

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

Visitor Center Survey Report

September 2011

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1. About the Survey

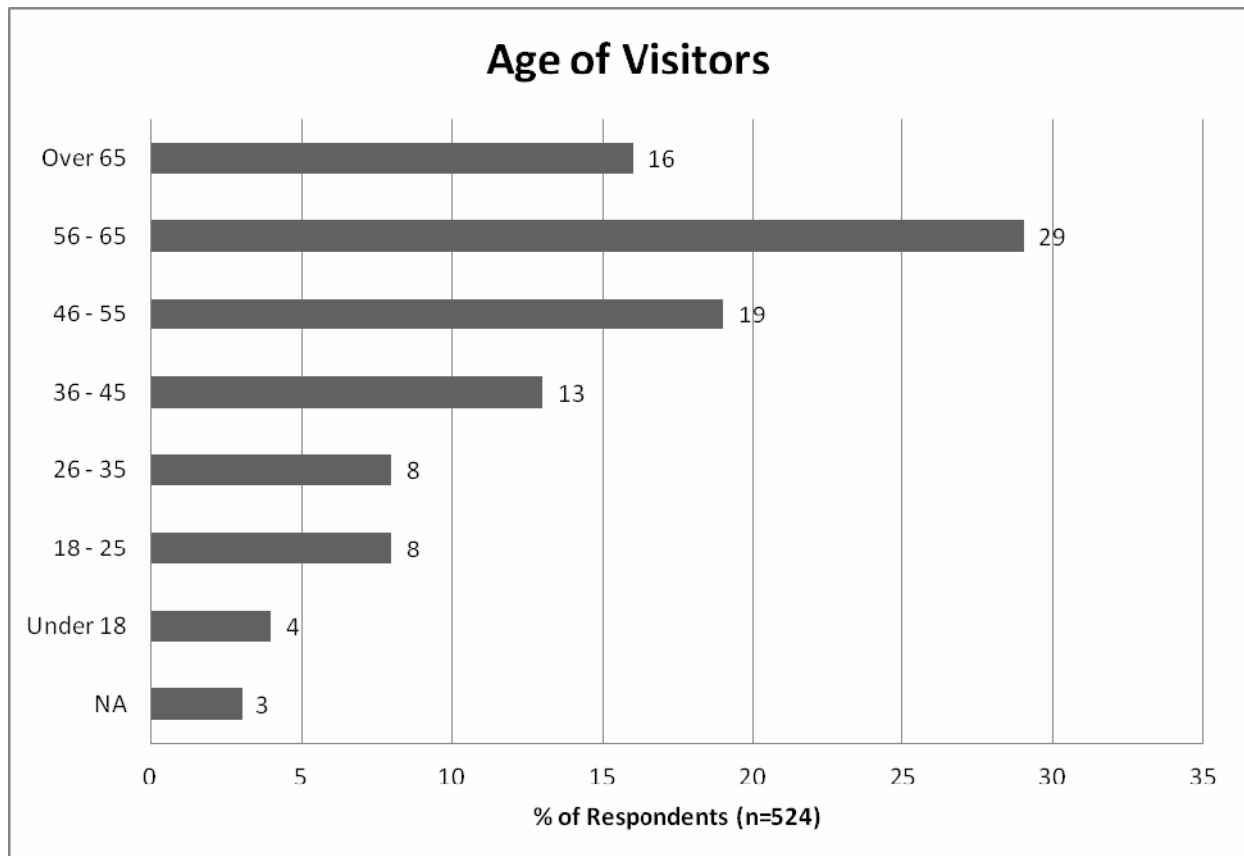
Following report is based on research conducted among people who came to the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville, NC during the month of August, 2011. Using a self-administered touch-screen computer or paper questionnaires, 525 respondents participated in the survey.

A similar survey of 474 Blue Ridge Parkway visitors was conducted in October and November 2010. Where meaningful, comparative data for the two surveys is presented. Younger visitors and the presence of children were more prominent in the August 2011 survey.

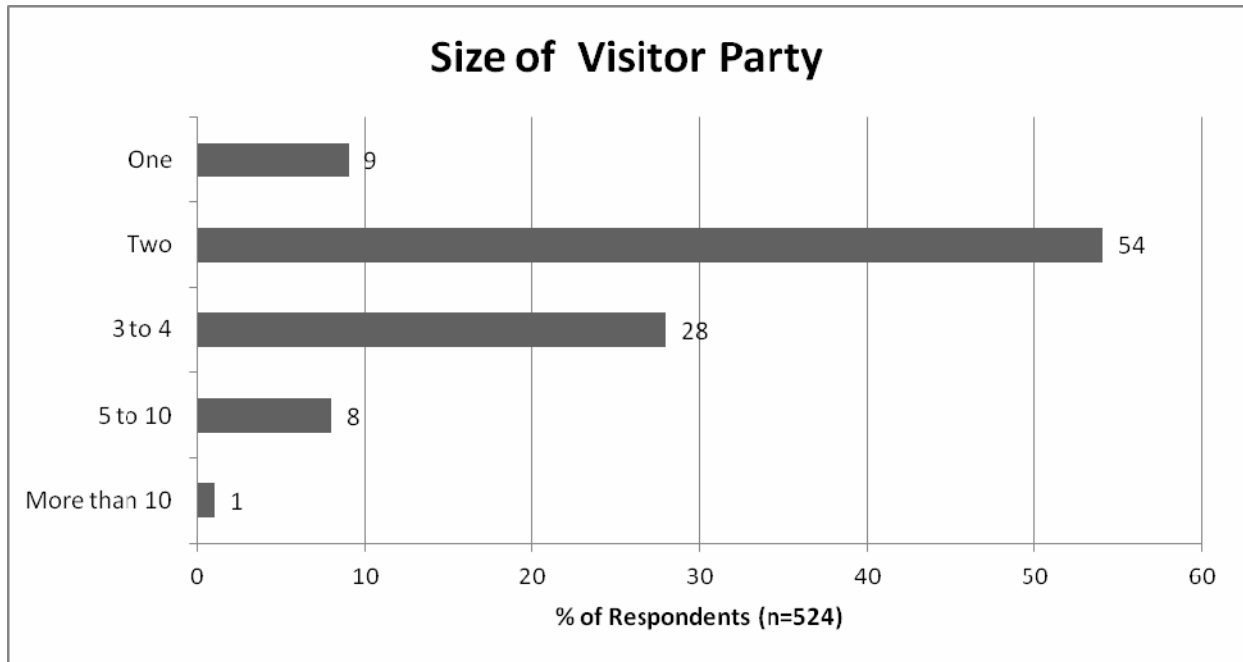
Results of both surveys reflect the opinions of respondents during the designated survey periods and may or may not be representative of all visitors to the Center.

2. About the Respondents

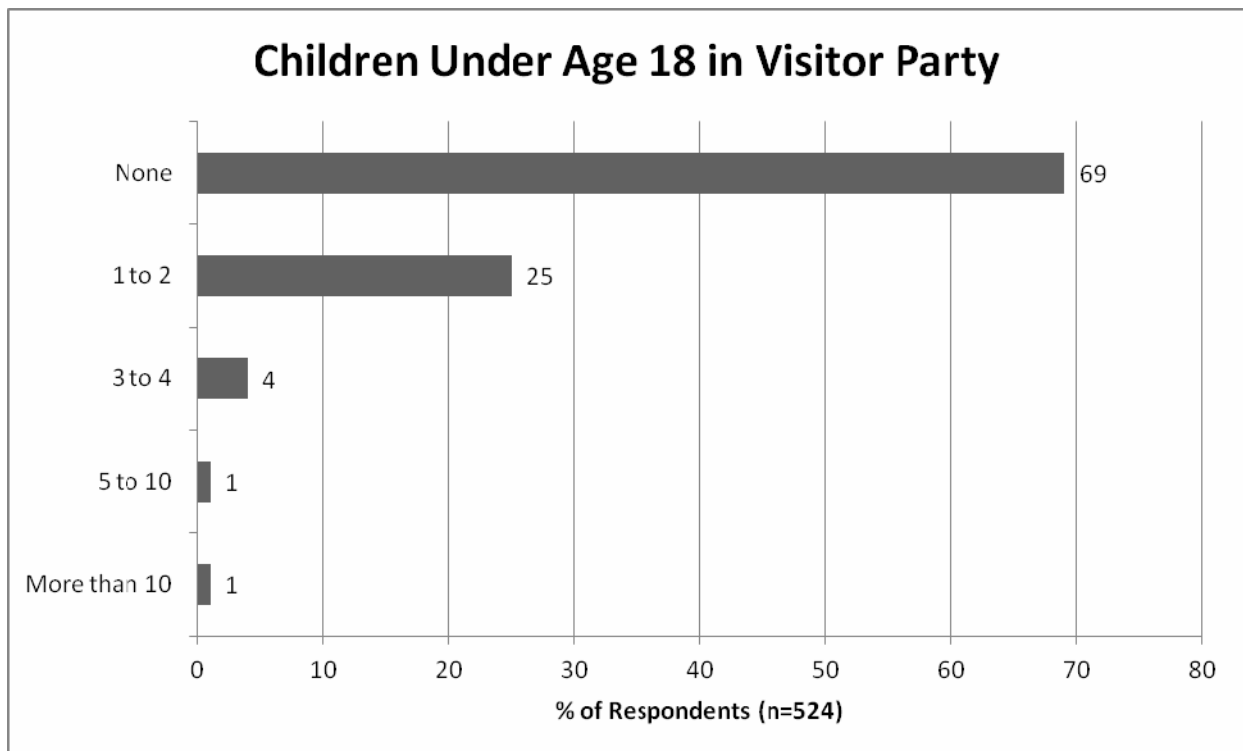
- **Age** – 45% of respondents were over age 55 (compared with 53% in October/November 2010), while 12% were age 25 and under.



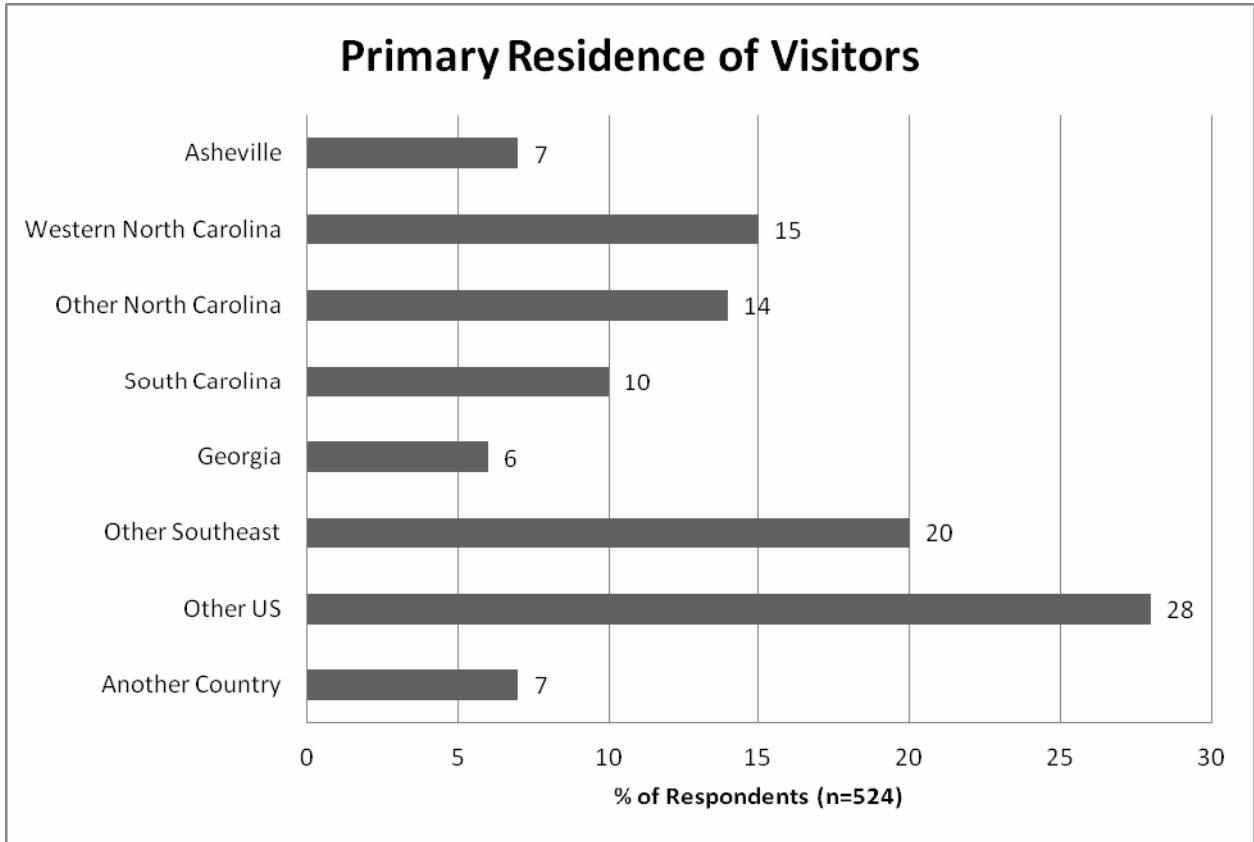
- **Size of Party** – 63% of respondents who visited the Parkway Center travelled with a party of two or less (compared with 68% in October/November 2010), while 9% travelled with a party of five or more.



- **Presence of Children** – Due to summer vacations, 31% of respondents visited the Parkway Center with children (compared with 16% in October/November 2010).

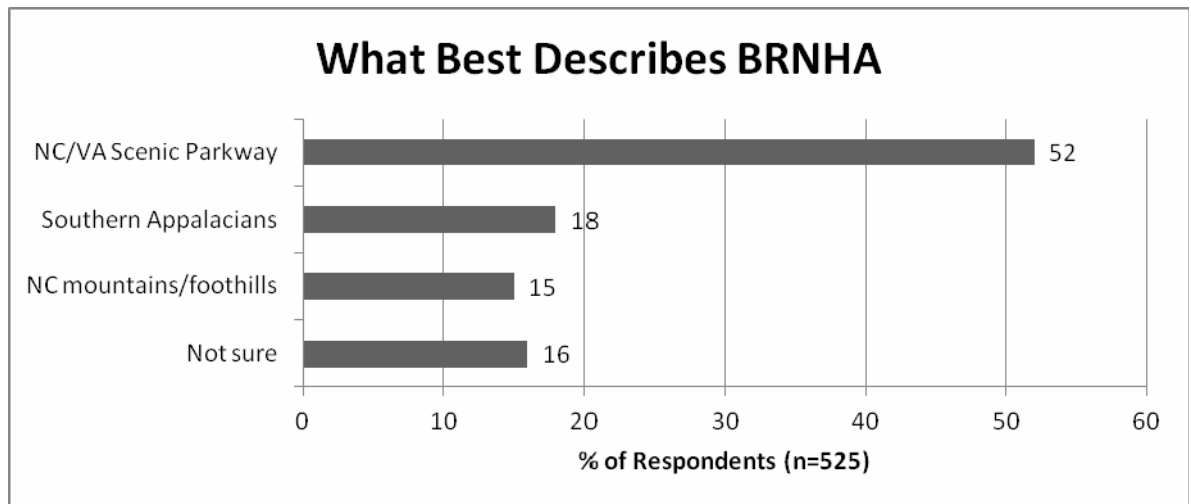


- **Primary Residence** - 72% of respondents live in the Southeast, with 22% coming from Western North Carolina and 7% from Asheville. Over half the respondents (56%) indicated they were travelling from outside the region and staying overnight in the area.

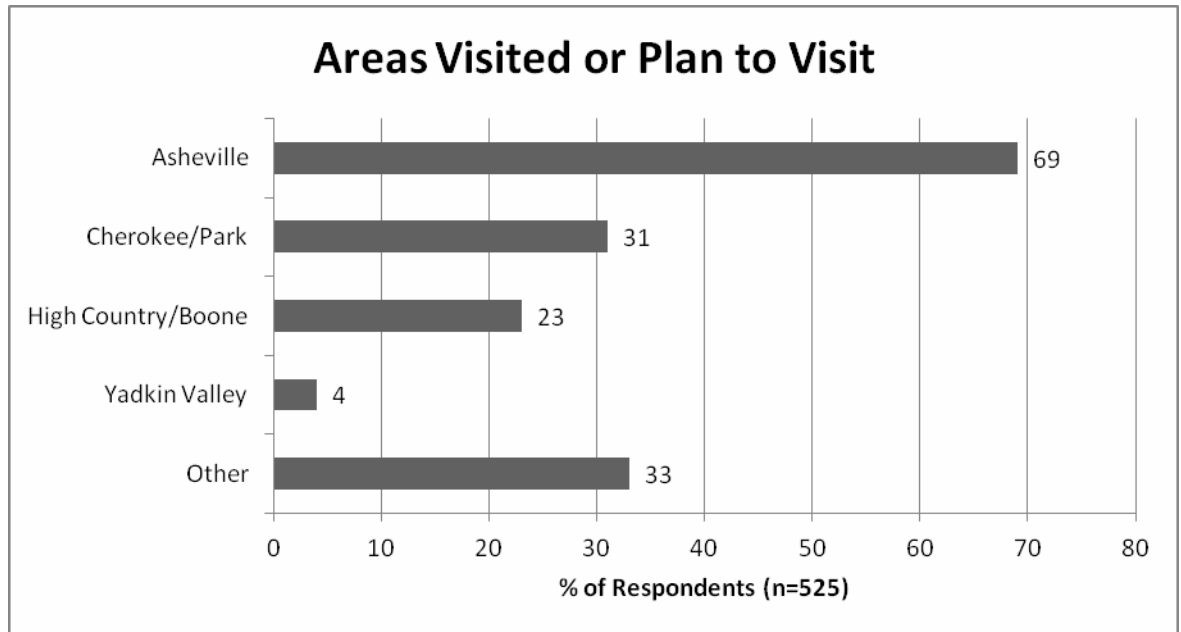


3. Survey Findings

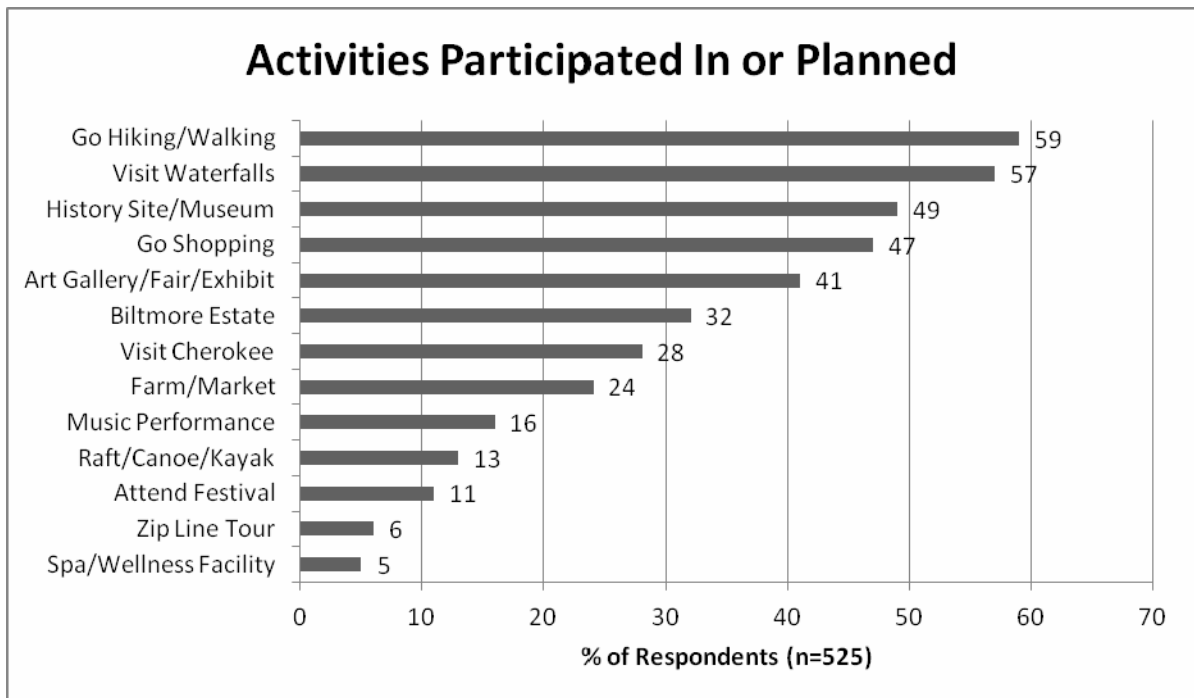
- Awareness of BRNHA-** Just over half of respondent (54%) said they were aware of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area before stopping at the Visitor Center, yet only 15% were able to correctly identify it (“North Carolina mountains/foothills”). Half of respondents (52%) thought the BRNHA was synonymous with the Blue Ridge Parkway (“a scenic parkway in North Carolina/Virginia”).



- Asheville Most Visited Area in Region-** While they were in the region, 69% of respondents said they had/would visit Asheville, 31% said Cherokee/Great Smoky Mountain Park and 23% said Boone/Blowing Rock area.

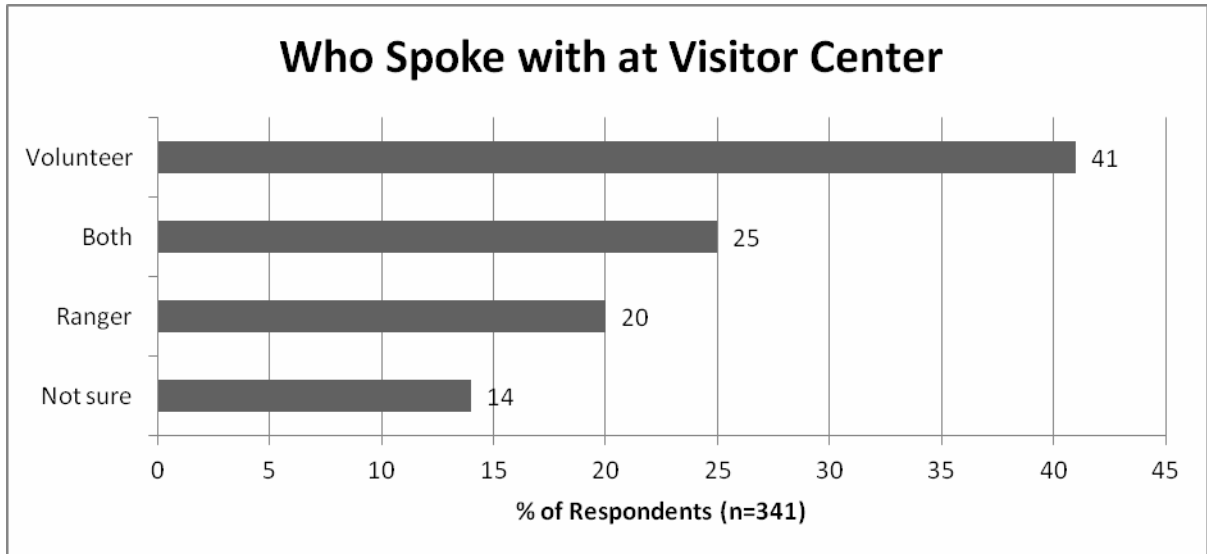


- Most Popular Activities-** Hiking (59%), visiting waterfalls (57%), visiting historic sites/museums (49%) and shopping (47%) are the most popular activities listed by respondents. These activities are consistent with the most popular ones cited in the October/November 2010 survey.

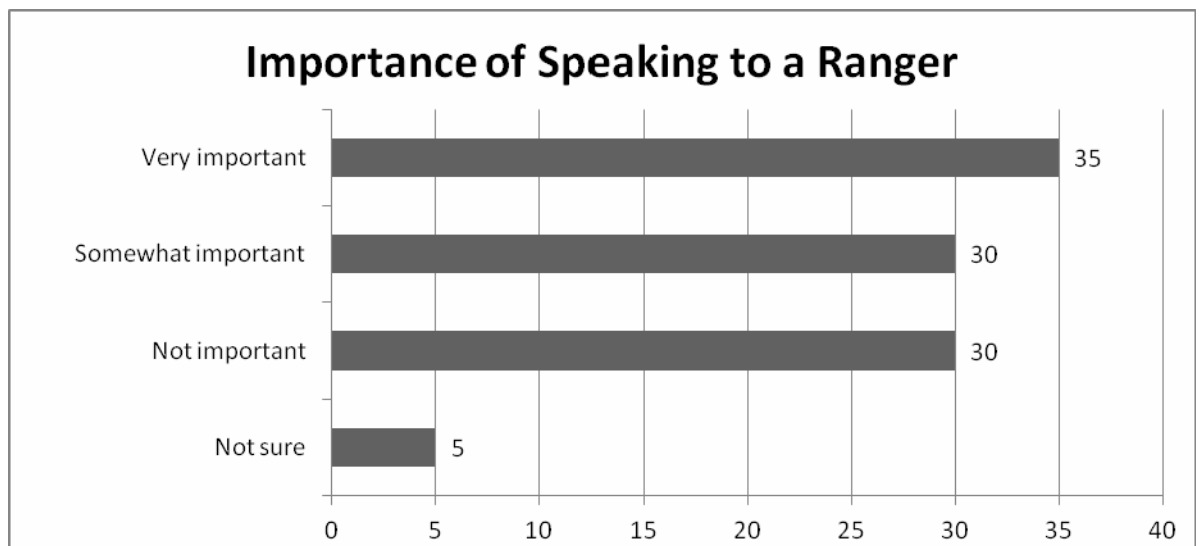


- Contact with Visitor Center Personnel-** 73% of respondents either spoke to or planned to speak with someone at the Visitor Center regarding their travel plans. Of these, 41%

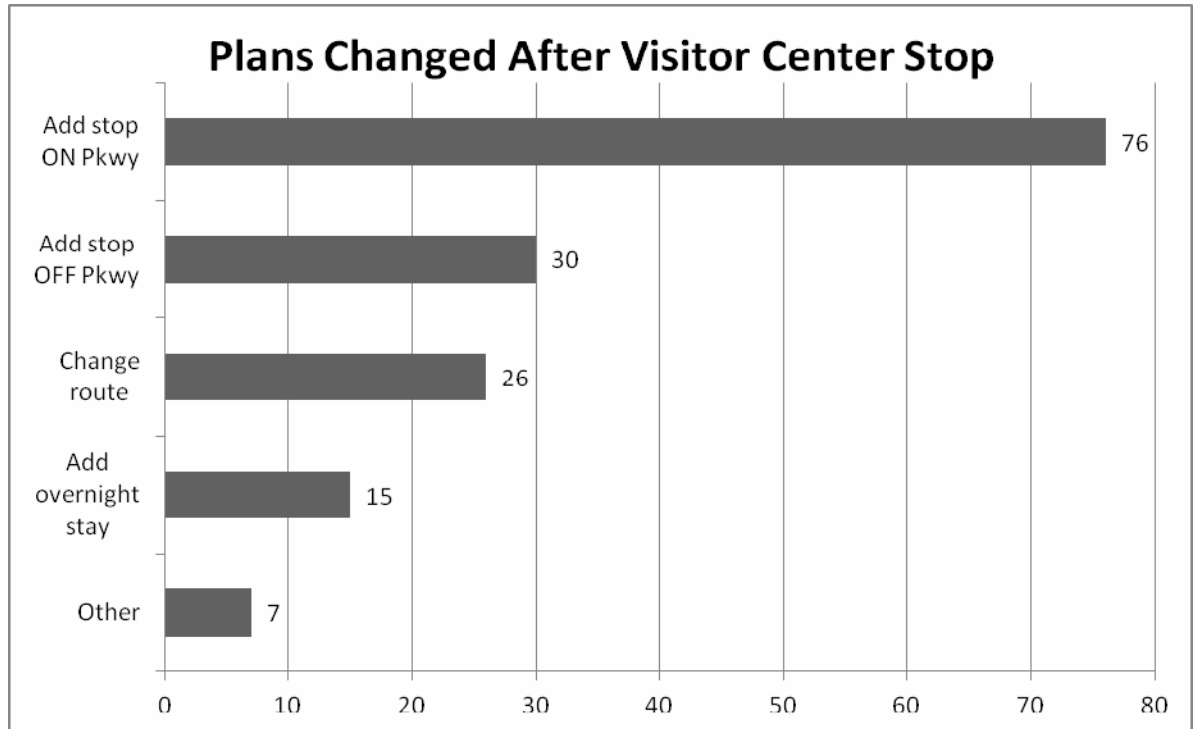
spoke to a National Heritage Area volunteer; 20% spoke with a National Park Service ranger; and 25% spoke with both.



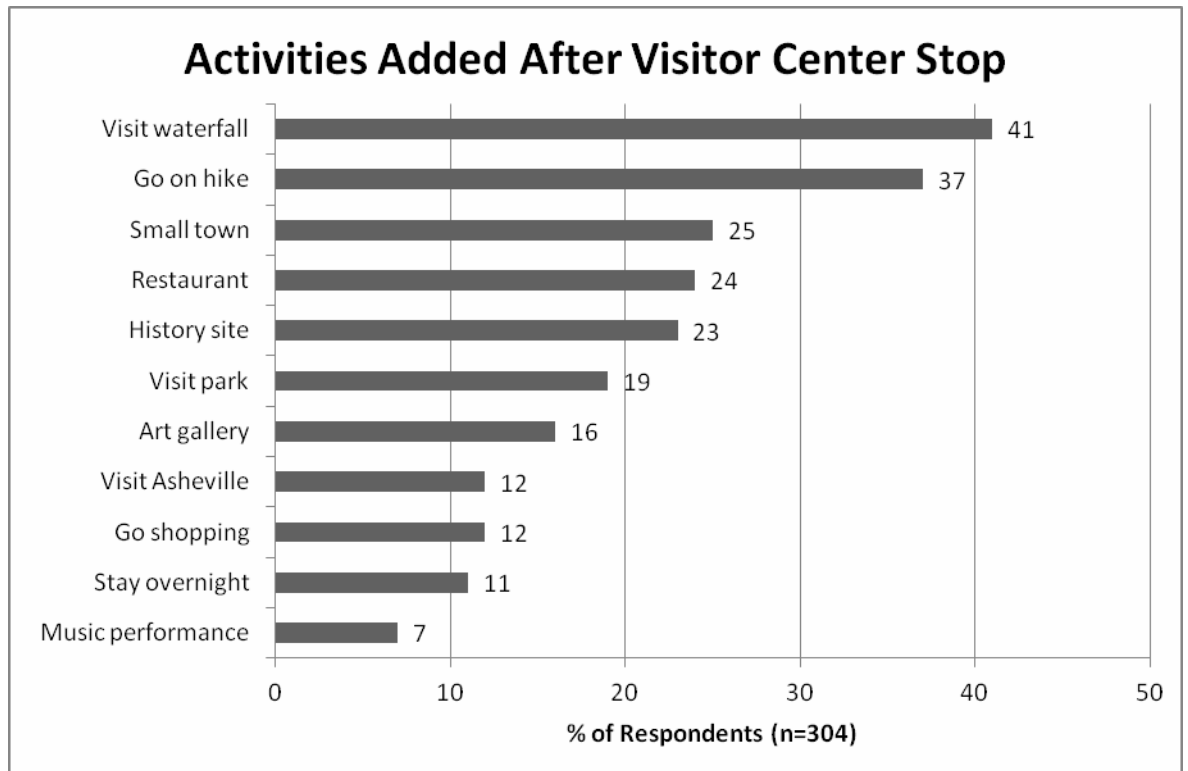
- Importance of Speaking to a Park Service Ranger-** 35% of respondents indicated it was “very important” that the person answering their questions was a National Park Service ranger; 30% said it was “somewhat important”; and 30% said it was “not important.”



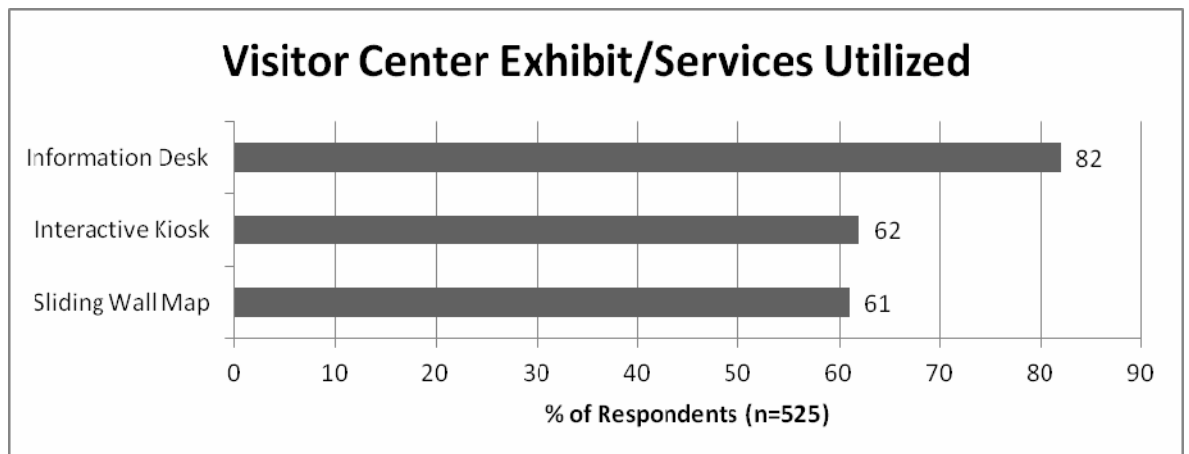
- Changed plans after stopping at Visitor Center-** 42% of respondents said they changed their plans after stopping at the Visitor Center. 76% of these added a stop ON the Parkway; 30% added a stop OFF the Parkway; 26% changed the direction or route of their travel and 15% added an overnight stay(s).



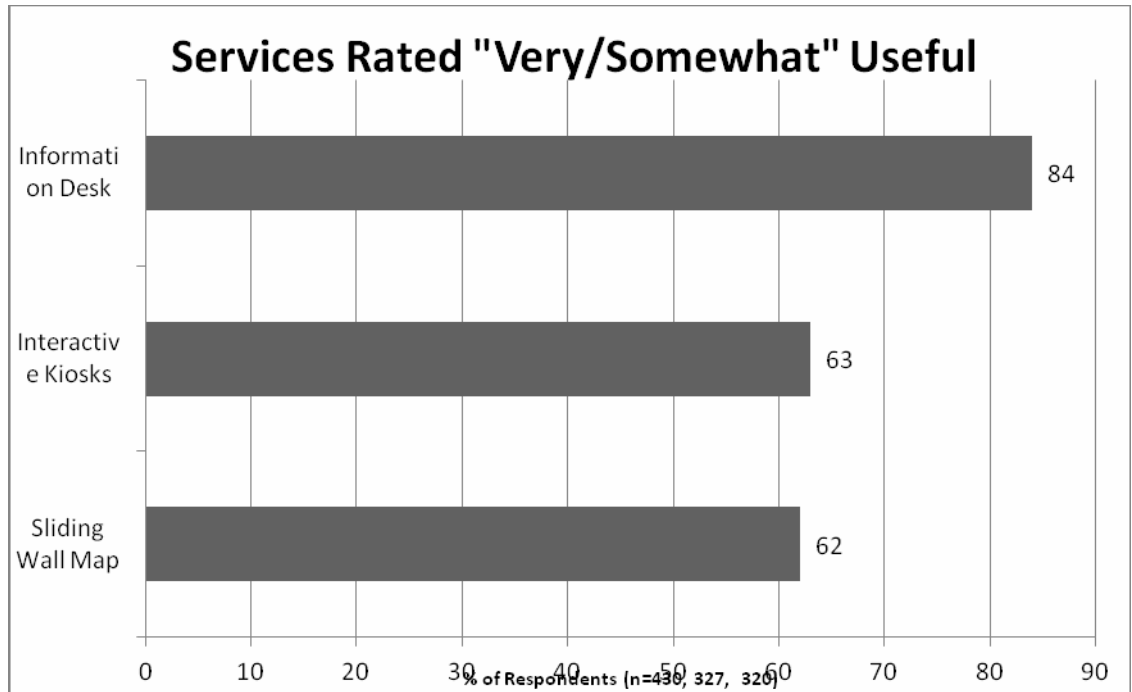
- **Stops or Activities Added-** Visiting a waterfall (41%) and going on hike (37%) are the activities most added by respondents who changed their plans after stopping at the Visitor Center.



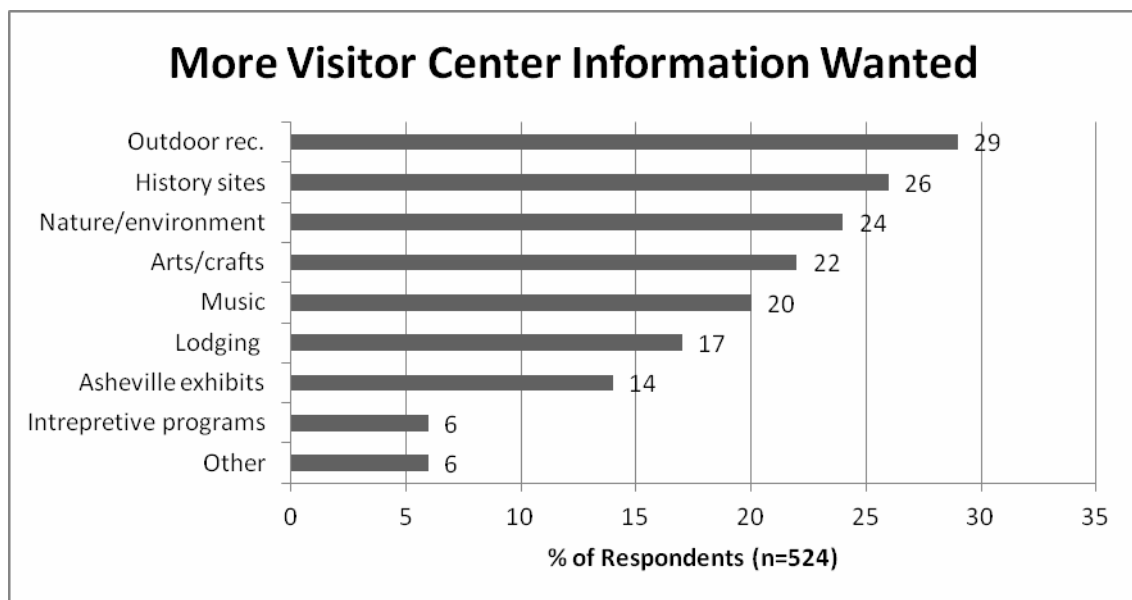
- Visitor Center Services Utilized-** During their visit to the Center, 82% of respondents said they stopped at an information desk; 62% utilized an interactive kiosk; and 61% utilized the sliding wall map.



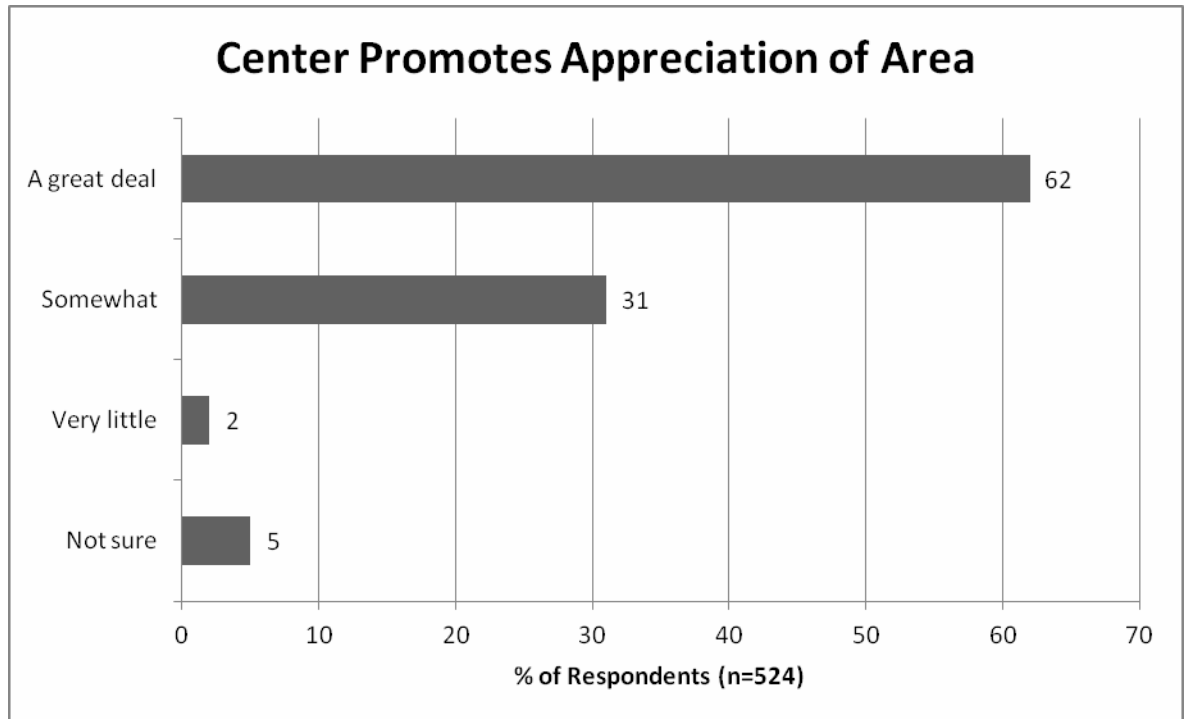
- Visitor Center Services Rating-** Respondents gave a “very” or “somewhat” useful rating to the Information Desk (84%), the Interactive Kiosks (63%), and the Sliding Wall Map (62%).



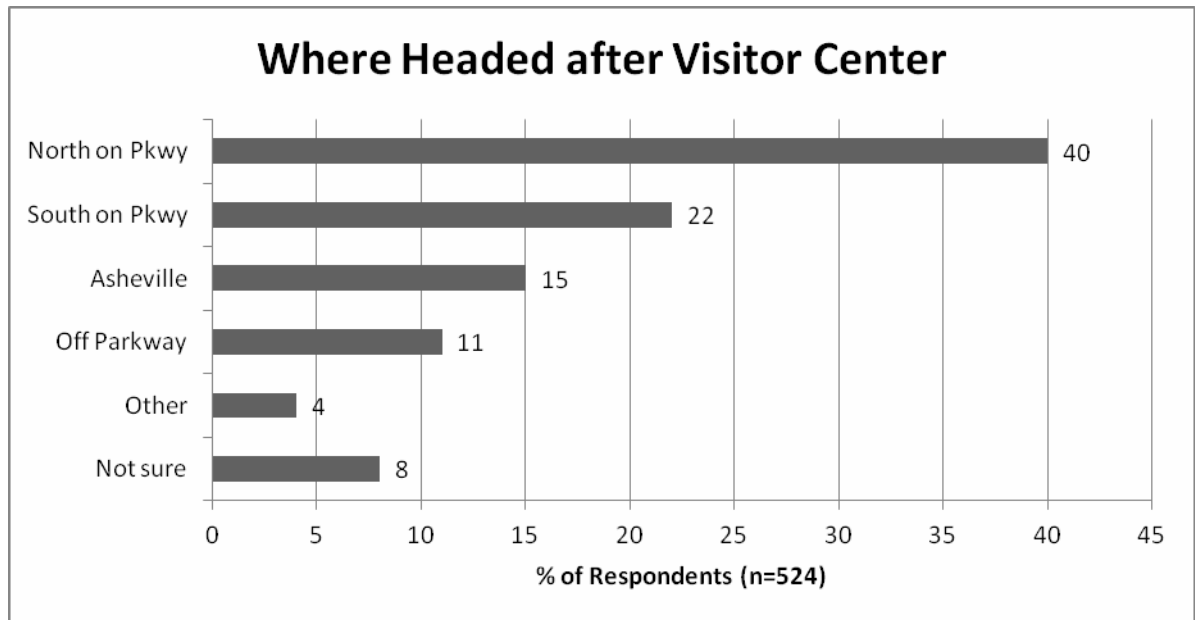
- More Information Wanted-** Respondents wanted more information about a variety of things at the Visitor Center led by outdoor recreation (29%), historic sites/museums (26%), nature/environment (24%) and art/craft galleries (22%).



- **Visitor Center Considered Helpful-** Nine out of ten (93%) respondents said the Visitor Center helped them to better appreciate what Western North Carolina has to offer.



- **Most Headed North from Visitor Center-** Four in ten (40%) respondents were headed north on the Parkway after stopping at the Visitor Center.



4. Questionnaire and Tabulations

Q1: Which ONE of the following statements BEST describes where you are traveling from?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Live in the immediate Asheville area	56	10.67%
From western North Carolina region	34	6.48%
From outside region and just passing through	62	11.81%
From outside region with overnight stay	294	56.00%
Other	79	15.05%
Valid Respondents: 525.0	Total Responses: 525	100.00%

Q2: Which areas of western North Carolina have you or will you visit while on this trip? Select all that apply and then touch "continue."

Answers	Responses	Respondent	Selection Percentage
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		Percentage	
Asheville	323	68.87%	43.07%
High Country/ Boone/ Blowing Rock	110	23.45%	14.67%
Yadkin Valley/ wine country	17	3.62%	2.27%
Cherokee/ Great Smoky Mtn. Nat. Park	144	30.70%	19.20%
Other	156	33.26%	20.80%
Valid Respondents: 469.0	Total Responses: 750	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q3: During this trip, which of the following activities have you done or plan to do? Select all that apply and then touch continue."

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
See waterfalls	268	57.14%	14.20%
See traditional music performance	73	15.57%	3.87%
Attend a festival	50	10.66%	2.65%
Go hiking or walking	275	58.64%	14.57%
Take a zip line tour	30	6.40%	1.59%
Visit Biltmore House/Estate	148	31.56%	7.84%
Visit Cherokee/ Great Smoky Mtn. Nat. Park	131	27.93%	6.94%
Go shopping	221	47.12%	11.71%
Go rafting, canoeing or kayaking	61	13.01%	3.23%
Visit farm or farmers' market	113	24.09%	5.99%
Visit spa or natural wellness facility	22	4.69%	1.17%
Visit art/craft gallery, fair or exhibit	191	40.72%	10.12%
Visit historical site or	229	48.83%	12.14%

museum			
Go to a festival	49	10.45%	2.60%
None of these	26	5.54%	1.38%
Valid Respondents: 469.0	Total Responses: 1887	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q4: This region has been designated by Congress as the "Blue Ridge National Heritage Area." Before today, were you aware of the "Blue Ridge National Heritage Area?"

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	283	53.90%
No	207	39.43%
Not sure	35	6.67%
Valid Respondents: 525.0	Total Responses: 525	100.00%

Q5: Which ONE of the following statements BEST describes the "Blue Ridge National Heritage Area?"

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Scenic Pkwy in North Carolina/ Virginia	271	51.62%
North Carolina mountains/ foothills	78	14.86%
S. Appalachian mountains	93	17.71%
Not sure	83	15.81%
Valid Respondents: 525.0	Total Responses: 525	100.00%

Q6: While at this Visitor Center did you speak with someone regarding the Blue Ridge Parkway or your travel plans?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	341	64.95%
No	140	26.67%
No, but I plan to	44	8.38%
Valid Respondents: 525.0	Total Responses: 525	100.00%

Q7: Who did you speak with regarding the Parkway or your travel plans?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
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National Park Service Ranger	70	20.53%
Nat. Heritage Area Volunteer	139	40.76%
Both	85	24.93%
Not sure	47	13.78%
Valid Respondents: 341.0	Total Responses: 341	100.00%

Q8: How important is it to you that the person answering your questions is a National Park Service Ranger?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Very important	136	35.32%
Somewhat important	115	29.87%
Not important	114	29.61%
Not sure	20	5.19%
Valid Respondents: 385.0	Total Responses: 385	100.00%

Q9: Have you decided to change your plans after coming to this Visitor Center? For example, adding a new travel stop or activity?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Yes	220	41.98%
No	220	41.98%
Not sure	84	16.03%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q10: How have you changed your plans as a result of coming here? Select all that apply and then touch "continue."

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Added a stop/activity ON Parkway	167	75.91%	49.26%
Added a stop/activity OFF Parkway	66	30.00%	19.47%
Added overnight stay(s)	34	15.45%	10.03%
Changed direction/route of travel	57	25.91%	16.81%
Other	15	6.82%	4.42%
Valid Respondents:	Total Responses: 339	(May add up to more	100.00%

220.0		than 100%)	
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Q11: Which of the following stops or activities did you decide to add to your travel plans as a result of coming to this Visitor Center? Select all that apply and then touch "continue."

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Visit a small town	56	25.45%	10.89%
Visit Asheville	26	11.82%	5.06%
Visit an historic site or museum	51	23.18%	9.92%
Visit another park	41	18.64%	7.98%
Visit a waterfall	90	40.91%	17.51%
Go on a hike	81	36.82%	15.76%
Visit an art gallery/exhibit	35	15.91%	6.81%
See a music performance	15	6.82%	2.92%
Eat at a restaurant	52	23.64%	10.12%
Go shopping	26	11.82%	5.06%
Stay at a hotel/motel or campground	24	10.91%	4.67%
None of these	17	7.73%	3.31%
Valid Respondents: 220.0	Total Responses: 514	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q12: If you stopped at the REGIONAL INFORMATION DESK in this Visitor Center, how helpful were the information or services provided?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Very helpful	360	68.57%
Somewhat helpful	48	9.14%
Not helpful	8	1.52%
No opinion/ Not sure	14	2.67%
Did not stop at information desk	95	18.10%
Valid Respondents: 525.0	Total Responses: 525	100.00%

Q13: If you used one of the INTERACTIVE COMPUTER KIOSKS at this Visitor Center, how helpful was it?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Very helpful	205	39.12%
Somewhat helpful	75	14.31%
Not helpful	13	2.48%
No opinion/ Not sure	34	6.49%
Did not use interactive kiosk	197	37.60%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q14: If you used the SLIDING WALL MAP of the Blue Ridge Parkway, how useful was it in helping you to learn about this region?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Very useful	197	37.60%
Somewhat useful	74	14.12%
Not useful	17	3.24%
No opinion/ Not sure	32	6.11%
Did not use sliding wall map	204	38.93%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q15: What would you like to see MORE of at this Visitor Center? Select all that apply and then touch "continue."

Answers	Responses	Respondent Percentage	Selection Percentage
Lodging and accommodation information	89	16.98%	8.63%
Outdoor recreation information	153	29.20%	14.84%
Historic sites and museums information	134	25.57%	13.00%
Music events and venues information	103	19.66%	9.99%

Arts/crafts galleries information	113	21.56%	10.96%
Exhibits about nature and the environment	124	23.66%	12.03%
Exhibits about Asheville	71	13.55%	6.89%
Interpretive programs	58	11.07%	5.63%
Other	32	6.11%	3.10%
None of these	154	29.39%	14.94%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 1031	(May add up to more than 100%)	100.00%

Q16: How much has this Visitor Center helped you to better appreciate what Western North Carolina has to offer?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
A great deal	324	61.83%
Somewhat	160	30.53%
Very little	12	2.29%
No opinion/ Not sure	28	5.34%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q17: How many people are in your party today? (Including yourself.)

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Just myself	46	8.78%
2	280	53.44%
3 - 4	147	28.05%
5 - 10	44	8.40%
More than 10	7	1.34%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q18: How many people in your party are under age 18?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
None	360	68.70%

1 - 2	133	25.38%
3 - 4	21	4.01%
5 - 10	4	.76%
More than 10	6	1.15%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q19: What is your age?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Under 18	23	4.39%
18 - 25	42	8.02%
26 - 35	45	8.59%
36 - 45	67	12.79%
46 - 55	98	18.70%
56 - 65	150	28.63%
Over 65	83	15.84%
Prefer not to answer	16	3.05%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q20: Where is your PRIMARY residence?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
Asheville	39	7.44%
Other Western North Carolina	40	7.63%
Other North Carolina	72	13.74%
South Carolina	52	9.92%
Georgia	30	5.73%
Other Southeastern state	107	20.42%
In the US, but not in the Southeast	148	28.24%

Another country	36	6.87%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

Q21: Where are you headed after you leave this Visitor Center?

Answers	Responses	Selection Percentage
NORTH on the Parkway	212	40.46%
SOUTH on the Parkway	118	22.52%
To Asheville	76	14.50%
To another destination OFF the Parkway	57	10.88%
Other	20	3.82%
Not sure	41	7.82%
Valid Respondents: 524.0	Total Responses: 524	100.00%

5.Additional Information Request/Contest Entries

Q22: Enter your name/address or email below for a chance to win a copy of "The Blue Ridge Parkway: Road to Discovery," and to receive more information about this region. Then touch "continue" to end this survey. Your information will remain confidential!