

**Visitor Services Project**  
**John Day Fossil Beds National Monument**

**Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a study of visitors to John Day Fossil Beds National Monument during August 19-25, 1990. Four hundred forty-four questionnaires were distributed and 377 returned, an 85% response rate.
- This report profiles John Day Fossil Beds visitors. A separate appendix has their comments about the park and their visit. A summary of these comments is included in this report and the appendix.
- Visitors were commonly families (68%); often in groups of two (48%). Thirty-one percent of visitors were 31-45 years old and 23% were under 16 years of age. Most (78%) were on their first John Day Fossil Beds visit.
- Foreign visitors comprised 7% of the total visitation and commonly came from Canada (30%) and Germany (29%). Americans came largely from Oregon (57%), Washington (13%), and California (11%).
- Twelve percent of the visitors visited John Day Fossil Beds on more than one day of their trip. Most visitors (64%) spent two hours or less in the park.
- Most visitors visited the visitor center, took photographs, viewed/studied fossils, viewed/studied geology, visited roadside exhibits, and walked trails.
- The most visited sites were the Sheep Rock visitor center (48%), Sheep Rock Overlook (35%), and Painted Hills Overlook (33%). More visitors stopped first at the Sheep Rock visitor center (28%) than at other park sites.
- On the day of their visit, visitors started their trips most often from John Day, Bend, and Prineville. These same towns were also the most common destinations on the day of their visit. Most visitors came in private vehicles and used Highway 26 to get to the monument. Some (33%) said they would likely have stayed longer in the area if more campgrounds had been available.
- The most important interpretive services according to visitors were visitor center exhibits, highway directional signs, the park brochure/map, and trail exhibits. Of the services they used, visitors rated ranger assistance, visitor center exhibits and the park brochure/map as highest in quality.
- Some visitors said their primary reason for visiting northeastern Oregon was that they were traveling through (33%), while others came primarily to visit John Day Fossil Beds (25%). Visitors came to the monument primarily to view scenery (38%) and see fossils (31%). They made many additional comments about their visits.

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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.