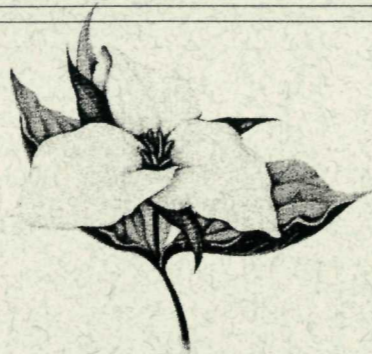


For more information, contact:
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Cooperative Park Studies Unit
College of Forest Resources,
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195
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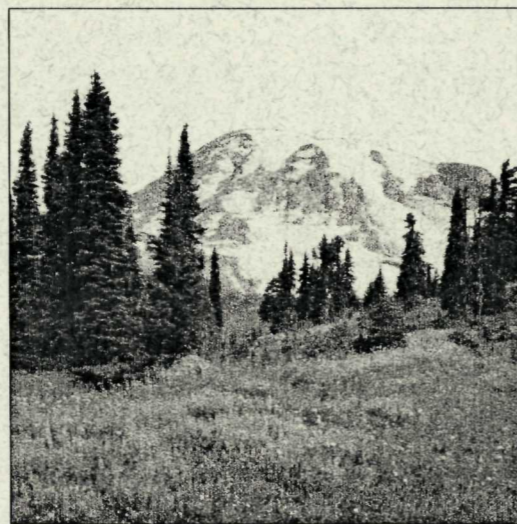


What Park Attributes Are Considered Important For Planning?

Park managers value visitors' opinions concerning which attributes of Mount Rainier National Park should be emphasized and preserved in planning for the park's future. Survey respondents were asked to choose which one of eight park attributes should be the most important in current management priorities. The "balance of the natural ecosystem" received the most votes, with 30% rating it as most important. Next were "forests, wildflowers and other plants" with 23% and "beautiful scenery" with 20%, followed by "wildlife" (11%) and "undeveloped recreation areas" (9%). "Developed recreation areas," "educational programs," and "historical buildings and archaeological sites" were considered most important by fewer than 4% of respondents.

What Are The Economic Impacts?

Findings from the 1985 visitors survey confirmed that the park is a significant source of income and seasonal employment for the local economy. In 1985, visitors spent over 13 million dollars in the Rainier area during their stay. Considering the increase in park visitation and economic growth that has occurred since 1985, it is likely that much more was spent in 1990. Mount Rainier National Park not only provides large numbers of visitors with a satisfying outdoor recreation experience, but also makes a valuable contribution to the health of state and local economies.

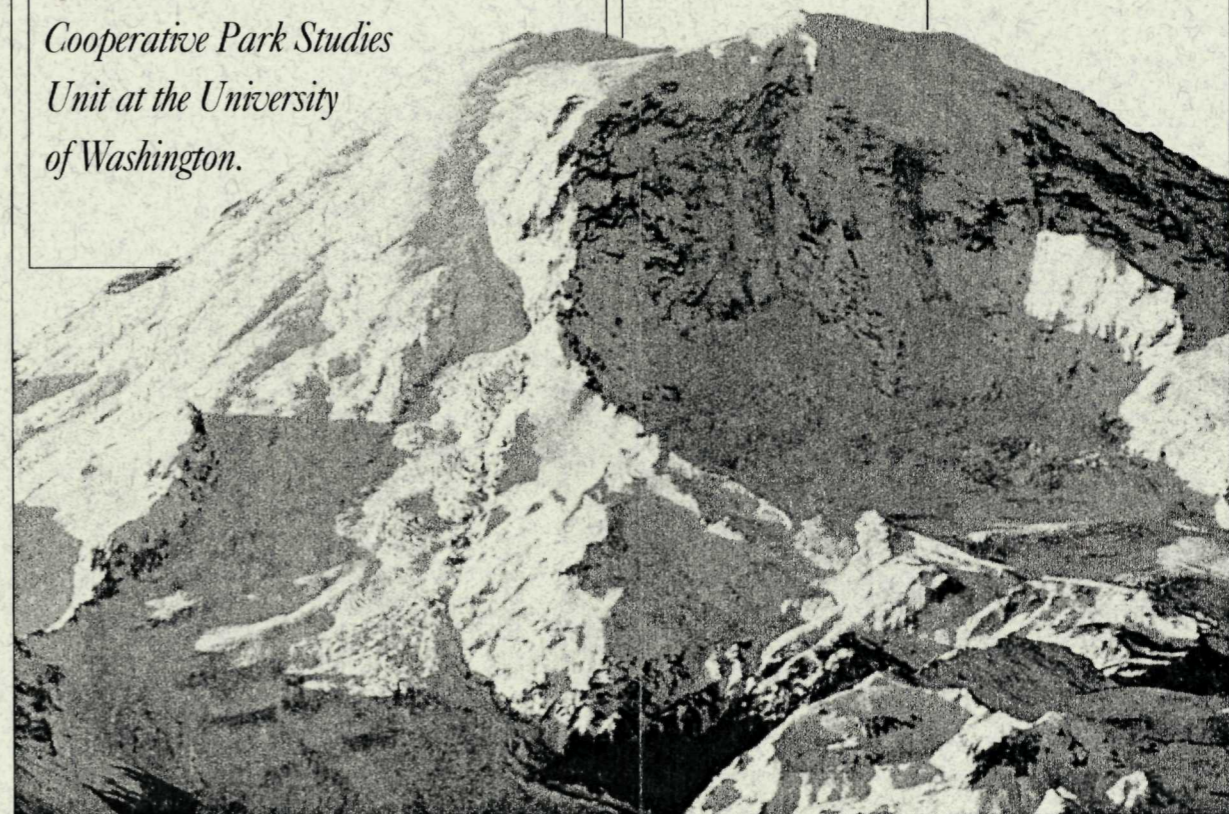


A PROFILE OF MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK VISITORS

Established in 1899, Mount Rainier National Park is an area rich in geologic, natural and human history. The park accommodates more than 1.5 million recreation visits per year, with visitors hailing from every state and many foreign countries. To obtain a comprehensive profile of park visitors and their activities, a survey was conducted during 1990 by Mount Rainier National Park and the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Washington.



Of nearly 2,000 questionnaires distributed to park users, 80% were returned, providing a great deal of valuable information. Highlights of the results of this survey are presented here.



"It's a beautiful place for me and a big part of my childhood memories."

—Survey respondent



Who Visits The Park?

Although visitors to Mount Rainier National Park traveled from all parts of the United States, over one-half (59%) of the survey respondents were from Washington state. Local residents from the four counties surrounding the park (King, Lewis, Pierce and Yakima) accounted for 44% of the total visitors.

The park was used predominantly by well-educated, professional men and women who came to the park with family members. Women and men visited the park in equal numbers. Respondents were primarily employed in the managerial and professional occupations (36%) or retired (19%). Their average education level was high, with one-half having completed college degrees. The average age of the visitors sampled was 43 years, with 64% between the ages of 21 and 49. Nineteen percent were 60 years or older. More than half (62%) of respondents visited the park with family members. Groups of friends comprised 19% of those surveyed. Nearly a third (30%) visited the park accompanied by children under age 16.

How Long Do They Stay?

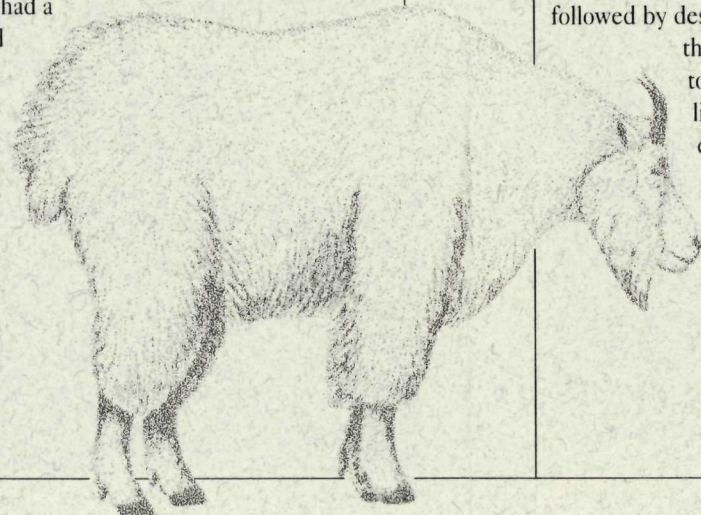
While the average time spent in the park was 15 hours, over three-quarters of the respondents stayed less than one day and two-thirds stayed less than 7 hours. Fourteen percent of the surveyed visitors stayed overnight in the park. Of these, about half spent the night in an automobile campground; 29% stayed at one of the park's two inns; and 29% stayed in the backcountry.

<i>Where did they come from?</i>	<i>How were they employed?</i>
Washington 59%	Managerial, Professional 36%
Oregon 3%	Retired 19%
California 5%	Technical, Sales, & Support 14%
Other 33%	Homemaker 7%
<i>How old were they?</i>	Student 5%
70+ 7%	Service 5%
60-69 12%	Other 5%
50-59 13%	Production, Craft 4%
40-49 18%	Military 3%
30-39 27%	Operator, Laborer 2%
20-29 20%	
15-19 3%	

What Facilities Do They Use?

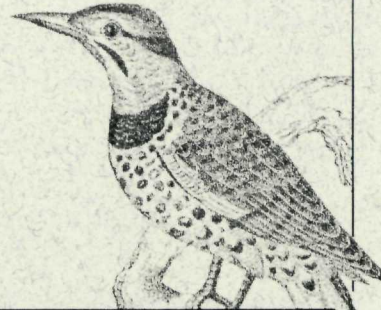
Visitors took advantage of the many facilities Mount Rainier National Park provides. Those most often used were Henry M. Jackson Visitor Center (51%), Paradise Inn (22%), and Sunrise Visitor Center (19%). The Paradise area is very popular; nearly three-quarters (71%) said they stopped there during their visit.

Of the visitors surveyed, 44% indicated that they had a specific, primary destination within the park. Of those, 27% had a day hike destination, 22% were going to a visitor center, 10% had a ski destination, and the remaining 9% were headed for an inn.



What did they do?

Drive to view scenery . 80%
Take photographs 59%
Visitor Ctr./Museums . 58%
Day hiking 51%
Observe wildlife 47%
View flowers 46%
Picnic 30%
Souvenir shop 35%



What Do They Do In The Park?

Mount Rainier National Park offers visitors the opportunity to experience its varied landscape through a wide range of activities. "Driving to view scenery" was the most popular activity with 80% of visitors surveyed saying they had done so, with 59% indicating "photography" and 51% specifying "day hiking." Similarly, when asked to specify the most important activity they participated in, visitors chose "driving to view scenery" most frequently, followed by "day hiking."

Why Do They Visit The Park?

Survey respondents were also asked to identify their reasons for visiting the park. The most important reason was "viewing the scenery." "Being close to nature" was the next most important motivation, followed by desires to "experience new and different things," to "do something with family," and to "get away from the usual demands of life." When asked to rate their overall experience in the park, 81% of the visitors regarded it as "very good" to "excellent."

How Has Visitation Changed?

A similar visitor survey was conducted at Mount Rainier during the summer of 1985. Comparisons across questions that were repeated in the 1990 survey showed a notable change in length of stay in the park. In 1985, 54% of visitors were in the park from one to six hours and 28% visited the park for 24 or more hours. In 1990, these proportions for summer visitors had changed to 63% and 21%, respectively. Other data reflect this trend toward shorter visits. In 1985, 7% of visitors did not use any park facilities during their visit; that figure had increased to 10% by 1990. While the proportions of people who engaged in "sight-seeing while driving" and "photography" remained the same, smaller percentages reported doing "self-led day hikes" and "attending a naturalist talk" in 1990.

The total number of recreational visits to the park increased by 14% from 1985 to 1990, and by 17% from 1990 to 1991. Much of this increase is related to the rapid population growth in the southern Puget Sound region adjacent to the park, which has grown by over one million people since 1970, and will increase by approximately 500,000 more by the year 2000.

