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# Tourism & Its Impacts on Rural Communities: Deer Lodge 2018

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# **Tourism & Its Impacts on Rural Communities: Deer Lodge 2018**

Deer Lodge, Montana

Carter Bermingham

Norma Nickerson, Ph.D.

Megan Tanner Schultz, M.S.

A sample of visitors to Deer Lodge completed a questionnaire regarding their visitation. Results show that most people are in the area for vacation, recreation, or pleasure, and participate in camping, hiking, fishing, wildlife watching, and bird watching.

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Case Study Report 2019-3

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## Abstract

This study was collaborative effort between the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research and the community of Deer Lodge, Montana to provide insight into the impacts tourism has on rural communities in Montana. Paper surveys on site were completed by 77 visitors. Results show that 13% of respondents were residents of Montana (outside of Powell County) and 84% were from out-of-state or country. Visitors spent an average of 8.27 nights away from home and 3.79 of those nights were in the town of Deer Lodge. Most spending in Deer Lodge was on hotel/motel/B&B/cabin rental (\$3,864). Respondents to the survey reported a total spending of \$20,714 in the Deer Lodge area. Most respondents in Deer Lodge were there for vacation, recreation, or pleasure and agreed that they visited Deer Lodge because it is relaxing, on their route, and a scenic drive. Results provide the Deer Lodge community with useful data for future planning, marketing/promotion, and understanding the visitor spending associated with visitation.

## Executive Summary

Overnight visitors to Deer Lodge were surveyed at the Old Prison Museum Complex, Elk Ridge Brewing Company, Indian Creek Campground, KOA Campground, Travelodge, Western Big Sky Inn, and the Kaffeination Station from June of 2018 to September of 2018. The respondents represented out-of-county Montana residents (13%) and out-of-state (84%) visitors to the Deer Lodge area. The visitors, upon arrival, make important economic contributions to the Deer Lodge area. The results of the study are worth considering for future planning within the Deer Lodge community.

- 97% of visitors who reside outside of Powell County spent at least one night away from home. The mean number of nights spent in Montana was 5.73 nights; mean number of nights in Deer Lodge was 3.79.
- 48% of respondents who stayed in Deer Lodge reported staying at a hotel/motel/B&B/rental followed by 42% staying at a private campground.
- More money was spent by these out-of-county visitors in hotel/motel/B&B/rental (\$3,864), campgrounds (\$3,616), and restaurant/bar (\$3,606) than other spending categories.
- 75% of respondents reported that they were spending for a travel group size of at least two or more people (including respondent). The average travel group size was 2.20 people (travel group spending size).
- Visitors were mostly traveling as a couple (37%). Other group types with high response were: immediate family (32%) and self (18%).
- Respondents traveled with a variety of age categories in their group – the highest percentages were 55-64 (33%), 65-74 year olds (31%), and 45-54 year olds (24%).
- Visitors, whether on this trip or in past trips, were mostly in the area for camping (35%). Other activities with high response rates were: hiking (16%) & fishing (14%).
- 28% of respondents indicated they planned to visit Deer Lodge that day and 24% made plans 1-6 months ahead. 18% of visitors decided to visit 1-4 weeks before arriving.
- Visitors, whether on this trip or in past trips, were mostly in the area to visit or had visited the Old Prison Museum (66%). Other places that were frequently visited were the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site (34%) and the Frontier Museum (34%).
- Overall, 59% (40 people) of visitors to Deer Lodge indicated that they were very likely to return to Deer Lodge, with another 28% (19 people) of respondents indicating they were somewhat likely to return. 13% (9) said they were unlikely to return to Deer Lodge.

## Study Implications

Respondents are mostly traveling in the area for vacation, recreation, or pleasure, as well as passing through. They are involved in camping, hiking, and fishing but visited many of the museums while in Deer Lodge. This shows a diverse market segment allowing Deer Lodge to promote both history and the outdoors. In addition, visitors wrote that Deer Lodge was quiet, friendly, convenient, and historical which are excellent marketing topics for the area. These visitors to Deer Lodge already stay quite long at 3.8 nights. Therefore it is important for Deer Lodge to maintain their friendly, quiet and historical charm with many activities to do while visiting. It is recommended that the citizens of Deer Lodge review the respondents' comments from Appendix B to gain more insight into people's likes and dislikes of Deer Lodge.

## Introduction

Deer Lodge, MT (formerly known as Deer Lodge City, Spanish Fork, or Cottonwood) is the second oldest town in the state of Montana. The Deer Lodge Valley, an area long known for its rich mining and farming heritage, encompasses a roughly 60 mile area in Western Montana surrounded by pristine wilderness and national forests. Deer Lodge and Powell County provide outdoor opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, backpacking, and photography. In Deer Lodge itself, the many museums, brewery, and theater allow for a diverse activity choice for visitors to the area.

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the characteristics of visitors to Deer Lodge, visitor spending in Deer Lodge, and levels of satisfaction with different aspects of visiting the area.

## Methods

A community leader of Deer Lodge took on the responsibility to coordinate the survey efforts with the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR). The survey instrument was designed cooperatively with Deer Lodge, printed by ITRR, and distributed in Deer Lodge by the community coordinator. Surveys were provided to the Old Prison Museum Complex, Elk Ridge Brewing Company, Indian Creek Campground, KOA Campground, Travelodge, Western Big Sky Inn, and the Kaffeination Station. These entities were responsible for asking visitors if they would complete the survey. Surveys were dispersed from June through September 2018. Seventy-seven completed surveys were obtained. No documentation of the number of refusals was recorded.

## Limitations

As in all research, there are limitations to the study. Limitations for the Deer Lodge study included the dependence on business owners to ask visitors to complete the survey. Business owners are busy and distributing surveys is not their main focus, therefore a random sampling did not occur. In addition, ITRR personnel were not present during the data collection for quality control.

## Results

Of the 77 valid responses to the residence questions, 16 percent (12 people) were from Montana and 84 percent (65 people) were from out-of-state (see Tables 1 and 2). Of all Montana respondents, 17 percent (2 people) were from Powell County while 83 percent (10 people) were from other Montana counties. Of respondents from out-of-state, 15 percent (10 people) were from Washington, 11 percent (7 people) were from California, and 8 percent (5 people) were from British Columbia, Canada (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Residence of all Respondents**

<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b># of total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Powell County	2	3%
Other MT County	10	13%
Montana=12		
U.S. State	55	71%
Canada	5	6%
International	2	3%
Unknown	3	4%
<b>Total all Residences</b>	<b>77</b>	

**Table 2: Out-of-State, Canadian, and International Residences**

<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b># of total</b>
Arizona	1
British Columbia	5
California	7
Colorado	3
Florida	1
Georgia	1
Idaho	3
Kansas	1
Minnesota	3
Mississippi	1
Missouri	2
Nevada	3
New Mexico	1
New Zealand	2
Ohio	1
Oklahoma	2
Oregon	3
Pennsylvania	1
South Carolina	1
South Dakota	2
Texas	3
Utah	2
Virginia	1
Washington	10
Wisconsin	1
Wyoming	1

The mean age of respondents was 52 years old. Of those who were from outside Powell County and responded to the survey, 35 people (97%) reported that they spent at least one night away from home. Of those nights spent away from home, the greatest percent of respondents (18%) spent four nights in Montana. The mean number of nights spent in Montana was 5.73 nights. The mean number of nights spent in Deer Lodge was 3.79 nights. A full breakdown of nights spent as well as results of all other questions in this survey can be found in Appendix A.

## **Expenditures**

Spending information was asked of visitors who reside outside of Powell County. The survey asked that they report their best estimate of the total amount of money they and their family/travel group (if applicable) spent in the Deer Lodge area in the following categories: accommodations, restaurant or bar, groceries or snacks, gasoline, guides or outfitters, shuttles or taxis, retail goods and services, and entertainment or recreation.

Table 3 presents the expenditure data of only the non-resident respondents (those who reside outside of Powell County) who reported spending money in the categories. The mean expenditure of those who spent money for each category can be found along with the percentage of people who reported that they spent money in that category. The last column provides the total dollars spent by those respondents in each category. The total reported expenditure for respondents who spent was \$20,714.

**Table 3: Expenditure Data: Expenditures calculated using only non-residents (those who live outside of Deer Lodge) who spent.**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>Mean expenditures of non-residents who reported that they <u>spent money</u> in these categories</b>	<b>% of respondents who reported spending money in each category</b>	<b>Total dollars spent in each category <u>by respondents who spent</u></b>
Hotel/motel/B&B/rental	\$161.00 (n=24)	32%	\$3,864.00
Campground	\$172.19 (n=21)	28%	\$3,616.00
Restaurant/bar	\$75.13 (n=48)	64%	\$3,606.00
Gas	\$70.80 (n=41)	55%	\$2,903.00
Groceries/snacks	\$82.09 (n=33)	44%	\$2,709.00
Retail goods & services	\$102.19 (n=16)	21%	\$1,635.00
Rented home/cabin/room	\$425.67 (n=3)	4%	\$1,277.00
Entertainment/recreation	\$55.20 (n=20)	27%	\$1,104.00
Shuttle/Taxi	\$0 (n=0)	0%	\$0.00
Guide/Outfitter	\$0 (n=0)	0%	\$0.00
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,714.00</b>

## Appendix A- Results

**Q1. Are you a resident of Montana? n=77**

16% Yes                      84% No (skip to Q3.)

**Q2. Do you reside in Powell County? n=12**

17% Yes (Skip to Q12. on back)                      83% No (Skip to Q4.)

**Q3. In what state, province, or foreign country do you reside?**

See Tables 1 and 2.

**Q4. Is this your first time visiting Deer Lodge? n=74**

60% Yes                      40% No

**Q5. What reasons are you visiting the Deer Lodge area? (Check all that apply.) n=74**

46% Vacation/recreation/pleasure    36% Just passing through    12% Business/convention/meeting

18% Visiting friends/relatives                      1% Shopping

**Q6. For this trip, how many nights will you spend away from home? n=73, mean=8.27**

3% 0 (Skip to Q.10)	7% 1	6% 3	6% 5	7% 7	1% 9
	0% 2	10% 4	7% 6	6% 8	49% 10 or more

**Q7. How many of those nights are in Montana? n=71, mean=5.73**

0% 0	9% 2	18% 4	7% 6	3% 8	16% 10 or more
14% 1	16% 3	13% 5	6% 7	0% 9	

**Q8. Of your nights in Montana, how many will you stay in Deer Lodge on this trip? n=72, mean=3.79**

14% 0 (Go to Q.10)	33% 1	8% 3	6% 5	4% 7	0% 9
	11% 2	14% 4	3% 6	0% 8	7% 10 or more

**Q9. While in Deer Lodge in which types of accommodation(s) did you stay ON THIS TRIP? (Check all that apply.) n=60**

48% Hotel/motel/B&B	42% Private campground	0% Resort/condominium
3% Rental cabin/home	5% Home of friend/relative	0% Guest ranch
5% Public land camping	0% Second home/cabin/condo	2% Vehicle in parking lot

**Q10. Please enter your best estimate of the TOTAL amount of money in US dollars you (and your family/travel group, if applicable) spent/will spend in Deer Lodge on THIS TRIP. If you did not spend money in a category, please leave it blank. (See Table 3 for expenditures)**

**ACCOMMODATIONS in Deer Lodge**

Hotel/motel/bed & breakfast  
\$

Campground  
\$

Rented home/cabin or room  
\$

**FOOD in Deer Lodge**

Restaurant/bar  
\$

Groceries/snacks  
\$

**TRANSPORTATION in Deer Lodge**

Gasoline/diesel  
\$

Shuttle/taxi  
\$

**RETAIL/SERVICES in Deer Lodge**

Retail goods/services  
\$

Entertainment/recreation  
\$

Guide/outfitting trip  
\$

**Q11. How many people does the above spending represent (including yourself, i.e., your travel group/family size)? n=64; mean= 2.20**

25% 1	16% 3	3% 5	2% 7	0% 9	0% more than 10
50% 2	3% 4	2% 6	0% 8	0% 10	

**Q12. What option best describes your travel group? n=76**

18% Self	32% Immediate family	7% Family/friends	0% Business associates
37% Couple	1% Extended family	4% Friends	1% Organized group/club

**Q13. Please select all the ages represented in your group: n=75 for each age category**

5% 0-5 yrs.	16% 11-17 yrs.	13% 25-34 yrs.	24% 45-54 yrs.	31% 65-74 yrs.
7% 6-10 yrs.	8% 18-24 yrs.	20% 35-44 yrs.	33% 55-64 yrs.	11% 75 and over

**Q14. How long before this trip did you make plans to spend time in Deer Lodge? n=67**

28% The day I arrived	18% 1-4 weeks before arriving	13% Over 6 months before arriving
16% 1-7 days before arriving	24% 1-6 months before arriving	

**Q15. Please select the option that best corresponds with your level of agreement with each statement below.**

I visit Deer Lodge because it has or is....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Total respondents
A scenic drive	0%	5%	9%	30%	56%	4.37	n=50
Relaxing	2%	2%	14%	24%	58%	4.34	n=50
On my route	4%	7%	9%	14%	67%	4.33	n=57
Close to attractions I'm visiting	4%	6%	17%	11%	61%	4.17	n=46
A charming small town	0%	7%	20%	24%	49%	4.16	n=45
Quiet	4%	8%	12%	26%	50%	4.10	n=50
Less crowded	4%	6%	20%	20%	49%	4.04	n=49
A vibrant small town	7%	7%	29%	17%	39%	3.73	n=41
Close to public lands	5%	13%	29%	10%	42%	3.71	n=38
Outdoor Recreation	8%	3%	35%	23%	33%	3.7	n=40
Special places to eat	18%	13%	31%	13%	26%	3.15	n=39
Where family/friends live	36%	9%	9%	7%	39%	3.02	n=44
Shopping	23%	18%	31%	8%	21%	2.85	n=39

**Q16. On this trip as well as past visits, what places have you visited in the Deer Lodge area (check all that apply). n=77 (Top 5 highlighted)**

- 34% Grant-Kohrs Ranch Nat'l Historic Site
- 20% Yesterday's Play Things
- 7% Kohrs Memorial Library
- 18% Adjacent forest lands
- 21% Milwaukee railroad exhibit
- 13% Rialto Theater
- 66% Old Prison Museum
- 5% Cutler Bros Theatre
- 10% Arrow Stone Park
- 34% Frontier Museum
- 18% Elk Ridge Brewery
- 7% Deer Lodge circle tour for cars and cycles

**Q17. On this as well as past trips, what activities have you participated in during your visit to the Deer Lodge area (check all that apply). n=77 (Top 5 highlighted)**

- 35% Camping
- 0% Horseback riding
- 8% Motorcycle touring
- 7% Golfing
- 16% Hiking
- 5% Guided trip
- 12% Wildlife watching
- 0% Covered wagon rides
- 14% Fishing
- 4% Hunting
- 9% Bird watching
- 3% OHV/ATV riding
- 3% Bicycle touring
- 1% Mt. biking

**Q18. What is your age? n=60; Range=18-81, mean=52.25**

**Q19. What is your gender? n=65**

48% Male 52% Female

**Q20. How likely are you to visit Deer Lodge again? n=68**

59% Very likely 28% Somewhat likely 13% Unlikely

**Q21. Please tell us what you liked about Deer Lodge.**

See Appendix B

**Q22. Please tell us what you did not like about Deer Lodge.**

See Appendix B

## Appendix B: Open-ended Responses

### Q21. Please tell us what you liked about Deer Lodge.

(listed 10 names of individuals) They are wonderful. Made us feel at home
Attending Draft Expo
Away from Missoula
Clean, cute, and kind people
Convenient
Convenient stop on our way to N. Idaho. Nice area, friendly people. We liked the Chinese/Thai restaurant- good food!
Customer service, great. Rooms very clean, eating area very clean
Cute little town
Elk Ridge Brewery
Everything
Friendly people
Frontier Montana
Great little brewery drew us in!
Home
I like staying at Deer Lodge KOA, XXXXX the lady that runs the KOA is a pleasure as a host. So hopeful
In town for 4H event. Town is easy to get to. People are friendly. Clean
In town for National 4H event
Interesting visit to Old Prison Museum
It was a cute, quiet town
KOA and staff- great location to walk in to downtown- friendly folks at campground and at museum and grocery store,. Also enjoyed the Draft Horse Expo
KOA, campground, close to town, owner/staff are great. prison/car museum very good
Little town with many activities and slower pace of life. I will be bringing my wife here for vacation
Love the KOA staff and surrounding areas.
Loved how open it was. Loved the sunset
My fave place to spend time
Neat town
Nice area
Nice area
Nice brewery
Nice town. Pretty much has everything a person needs
People
People, services
Pretty, not so crowded
Prison
Quiet, friendly
Quiet, friendly, and convenient
Quiet, friendly. Came to see Draft Horse Show (Big Sky Draft Expo)
Quiet, locals are warm and welcoming. Feels like home! 34-45 min drive to major cities Helena and Butte
Safe, quiet, great place to stay overnight while travels on motorcycle. Motorcycling through safe area away from urban areas
Saw sign for brewery and decided to stop. Like the charming small town vibe
Selected "unlikely" for visiting again because I'll never drive through MT again but if I did I would stay again

Small town charm and treasures
Small town, friendly people
Small town, friendly people
The brewery, the prime rib, the people
The GK ranch, the prison and automobile museums, the Catholic Church
The KOA campground and its owner XXXX are great. The car museum is fantastic
The people
The Prison Museums
Very accommodating KOA camp-friendly staff wherever we were in town
Very friendly staff, nice campground, close to downtown. Absolutely will visit again
Very historical
Very historical, friendly people, beautiful architecture feeling of Old town energy, safe
Visiting family
We have family here and enjoy the activities. Good food
We like the KOA campground on the Clark Fork River which is off Hwy 90. Very quiet spot. My wife always shops at the quilt shop for material that we cannot get at home
We were passing by and saw the advertising for the brewery so stopped. Great beer!

**Q22. Please tell us what you did not like about Deer Lodge.**

1512 miles from home
Behind a truck stop near the interstate- noise
Better choice of restaurants. Upgraded lodging facilities needed.
Can't think of anything
Didn't stay long enough to dislike anything.
Dogs barking and the junky trailers
Food
I did not encounter anything negative during my short visit.
Junk when you first come into town South Side
Lack of venues, stores, shopping
Motel room was not well-equipped re: lights. 0 in bath. All on one switch. Bed uncomfortable and old! Bedding was old and scratchy sheets. I would not stay here again
N/A
NA
Need more switches for the lights. Hair dryer, microwave, and refrigerator in all rooms.
None
Not enough areas/activities for children
Not enough public access to river and exploring
Not enough shopping
Nothin

Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing, I can't say anything about them bad (list of individuals)
Rainy- campground was saturated with puddles. Both times we came in mid and late June. Worried that Clark River would flood.
Too many bars
Water pressure low in hotel room and remote did not work- no big deal.
WE did not find it as charming as Ennis and Philipsburg- not as many restaurants and open shops downtown.

## Appendix C: Letter to Deer Lodge Business Owners



To: Deer Lodge business owners  
From: Norma Nickerson, Director, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research  
RE: Deer Lodge visitor survey  
Date: 6/19/18

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) was approved by the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council to utilize our survey kit for five small towns in Montana. Deer Lodge, through the efforts of the community coordinator, has been selected to participate in this project. The other communities participating in the project are Lima, White Sulphur Springs, Thompson Falls, and Shelby.

The purpose of the project is to assist five small communities with their visitor data through conducting the survey kit customized to their community.

### Objectives

- To assist communities in understanding their local visitor by waiving the \$700 fee for up to five communities;
- To understand the visitor demographics, trip characteristics, activities, attractions to the community, and visitor planning time frame, and;
- To assess the spending patterns of visitors to the community.

The survey kit is conducted as follows:

1. ITRR develops the survey instrument template
2. ITRR works with a community leader to determine the survey methods best suited for the community
3. ITRR prints ~200 surveys and mails them to the community leader
4. The community collects the data based on the methods and time frame chosen
5. Upon completion of data collection, surveys are mailed back to ITRR
6. ITRR conducts data entry, analysis, and report for the community

After discussion with the community coordinator, we decided the most efficient and useful way to collect data is to ask accommodation owners (motels, cabins, rented rooms, campgrounds) to assist by asking each guest all summer long and possibly through September, to complete the questionnaire before they leave Deer Lodge. In addition, one or two restaurants in town could ask patrons to complete the survey while waiting for their meal (but these folks cannot reside in Powell County). Finally, if the museum complex and Grant Kohrs Ranch could ask visitors to fill out the survey, that could give us an idea of who stops in town, but doesn't necessarily spend the night.

We ask that the business owners provide their 'blessing' and passion for this study. It can only be successful if everyone is on board and persistent throughout the summer in data collection.

The resulting data will provide Deer Lodge with information about their visitor behavior which can ultimately assist the community in economic development. If you have questions, please call or email me at: 406-243-2328;

[norma.nickerson@umontana.edu](mailto:norma.nickerson@umontana.edu).

Thank you!

**\*\*\*All community names have been changed due to anonymity\*\*\***