

Verde Valley Tourism Survey

Executive Summary

This survey of visitors to Arizona's Verde Valley was undertaken in an effort to gather more reliable regional data than is available from statewide or national panel surveys which often contain too few cases to reliably represent area visitation. This survey process collected a total of 1,284 surveys from the Verde Valley communities of Sedona, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, Clarkdale, and Jerome over a 12-month period from December 2006 through November 2007 – a more than sufficient sample size to provide reliable results. This information will assist the Verde Valley communities with targeted marketing, product development, and advocacy for an industry that is critical to the health of the regional economy. Generally, the Verde Valley is a primary destination for affluent Baby-boomer couples on leisure vacations, who stay overnight, dine out, hike and shop for arts and crafts. A summary of the specific findings of the visitor survey follows:

- Data for the tourism survey were collected in the communities of Sedona (55.5%), followed by Cottonwood (19.0%), Camp Verde (12.8%), Clarkdale (11.0%) and Jerome (1.8%).
- More males (60.2%) than females (39.8%) appeared in the survey sample.
- The average age of visitors was 52.8 years (median age 55.0 years), with males (52.1 years) slightly younger than female visitors (53.9 years).
- The average party size was 2.6 people (1.3 men, 1.4 women). Less than 13 percent of parties traveled with children under the age of 18 years.
- The great majority of visitors (63.4%) traveled in family groups, while a further 14.9 percent traveled in groups of family and friends. Friends only parties (12.1%) and organized tour groups (7.5%) accounted for most of the remaining travel party types.
- Travelers to the Verde valley had high average annual household incomes, \$72,310 on average.
- Impressively, more than two-thirds of visitors (69.3%) indicated that the Verde Valley was their primary destination; less than one-third (30.7%) were bound to another destination.
- Travelers visited all Verde valley communities, although Sedona (84.9%) and Jerome (48.8%) received the most visits.
- Most visitors to the Verde Valley were traveling for vacation-leisure purposes (53.5%), followed by day trips (17.5%), and weekend visits (13.2%). Other purposes such as visiting friends and relatives, business, and combinations of business and pleasure accounted for smaller percentages.
- A majority of visitors to the Verde Valley traveled in a private vehicle (50.9%), a further one-third (36.1%) traveled in a rental car, and 8.8 percent travel in RV/Camper.
- Day visitors spent between 4 and 7 hours in the Verde Valley while overnight visitors spent an average of 3.7 days. Overnight visitors to the Verde Valley stayed in a variety of accommodations; 40.8 percent stayed in a hotel or motel,

19.2 percent stayed in a timeshare property, and 13.6 percent stayed in a campground or RV Park.

- More than half (50.8%) of all respondents who spent the night stayed in the Verde Valley prior to taking the survey, while a larger percentage (64.1%) were staying in the Verde Valley after taking the survey.
- At least one third of all visitors to the Verde Valley came from Arizona (31%), followed by California (13.7%). Maricopa County (57.3%) accounted for more than half of all Verde Valley visitors. Canadian visitors accounted for more than half (57.7%) of all international visitors.
- Visitors had moderate expenditures in the Verde Valley. Average per party per day expenditures by category were: lodging (\$120), restaurant and grocery (\$80), transportation including gas (\$51), shopping or arts and crafts purchases (\$75), recreation-tour-entrance fees or permits (\$25), spa-spiritual-metaphysical (\$22), and “other” (\$50).
- Visiting state and national parks and visiting historic places were the most popular activities for visitors to the Verde Valley. These were followed by hiking and shopping, bird watching and observing wildlife, and enjoying area streams and rivers.
- Verde Valley visitors explored a wide variety of attractions. Sedona (68.5%) and Jerome (50.7%) were the most visited communities or attractions. National and state parks, vortex sites, and local shopping areas were also popular attractions.
- Visitors to the Verde Valley evidenced a high level of satisfaction with their trip. Overall satisfaction levels with visitor experiences in the Verde Valley achieved an 8.5 out of a possible 10.
- Visitors to the Verde Valley had an estimated \$529 million in direct expenditures, which resulted in an indirect economic impact of \$103.8 million, and induced impact of \$139 million for a total economic impact of \$772 million. Indirect business taxes based on direct expenditures produced an additional \$64 million and the total economic impact supported 9,490 direct jobs or 12,130 direct and indirect jobs.