the ranger-led programs.
- The sources of information about the park that visitors commonly consulted prior to their visit were maps or brochures and their own experience from previous visits.
- Few visitors had difficulty locating the park.
- Visitors to Big Meadows commonly participated in visiting the Visitor Center and in using the gas stations/stores/gift.shops.
- Higher proportions of Fall visitor groups were in a group of 2 people, older than 55 and repeat visitors. There were higher proportions of Summer visitor groups who used gas stations/stores/gift shops, went on ranger-led walks/talks and attended evening slide programs. Higher proportions of Summer visitor groups left the park via Rockfish Gap and used bulletin boards and the ranger-led programs. Higher proportions of Fall visitor groups participated in most of the activities at Big Meadows.
- Visitors made many general comments about their visit to the park.