

Executive Summary

- This report describes the results of two visitor studies at Death Valley National Park (NP) during March 18-24, 2010 and November 22 - December 8, 2009. During the spring survey, a total of 371 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 304 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 81.9% response rate. During the fall survey a total of 360 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 271 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 75.2% response rate.
- This report profiles a systematic random sample of Death Valley NP wilderness/backcountry users during two survey periods. 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-eight percent of spring visitor groups and 46% of fall visitor groups consisted of two people. Forty-four percent of spring visitor groups and 51% of fall visitor groups were in family groups.
- Forty-nine percent of spring visitors and 39% of fall visitors were in the 46 to 65 year age group while 29% of spring visitors and 32% of fall visitors were in the 21 to 40 year age group.
- For 44% of spring visitors and 45% of fall visitors, this was their first visit to Death Valley NP, while 17% of spring visitors and 18% of fall visitors had visited seven or more times.
- United States visitors during the spring survey were from 37 states and Washington, D.C. In the fall survey, U.S. visitors were from 34 states. The highest proportion of visitors was from California (53% spring, 62% fall). International visitors during the spring survey were from eight countries and comprised 5% of spring visitation, with the highest proportion (44%) from Canada. Similarly, during the fall survey, international visitors were from ten countries and comprised 5% of fall visitation, also with a majority from Canada (43%).
- Ninety-one percent of spring visitor groups and 95% of fall visitor groups stayed overnight away from home within Death Valley NP and/or in the surrounding area. The most common type of lodging used inside the park was tent camping in developed campgrounds (38% spring, 38% fall). The most common types of lodging used outside the park were lodges, hotels, cabins, vacation rentals, B&B, etc. (57% spring, 64% fall).
- Of the visitor groups that spent more than 24 hours visiting the park, 28% of spring visitor groups and 27% of fall visitor groups spent three days. The average length of stay in the park was 4.3 days for spring visitor groups and 4.2 days for fall visitor groups.

- Most visitor groups (94% spring, 94% fall) obtained information about Death Valley NP prior to their visit. A majority of visitor groups (69% spring, 72% fall) used the park website to obtain their information.
- The most common activities in the park were: “walking/hiking” (spring 89%, fall 87%); “driving on backcountry roads” (spring 86%, fall 85%); and “viewing scenic attractions” (spring 82%, fall 81%). The most important activities at the park were “walking/hiking” (34% spring, 37% fall), followed by “viewing scenic attractions” (15% spring, 19% fall).
- Eighty percent of spring visitor groups and 82% of fall visitor groups were aware of the protected wilderness areas in Death Valley NP. A majority of all visitor groups said they were aware of “Leave No Trace” principles (97% spring, 96% fall) and a majority also followed these principles (99% spring, 97% fall).
- Seventeen percent of spring visitor groups and 13% of fall visitor groups backpacked overnight in the park wilderness, and about half of these (49% spring, 51% fall) obtained voluntary backcountry camping permits.
- The most used visitor services and facilities included restrooms (81% spring, 80% fall) and backcountry roads passable to non-4x4 vehicles (77% spring, 73% fall).
- Regarding ratings of the importance and quality of visitor services and facilities, it is important to note that the number of visitor groups that responded to each question varies with each service/facility. The service/facility that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings was open camping (88% spring, 82% fall).
- The services/facilities that received the highest combined proportions of “very good” and “good” quality ratings by spring visitors was the Death Valley backcountry road map and assistance from park staff (88%). For fall groups, the highest quality rating was for the visitor center (89%).
- Most visitor groups (96% spring, 95% fall) rated the overall quality of services, facilities, and recreational opportunities at Death Valley NP as “very good” or “good.” Less than one percent of spring visitor groups, and no fall 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/>