

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (NPs) visitors during August 2 - 8, 2012. A total of 1,019 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups, including 1,015 in English and 14 in Spanish. Each questionnaire included an option to complete the survey online. Of those, 541 questionnaires (538 English and 3 Spanish) were returned, (470 paper questionnaires and 71 online questionnaires), resulting in a 53.1% response rate.

Group size and type	Fifty-one percent of visitor groups consisted of four or more people and 45% were in groups of two or three. Sixty-eight percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 41 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico and comprised 79% of total visitation during the survey period, with 73% from California. International visitors were from 18 countries and comprised 21% of total visitation during the survey period, with 22% from France.
Frequency of visits	In the past 12 months, 83% of visitors visited the parks once, while 12% visited two or three times in the past 12 months. For 53%, this was their first visit in their lifetime, while 33% had visited three or more times in their lifetime.
Age, ethnicity, race, income level, and household size	Forty-one percent of visitors were ages 41-65 years, 26% were 21-40 years old, and 20% were ages 15 years or younger. Twenty-one percent were Hispanic or Latino. Eighty-five percent of visitors were White and 11% were Asian. Twenty-six percent of respondents reported a household income of \$100,000-\$149,999. Forty-eight percent of respondents had two or three people in their household.
Language preference and information in Spanish	Most (88%) visitor groups preferred English for speaking and 87% preferred English for reading. Six percent of visitor groups used park information in Spanish. Seventeen percent of visitor groups felt that services in the parks need to be provided in languages other than English.
Awareness of park policy and effects of fire	Sixty-one percent of visitor groups were aware of the parks' fire policy. Forty-two percent of visitor groups were aware that they might experience smoke from prescribed, managed, or suppression fires during their visit to the parks.
Information sources	Most visitor groups (92%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit through the parks' website (56%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (41%), and previous visits (37%). Most visitors (92%) received the information they needed. Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups used or desired to use electronic devices to obtain information.
Parks as destination	For 63% of visitor groups, Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs were the primary destination and for 36%, the visit to the parks was one of several destinations.
Primary reason for visiting the area	For 20% of visitor groups, all members were residents of the area (within 80 miles of either park). Among nonresident visitor groups, 82% indicated that visiting the park was the primary reason for coming to the area.

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Transportation	Sixty percent of nonresident visitor groups used a car to travel most of the distance from their home to the Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs area, 18% used a SUV/truck/van, and 18% traveled in an airplane. Fifty-eight percent of visitor groups used one personal vehicle to arrive at the parks. Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups used one rental vehicle to arrive at the parks.
Park entrance and number of park entries	Fifty-three percent of visitor groups first entered the parks by Highway 198 into Sequoia NP, while 45% entered by Highway 180 into Kings Canyon NP. Sixty-eight percent of visitor groups entered the parks one time.
Overnight stays	Eighty-two percent of visitor groups stayed overnight inside Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs or in the area within 80 miles of the parks. Of those staying inside the parks, 46% of visitor groups stayed two or three nights. Of those staying outside the parks within 80 miles of either park, 75% stayed one or two nights.
Length of stay	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the parks, the average length of stay was 7.4 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more, the average length of stay was 3.5 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 50.4 hours or 2.1 days.
Sites visited	The most common places visited in the parks were General Sherman Tree (73%), General Grant Tree (57%), and Moro Rock (42%).
Activities on this visit	The most common activities were day hiking or walking (78%), scenic driving (78%), sightseeing (74%), and picnicking (42%).
Concession (commercial) services and facilities	The concession services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were gift shops (74%), markets (59%), and restaurants (36%).
Visitor services and facilities	The visitor services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were restrooms (93%), parking areas (88%), and roads (85%).
Safety	Most visitor groups (84%) obtained safety information about potential park hazards and other hazards. The most common sources were signs (74%), park newspaper/map (49%), and staff at visitor centers/museums (45%).
Expenditures	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the parks within 80 miles of either park) was \$514. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$310, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$142.
Preferred subjects to learn on a future visit	Ninety percent of visitor groups were interested in learning on a future visit. The most common topics included animals (80%), wilderness (74%), and history/archeology (64%).
Preferred methods of learning about the parks	Most visitor groups (95%) were interested in learning about the natural and cultural history of Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs through visitor centers/exhibits (67%), brochures/other printed materials (58%), and outdoor exhibits (55%).

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Amenities to use in developed campgrounds on a future visit

Seventy-one percent of visitor groups were interested in camping in Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs on a future visit. The most common amenities visitor groups would like to use in developed campgrounds on a future visit included showers (81%), standard campsites (1-6 people) (75%), and ability to make advance reservations (66%).

Overall quality

Most visitor groups (90%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs as “very good” or “good.” Less than 1% of groups rated the overall quality as either “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) 885-2585 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.