

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

Visitor Center Survey Report

January 2011

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Table of Contents

1. About the Survey.....	3
2. About the Respondents.....	3-5
3. Survey Findings.....	5-10
4. Questionnaire and Tabulations.....	11-20
5. Additional information requests/contest entries.....	21-27

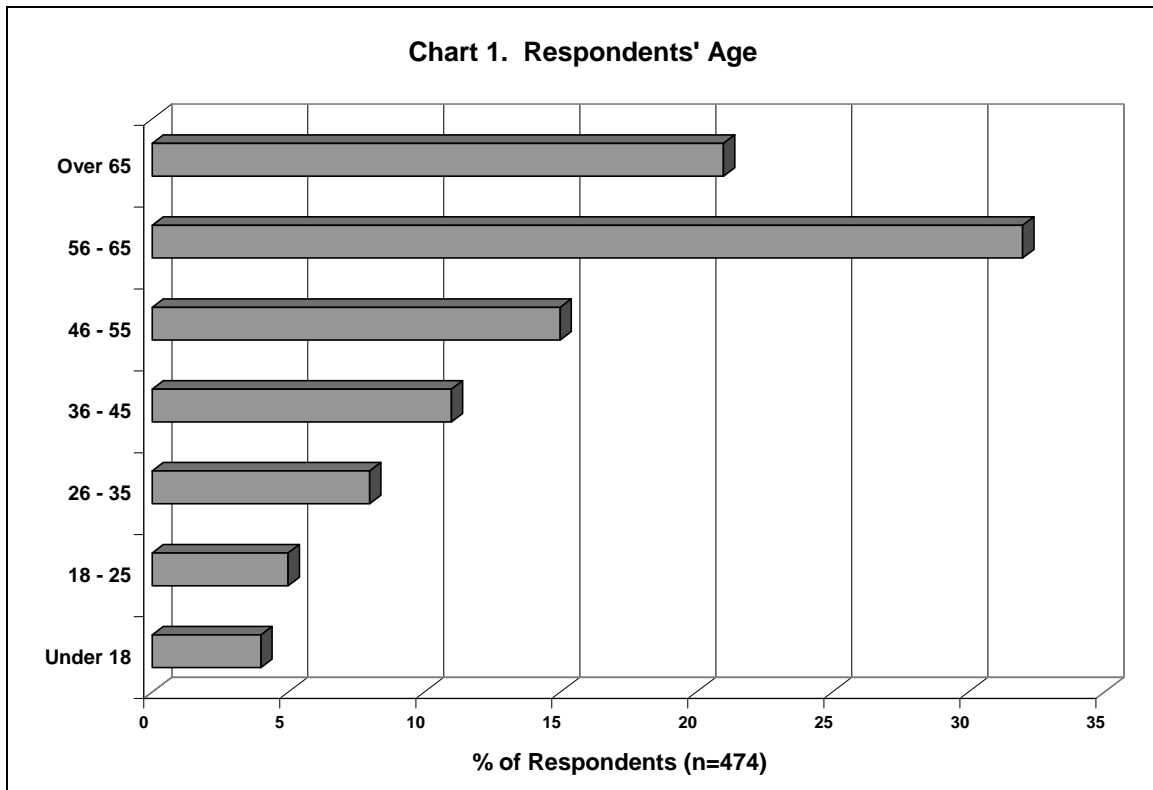
1. About the Research

Following report is based on research conducted among people who came to the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville, NC during October and November, 2010. Using self-administered touch-screen and paper questionnaires, 474 respondents participated in the survey. Respondents were limited to only one person per family.

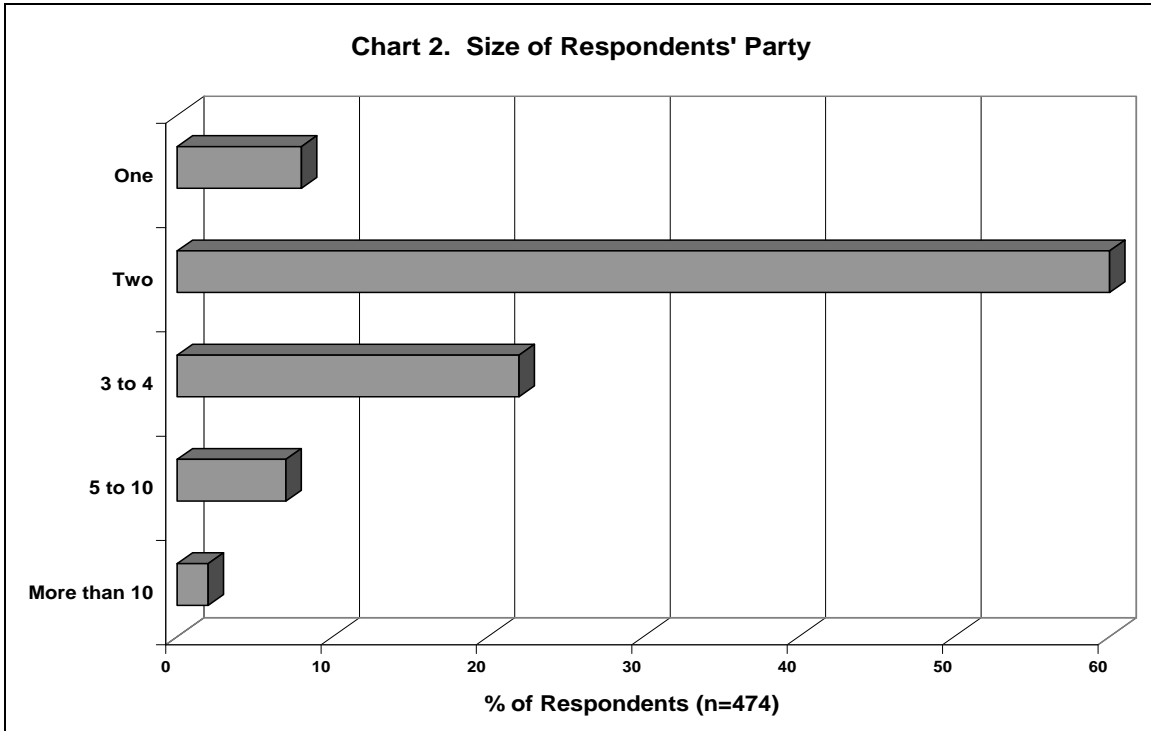
Results of the survey reflect the opinions of respondents and may or may not be representative of all visitors to the Center during the designated survey period.

2. About the Respondents

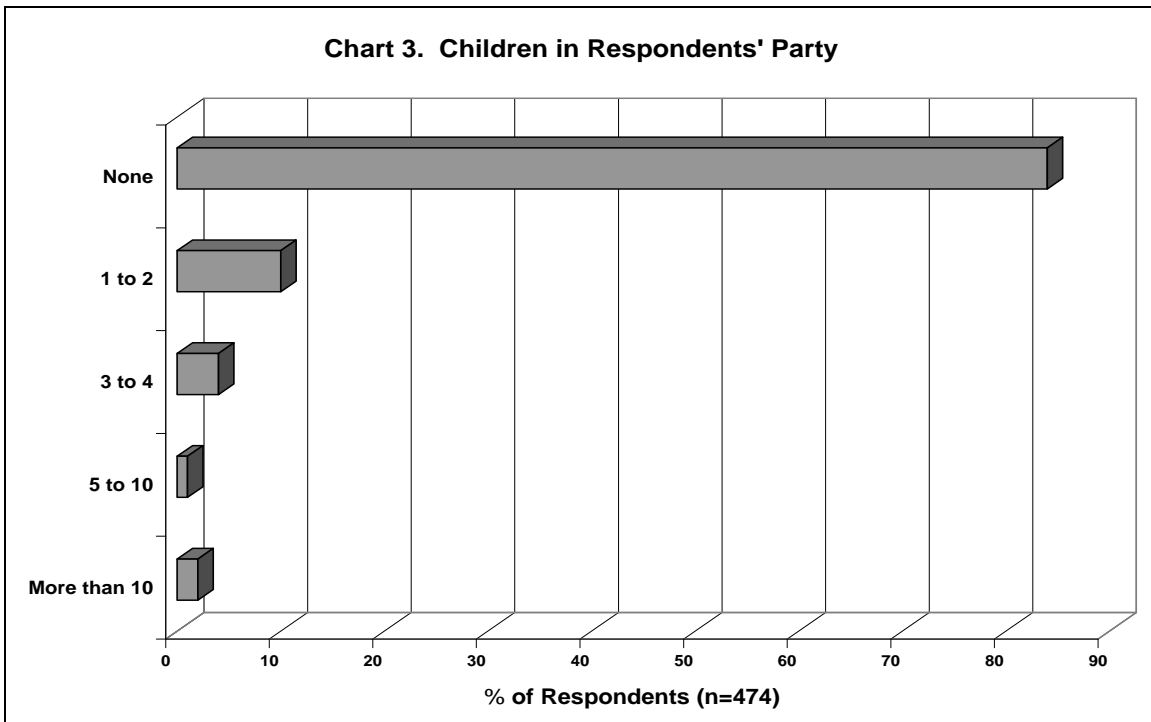
- **Age** – 53% of respondents were over age 55, while 9% were age 25 and under.



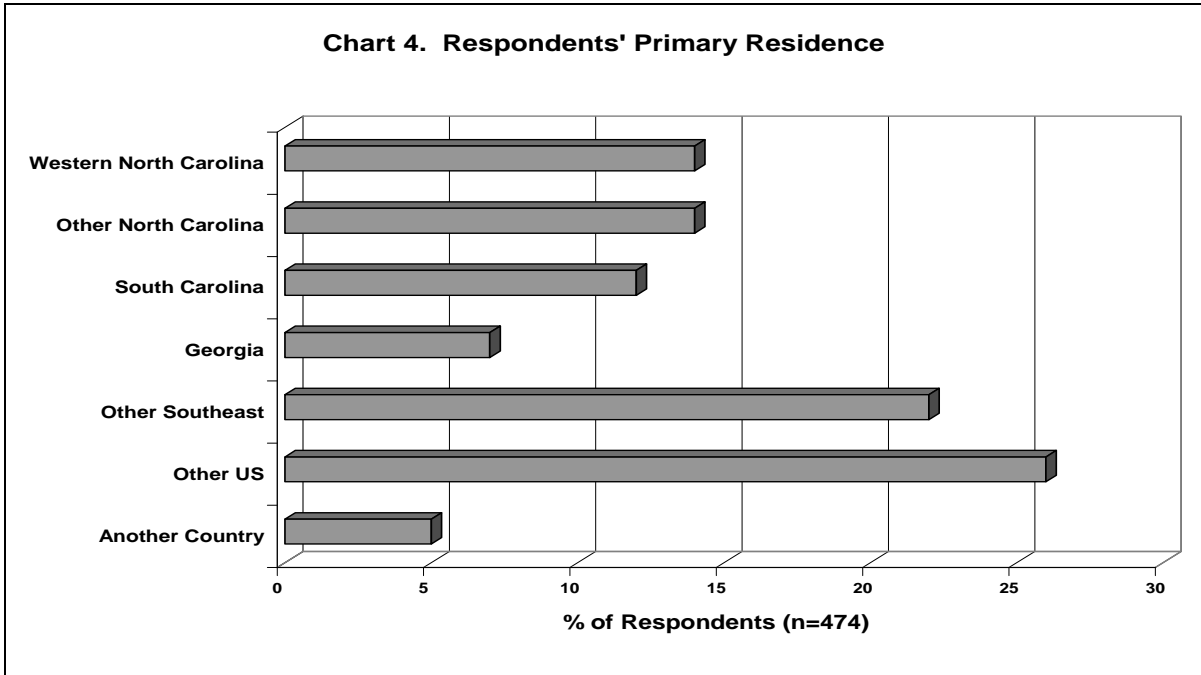
- **Size of Party** – 68% of respondents visited the Parkway Center with a party of two or less, while 9% were with a party of five or more.



- **Presence of Children** – 84% of respondents visited the Parkway Center without children (under age 18).

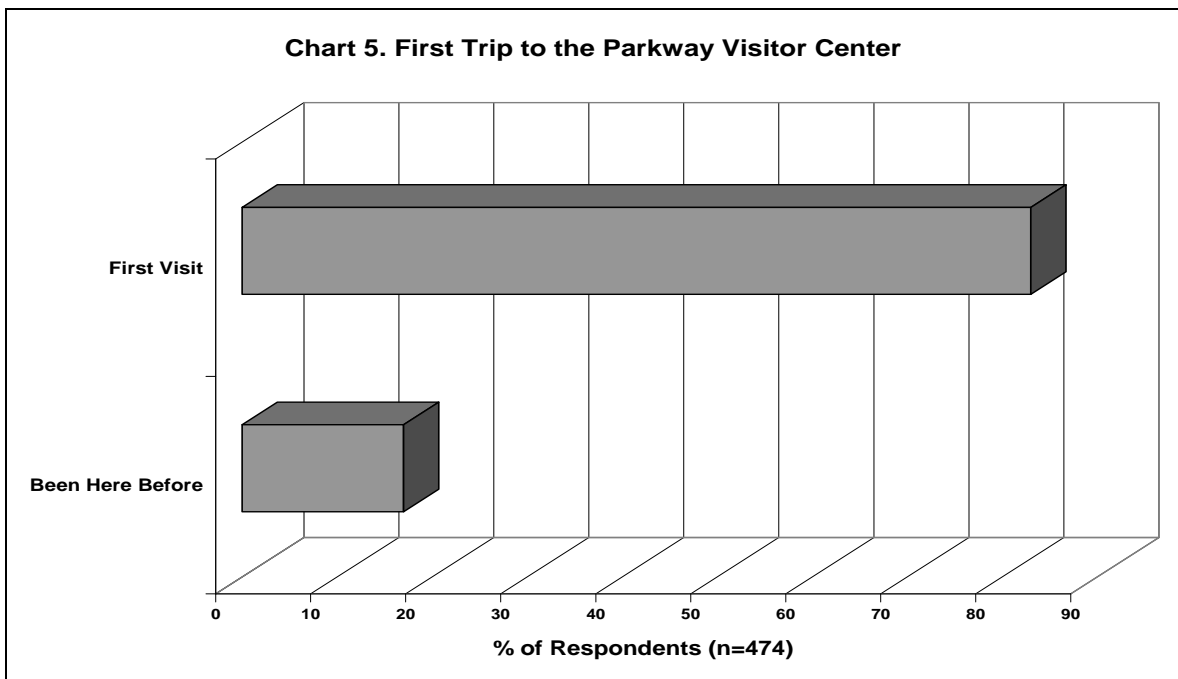


- **Primary Residence** - 69% of respondents live in the Southeast, with 14% coming from Western North Carolina.

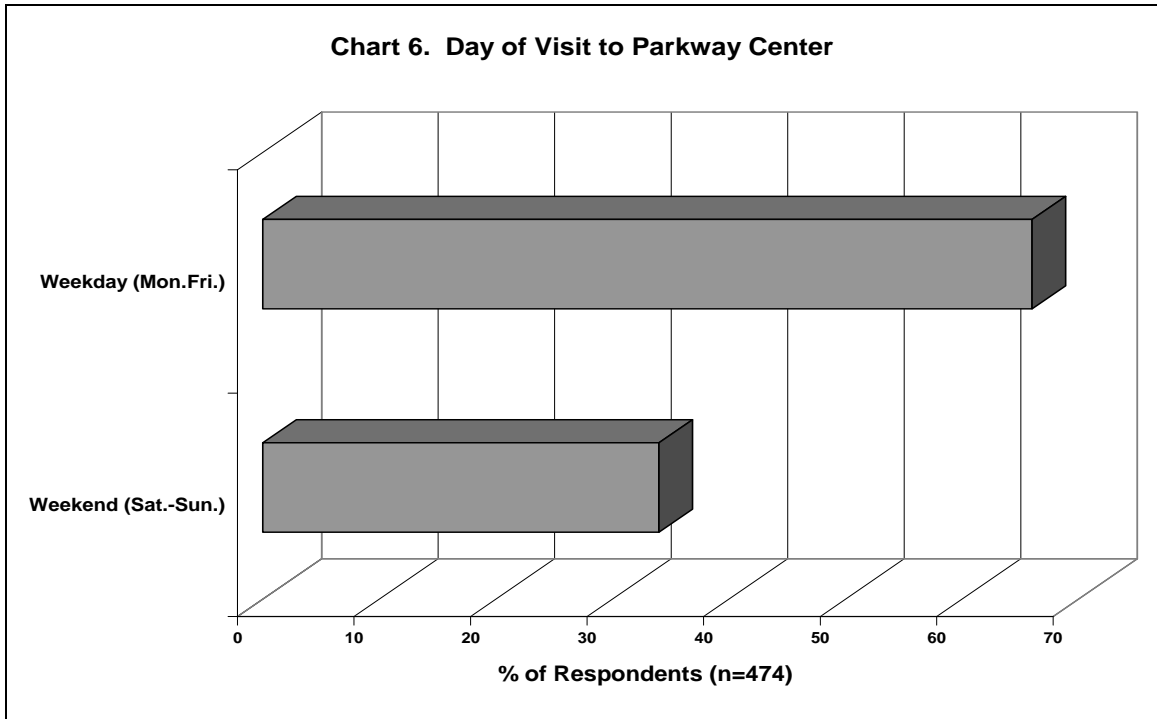


3. Survey Findings

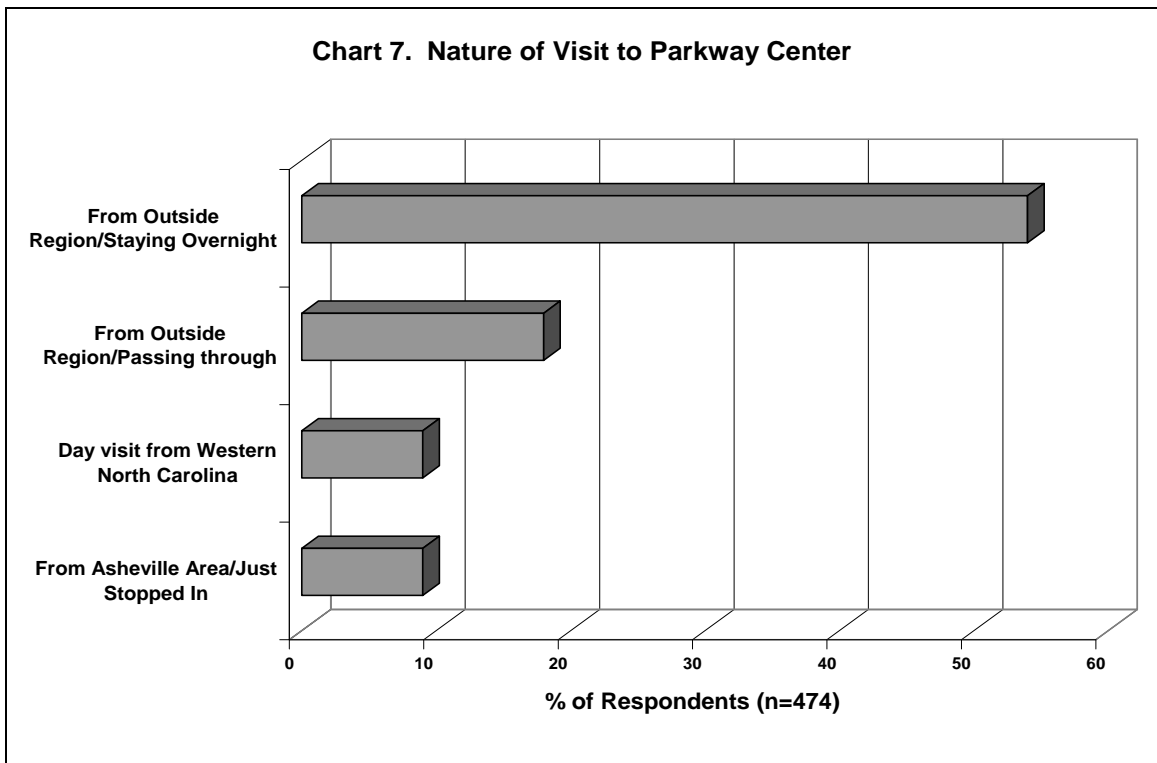
- 83% of respondents were visiting the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center for the first time.



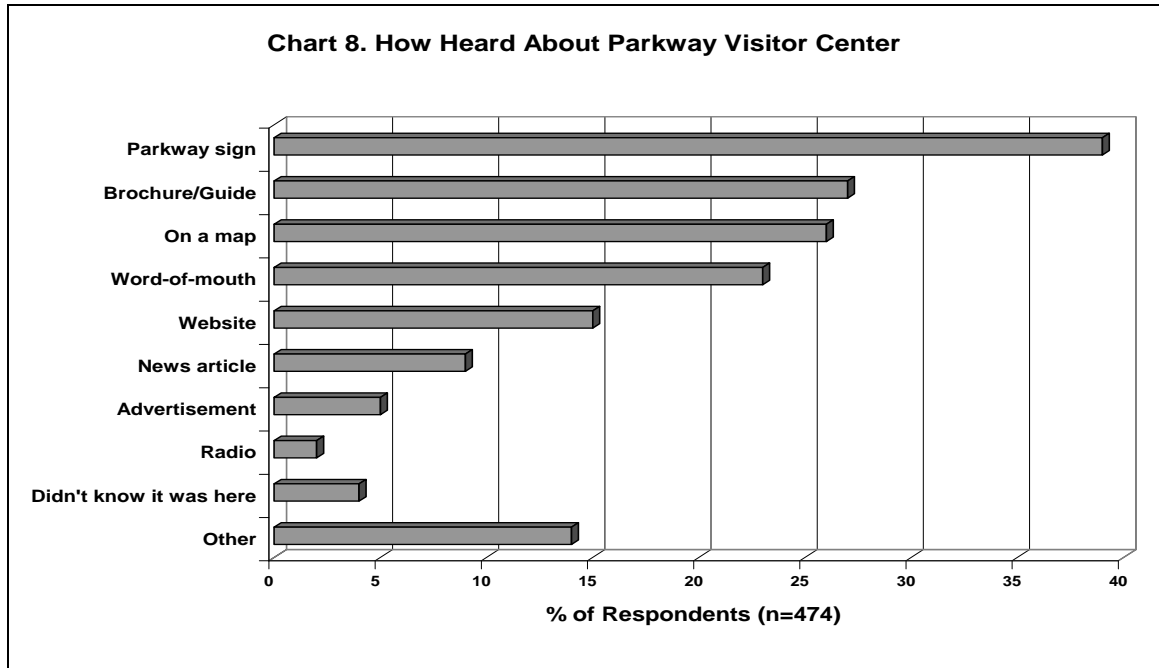
- 66% of respondents visited the Parkway Center on a weekday (M-F).



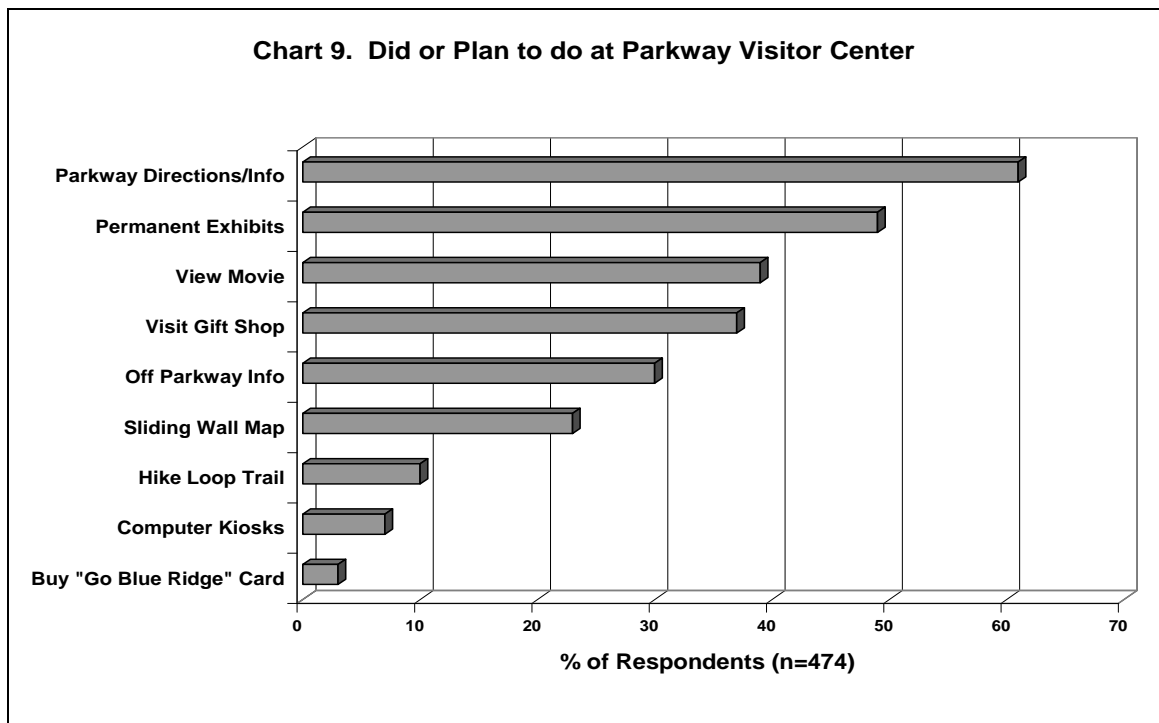
- 54% of respondents were visiting from outside the region with an overnight stay, while 18% were day visitors from Asheville or W. Carolina.



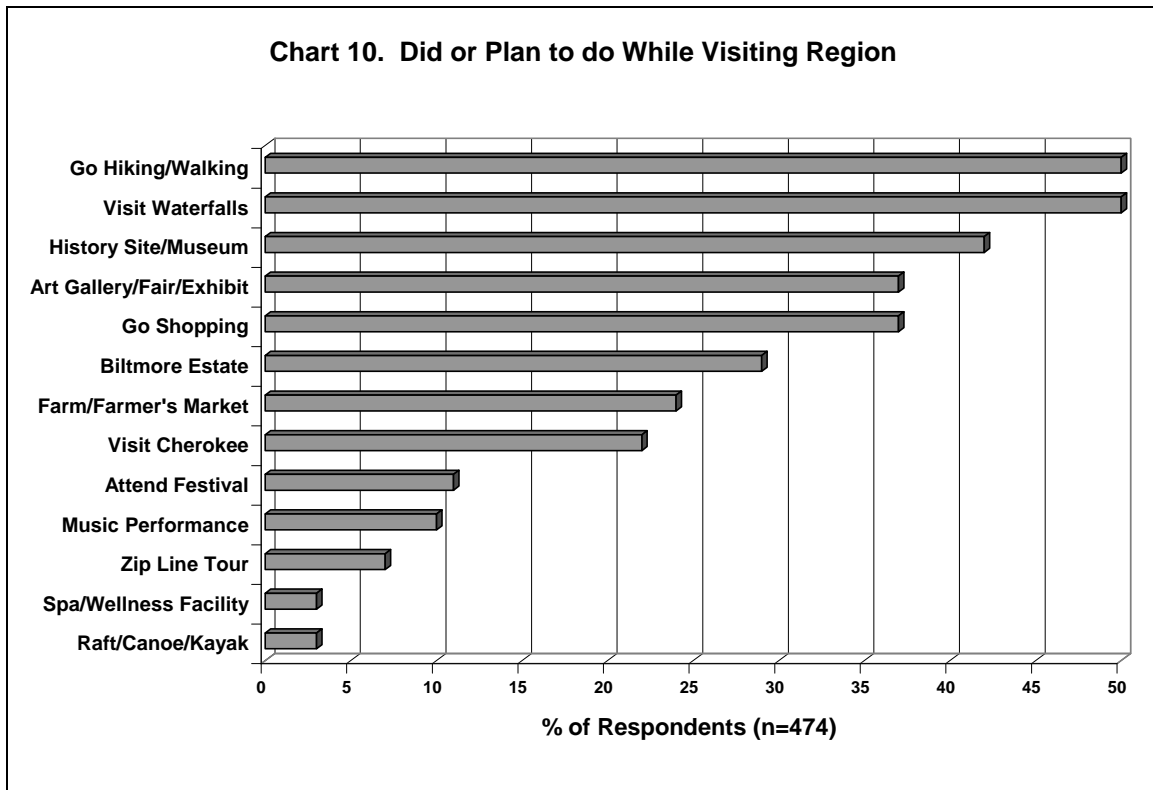
- The most common ways respondents heard about the Visitor Center include: sign on Parkway (39%), brochure/visitor guide (27%), on a map (26%) and word-of-mouth (23%).



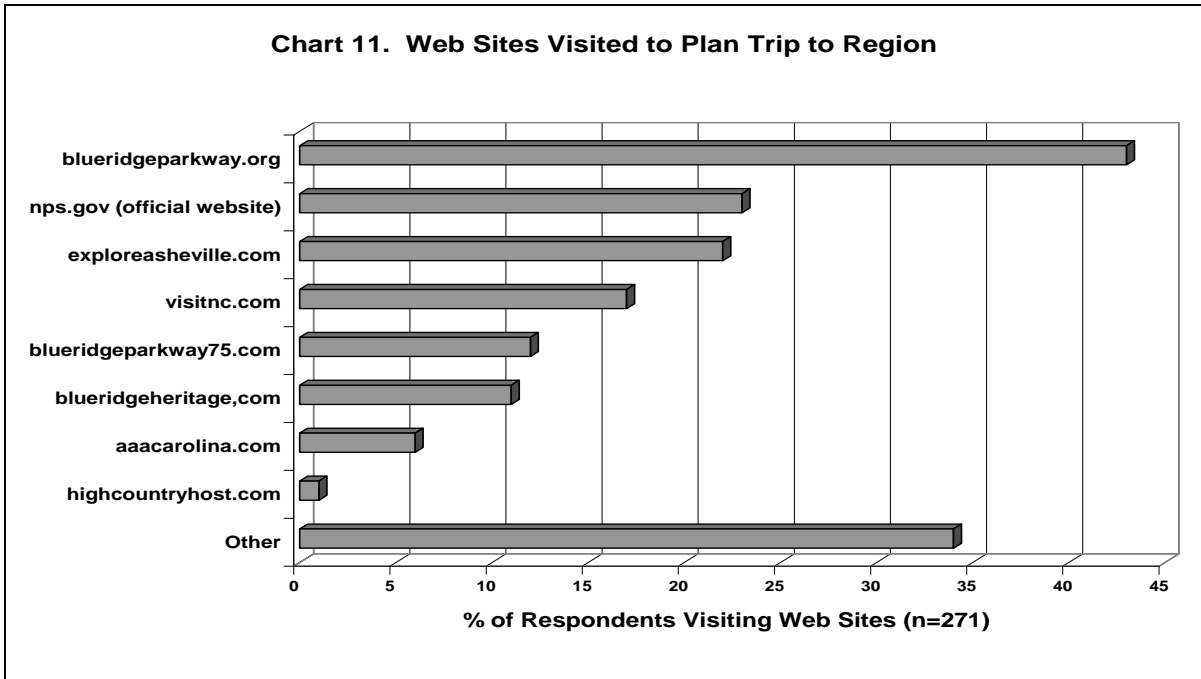
- While at the Visitor Center respondents got Parkway directions/information (61%), saw the permanent exhibits (49%), saw the movie (39%), visited the gift shop (37%) and used the sliding wall map (23%).



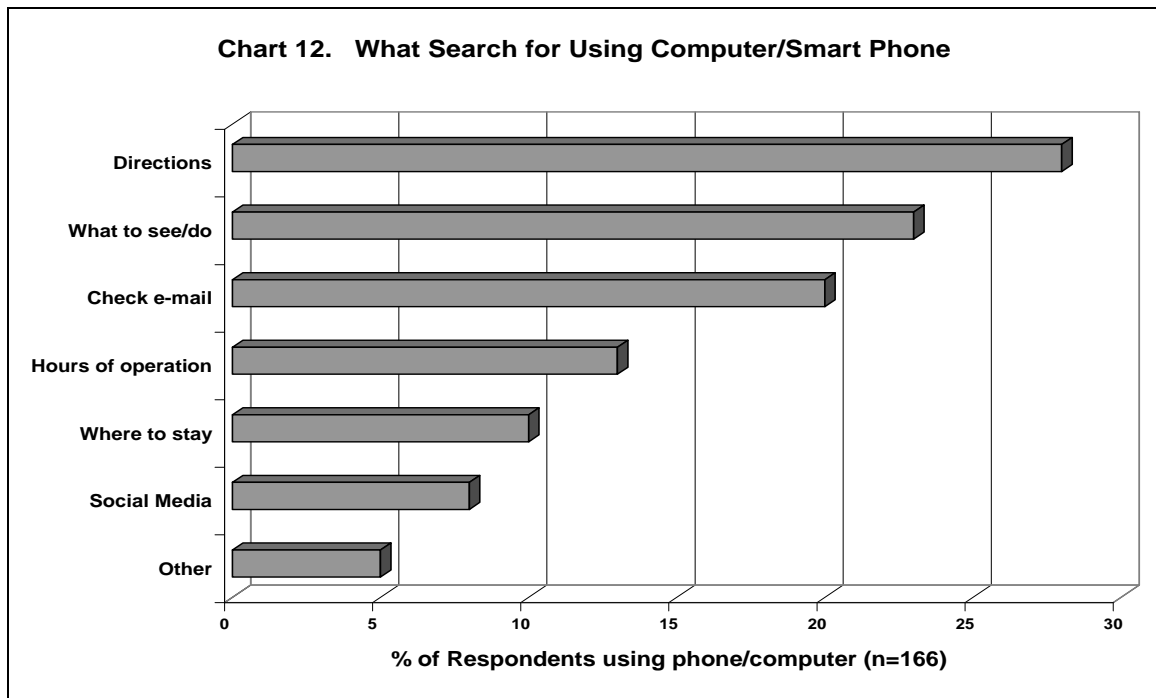
- As a result of their visit to the Visitor Center, 42% of respondents adjusted their travel plans ON the Parkway. In addition, 34% of respondents adjusted their travel plans OFF the Parkway after stopping at the Visitor Center.
- 57% of respondents said they were aware of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area before coming to the Visitor Center. This figure seems high and may be more a recognition of the Blue Ridge name in general than the National Heritage Area designation.
- The most popular activities for respondents while visiting the Western Carolina region include: hiking/walking (50%), waterfalls (50%), historical site/museum (42%), art gallery/fair/exhibit (37%) and shopping (37%).



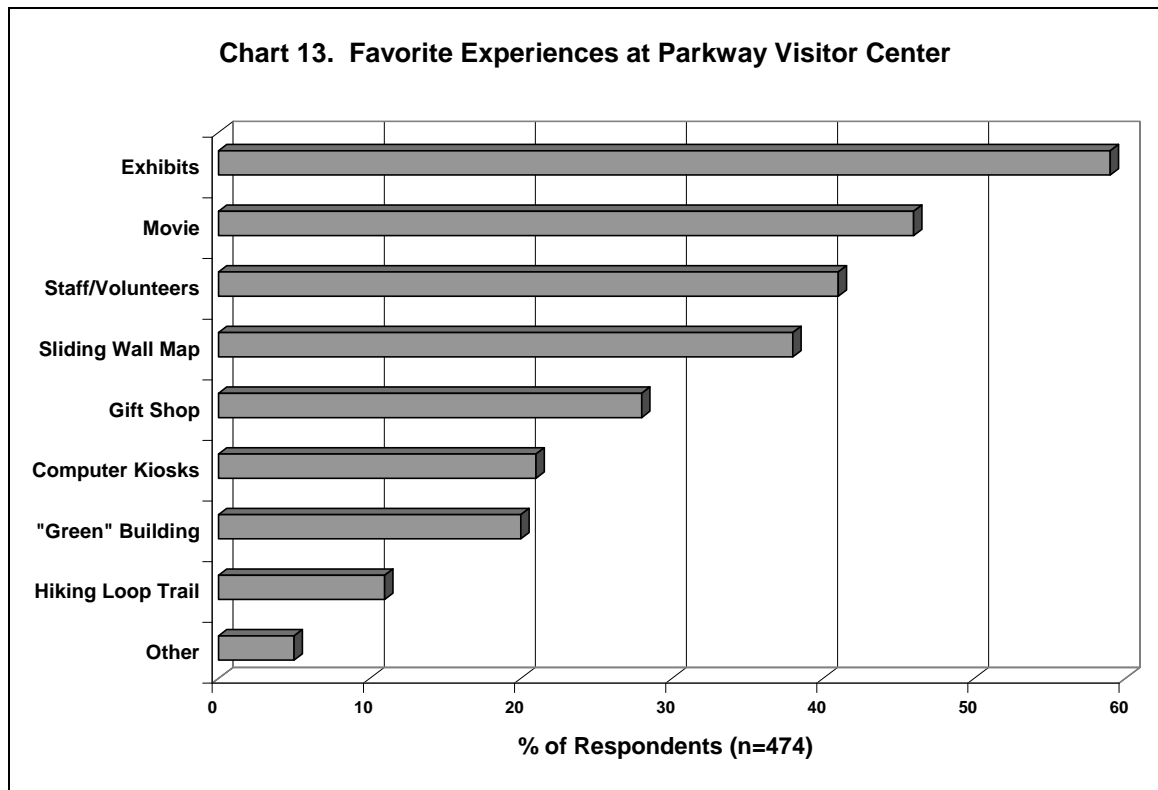
- 57% of respondents used the Internet to help them plan their trip to Western Carolina. The most popular sites were blueridgeparkway.com (43%); nps.gov. (23%).exploreasheville.com (22%).



- 35% of respondents used a smart phone or portable computer while traveling in the area, primarily for directions (28%), things to see/do (23%) and e-mail (20%).



- Respondent's favorite experiences at the Visitor Center were the exhibits (59%), the movie (46%), talking with staff/volunteers (41%) and the sliding wall map (38%).



- 95% of respondents would recommend the Visitor Center to friends.
- While most respondents like the Visitor Center as it is, suggestions for improvement included the addition of food or drink and specific exhibits or activities. (See pages 15-17 for a complete listing of suggestions.)

4. Questionnaire and Tabulations

Q1: Is this the first time you have been to THIS specific Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	393	82.91%
No	81	17.09%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q2: On what day are you visiting this Visitor Center?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Sunday	68	14.35%
Monday	52	10.97%
Tuesday	59	12.45%
Wednesday	73	15.40%
Thursday	66	13.92%
Friday	62	13.08%
Saturday	94	19.83%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q3: Which of the following statements BEST describes where you are visiting from?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Live in Asheville area and stopped in	41	8.65%
Live in Western North Carolina region	45	9.49%
From outside region and just passing through	84	17.72%
From outside region with overnight stay	254	53.59%
Other	50	10.55%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q4: How did you hear about this Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center? (Touch all that apply, and then touch "continue".)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Brochure/ Visitor Guide	130	27.43%	16.62%
Saw an advertisement	26	5.49%	3.32%
On a map	121	25.53%	15.47%

Word-of-Mouth	111	23.42%	14.19%
Website	73	15.40%	9.34%
Saw sign on the Parkway	184	38.82%	23.53%
Newspaper or magazine article	41	8.65%	5.24%
Radio	10	2.11%	1.28%
Other	66	13.92%	8.44%
Didn't know it was here	20	4.22%	2.56%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 782	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q5: What did you do or plan to do while at this Visitor Center today? (Select all that apply, and then touch "continue".)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Get Parkway directions or information directions	290	61.18%	23.69%
View/read permanent exhibits	232	48.95%	18.95%
Visit gift shop	176	37.13%	14.38%
Get information about places OFF of Parkway	140	29.54%	11.44%
Use computer information kiosk	31	6.54%	2.53%
Purchase "Go Blue Ridge" card	13	2.74%	1.06%
Hike the loop trail	46	9.70%	3.76%
View the movie	185	39.03%	15.11%
Use Parkway sliding wall map	111	23.42%	9.07%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 1224	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q6: Have you decided to adjust your Parkway travel plans after stopping at this Visitor Center? For example, adding a new stop or activity on the Parkway.

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	199	41.98%
No	142	29.96%
Not sure	133	28.06%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q7: Have you decided to adjust your travel plans OFF the Parkway after stopping at this Visitor Center? For example, adding a new activity or place to visit outside the park.

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	162	34.18%
No	180	37.97%
Not sure	132	27.85%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q8: Before coming to this Visitor Center were you aware that the mountains and foothills of North Carolina are known as the BLUE RIDGE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	269	56.75%
No	179	37.76%
Not sure	26	5.49%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q9: During this trip/visit, which of the following activities have you done or plan to do? (Select all that apply)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
See waterfalls	238	50.21%	14.96%
See traditional music performance	47	9.92%	2.95%
Attend a festival	50	10.55%	3.14%
Go hiking or walking	238	50.21%	14.96%
Take a zip line tour	34	7.17%	2.14%
Visit Biltmore House/Estate	137	28.90%	8.61%
Visit Cherokee	105	22.15%	6.60%
Go shopping	173	36.50%	10.87%
Go rafting, canoeing or kayaking	15	3.16%	.94%
Visit farm/farmers' market	112	23.63%	7.04%
Visit spa or natural wellness facility	12	2.53%	.75%
Visit art/craft gallery, fair or exhibit	175	36.92%	11.00%
Visit historical site or museum	199	41.98%	12.51%
None of these	56	11.81%	3.52%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 1591	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q10: Did you use the Internet to help plan this trip/visit?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	271	57.17%
No	193	40.72%
Not sure	10	2.11%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q11: Which websites did you use? (Touch all that apply, and then touch "continue".)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
aaacarolinas .com	16	5.90%	3.50%
blueridge heritage.com	29	10.70%	6.35%
nps.gov (official website site)	63	23.25%	13.79%
visitnc.com	46	16.97%	10.07%
blueridge parkway.org	116	42.80%	25.38%
exploreasheville.com	60	22.14%	13.13%
highcountry host.com	3	1.11%	.66%
blueridge parkway75.org	33	12.18%	7.22%
Other	91	33.58%	19.91%
Valid Respondents: 271.0	Total Responses: 457	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q12: While you are traveling in the area, are you accessing the Internet via a smart phone and/or a portable computer to help plan your travel?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	166	35.02%
No	293	61.81%
Not sure	15	3.16%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q13: What are you using the device to search for? (Select all that apply, and then touch "continue".)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
What to see and do	108	65.06%	21.26%
Where to stay	49	29.52%	9.65%
Directions	133	80.12%	26.18%
Check e-mail	96	57.83%	18.90%

Hours of operation	61	36.75%	12.01%
Visit social media sites	38	22.89%	7.48%
Other	23	13.86%	4.53%
Valid Respondents: 166.0	Total Responses: 508	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q14: What were your FAVORITE experiences at this Visitor Center? (Select all that apply, and then touch "continue".)

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Parkway Movie	216	45.57%	16.76%
Gift shop	135	28.48%	10.47%
Exhibits and displays	282	59.49%	21.88%
Talking with staff or volunteers	193	40.72%	14.97%
Interactive Parkway wall map	181	38.19%	14.04%
The "green" features of the building	94	19.83%	7.29%
Information kiosks	98	20.68%	7.60%
Hiking the loop trail	50	10.55%	3.88%
Other	23	4.85%	1.78%
None of these	17	3.59%	1.32%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 1289	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q15: What did this Visitor Center NOT have that you would have liked or found useful? (Touch "continue" when finished.)

Comments
LONGER HOURS
A BETER SELECTION OF GIFT SHOP SHIRTS - I WAS LOOKING FOR A SPECIFIC SHIRT I SAW AT CRAGGY GARDENS BUT IT WASN'T HERE IN THE COLOR I WANTED
FOOD
FOOD, DRINK MACHINE
IS JUST FINE
IT WAS PERFECT.
MORE HISTORICAL DISPLAYS

ANMALS DOWN STAIRS
I BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING HERE IS VERY USEFUL.
ALL
MORE TRAILS
NOTHING; VERY NICE
FREE FOOD
MORE ABOUT THE PASSIVE SOLAR & SUSTAINABLE FEATURES.
A OK
SOUVENIER SPOONS
DETAILS ON ALL TYPE TREES AND FOLIAGE EVERGREEN IN FOREST
FREE FOOD & DRINKS, COFFEE
NOTHING
REAL ANIMALS
VERY COMPLETE
A MAP THAT WAS RIGHT-SIDE UP
MORE HANDS ON ACTIVITED
MORE MERCHANDISE.
PET FRIENDLY IN BUILDING
A LIBRARY OF INFORMATION
POOR SIGNAGE BOTH ON AND OFF THE PARKWAY
WIFI
GOOD AS IS
GREAT
OUR EXPERIENCE HERE WAS WODERFUL AND STAFF VERY KIND AND HELPFUL.
CRAFTS
NOTHING REALLY
CHEAP BLUE RIDGE ARKWAY CLOTHES

M&MS
COFFEE OR HOT CHOCOLATE
IT'S GREAT
NOTHING, IT IS VERY THOROUGH
COUPONS
FOOD
JUST FINE AS IS
TIME THE MOVIE STARTS
OK
NOTHING
NOTHING, I LOVE COMING HERE.
NOTHING
IT WAS VERY INFORMATIVE.
FOOD
SALAMANDER DISPLAY
COKE MACHINE
NONE
COFFEE
REGIONAL SPECIFIC SITES TO SEE SUCH AS NASCAR
IT WAS GREAT
HAS IT ALL...WONDERFUL
LARGER AND MORE BATHROOMS

Q16: Would you recommend this Visitor Center to friends?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	452	95.36%
Maybe	15	3.16%
No	7	1.48%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q17: You indicated you would NOT recommend this Visitor Center. Please tell us why not.

Comments
CAUSE ITS KIND OF BORING FOR KIDS
YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE ACTIVITIES AND THE HIKES ARE LONG AND SHOULD HAVE PIT STOPS
THIS PLACE IS LAME
IT WAS BORING

Q18: How many people are in your party today? (Including yourself.)

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Just myself	36	7.59%
2	286	60.34%
3 - 4	106	22.36%
5 - 10	35	7.38%
More than 10	11	2.32%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q19: How many people in your party are under age 18?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
None	397	83.76%
1 - 2	47	9.92%
3 - 4	18	3.80%
5 - 10	3	.63%
More than 10	9	1.90%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q20: What is your age?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Under 18	20	4.22%
18 - 25	22	4.64%
26 - 35	39	8.23%
36 - 45	52	10.97%
46 - 55	72	15.19%
56 - 65	153	32.28%
Over 65	100	21.10%
Prefer not to answer	16	3.38%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%

Q21: Where is your PRIMARY residence?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Western North Carolina	68	14.35%
Other North Carolina	64	13.50%
South Carolina	56	11.81%
Georgia	34	7.17%
Other southeastern state	106	22.36%
In the US, but not in the Southeast	122	25.74%
Another country	24	5.06%
Valid Respondents: 474.0	Total Responses: 474	100.00%