
Visitor Services Project Great Falls Park, Virginia Report Summary

- This report describes part of the results of a visitor study at Great Falls Park, Virginia during April 28 - May 4, 1996. A total of 585 questionnaires were distributed. Visitors returned 443 questionnaires for a 76% response rate.
- This report profiles Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors. A separate appendix has visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix contain a comment summary.
- Thirty-four percent of the visitors were in groups with friends; 31% were with families. Thirty-eight percent of Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors were in groups of two. Over half of the visitors (51%) were aged 21-40 and 11% were aged 15 years or younger.
- Among Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors, 6% were international visitors. Over one-third of those visitors (38%) were from England and 16% were from Germany. United States visitors were from Virginia (60%), Maryland (12%), Washington, D.C. (10%) and 33 other states.
- On this visit, visitors' most common activities viewing the falls (73%), walking/hiking (56%) and viewing wildlife (41%). On past visits, visitors' most common activities were viewing the falls (88%), walking/hiking (75%), visiting Patowmack Canal (56%) and viewing wildlife (50%).
- About one-third of the visitors were visiting Great Falls Park, Virginia for the first time (34%). Another one-third of the visitors (33%) had visited ten or more times. Seventy-four percent of visitors stayed for two to four hours in the park on this visit.
- The primary reason which brought visitors to the park was to view the falls (29%). Other visitors identified walking/hiking (20%), bicycling (12%) and white water boating (8%) as their primary reason for visiting.
- When asked what information sources they used to learn about river safety hazards, 96% of the visitors said park signs. Fifty-one percent of visitors said they used park bulletin boards. The least used source to learn about river safety was radio (19%). The information sources which received the highest "very effective" to "extremely effective" ratings were park signs, park bulletin boards, park personnel and park brochures.
- The most used visitor services were the park brochure/map (64%), trail map (52%) and visitor center exhibits (42%). According to visitors, the most important services were the trail map (73%), park brochure/map (67%) and park staff assistance (61%). The best quality services were park staff assistance (87%), visitor center information desk (87%), park brochure/map (86%) and visitor center exhibits (85%). The services with the highest "very poor" quality rating was the trail map (2%)
- The most used visitor facilities were parking (79%), trails (69%), overlooks (66%) and restrooms (65%). According to visitors, the most important services were parking (96%), trails (93%) and restrooms (90%). The service receiving the highest proportion of "not important" ratings was the snack bar (8%). The best quality services were parking (87%), trails (82%) and picnic area (80%). The services with the highest "very poor" quality rating was the snack bar (6%)
- Most visitors (93%) rated the overall quality of services in Great Falls Park, Virginia as "good" or "very good." Visitors made many additional comments.

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 83844-1133 or call (208) 885-7129.
--
