

HERITAGE TOURISM STUDY: ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA



Executive Summary

By

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Submitted to:

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October 2002

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1. More than 2/3 of those surveyed were overnight visitors. The mean length of overnight stays was 3.8 days, more than 2/3 stayed for 2 to 3 days. Of those who were day visitors, the majority stayed for 7.1 hours.
2. The most frequently used accommodations were hotels/motels (59.4%), followed by resorts (3.3%). Approximately, 9% stayed with friends and relatives.
3. About 54% of the visitors were repeat visitors to St. Johns County. Over one quarter (26.2%) of those surveyed had visited from 2 to 4 times in the last 12 months. The majority of respondents had visited the region in the past five years.
4. More than ½ of the respondents heard about the area through word of mouth. Friends and family (30.8%) provided the most information via word of mouth.
5. Of the seasons visited, spring received the most responses; this was also the most frequently surveyed season.
6. Primary reasons for visiting the county were: general sightseeing (27%), visiting historical sites and museums (22%), sightseeing historical architecture & character (12%), and attending personal special events (6%).
7. The most frequently participated in activities were general sightseeing (88%), visiting historical sites and museums (80%), sightseeing historical architecture and character (71%), shopping (68%), visiting a scenic area (62%), and visiting the beach (51%).
8. Sightseeing historical architecture & character (1%) had the highest mean number of trips made within the St. Augustine region, while conferences and conventions (less than 1%) and sporting events (less than 1%) had the lowest mean number of trips made within the St. Augustine region.
9. Visiting the beach (3%) had the highest mean number of trips made outside the St. Augustine region, while art galleries (less than 1%) had the lowest mean number of trips made outside the St. Augustine region.
10. The satisfaction with the region was very high (90%), indicating a high level of experience. Over 36% indicated that the quality of their experience was perfect.
11. The return potential was high with 61% of the visitors indicating that it was very likely that they would return and 28% saying it was somewhat likely. Only about 1% said it was unlikely that they would return.
12. The attractions most visited during this trip were Castillo de San Marcos (52%), Colonial Spanish Quarter (41%), St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum (37%) and Oldest House Museum (35%).
13. The majority (88.1%) of surveyed visitors indicated they had some previous historical knowledge about the sites they visited. The historical knowledge rating of most (58.4%) of the respondents was limited. Only 7.2% of those sampled said they had extensive historical knowledge, while 8.7% said they had no historical knowledge.

14. Historic architecture, museums, and historic objects had the highest mean authenticity ratings, each with a mean score of 4.1. Historic Architecture had the highest percentage of very authentic responses (47%). Souvenirs had the highest percentage of very inauthentic responses (9%), and the lowest mean score (3%).
15. The typical visitor to St. Johns County had incomes over \$50,000 annually and had some college or a college degree. The sampled visitors were about equally female and male, about half were under 50 years of age. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sample was Caucasian or white.
16. Slightly more than half (58%) of the sampled visitors were traveling in groups of two, 8% were solo travelers, about 6% in groups of 6 or more. The majority of travelers were traveling with family (67%) followed by friends (16%).
17. The majority (60%) of survey participants were domestic tourists, while approximately 10% were international tourists. Over one-quarter (30%) of the respondents were either a local or distant Florida resident.
18. Based on reported actual expenditures at the time the visitors were interviewed, and extrapolating to an estimated 6,260,000 total visitors a year. This total estimate includes 2.46 million overnight visitors in paid accommodations; 800,300 visiting friends and relatives and 3.0 million excursionist traveling 50+ miles. It is estimated that about \$1,092 million of added value occurred to St. Johns County, attributable to tourists. This accounts for an estimated 32 thousand jobs. The estimated total revenues from all classes of heritage tourists were \$1,485.05 million in 2001. Visitors classified as primary heritage tourists contributed \$459.17 million whereas secondary heritage tourists contributed \$1,390.88 million.