

## Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Denali National Park and Preserve (Denali) visitors during July 19-25, 2011. A total of 1031 questionnaires was distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 735 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 71.3% response rate.

Group size and type	Forty-seven percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, 30% were in groups of three or four, 19% were in groups of five or more and 4% were alone. Sixty-six percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups, while 19% consisted of friends. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups were part of a commercial guided tour group.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 50 states and Washington, DC and comprised 91% of total visitation during the survey period. Visitors were most often California (12%), Alaska (10%), and Texas (6%), with smaller portions were from 47 other states and Washington, DC. International visitors were from 24 countries and comprised 9% of total visitation during the survey period, with 24% from Canada.
Frequency of park visits in past five years or lifetime	On this visit, most visitor groups (89%) were visiting the park for the only time in the last five years. Eighty percent of visitors were visiting the park for the first time in their lifetime, while 15% had visited two or three times in their lifetime.
Age, language used	Fifty-one percent of visitors were ages 51-70 years, 31% were ages 16-50, 9% were 71 or older, and 8% were ages 15 years or younger. Most visitor groups preferred English for speaking (96%) and reading (97%).
Physical conditions	Nine percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions affecting their ability to access or participate in activities and services. Of those, 84% had difficulty accessing trails and 16% had difficulty accessing or participating in bus tours, including park road rest areas.
Information sources	Most visitors (90%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit. The most common sources were friends/relatives/word of mouth (59%), maps/brochures/travel guides/tour books (58%), and the park website (52%). Most visitors (92%) received the information they needed. Many visitor groups (80%) would prefer to use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
How park visit fit into travel plans	For 80% of visitor groups, the park was one of several destinations, and for 19%, the park was the primary destination.
Primary reason for visiting the area	Two percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (from Nenana to Talkeetna). Among non-residents, the most common primary reasons for visiting the park area were to visit the park (83%) and visit other attractions in the area (8%).
Transportation	Thirty-six percent of visitor groups used a train to arrive at Talkeetna or the entrance area of Denali, while 28% traveled by private car, and 26% traveled by tour motorcoach. NOTE: visitor groups were allowed to make more than one answer choice for this question, affecting the results.
Adequacy of directional signs	Most visitor groups (82%) felt directional signs in the park were adequate.

## Executive Summary (continued)

Number of entries	On this trip, 53% entered the park or visited the Talkeetna Ranger Station two or more times, while 47% of visitor groups entered or visited once. Visitors were asked to count one entry per 24 hours.
Overnight stays/ Number of nights stayed	Most visitor groups (85%) stayed overnight inside Denali or in the local area (from Nenana to Talkeetna). Of these, 40% stayed two nights inside the park and 42% stayed two nights in the local area. NOTE: visitors may not have known if their accommodations were inside or outside the park.
Accommodations	Inside the park, 33% of visitor groups RV camped in a developed campground, while 30% stayed in Kantishna area lodges/cabins and 28% tent camped in a developed campground. In the local area, 84% of visitor groups stayed in a lodge, motel, rented condo/home, or bed and breakfast.
Length of stay	Among visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the park (40%), the average length of stay was 9.3 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more (60%), the average length of stay was 2.9 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 44.7 hours, or 1.9 days.
Activities on previous visits	Eleven percent of visitors had visited the park previously. On their previous visits, the most common activities were viewing scenery (88%), viewing wildlife (83%), and riding a park road bus (66%).
Activities on this visit	On this visit, the most common activities were viewing scenery (88%), viewing wildlife (80%), and riding a park road bus (77%).
Trails	Forty-seven percent of visitor groups hiked/walked trails in the park. The most common trails hiked/walked were Savage Canyon Loop (31%), Roadside (23%), and Taiga (21%). Most visitor groups (81%) were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the existing network of trails in the park.
Travel beyond Mile 14	On this visit, most visitor groups (81%) traveled past Mile 14 on the park road. The most common types of transportation used to travel past Mile 14 were the VTS shuttle bus (45%) and Tundra Wilderness Tour (30%). The distance most often traveled was to Eielson Visitor Center--MP 66 (30%).
VTS (shuttle or camper) bus use	Seventeen percent of visitor groups had to wait for a VTS bus. Of those, 38% waited 21 or more minutes, while 20% waited 11-15 minutes. Seventy-eight percent of visitor groups rated the acceptability of the wait time as “very acceptable” or “acceptable.” Sixty percent of visitor groups felt a wait of 31 or more minutes for a VTS bus would be unacceptable.
Vehicles seen beyond Mile 14	At wildlife stops, 65% of visitor groups saw 1-3 vehicles. While moving along Denali Park Road, 27% of visitor groups saw 1-3 vehicles. At restroom stops, 29% saw 1-3 vehicles; 44% of visitor groups saw 4 or more vehicles.
Crowding by vehicles beyond Mile 14	At wildlife stops, 59% of visitor groups felt “not at all crowded;” 41% felt “slightly,” “moderately,” or “very” crowded; and no visitor groups felt “extremely crowded.” While moving along Denali Park Road, 62% felt “not at all crowded;” 38% were “slightly,” “moderately,” or “very” crowded; and <1% felt “extremely crowded.” At restroom stops, 40% felt “not at all crowded;” 59% felt “slightly,” “moderately,” or “very” crowded, while 1% felt “extremely crowded.”

## Executive Summary (continued)

Importance of limiting vehicles beyond Mile 14	At wildlife stops, 50% of visitor groups rated the importance of limiting vehicles as “extremely important” or “very important.” While moving along Denali Park Road, 45% rated the importance of limiting vehicles as “extremely important” or “very important.” At restroom stops, 26% of visitor groups rated the importance of limiting vehicles as “extremely important” or “very important.”
Experience of viewing wildlife along the park road	Eighty-four percent of visitor groups rated their satisfaction with viewing wildlife along the park road as “very satisfied” or “satisfied.”
Visitor facilities used on past visits	On past visits, the visitor facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the Denali Visitor Center (83%) and Wilderness Access Center (40%).
Visitor facilities used on this visit	On this visit, the visitor facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the Denali Visitor Center (90%) and Wilderness Access Center (45%).
Services used on past visits	On past visits, the services most commonly used by visitor groups were the park brochure/map (66%) and assistance from information desk staff (61%).
Services used on this visit	On this visit, the services most commonly used were the park brochure/map (64%) and assistance from information desk staff (57%).
Reservation services	The most common reservation services used by visitor groups were park bus reservations in person (41%) and park bus reservations by Internet (37%).
Difficulty accessing/using services/facilities with children under 12 years of age	Twelve percent of visitor groups had children under 12 years old. Of these, 76% of groups had children 4-11 years of age, 5% of groups had children up 0-3 years of age and 19% had children in both of these age groups. Of all of these groups (N=83), 5% had difficulty accessing/using service/facilities.
Learning about the park’s cultural and natural history on a future visit	Most visitor groups (95%) were interested in learning about the park through a tour bus driver-naturalist (77%), printed materials (49%), and ranger-led activities (49%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (96%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Denali 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>.