

Visitor Services Project (VSP)
Yellowstone National Park
Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a study of visitors to Yellowstone National Park during July 12-18, 1989. One thousand seventy questionnaires were distributed and 856 were returned, an 80% response rate.
- The report profiles Yellowstone visitors. The separate Appendix has visitors' comments about the park and their visit. A summary of these comments is included in both this report and the appendix.
- Forty-two percent of visitors were in groups of two people. Seventy-eight percent of visitors were in family groups. The most common ages were children younger than fifteen years old (23%) and adults aged 36-45 (21%). Almost half of visitors (49%) were on their first visit.
- Seven percent of visitors were foreign, with the highest proportions from Canada (43%) and Germany (14%). U.S. visitors came from 48 states.
- Of the visitors who stayed more than one day, 68% stayed two to three days. Common activities included viewing wildlife (93%) and thermal features (85%), photography (83%), walking for pleasure (75%) and visiting museums/visitor centers (73%).
- Most visitors stopped at Old Faithful (84%), Canyon (68%), Grant Village/West Thumb (63%), Madison (61%) and Norris (61%).
- Most visitors used the park folder/map (92%), park newspaper (68%) and visitor center exhibits (60%). Visitors highly rated the usefulness of ranger personnel, the park folder/map, self-guided trails/trail guides and sales publications.
- On the nights visitors spent in the park, most stayed in developed campgrounds (84%), and one night was the most common length of stay. Outside the park, most nights were spent in hotels or cabins (59%) and three nights was the most common length of stay.
- Regarding the 1988 fires, 64% of visitors stated the fires were not a reason for their visit; 7% stated they were the primary reason for visiting; and 86% would recommend a visit to family/friends. Most felt that they would likely visit the park again within the next five years (54%). Almost half (48%) said they felt the fires were beneficial to the park's natural systems; 28% said they were not; and 24% didn't know. Almost equal numbers of comments said the park appeared worse than expected and better than expected.
- Visitors made many more general comments about their visits to Yellowstone NP.

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83843 or call (208) 885-7129.