

Visitor Services Project Great Smoky Mountains National Park Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (NP) during October 5-11, 2008. A total of 1,143 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 781 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 68.3% response rate.
- This report profiles a systematic random sample of Great Smoky Mountains NP visitors. 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-four percent of visitor groups were in groups of two and 33% were in groups of four or more. Seventy-four percent of visitor groups were in family groups.
- United States visitors comprised 98% of total visitors, from Tennessee (21%), Kentucky (11%), and 39 other states. International visitors represented 2% of total visitation, with 26% from Canada, 26% from United Kingdom, and eight other countries.
- Fifty-three percent of visitors were ages 46-70 years and 11% were ages 15 years or younger. Twelve percent of visitor groups reported physical conditions that made it difficult to access or participate in park services or activities.
- Forty-two percent of visitors had visited the park five or more in their lifetime, while 36% had visited once.
- Twenty-eight percent of respondents had attended some college and 25% had a high school diploma or GED. Twenty-four percent of visitor groups had an annual household income of \$50,000 to \$74,999. Sixty-one percent of visitor groups had two members in their household.
- Prior to this visit, 93% of visitor groups were aware that Great Smoky Mountains NP is a unit of the National Park System.
- Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about Great Smoky Mountains NP through previous visits (73%) and friends/relatives/word of mouth (43%). Eleven percent of visitor groups did not obtain any information about the park prior to their visit. Fifty-five percent indicated they would prefer to obtain information for a future visit from the Great Smoky Mountains NP website.
- Viewing mountain scenery was the primary reason that brought 35% of visitor groups to the park area, while 34% came primarily to visit the park.
- Of visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours visiting the park, 53% spent five or more hours. Of groups that spent more than 24 hours, 27% spent three days. The average length of stay was 44.6 hours (1.9 days).
- The most used information services/facilities were the park brochure/map (83%) and visitor center information desk (54%). The most used visitor services/facilities were the restrooms (90%) and trails (64%).
- Most visitor groups (94%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Great Smoky Mountains NP as “very good” or “good.” Fewer 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>