

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Rocky Mountain National Park (NP) visitors during February 19-27, 2011. A total of 792 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 579 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 73.1% response rate.

Group size and type	Fifty-six percent of visitor groups consisted of two people and 24% were in groups of three or four. Fifty-eight percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 40 states and Washington, D.C. and comprised 97% of total visitation during the survey period, with 77% from Colorado and smaller portions from 39 other states and Washington, D.C. International visitors were from 9 countries and comprised <1% of total visitation.
Frequency of visits	Thirty-nine percent of visitors visited the park five or more times in the past 12 months; and 37% had visited 21 or more times in their lifetime.
Age, gender, ethnicity, race, and education level	Thirty-five percent of visitors were ages 51-65 years, 11% were ages 15 years or younger, and 10% were ages 66 or older. Fifty-three percent of respondents were male and 47% were female. Four percent were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Ninety-four percent of visitors were White and 3% were Asian. Thirty-eight percent had completed a graduate degree.
Physical conditions	Five percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions. Hiking and walking were the services/activities most commonly listed as difficult to access or participate in.
Information sources	Most visitor groups (80%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit through previous visits (72%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (40%), and the park website (34%). Most (95%) received the information they needed. To obtain information for a future visit, 64% of visitor groups would use the park website.
Primary reason for visiting park area	For 73% of non-resident visitor groups, the primary reason for visiting the area (within 20 miles) of Rocky Mountain NP was to visit the park.
Overnight stays	Thirty-five percent of visitor groups stayed overnight in the area within 20 miles of the park, of which 38% percent stayed two nights outside the park.
Accommodations	Of those visitor groups that stayed outside the park, 82% stayed in a lodge, hotel, motel, rented condo/home, or bed and breakfast.
Length of stay	The average length of stay in the park was 6.2 hours and the average length of stay within 20 miles of the park was 1.6 days.
Sites visited in the park	The most commonly visited sites in the park were Bear Lake (44%), followed by the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (28%), and Fall River Visitor Center (23%).

Executive Summary (continued)

Activities	The most common activities on this visit were viewing scenery (66%), followed by wildlife viewing/bird watching (45%), and snowshoeing (42%). Snowshoeing was the most important activity for 34% of visitor groups. On a future visit, 84% of visitor groups would like to day hike, and 76% would like to view scenery.
Ranger-led programs/activities	Of those visitor groups that did not participate in a ranger-led program/activity, 48% did not because they did not have time, while 34% were not interested. However, 47% of visitor groups were interested in attending ranger-led programs on a future visit to the park, of which 54% would prefer a program length of 1/2-1 hour. The most commonly preferred topic to learn about was wildlife (81%).
Information services and facilities	The information services/facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were directional signs in the park (72%), followed by trailhead signs (56%), and the park brochure/map (56%). The information service/facility receiving the highest importance rating was the self-guided tour/trail booklets (84%). The information service/facility receiving the highest quality rating was assistance from park staff (94%).
Visitor services and facilities	The visitor services/facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the park roads (88%), followed by parking areas (76%) and restrooms/toilets (65%). The visitor service/facility receiving the highest importance rating was trails (97%). The visitor service/facility receiving the highest quality rating was trails (93%).
Protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences	The highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings of protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences included natural scenery/undeveloped vistas (97%), clean water (95%), clean air (94%) and native wildlife (92%).
Expenditures	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the park within 20 miles) was \$267. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$74, and the average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$109.
Methods of learning about the park	Eighty-nine percent of visitor groups were interested in learning about the park through trailside exhibits (57%), printed materials (52%), and self-guided tours (49%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (95%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Rocky Mountain NP as “very good” or “good.” Less than 1% of groups rated the overall quality as “very poor” or “poor.”