

# Executive Summary

In March of 2011 the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho conducted a three-part study of the ticketing system at World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument consisting of 1) a survey of 1,304 park visitors, 2) focus groups with commercial tour companies, and 3) a case study of ticketing systems at other recreational, cultural, and historical sites.

This report describes visitors to World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument and their opinions on and use of its ticketing system, park partners' and commercial tour operators' opinions of and suggestions for the ticketing system, and other site managers' experiences with ticketing systems.

Highlights of the results include:

## 1. Visitor profile

- **Demographics:** Survey respondent ages ranged from 16 to 91 years. The majority (47%) were between 40 and 60 years old. Thirty-two percent of visitors came to the park with a commercial guided tour group. Most visitors (65%) were in family groups. Eighty percent of visitors were from the U.S., with 14% from California, 8% from Hawaii, 8% from Illinois, and smaller percentages from 48 other states. Of the 261 international visitors (5%) that spoke English, 53% were from Canada, 26% from Australia, and smaller percentages from 21 other countries.
- **Visit experience:** Forty-eight percent of visitors experienced waiting time in line to obtain tickets for a program that culminates in a visit of the USS Arizona Memorial. The wait time average was 2.4 minutes, with a maximum time of 60 minutes. Less than 1% rated the wait time as "unacceptable." Fifty-two percent of visitors experienced "dwell time" (the time between obtaining a ticket and the program start time) of 90 minutes or more. Most visitors (82%) experienced the same level of crowding as expected, or less crowding than expected.

## 2. Commercial tour operators

- Generally tour operators were satisfied with recent changes in the ticketing system, primarily the ability to obtain tickets in advance for their clients. Some issues remain for park management to address, such as equity between companies' access to advance tickets, clear communication regarding changes in park policies and procedures, the physical logistics of obtaining tickets, and relations between National Park Service staff and tour operators.
- Commercial operators supported an on-line system for obtaining advance tickets as a means of mitigating many issues. Tour operators offered suggestions for improving the visitors' experience, including improved handicap access, enhanced interpretive opportunities, and the quality of the experience at World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument and on the USS Arizona Memorial.

### 3. Ticketing systems at other recreational, cultural, and historic sites

- Over half the sites studied (60%) offer advance ticket reservations via on-line reservation systems. Of these, five sites use their own system, five sites use Recreation.gov, and one site uses Extreme Tickets.
- Some advantages of using an on-line system for advance reservations included: convenience and flexibility for the visitor; less time waiting in line; obtaining visitor data for the park; improvements in accountability. Disadvantages included: misinformed ticket sales agents resulting in poor customer service; technology glitches and connectivity issues. Among companies that did not use online reservation systems, advantages included: flexibility; no additional cost to visitors; no issues with no-shows. Disadvantages were: increased wait time for visitors; accountability issues; multiple databases to handle.

### 4. Park partners

- Park partners are non-profit organizations that work alongside World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument to preserve Pearl Harbor history and tell its story. They include the Battleship Missouri Memorial, the USS Bowfin Museum, the Pacific Aviation Museum, and the Pacific Historical Parks. Partners were supportive of recent changes to the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument ticketing system, as it resulted in shorter ticket lines, while acknowledging that lines still form on busy days and the park does run out of tickets.
- An on-line advance reservation system would allow visitors more flexibility and would generate useful data on visitor use, scheduling, circulation, etc. An on-line system would also help inform visitors as to partner sites and the availability of other Pearl Harbor activities.
- Suggestions were made regarding ways that the park and its partners could work more closely together, specifically, using technology to facilitate ticketing, information, marketing, donor opportunities, memberships, etc. The current system of two ticket windows – one for NPS and one for partners – could eventually be combined into one window, serving all sites.

This report, which demonstrates World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument's continuing commitment to refine its ticketing system and improve the park visitor's experience, concludes with recommendations for further changes and improvement. Three alternatives are presented, with advantages and disadvantages of each. A ticket system that is efficient, accessible, and perceived as equitable to all stakeholders – visitors, tour companies, park partners, and NPS personnel – is a goal worthy of further efforts.