
Visitor Services Project Edison National Historic Site

Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Edison National Historic Site during August 7-13, 1994. A total of 302 questionnaires were distributed and 236 returned, a 78% response rate.
- This report profiles Edison NHS visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix contain a summary of visitor comments.
- Sixty-eight percent of Edison NHS visitors were in family groups. Almost a third of Edison NHS visitors (31%) were 15 years old or younger. Most visitors (81%) were visiting Edison NHS for the first time.
- Visitors from foreign countries comprised 7% of the visitation. Approximately half of the United States visitors to Edison NHS (52%) reside in New Jersey. Smaller percentages of visitors came from 25 other states and Puerto Rico.
- Thirty-seven percent of Edison NHS visitors used the Garden State Parkway to get to the site and 9% used the New Jersey Turnpike. Forty-nine percent of visitors traveled west on Route 280 as they approached the site.
- Most Edison NHS visitors (92%) spent less than one day in the West Orange area. The majority of visitors time was spent at Edison NHS, with 48% of visitors spending 2 hours and 30% of visitors spending 3 hours at the site.
- During their visit to the West Orange area, most visitors (91%) spent \$50 or less. The largest proportion of visitor's money (54%) was spent on food.
- Prior to visiting Edison NHS, the most often used sources of information about the site were travel guides and tour books (36%), friends and/or relatives (26%), and previous visits (24%). Fifty-two percent of the visitors stated an interest in Thomas Edison was the primary reason for their visit. Visitors listed Edison's life and inventions, science and technology, and communication and sound as the most interesting tour and exhibit subjects.
- The most used interpretive services by Edison NHS visitors were visitor center exhibits (96%), the lab tour (89%), the video theater (77%), and the visitor information desk (75%). The Glenmont house tour was used by less than half of the Edison NHS visitors (43%), and the Glenmont grounds tour was the least used interpretive service (16%). The visitor information desk, the visitor center exhibits, and the lab tour received the highest quality ratings.
- More than half of the Edison NHS visitors stated they would prefer full guided tours of both the lab complex (57%) and Glenmont (56%). Self guided tours and introductory talks were the least preferred alternatives. On a future visit to Edison NHS, visitors would most prefer demonstrations and hands-on activities (69%), interactive exhibits (36%), and audio visual programs (29%).
- Visitors made 337 comments about what they would plan for the future of Edison NHS. The majority of these comments were about interpretive services. Two hundred seventy-five additional comments were also provided by visitors.

<p>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 83843-1133 or call (208) 885-7129.</p>
