

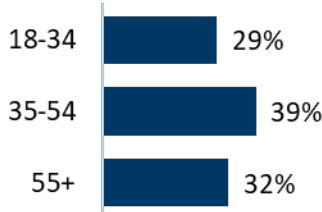
Key Findings from the 2022 State Park Visitor Study

Every five years, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources completes a state parks visitor study to understand who visits state parks, inform critical management decisions, and plan for the future.

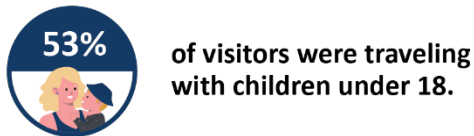
Who visits Minnesota state parks?



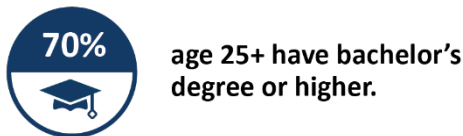
Age



Group composition



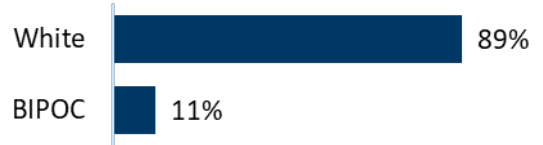
Education



Income

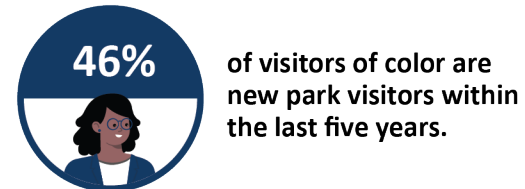
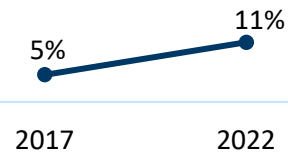


Race

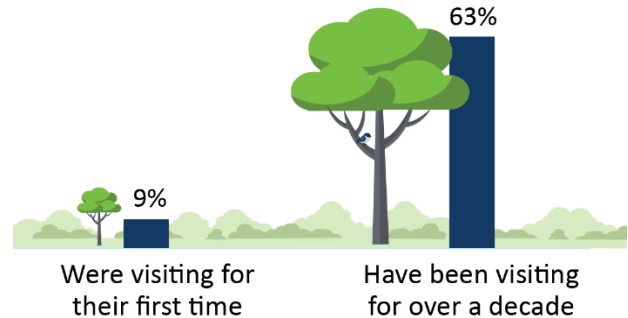


Note. BIPOC Includes race/ethnicity categories American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, biracial and multiracial.

An increasing share of park visitors are people of color.



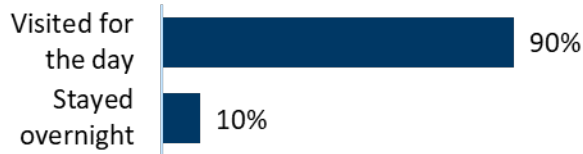
Prior use of state parks:



Compared to the Minnesota population, state park visitors are more likely to be:



What type of visits do people make?



Note. Visited for the day includes day visitors who stayed overnight at an accommodation other than the state park they were surveyed at.



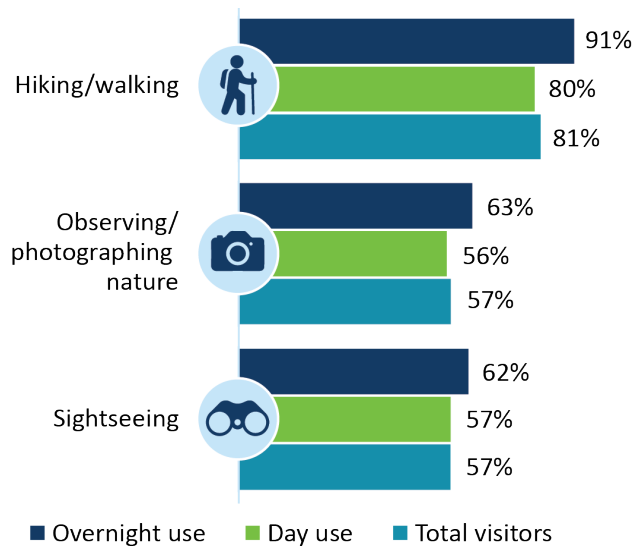
1/3 of day-use visitors were on overnight trips, staying an average of 3-4 nights away from home.



1 in 7 visitors (15%) reside outside MN.

What activities do visitors enjoy at the state parks?

Top 3 activities

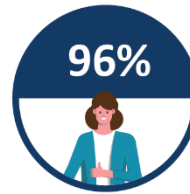


Note. Sightseeing is taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery.

How satisfied are visitors with their park visit?



98% of visitors would recommend this state park to friends or family.



96% were satisfied with their park visit.



Primary satisfaction factors

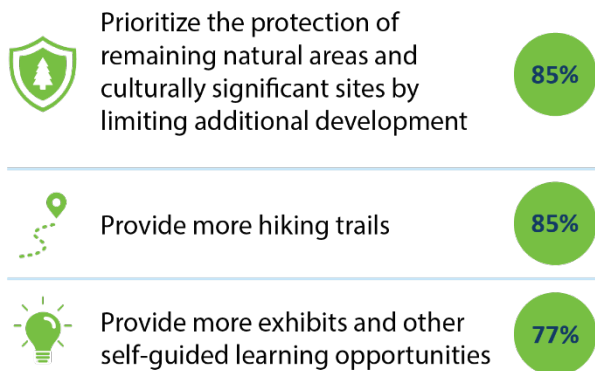
- The parks' natural features
- Beautiful scenery
- Trail systems that allow visitors to explore it all

What are visitors most satisfied with at state parks?



Note. >95% of respondents said these items were important to making their park visit enjoyable

Top 3 supported features for proposed change



What changes would park visitors like to see to better serve their needs?

- Trail enhancements including maintenance, better wayfinding points, and longer/more trails
- Improve campgrounds and lodging by adding more sites/accommodations of certain types and by increasing space between campsites
- Refine the reservation system and policies (i.e., how far in advance one can reserve a campsite, sites with “first come first served” or no reservation options)

How welcome do visitors feel while at the state park?



of visitors felt welcome during their visit.

Focus group participants from Asian American, African American, Indigenous, and Latino communities shared that seeing staff and other visitors that look like them positively impacted their feelings of safety. While some participants reported generally feeling welcome, several expressed hesitance about visiting parks further from the Twin Cities because of the lack of diversity and potential for experiences of microaggressions. The presence of park staff and rangers supported feelings of safety among BIPOC participants, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Not too long ago I went to a state park... I wasn't going to stay there very long, and I think the woman that was at the front gate was a person of color. And that was really nice to see because it ... re-emphasizes like, "You're welcome here too."

– Focus group participant

How do visitors feel about interactions with park staff?

Frequent park visitors who participated in focus groups described a range of engagement with park staff. Some participants noted that engaging with park staff helped them get “inside” information about the park’s notable features or trail conditions as well as the surrounding area.

We stop in [when arriving at the park]. They do a great job of [highlighting] favorite trails... they've always been extremely friendly when you get there and show you where to go.

– Focus group participant

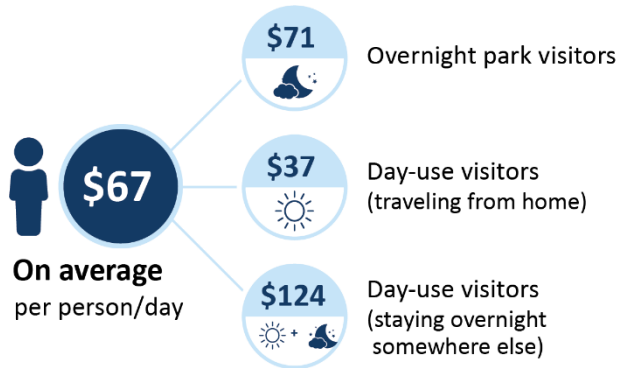
Beyond basic interactions with staff, several participants suggested increasing the program offerings at parks; these visitors commented on the enrichment they experience when learning something new from park rangers and naturalists. This was particularly important among participants with children.

How do parks boost local economies?



Spending by park visitors generates over \$688 million per year in economic activity around state parks across the state.

During their trips to state parks, visitors spent:



Visitors from outside Minnesota contribute an estimated \$147 million per year to Minnesota's economy during their trips to Minnesota state parks.

We like the parks so much for the natural beauty and the many different parks. I have been to all Minnesota state parks and I can't say I have a favorite because they all have something unique. Keep up the great work you do, and protect the fabulous assets we have.

– Lake Shetek State Park visitor

What vision do visitors have for park design?



Increase visibility and accessibility of rangers and park staff



Improve options for communication to the outside world in case of emergencies



Expand existing programming to include more options for families and visitors new to park exploration



Include more Indigenous voice in park programming; decolonize signage and acknowledge park history



Improve accessibility of parks for visitors with special needs

For more information:

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