

**Visitor Services Project
Blue Ridge Parkway
Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of two visitor studies at Blue Ridge Parkway. During the fall survey, October 20-28, 2007, a total of 1,560 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 1,150 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 73.7% response rate. During the summer survey, June 17-23, 2008, a total of 1,103 questionnaires were distributed, and 826 were returned, resulting in a 74.9% response rate. The combined response rate for both surveys was 72.2%.
 - This report profiles a systematic random sample of Blue Ridge Parkway. 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.
 - Fifty-nine percent of fall visitor groups were in groups of two and 25% were in groups of three or four. Fifty percent of summer visitors were in groups of two and 29% were in groups of three or four. Sixty-eight percent of fall and summer visitor groups were in family groups.
 - United States visitors in the fall comprised 96% of total visitation, and were from North Carolina (33%), Virginia (15%), and 44 other states and Puerto Rico. Fall international visitors represented 4% of total visitation, with 42% from Canada, 28% from United Kingdom, and eight other countries. Among summer visitors, 97% were from the United States, including North Carolina (28%), Virginia (15%), Florida (13%), and 40 other states and Washington, D.C. Three percent of summer visitors were international, from Australia (16%), United Kingdom (16%), Germany (14%), and 9 other countries.
 - Among fall visitors, 50% were ages 46-65 years, 21% were 66 years or older, and 7% were ages 15 years or younger. Fifty percent of summer visitors were ages 46-65 years, 17% were 66 years or older, and 12% were ages 15 years or younger. Ten percent of fall visitor groups and 7% of summer visitor groups reported having members with physical conditions that made it difficult to access or participate in parkway activities or services.
 - Fifty-one percent of fall visitors and 47% of summer visitors had visited the parkway four or more times in their lifetime, while 34% of fall visitors and 38% of summer visitors had visited once.
 - Prior to this visit, 84% of fall visitor groups and 85% of summer visitor groups were aware that Blue Ridge Parkway is a unit of the National Park System. Twenty-six percent of fall visitor groups and 27% of summer visitor groups had heard of the Blue Ridge Parkway Association prior to their visit.
 - Prior to this visit, fall visitor groups most often obtained information about Blue Ridge Parkway through previous visits (71%) and maps/brochures (53%). Most summer visitor groups, prior to their visit, obtained information about the parkway through previous visits (72%) and maps/brochures (55%). Ten percent of fall and summer visitor groups did not obtain any information about the parkway prior to their visit.
 - Fifty-six percent of fall visitor groups indicated they would prefer to obtain information for a future visit from maps/brochures, while 56% of summer groups would prefer to use the park website.
 - Of visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours visiting the park, 42% of fall visitor groups and 38% of summer visitor groups spent five or more hours. For those who visited for more than one day, 36% of fall visitor groups spent two days and 38% of summer visitor groups spent four or more days. The average time spent in the parkway was 36.3 hours for fall visitor groups and 35.5 hours for summer visitor groups.
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- Concerning their activities at the park, 95% of fall visitor groups and 89% of summer visitor groups viewed scenery and took scenic drives. Fifty-nine percent of fall visitor groups and 52% of summer visitor groups engaged in photography, painting, and drawing. .

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- Although only 4% of fall visitor groups and 8% of summer visitor groups attended a ranger-led program, 47% of fall groups and 44% of summer groups indicated they would be interested in attending a ranger-led program on a future visit.
- The most used services/facilities included visitor center restrooms (fall, 87%; summer 84%) and the visitor centers (fall, 79%; summer 74%).
- The most used concession services/facilities included Mabry Mill Gift/Craft Store (fall, 32%; summer 36%), the Pisgah Inn Craft/Gift Shop (fall, 24%), and the Mabry Mill Restaurant (summer, 28%).
- For 97% of fall and 96% summer visitor groups, the scenic drive and scenic views were the most important of the park's attributes and resources. Clean air was most important to 93% of fall and 92% of summer visitor groups.
- Fifty-five percent of both fall and summer visitor groups indicated that they would be willing to pay an entrance fee of five dollars per vehicle to drive on the parkway for up to seven days, while 65% of fall groups and 60% of summer groups said they would not be willing to pay \$25 for parkway access throughout the year.
- Most visitor groups (fall, 95%; summer 97%) rated the overall quality of services, facilities, and recreational opportunities at Blue Ridge Parkway as "very good" or "good." Less than 1% of both fall and summer 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>.