

Visitor Services Project
Fort Donelson National Battlefield
Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Fort Donelson National Battlefield during July 3-22, 2007. A total of 453 visitor groups were contacted with 438 accepting questionnaires. Of those, 284 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 64.8% response rate.
- This report profiles a systematic random sample of Fort Donelson National Battlefield. Most results are presented in graphs and frequency tables. Summaries of visitor comments are included in the report and complete comments are included in the Visitor Comments Appendix.
- Forty-five percent of visitor groups were in groups of one or two and 39% were in groups of four or more. Seventy-three percent of visitor groups were family groups and 12% were traveling alone. Five percent of visitor groups were traveling with a Civil War enthusiast group.
- Forty-six percent of visitors were ages 41-65 years, 12% were 66 years or older, and 21% were 15 years or younger. Seventy percent of visitors visited the park for the first time in their life, while 14% visited four or more times. United States visitors were from Tennessee (31%), Illinois (12%), Kentucky (11%), 32 other states, and Washington, D.C. International visitors, comprised 1% of the total visitation, but this data should be viewed with CAUTION! due to the small number of respondents.
- Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about the park through previous visits (37%), friends/ relatives/ word of mouth (35%), and travel guides/tour books/publications (32%). The most preferred source to use on a future visit was the park website (58%).
- Of visitor groups (94%) who visited the park within one day, 63% spent up to two hours and 23% spent three hours. The average length of visit was three hours. Seventy percent of visitor groups had not planned a specific amount of time to spend at the park, while 59% spent the amount of time they had planned.
- The most common activities visitor groups participated in were viewing exhibits in visitor center (86%) and self-guided tour (84%). The most common sites visited were visitor center (96%), River Batteries (92%), and Fort Donelson (84%). The most important site to visitor was River Batteries (46%).
- The most common topics that visitors learned on this visit were importance of the Tennessee Cumberland River during the Civil War (95%) and tactics/strategies used to take control of the river (90%). Preferred topics to learn on a future visit by visitor groups were connection to other civil war sites (91%) and importance of the Tennessee Cumberland River during the Civil War (91%).
- Regarding use, importance, and quality of services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The most used services/facilities included visitor center exhibits (95%) and visitor center restrooms (83%). The services/facilities that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings included directional signs to find park sites (92%, N=209) and park brochure/map (91%, N=215). The services/facilities that received the highest combined proportions of “very good” and “good” quality ratings were park website (95%, N=41) and assistance from park staff (95%, N=116).
- Most visitor groups (93%) rated the overall quality of services, facilities, and recreational opportunities at Fort Donelson National Battlefield as “very good” or “good.” Less than 1% of visitor groups rated the overall quality as “very poor,” or “poor.”

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho at (208) 885-7863 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.