

Visitor Services Project
New River Gorge National River
Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at New River Gorge National River (NR) during June 19-27, 2004. A total of 839 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Visitor groups returned 552 questionnaires for a 66% response rate.
- This report profiles New River Gorge NR visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Thirty-two percent of visitor groups had two people, 30% were groups of three or four, and (34%) were in groups of five or more. Fifty-two percent of the visitor groups were family groups. Fifty-six percent of visitors were aged 26-60 years and 18% were aged 15 years or younger.
- International visitors, comprising less than 1% of the total visitation, were from South Africa (22%), Japan (17%), Singapore (17%), and 6 other countries. United States visitors were from West Virginia (28%), Ohio (11%), Virginia (10%), and 34 other states, and Washington, D.C.
- Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about New River Gorge NR through previous visits (54%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (43%), and travel guides/tour books (22%). Eighty-eight percent of visitor groups received information before their visit. Most groups (87%) received the information they needed about the park.
- The most common reasons that visitor groups went to the New River Gorge NR area (within 50 miles of park) were to participate in recreation (25%) and visit New River Gorge NR (23%). On this visit, the most common activities while visiting New River Gorge NR were sightseeing (55%), hiking/walking (53%), and seeing New River Gorge Bridge (45%).
- The average visitor group expenditure in and outside the park (within 50 miles of park) was \$403. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of group spent more, 50% spent less) was \$130. The average per capita expenditure was \$84.
- In regard to use, importance, and quality of park services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The most used interpretive services by the 391 respondents included park brochure/map (61%), visitor center exhibits (43%), and visitor center information desk (43%). The interpretive services that received the highest combined "extremely important" and "very important" ratings included assistance from park staff (84%, N=101) and visitor center information desk (77%, N=153). The services that received the highest combined "very good" and "good" quality ratings were assistance from park staff (95%, N=98) and visitor center information desk (91%, N=141).
- The most used visitor services/facilities included parking (21%), restrooms (20%), and highway directional signs (17%). The visitor services/facilities that received highest combined "extremely important" and "very important" ratings included boat launches (94%, N=74), campsites (93%, N=54), and hiking/biking trails (87%, N=160). The services that received the highest combined "very good" and "good" quality ratings were park overlooks/scenic views (91%, N=282) and parking (89%, N=358).
- Most visitor groups (94%) rated the overall quality of visitor services at New River Gorge NR as "very good" or "good." Less than two percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services as "very poor" or "poor."

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please visit the University of Idaho
Park Studies Unit website: www.psu.uidaho.edu