

[Hiking Survey]

New River Gorge National River



A survey of visitors: Your opinion matters!

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In cooperation with the New River Gorge National River

Survey Directions:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The results of this study will help resource managers better understand visitors like you, as well as develop education and interpretive programs for park visitors. This survey is only being given to a select number of visitors, so your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. This survey should take about 15 minutes of your time. Please read the instructions for each question and answer to the best of your ability.

First, we would like to find out a little about *your current visit* to the New River Gorge National River.

Topic Area 1 – Trip/Visit Characteristics (Questions 1-2)

1. Is this your first trip to the New River Gorge (NRG)? *(please check one)*
- Yes No
2. How long is your current trip to the NRG? *(please check one, and write in number)*
- Less than one day. → If so, how many hours? _____
- More than a day. → If so, how many days? _____

Topic Area 3 – Individual Activities and Uses of Park Resources

3. What activities are you doing today while on the trail? *(check all that apply)*
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> hiking/walking | <input type="checkbox"/> rock climbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bird watching | <input type="checkbox"/> photography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> viewing wildlife (other than birds) | <input type="checkbox"/> viewing the scenery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> visiting historic sites | <input type="checkbox"/> picnicking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ | |
- Now, from the activities that you checked **above**, please **write in the one** that was most important to you: _____

Topic Area 5 – Individual Perceptions of their Park Experiences (4 and 5)

4. How did the number of people you saw during your visit compare with what you expected?
- A lot less than what you expected
 - A little less than what you expected
 - About what you expected
 - A little more than what you expected
 - A lot more than what you expected
 - You did not have any expectations

5. How crowded did you feel on your visit to the New River Gorge today? (*circle one number*)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Not crowded at all Slightly Crowded Moderately Crowded Extremely Crowded

Topic Area 6 – Individual Evaluation of Park Services (6 and 7)

6. How important to you are the following features at NRG hiking areas? (*please circle one response for each question*)

	Not important				Very Important		
Restrooms at trailheads.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parking Areas.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Signage at Trail Access Points	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trail Quality.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visitor Center.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ranger presence on trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Suitable campsites in park	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. How would you rate your satisfaction with the quality of these features at NRG hiking areas? (*circle one response for each question*)

	Very Dissatisfied		Neutral			Very Satisfied	
Restrooms at trailheads.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parking Areas.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Signage at Trail Access Points.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trail Quality.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visitor Center.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ranger presence on trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Suitable campsites in park	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Now, we'd like you to tell us about your background: (*circle or fill in as appropriate*):

Topic Area 1 – Individual Characteristics (Questions 8-13)

8. How many years have you been hiking? (*please write in number*) _____

9. How many years have you been hiking at the New River Gorge? (*write in number*) _____

10. When was your first visit to New River Gorge? (*write in the month and year*)
 Month: _____ Year: _____ Don't know/can't remember

11. Approximately how many times a year do you participate in hiking? (*check one*)
 <10 days/year 31-40 days/year

- 11-20 days/year
- 21-30 days/year

- 41-50 days/year
- >50 days/year

12. Approximately how many times a year do you participate in hiking at the New River Gorge? (*check one*)

- <10 days/year
- 11-20 days/year
- 21-30 days/year
- 31-40 days/year
- 41-50 days/year
- >50 days/year

13. What category best describes your overall ability as a hiker? (*check one*)

- Novice
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Expert

Topic Area 2 – Trip Planning (14 and 15)

14. From your home, how many hours did you travel to reach the New River Gorge? (*please check one box*)

- Less than 1
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 6
- 7 to 8
- more than 8

15. What would you be most interested in learning about, in regards to the cliffs and their ecosystems at the NRG? (*please write in your answer*)

Topic Area 6 – Preferences, Motives and Attitudes - variation (Questions 16-20)

The following questions deal with the cliffs at the NRG and your opinion of their importance. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (*check one box for each question*)

16.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a. The cliffs in the NRG are the same as cliffs anywhere else.						
b. Cliffs are a fundamental resource to the NRG National River, and essential to its national significance.						
c. The cliffs in the NRG provide habitat for rare plants.						
d. The cliffs in the NRG provide habitat for rare animals.						
e. The cliffs in the NRG support unique habitats and ecosystems.						

f. The views of natural landscape from the cliffs in the NRG are worth protecting from human development.						
g. The views from the cliffs in the NRG are one of the Park's most important and unique resources.						

This next section has questions about your behaviors and opinions regarding hiking practices. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (check one box for each question)

17.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a. I always pack out waste.						
b. I always use official trails.						
c. I respect revegetation efforts.						
d. I avoid trails that have been closed.						
e. I practice Leave No Trace when I hike.						
f. I try to keep my noise level down.						
g. I park my vehicle in designated areas.						
h. Soils & plants along the Park trails are hardy and not easily damaged.						
i. I respect seasonal closures at certain trails for wildlife needs.						
j. The park provides clear indications about which trails should not be used.						
k. Compared to other people I saw on this visit, I am causing less damage to the soils & vegetation.						
l. I feel a responsibility to help protect the plants and ecosystems in the Park.						
m. The continued use of unofficial visitor created trails is a serious threat to plants and soils along the Park trails.						
n. It is OK to walk off the official trails, if I stay on unofficial trails already created by visitors.						

The next question deals with potential resource impacts at hiking areas in the New River Gorge, and if you perceive them to be a problem. Please place a check under the column that best describes to what extent each of the following is a problem for you when hiking at the New River Gorge. (check one box for each question)

18.	Not a problem	Minor problem	Neutral	Moderate problem	Serious problem	Don't know
a. Bare soil at the top or base of cliffs.						
b. Trampled vegetation at the top or base of the cliff.						
c. Dead or damaged trees at the top or base of the cliff due to use as a climbing anchor, or rappel site.						
d. Erosion at/near the cliffs due to multiple trails.						
e. Vegetation damaged or being removed from cliff face.						
f. Pieces of litter/trash at the cliff.						
g. Human waste visible along cliff lines or trails.						
h. Chalk tick marks on routes.						
i. Vandalism at NRG.						
j. People that do not control their dogs adequately.						

Climbing is another popular activity in the NRG. This series of questions ask you to think about your opinions about management preferences, as well as how hiking and climbing is currently managed at the New River Gorge. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (check one box for each question)

Definitions:

***Fixed Anchor:** Presence of fixed bolts/webbing/pitons on cliff, used for anchor/rappel stations.

***Bolts:** Permanent bolts used on sport routes, and as anchor points.

19.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
a. The impact of bolts & anchors on the natural resource is minimal.						
b. There should be official regulations concerning where, when, and how bolts and fixed anchors should be used.						
c. The presence of numerous bolts & anchors negatively affects my climbing experience.						
d. The National Park Service managers at the NRG share my values.						

e. All climbing guide services should be required to be certified or accredited.						
f. I am familiar with the climbing regulations at the NRG.						
g. Climbing is not treated fairly in the management process when compared to other recreation activities at the NRG.						
h. Climbing group sizes should be limited at NRG.						
i. I was not offended by seeing climbing bolts or anchors.						
j. I trust that the National Park Service managers at the NRG will do what is right for the Park.						
k. Climbers need to be educated concerning their role in the management process.						
l. Large groups of climbers detracted from my experience at NRG.						
m. Most climbing areas need an official management plan in order to provide sustained use.						
n. The National Park Service managers at the NRG have the same goals as me.						
o. Park managers do not have adequate knowledge of climbing to properly manage it at the NRG.						
p. Climber's practice of land stewardship is not adequate.						
q. Poor communication of rules & regulations is a problem at NRG.						
r. Climbers have a negative attitude toward management at the NRG.						

20. These questions ask you to indicate how important the NRG is you. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about the New River Gorge area. *(please check one box for each question)*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a. This place means a lot to me.						
b. I feel like this place is a part of me.						
c. I feel no commitment to this place.						
d. I get more satisfaction out of climbing at the New River Gorge than anywhere else.						
e. The New River Gorge is the best place for doing the kind of climbing I do.						
f. There is NO substitute for the type and quality of climbing at the New River						

Gorge.						
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Topic Area 2 – Trip Planning

21. How do you usually obtain information about climbing in the NRG? (*check all sources that you have used*)

- Local guidebook
- Climbing websites
- Friends/word of mouth
- Through personal exploration & discovery
- Outdoor/climbing stores around the NRG
- National Park Service information (website, brochure, etc.)
- Other: _____

Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics

22. Have you ever taken a course on, or been trained in, Leave No Trace (LNT) practices? (*check one*)

- Yes
- No

Topic Area 2 – Trip Behaviors

23. Did you encounter any National Park Service rangers on the trails today? (*check one*)

- Yes
- No

Topic Area 6: Trust in the NPS (variation)

24. How much do you trust or distrust the following as a source of information about **cliff resource management**? (*please check for each item*)

	Strongly distrust	Somewhat distrust	Somewhat trust	Strongly trust
Family & friends				
Environmental organizations				
Businesses (outdoor related)				
Outdoor related organizations				
Scientists in general				
National Park rangers in general				
National Park rangers at the New River Gorge National River				
Mainstream news media				

Of the sources listed above, which do you most strongly trust, and WHY?

List source: _____

Why trust?: _____

<p>Of the sources listed above, which do you most strongly distrust, and WHY?</p> <p>List source: _____</p> <p>Why distrust?: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics

25. To which of the following organizations affiliated with the outdoors or the environment do you currently belong? *(please check all that apply)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave No Trace | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature Conservancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sierra Club | <input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Audubon Society | <input type="checkbox"/> National Parks Conservation Association |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(please write in)</i> _____ | |

Topic Area 6 – Evaluation of Services and Management

26. Did you know that volunteers undertake trail maintenance projects at NRG? *(check one)*

- Yes No

Topic Area 3 – Trip Behaviors – variation (Questions 27 and 28)

27. Have you ever volunteered for a trail maintenance project at NRG (trail construction, trash clean up, etc.)? *(check one)*

- Yes No

28. Have you ever volunteered for trail maintenance project anywhere else (trail construction, trash clean up, etc.)? *(check one)*

- Yes No

Topic Area 6 – Opinions of Services and Management

29. Do you think visitors should share responsibility for park resource (trails, etc.) maintenance? *(check one)*

- Yes No

Finally, we would like to know a bit more about you.

Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics (Questions 30-38)

30. What is your gender? (*please check one*)

- Male Female

31. What is the highest grade of school or year of college that you completed? (*check one*)

- Less than high school Four year college degree
 High school graduate or GED Masters, doctoral, or professional degree
 Some college or associate degree

32. Are you Hispanic or Latino? (*check one*)

- Yes No

33. Which racial groups do you identify with? (*check one or more*)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
 Asian
 Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 White

34. What is your age? (*please write in number*) _____

35. Are you a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S.? (*check one and fill in*)

No — What is your country of origin? _____

Yes — What is your zip code, city and state of residence?

Zip Code _____

City _____

State _____

36. How many people (including yourself) are in your party on this visit? (*write in number*)__

Which of the following best describes your personal group you are traveling with?
(*check one*) Myself alone

Myself with family (including spouse/partner and/or other family members/relatives)

Myself with family and friends

Myself with friends

Outfitter guided Specify _____

Club/organization/school Specify _____

Other (*Please specify*)

37. Do you consider yourself to be a leader or organizer for your group?

- Yes No

38. Are there any children under age 18 in your group? (*check one & write in number as needed*)

- No
 Yes → How many children are in each of these age categories?
_____ Number of children under 5 years old.
_____ Number of children age 5-12
_____ Number of children age 13-17

Thank you for your help!

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