

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Joshua Tree National Park (NP) visitors during November 16-22, 2010. A total of 767 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 502 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 65.5% response rate.

Group size and type	Fifty-two percent of visitor groups consisted of two people and 23% were in groups of three or four. Fifty-four percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 45 states and Washington, D.C. and comprised 81% of total visitation during the survey period, with 62% from California. International visitors were from 19 countries and comprised 19% of total visitation.
Frequency of visits	Fifty-six percent of visitors were visiting the park for the first time in their lifetime. Twenty-two percent had visited five or more times in their lifetime.
Age	Twenty-eight percent of visitors were 56 to 70 years of age, 25% were 26 to 40 years old, 11% were 15 years or younger, and 6% were 71 years or older.
Physical conditions	Six percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions affecting their ability to access or participate in activities and services.
Awareness of park prior to visit	Thirty-eight percent of visitor groups were aware of the Congressionally designated wilderness in Joshua Tree NP. Eighteen percent of visitor groups visited the Congressionally designated wilderness areas during this visit to the park.
Information sources	Most visitor groups (87%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit from the park website (55%), and most (93%) received the information they needed. Seventy-two percent of visitor groups would use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
How visit fit into travel plans	For 49% of visitor groups, the park was one of several destinations, and for 43%, the park was the primary destination.
Primary reason for visiting the area	Six percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms). The most common primary reason for visiting the park area among non-resident visitor groups was to visit the park (75%).
Overnight stays in the park and area	Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups stayed overnight in Joshua Tree NP or in the surrounding area (Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms), of which 35% stayed two nights inside the park and 33% spent one night in the surrounding area.
Accommodations	Seventy-two percent of visitor groups tent camped in a developed campground in the park, while 36% of visitor groups were RV/trailer camping outside the park in the surrounding area.

Executive Summary (continued)

Length of visit in park	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours, the average length of visit was 5.5 hours. Of those that spent more than 24 hours, the average length of visit was 4.5 days. The average length of visit for all visitors was 2 days.
Sites visited in the park	The most commonly visited sites in the park were Jumbo Rocks area (55%), Hidden Valley (50%), and Joshua Tree Visitor Center (50%). The site visitor groups most often visited first was Joshua Tree Visitor Center (81%).
Activities on this visit	The most common activities were sightseeing (63%), walking self-guided nature trails (62%), visiting visitor centers (59%), and dayhiking (53%). For 27% of visitor groups the most important activity was dayhiking, and for 23% the primary activity was sightseeing.
Rock climbing	Twenty-nine percent of visitor groups participated in rock climbing activities; of these, 51% climbed on this or past visits in the park.
Park issues learned about	Sixty-three percent of visitor groups were aware that off-road vehicles damaged the desert, while 57% were aware of the dark night sky issue. Thirty-six percent learned about air pollution impacts during their visit.
Information services and facilities	The information services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the park brochure/map (80%), assistance from visitor center staff (71%), and the trailside exhibits/signs (50%).
Visitor services and facilities	The visitor services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were paved roads (86%), restrooms (81%), and directional road signs inside park (81%).
Protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences	Views without development (90%), clean air (89%), and natural quiet/sounds of nature (87%) received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings regarding the protection of park attributes, resources, and experiences.
Importance of Joshua trees	Twenty-one percent of visitor groups were aware that Joshua Trees are declining and that climate change may be a direct cause. The presence of healthy Joshua tree populations to the future of Joshua Tree NP was “extremely important” or “very important” to 86% of visitor groups.
Opinions about safety	Most visitor groups (80%) felt “very safe” from crime, 59% felt “very safe” from accidents, and 69% felt their personal property was “very safe” from crime.
Expenditures	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the park in the surrounding area) was \$387. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$150, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$128.
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (96%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Joshua Tree NP as “very good” or “good.” One percent of 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>.