

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Yellowstone National Park (NP) visitors during February 15-21, 2012. In total, 433 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 334 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 77.1% response rate.

Group size and type	Forty-eight percent of visitor groups consisted of two people and 29% consisted of three or four people. Sixty-three percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 48 states and Puerto Rico and comprised 94% of total visitation during the survey period, with 22% from Montana. International visitors were from 13 countries and comprised 6% of total visitation during the survey period, with 21% from Australia.
Frequency of visits	Most visitors (70%) were visiting the park for the first time in the past 12 months and 31% were visiting the park for the first time in their lifetime. Thirty-four percent had visited more than five times in their lifetime.
Age, ethnicity, race, and education	Forty-eight percent of visitors were ages 46-65 years, 12% were 66 or older, and 11% were ages 15 years or younger. One percent were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-six percent of visitors were White and 2% were Asian. Eighty percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree or graduate degree.
Preferred language	Most visitor groups preferred speaking (97%) and reading (98%) English. Twenty-two percent of visitor groups wanted services provided in another language.
Physical conditions	Five percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions affecting their ability to access or participate in activities and services.
Household size and income	Sixty percent of households were comprised of two people. Thirteen percent had four people in their household. Thirty-six percent of households had an income of \$75,000 to \$149,999. Fifteen percent had a household income of \$200,000 or more.
Information sources	Ninety percent of visitor groups obtained information about the park prior to their visit through previous visits (63%), the park website (54%), and friends/relatives/word of mouth (53%). Most visitors (97%) received the information they needed. Sixty-seven percent of visitor groups would prefer to use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
Park as destination	For 64% of visitor groups, the park was the primary destination and for 35%, the park was one of several destinations.
Reason for visiting the park area	Seventeen percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (within 150 miles of the park). Seventy-two percent of visitor groups indicated visiting the park was the primary reason that they visited the area. The most common reasons for visiting the park area were to visit the park (82%) and watch wildlife (64%) and snowmobile/snowcoach (58%).
Transportation and road signs	Eighty-one percent of visitor groups used one vehicle to arrive at the park. Most visitor groups (77%) found the park signs adequate, 71% found state highways signs adequate, and 64% found interstate signs to be adequate.

Executive Summary (continued)

Park entries	Seventy percent of visitor groups entered the park one time during their stay and 18% entered the park twice. Fifty-two percent of the entries were through the West Yellowstone Entrance, 35% were through the North Entrance, and 20% came through the South Entrance.
Overnight stays	Most visitor groups (85%) stayed overnight in the park or in the area within 150 miles of the park. Of those that stayed in the park, 29% stayed five or more nights and 28% stayed two nights. Thirty-one percent stayed five or more nights outside the park in the area (within 150 miles of the park).
Accommodations	Ninety-six percent of visitor groups that stayed in the park and 86% of visitor groups that stayed in the park area used a lodge, hotel, motel, cabin, rented condo/home, or B&B.
Length of visit	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the park, the average length of stay was 7.7 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more, the average length of stay was 3.8 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 45.6 hours, or 2 days.
Locations visited in the park	Eighty-eight percent of visitor groups visited all the locations in the park that they had planned to visit. Seventy-nine percent of visitor groups visited Old Faithful, 41% visited Madison, and 38% visited Mammoth Hot Springs.
Time spent at park sites	The most common length of time spent at each location was 1-2 hours. Twenty-seven percent of visitor groups spent five or more hours at Mammoth Hot Springs. The highest average number of days spent was three days at Mammoth Hot Springs and Old Faithful.
Activities on this visit	The most common activities were viewing wildlife/birdwatching (86%), boardwalk/geyser basin (77%), and eating in park restaurants (66%). Sixty-three percent of visitor groups took a snowcoach tour on this trip and 22% took a snowmobile tour.
Primary reason for visiting the park	Twenty-six percent of visitor groups listed a snowcoach tour as their primary reason for visiting the park, while 23% listed a snowmobile tour.
Locating commercial services	Three percent of visitor groups indicated that they had difficulty finding commercial services.
Commercial services used	Seventy-one percent of visitor groups ate at a restaurant or used other food services and 55% took a snowcoach tour. Fifty percent of visitor groups used lodging.
Rating commercial services	Almost all visitor groups were able to get their first choice of food services (96%) and lodging (92%). Most visitor groups also indicated that services/activities met their expectations, while 8% or less of each service/activity was rated “worse than expected.”

Executive Summary (continued)

Value for money paid for concession services	The concession services that received the highest combined “very good” and “good” ratings of value for money paid were snowcoach tour (77%), snowmobile tour (75%), and lodging (74%).
Concession services and activities	Ninety-two percent of visitor groups were able to use the services/activities that they had planned prior to visiting the park. Specifically, 99% planned to participate in a snowcoach tour (95% did participate), 58% planned a snowmobile tour (93% did), 15% planned a cross-country ski tour (73% did), and 12% planned to rent ski equipment (92% did).
Expenditures	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the park within 150 miles) was \$2114. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$1197, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$777.
Technology access on future visits	Sixty-one percent of visitor groups would like to have cell phone access in developed areas of the park on future visits. Forty-nine percent of visitor groups would like to have internet access.
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (94%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Yellowstone 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>.