# Sisters Visitor Opportunities Study 

## Survey Results

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## Survey Summary

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## Survey Dates

Survey Intercepts Conducted
Survey Intercepts Conducted
Fri, August I3 - Mon, August I6, 202I
Fri, August I3 - Mon, August I6, 202I

September 8, 202 I

- Intercept sites included:
- Local restaurants and shops (Three Creeks Brewery, Sisters Coffee, Sisters Bakery)
- Trails, trailheads and rec sites (Peterson Ridge, Wychus Creek, Three Creek Lake, Suttle Lake)
- Black Butte Ranch and Camp Sherman
- Online distribution via email lists and social media:
- Creekside Campground, Sisters Folk, Quilt Festival, others


This survey is being conducted by ECONorthwest on behalf of Crosscurrent Collective and the Sisters Destination Management project team that includes:

## City of Sisters

Sisters Chamber of Commerce
Sisters Country Economic Development
Central Oregon Visitors Association
U.S. Forest Service


Please take this survey by September 6, 2021 https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YXGOOY7

# Survey Preview 



## Sisters Visitor Opportunities Study

Trip Overview

1. Are you:A permanent resident of the Sisters area (Sisters, Black Butte, Camp Sherman)A temporary or seasonal resident of the Sisters areaA visitor to the Sisters area

## "Sisters Area"



## Survey Response Rates

## Total respondents: <br> Total completed surveys: <br> Notes and Caveats:

- Total collected on-site: 1,470
- Total collected online: 1,211
- Incomplete surveys: (207)

1,263

- Majority of respondents were from events (folk festival, quilt show) and Creekside CG.
- Survey includes visitors to Sisters within previous 3 years.
- Visitor characteristics and motivations for festival, event, and campground visitors are different. Results from both the on-site only and full surveys are presented here.


## Where Did Respondents Visit From?



## Survey Respondents by State/County

## Total Responses by State/Region

Oregon:
Washington:
721
171
California: 140
Other western states: 90
Midwest: 34
South: 26
East: 24

Top 5 counties:

- Multnomah County (122)
- Clackamas County (96)
- Deschutes County (80)
- Washington County (73)
- Lane County



## Survey Results

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## Key Findings: Overall Summary

Visitors to Sisters are in general highly satisfied with their experience, but we find several key areas for improving visitor experience and encouraging repeat visits.

Visitor profile: Visitors tend to be older, traveling without children, on 3-4 night destination vacations staying with friends/family or vacation rentals.

Most popular activities: Restaurants, hiking, shopping, breweries, and visiting parks/natural areas are the most popular activities.

Recreation sites: McKenzie Pass/Santiam Pass Scenic Byway, Suttle Lake/Scout Lake, Three Sisters Wilderness, Smith Rock, Black Butte and Metolius River are the most popular recreation sites.

Most important factors for visiting: Scenic beauty, relaxation, and local dining were rated most important factors to visitors when deciding whether or not to visit.

What visitors disliked: Traffic, lack of availability of restaurants and accommodations, and affordability were among main complaints deterring people from visiting the area more.

What visitors liked: Restaurants/food, scenic beauty, events, and time spent with family were most common positive feedback from visitors.

Future visits: Most visitors are likely to return and would plan future visits of 3-5 nights. Not many are thinking of Sisters for a longer vacation (6+ nights).

Why would they choose not to return? Distance, cost and crowding are among main reasons people would choose not to visit again.

## On-Site Respondents vs. All Respondents

Note, we assume that on-site surveys provide a more accurate representation of the average visitor to Sisters compared to the online sample, which was heavily weighted towards event and campground visitors. The on-site sample includes visitors intercepted in-person, and those who picked up a survey card at a local business.
In the summary analyses that follow, we use the on-site subsample ( $n=212$ ) to describe visitor characteristics and activity participation, and the full sample ( $n=1263$ ) to describe visitor satisfaction, trip planning, and written feedback. Graphic results for both the on-site subsample and full sample are included for each quantitative survey question in this presentation.


## Section I: Visitor Overview

## Visitor Overview

## Visitors primarily stayed in Sisters or Black Butte

Staying with family and friends is the most common type of accommodation.

Only $27 \%$ of visitors stayed at a hotel, motel or resort.

About 25\% stayed at a private rental and 20\% of visitors camped.

Sisters was a destination trip, rather than a stopover on a trip to another destination for $56 \%$ of visitors.

Most travel by car or camper/RV, but other travelers, such as bikers and PCT hikers, are common.

Visitors tend to be older, traveling without children, on 3 to 4-night vacations.

## Visitor Overview

## Average Group Size 3.2

| Number of Adults | 2.6 |
| ---: | ---: |
| Number of Children | 0.6 |
| Percent of Visitors Traveling with Children | $28 \%$ |
| Percent of Visitors on Overnight Trips | $71 \%$ |

Average Length of Overnight Trips 3.8 nights
Percent of Visitors on Day Trips ..... 29\%
Average Length of Day Trips 4.6 hours

## Visitor Overview



## Visitor Overview

How Visitors Traveled to Sisters Area


## Was Sisters a Destination Trip?



## Was Sisters a Destination Trip?




Places Stayed Overnight


## Parks and Outdoor Recreation Sites Visited



Parks and Outdoor Recreation Sites Visited


## Visitor Overview

Proportion of Visitors by Type of Accommodation


## Visitor Overview

Proportion of Visitors by Type of Accommodation


## Visitor Overview

## Average Nights Stayed by Type of Accommodation



## Visitor Overview



## Differences by Visitor Demographics

Low-income visitors (less than \$50,000 household income) were more likely to stay in a campground (36\%) than the overall sample (19\%).

Low-income visitors took shorter visits to the area (3.3 nights vs. 3.8 night for all respondents).

Nonwhite visitors were more likely to be on day trips (37\% vs. 29\% for all respondents).

Modes of transportation were similar across all races and incomes.
(Note: statistical significance of differences across groups was not tested.)


## Section II: Visitor Activities and Satisfaction

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Primary reasons for visiting Sisters area:

Outdoor Recreation: 45\%
Dining: 23\%
Visit family, friends, relatives: 21\%
Festival, event or wedding: 8\%
Other: 3\%

Eating at local restaurants, hiking and shopping are the most common activities.

## Visitor Activities



## Visitor Activities

## Top 10 Activities Particpated In



## Visitor Activities

Activity
Eating at local restaurant(s)/cuisine ..... 64.2\%Percent
Shopping ..... 50.0\%
Attending a festival or event ..... 37.8\%
Hiking ..... 35.4\%
Camping ..... 29.2\%
Visiting a park ..... 28.8\%
Visiting friends, relatives ..... 26.5\%
Visiting a brewery, cidery or distillery ..... 23.7\%
Visiting an art gallery, museum, or theater ..... 19.6\%
Photography ..... 19.6\%
Mountain biking ..... 16.9\%
Leisure bicycling (easy low-traffic pathways) ..... 16.2\%
Viewing wildlife, geology, and botany ..... 13.9\%
Swimming ..... 13.8\%
Picnicking ..... 13.3\%
Other ..... 8.9\%
Birdwatching ..... 8.2\%
Kayaking/canoeing ..... 8.1\%
Fishing ..... 8.0\%
Visiting historical sites ..... 7.7\%
Visit cultural or heritage sites ..... 7.0\%
Road cycling ..... 7.0\%
Farmers market ..... 6.7\%
Visiting a winery or tasting room ..... 6.7\%
Paddleboarding ..... 6.2\%
Backpacking ..... 5.7\%
Participating in a sports competition ..... 4.7\%
Golfing ..... 4.6\%
Off highway vehicle driving ..... 4.2\%
Running .....  0 \%
Visiting a ranch ..... 2.8\%
River rafting ..... 2.8\%
Attending a conference or business meeting ..... 2.1\%
Taking a guided tour trip ..... 2.1\%
Cross country skiing or snowshoeing .....
Horseback riding ..... 1.7\%
Downhill skiing/snowboarding ..... 1.7\%
Climbing ..... 1.5\%
Attending a wedding ..... 3\%
Geocaching ..... 1.0\%
Disc golf ..... 8\%
Motorized boating ..... 0.7
Hunting ..... $0.4 \%$
Snowmobiling ..... 0.3\%

## Visitor Activities



Top 10 Primary Motivators for Visiting Sisters Area

Primary Activity Percent
Attending a festival or event ..... 32\%
Camping ..... 12\%
Visiting friends, relatives ..... 9\%
Mountain biking ..... 9\%
Other ..... 7\%
Eating at local restaurant(s)/cuisine ..... 7\%
Hiking ..... 6\%
Shopping ..... 4\%
Attending or participating in a sports competition ..... 2\%
Road cycling ..... 2\%
Fishing ..... 1\%
Leisure bicycling (easy low-traffic pathways) ..... 1\%
Attending a wedding ..... 1\%
Photography ..... 1\%
Visiting an art gallery, museum or theater ..... 1\%
Wildlife / Geology / Botany viewing ..... 1\%
Backpacking ..... 1\%
Kayaking or canoeing ..... 1\%
Swimming ..... 1\%
Visiting a brewery / cidery / distillery ..... 1\%
Attending conferences and/or business meetings ..... 1\%

## Visitor Satisfaction

## Why did visitors choose to come?

Scenic beauty, relaxation, and local dining were rated most important factors to visitors.

## How satisfied were they?

Satisfaction ratings exceeded importance ratings for all factors rated by visitors.

## Exceeding expectations:

Learning about the cultural history of the area, viewing local art and culture, and visiting a farm or ranch most exceeded the average ratings for importance.

## Possible room for improvement:

Local restaurants, affordability, and outdoor recreation had the lowest satisfaction rating relative to their importance.

## Visitor Satisfaction

How Important Were the Following Factors in Deciding to Visit?


## Visitor Satisfaction

How Important Were the Following Factors in Deciding to Visit?


## Visitor Satisfaction

How Satisfied Were Visitors with the Following Qualities?


## Visitor Satisfaction

How Satisfied Were Visitors with the Following Qualities?


## Visitor Satisfaction



All visitors, $\mathrm{n}=212$. Note: greater distance above the blue line means visitors were more satisfied with the attribute

## Visitor Satisfaction



All visitors, $\mathrm{n}=1263$. Note: greater distance above the blue line means visitors were more satisfied with the

## Differences by Visitor Demographics

Types of activity participation were similar across races and incomes.

Low-income visitors were more likely to go camping than the overall sample.

Nonwhite visitors were slightly more likely to do shopping and biking, and less likely to go hiking than the overall sample.
SCORP (2018) shows racial minorities have less access to info about outdoor recreation and less exposure to outdoor recreation.

Visitor satisfaction was similar across races and incomes.


## Section III: Trip Planning and Future Visits

## Trip Planning and Future Visits

Word of mouth and personal experience provided some of the best advertising and information for visitors.

Future visitors were most likely to want to stay 3-5 nights on a future visit. This is what the current average length is (3.8 nights).

Visitors want to participate in water-based recreation (kayaking, SUP, and swimming) in future visits, but were less likely to have done so on their last visit.

Respondents generally did not view Sisters as a destination for a full vacation (only $13 \%$ said they would visit for 6+ nights)

On average, visitors spent about $\$ 133$ per party per day on day visits and $\$ 217$ per party per night on overnight visits to Sisters.

Event successes: event visitors are likely to return for events. Non-event visitors were much less likely to consider visiting Sisters for an event.

## Trip Planning and Future Visits



## Trip Planning and Future Visits



How Long Would a Future Trip Be?


How Long Would a Future Trip Be?


## Trip Planning and Future Visits

Times Visited in the Past Year


## Trip Planning and Future Visits

Times Visited in the Past Year


## Trip Planning and Future Visits

Likelihood to Visit Again in the Next Two Years


## Trip Planning and Future Visits

Likelihood to Visit Again in the Next Two Years


## Trip Planning and Future Visits



## Trip Planning and Future Visits



## Trip Planning and Future Visits



## Trip Planning and Future Visits



## Trip Planning and Future Visits

ActivityEating at local restaurants67\%
Attending a festival or event ..... 55\%
Shopping ..... 51\%
Hiking ..... 49\%
Camping ..... 43\%
Visiting a brewery, cidery or distillery ..... 40\%
Visiting a park ..... 33\%
Visiting friends or relatives ..... 28\%
Leisure bicycling ..... 27\%
Visiting an art gallery, museum, or theatre ..... 27\%
Kayaking or canoeing ..... 26\%
Visiting a winery or tasting room ..... 24\%
Mountain biking ..... 23\%
Photography ..... 23\%
Wildlife geology and botany viewing ..... 23\%
Picnicking ..... 21\%
Visiting historical sites ..... 21\%
Swimming ..... 20\%
Attending a farmers market ..... 20\%
Fishing ..... 18\%
Visiting cultural heritage sites ..... 18\%
Paddleboarding ..... 15\%
Birdwatching ..... 14\%
Backpacking ..... 13\%
Road cycling ..... 12\%
River rafting ..... 11\%
Cross country skiing, snowshoeing ..... 11\%
Golfing ..... 8\%
Downhill skiing, snowboarding ..... 8\%
Horseback riding ..... 7\%
Running ..... 7\%
Visiting a ranch ..... 7\%
Off highway driving ..... 6\%
Sports competition ..... 6\%
Guided tour trip ..... 6\%
Other ..... 6\%
Disc golf ..... 4\%
Climbing ..... 3\%
Geocaching ..... 3\%
Attending a conference or business meeting ..... 3\%
Motorized boating ..... 2\%
Hunting ..... 2\%
Snowmobile ..... 2\%
Attending a wedding

## Differences by Visitor Demographics

Low-income visitors were more likely to want to eat at local restaurants, go shopping and visit the farmer's market than the overall sample.
-> Low-income visitors are less likely to want to go hiking in the future.
-> Low-income visitors were 2.4 x more likely to rate Sisters as too expensive than the average visitor.

Nonwhite respondents were less likely to be "extremely likely" to visit the Sisters area in the next two years
(60\% of nonwhite respondents, vs. 69\% of all respondents and 79\% of all on-site respondents).

## Economic Impact

Money Spent Per Party Per Trip on Overnight Visits


## Economic Impact

Money Spent Per Party Per Trip: Hotel and Vacation Rental Guests


## Economic Impact

Money Spent Per Party Per Trip: Stays With Family or Camping


Visitors staying with friends and family or camping, $n=483$

## Economic Impact

Money Spent Per Party Per Trip: Day Visits


Visitors on day trips, $\mathrm{n}=342$


## Section IV: Written Feedback

## Written Feedback

## Visitors Liked

Restaurants, bars and dining

Events and festivals

Natural beauty

Relaxation and family time

Nice lodging and access to outdoor recreation

## Visitors Disliked

## Traffic and parking

## Lack of availability or expense of accommodations

Lack of availability of restaurants

Situational- covid, smoke, staffing

Cost or expense

Common Themes Enjoyed by Visitors


## Feedback: Difficulties Encountered by Visitors

Common Difficulties Experienced by Visitors


## Quotes: What Visitors Enjoyed

- Hiking to surrounding waterfalls and taking walks through Sisters. Also enjoyed the restaurants.
- Music, picnic in the park in the center of town enjoying food from a local restaurant.
- I enjoy so much about the Sisters area, and used to live there. The Folk Fest was my reason for my last trip, but I also go for the wilderness, hiking, backpacking, skiing, all things outdoors!
- I like the Sister Creekside CG. there is a bit of traffic noise, but nice campground, close to Peterson Ridge trails and easy shopping!
- Trails close to town, easy access to great food
- Well-organized folk festival. Very accommodating camping at the high school and we biked to our musical events on well maintained bike trails.
- The quilt show and classes have been a lifelong dream of mine to attend. In 2018 I was finally able to attend this spectacular event.


## Quotes: Difficulties Visitors Faced

- Too much traffic on Main Street. Noisy. Takes away from the charm of Sisters.
- TRAFFIC! Getting out onto the main road to go anywhere was crazy. We started going through the residential streets to keep from having to turn left at the intersections of town.
- Lodging is sparse and super expensive. that is the main reason I stay in Bend and drive or ride my bike to Sisters.
- I have never been able to actually stay in Sisters, during the Quilt Show week, because the hotels etc. fill up so quickly.
- Affordable places to stay. Would've liked to stay in Sisters . Instead stayed in Bend and drove over for the day.
- Many closed restaurants due to staffing. We feel very sorry for local businesses and wish that we could've supported them.
- Parking is somewhat limited / not clearly marked and traffic on the main route through town makes turning around to back track somewhat of a challenge


## Quotes: Improvements Visitors Want

- More dining options and places to stay.
- Sadly, it's the inability to get accommodation. If I don't have a place to stay near Sisters, I have to day-trip it, and it's a punishingly long day trip from where I live.
- ...encourage hotels to not raise their rates so excessively during the festival. We would have stayed longer.
- Add more places for quick healthy food rather than sit down food. More affordable places to stay overnight. Getting too expensive so I typically make it a day event.
- More biking trail variety. Biking specific trails. Biking shuttle.
- More resorts/hotels near downtown similar to 5 Pines
- Another similar campground in the area, limiting vehicles to the campground, businesses with broader hours (everything was closed when we weren't cycling)
- I wish you could move the highway. I always worry about pedestrians when driving through. Maybe some way to slow down traffic, raised crosswalks? Stop signs?

Q15 What did you enjoy most about your visit?
walk RV park Mountain bike sisters Creekside campground Peterson Ridge Visiting friends sister s Everything lovely friendly people river Stores also wonderful quality beauty surrounding Views bike race friendly new
restaurants lots $f 00$ road $_{\text {Seeing Beautiful area }}$ Outdoor Quilt Easy access Sisters Coffee mountans family community Hiking away beautiful shops restaurants Folk Festival ${ }_{\text {Quiet }}$ area sisters stampede $^{\mathrm{music}_{\text {trails }}}$ love $_{\text {go }}$ Shopping $_{\text {Atending }}$ town $_{\text {seeing quilts }}$ quilt show ${ }_{\text {place }}$ Sisters nature quilts $_{\text {tun }}$ scenery music festival Relaxing work enjoyed bike trails great $_{\text {parks }}$ friends Eating event outdors local beautifu scenery Camping creekside Campground visiting easy Sisters Folk seting festival natual beauy Sisters Quilts saying atmosphere bakery weather amazing good riding small town variety
time coffee shop Walking around Black Butte nice Great music people
local restaurants around town many beauty area Sisters Outdoor

## Word Cloud: Difficulties Visitors Faced

Q16 What was the main difficulty you and/or your group encountered during your trip?
festival warm Na help reservations little event room Long outside places eat visit venues use stayed dinner lot lunch hot many people closed stay sisters available traffic main many Air quality Traffic town night lodging rv time much
camping easy enough problem $\mathrm{N}_{\text {Lack }} \mathrm{gO}_{\text {smoke fires }}$ tOWn restaurants open crowded $_{\text {due Covid }}$ difficulties $_{\text {challenging }}$ Sisters $_{\text {nousisis }}$ Traffic epoensise None $_{\text {s }}$ Parking wak ${ }^{\text {restaurants }}$ say sem heat $_{\text {mech ratific }}$ Finding Finding sestaramen Nothing vex Smoke geen $^{\text {Covid }}$ weather quilt show good place stay take area year day closed early drive Folk Festival make Long lines Shops weekend hotel way hard food places one accommodations seating Finding place wanted campground trip really big around availability restaurants closed cancelled quilt Waiting

Q17 What improvements could be made to make you a repeat visitor to the Sisters area?

Make open love Sisters return way Less always left stay help nice season Improve show downtown sisters Folk Festival back repeat visitor options please Keep around S aready will back Bend need main street Campground venues N even sure live will ${ }_{\text {odging }}$ visit big think enjoy restaurants hours Better quil $^{\text {p }}$ parking ${ }_{\text {one }}$ town ${ }_{\text {see }}$ SisterS $_{\text {day }}$ None $_{\text {reall }}$ Nothing $_{\text {paces stay }}$ traffic wok $^{\text {wrea }}$ stop quilt show ${ }_{\text {things }}$ love arready repeat visitor time ${ }_{\text {know }}$ year limited place access camping much shops $_{\text {r parks }}$ great home Maybe housing gO available close try improvements come back affordable fires event smaller find without accommodations move people definitely come longer food na RV sitting hotels Covid


## Section V: Demographics

## Demographics

- Gender: 68 percent female

|  | Gender | Percent |  |
| :--- | :---: | ---: | :---: |
| Male |  | $31 \%$ |  |
| Female | $<1 \%$ | $68 \%$ |  |
| Non-Binary | $<1 \%$ |  |  |

- Age: 66 percent aged 51 and over

|  | Ages |
| :--- | ---: |
| Under 20 | Percent |
| $21-30$ | $9 \%$ |
| $31-40$ | $6 \%$ |
| $41-50$ | $10 \%$ |
| $51-60$ | $9 \%$ |
| $61+$ | $18 \%$ |


| Income | Percent |
| :--- | ---: |
| $\$ 150,000+$ | $27 \%$ |
| $\$ 100,000-\$ 149,999$ | $25 \%$ |
| $\$ 75,000-\$ 99,999$ | $19 \%$ |
| $\$ 50,000-\$ 74,999$ | $18 \%$ |
| $\$ 20,000-\$ 49,999$ | $8 \%$ |
| Less than $\$ 20,000$ | $2 \%$ |
|  | 76 |

## Demographics

- Household Status: 44 percent households with adult kids
- Race: 94 percent white
- Ethnicity: 97 percent not Hispanic/Latino


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