

South Dakota  
Office of Tourism



Information Center Intercept Report  
Summer 2009

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## Methodology

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July 8-17, 2009, 6,500 surveys were distributed at the 13 Interstate Information Centers around the state of South Dakota. These intercept surveys were distributed for 10 days, with July 20th being the final day. Respondents were entered into a drawing for a \$250 gas card. To be eligible for the drawing, the participant had to be 18 years of age or older and return the completed survey no later than July 20, 2009.

There were 1,723 travelers that responded to the survey. This number was then broken down further into two groups which are titled In-Target and Aggregate. The In-Target segment consists of only those that fall within the target markets described by the South Dakota Department of Tourism and make up 792 respondents. These markets include Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Canada, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and Colorado. South Dakota residents make up roughly 175 of the In-Target group and their impact on the state's visitor industry is outlined in the Results section of this report.

The Aggregate and In-Target groups are the two segments that will be analyzed, compared, and contrasted against each other throughout the course of this report to show the differences and similarities that they possess. Both leisure and business travelers are included in the results of this report.

## Executive Summary

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### **Question 1 – Is South Dakota your final destination on this trip?**

With 1,723 respondents in the Aggregate group, 46% of the respondents indicated that South Dakota was their final destination. The In-Target group of respondents, which totaled 792, indicated that 63% held South Dakota as their final destination. These results did not vary much from 2008. Both groups indicated that Rapid City was the most common in-state city destination, while Yellowstone remained the most common out-of-state destination.

### **Question 2 – What is your travel purpose?**

Out of the Aggregate group of respondents, 91% were leisure travelers.

### **Question 3 – How many days total will you be spending on your entire vacation?**

The average total vacation days among the Aggregate group were 18.3 days, while the In-Target group stated that their total vacation was 9.9 days.

### **Question 4 – How many days of your vacation will you be spending in South Dakota?**

The amount of time spent in South Dakota did not vary much among the two groups, with the Aggregate group spending an average of 4.3 days in South Dakota and the In-Target averaging 5.4 days.

### **Question 5 – What time of year did you make the decision to come to / through South Dakota?**

The result of this question stayed the same from last year with the most common month of planning to take a trip being July.

### **Question 6 – What in particular prompted you to choose South Dakota for your vacation this year?**

The responses from this question was similar among the two groups. Both indicated that the scenery of South Dakota was the main reason for their visit. The second most popular response for both groups was coming to visit a special attraction with Mount Rushmore being the most popular mentioned.

### **Question 7 – Have you ever visited the South Dakota state tourism Web site, [www.travelSD.com](http://www.travelSD.com)?**

Twenty-three percent of the Aggregate group said they had visited [www.TravelSD.com](http://www.TravelSD.com), while 27% of the In-Target group had visited the Web site. Of those who answered the question in the Aggregate group, 81% indicated that the Web site did answer all of their questions, which was very similar to the In-Target response of 82%.

**Question 8 – While traveling in South Dakota, are you using a South Dakota Vacation Guide?**

The Aggregate group reported that while traveling through the state, 794 (47%) used a Vacation Guide. The In-Target group closely mirrored those results with 41% or 323 respondents using a Vacation Guide.

**Question 9 – Are you using a travel special or vacation package that combines lodging and activities on your trip?**

The response was the same for both groups with 4% using a special or vacation package while visiting South Dakota.

**Question 10 – Have you been to South Dakota prior to this trip?**

Out of those that responded to this question, 66% stated that they had been to South Dakota previously. The In-Target group indicated that 73% had been to South Dakota before this trip. On average, it has been 10.3 years since an individual in the Aggregate group has visited the state, while the In-Target group indicated eight years between visits.

**Question 11 – From what Zip Code did your travel party originate from?**

The most common Zip Codes this year were 82718 (Gillette, WY) and 57701 (Rapid City, SD). 82718 was selected nine times and 57701 was selected 11 times.

**Question 12 – How many people are in your travel party?**

The average travel party size was very similar in both groups and consistent with the 2008 results. The Aggregate group had an average travel party size of three and the In-Target group averaged 3.11 people respectively. The most common travel party size for both groups was two.

**Question 13 – How many children (under 18) are in your travel party?**

The average child per travel party is less than one (0.56) which did not change much from last year's 0.66. Of the respondents who were traveling with a child, the average amount of children per travel party in the Aggregate group was 2.1. The In-Target group varies very little from the Aggregate group with an average of 2.3.

**Question 14 – What are the genders and ages (and the number) of adults in your party?**

The most common gender and age group of this year's respondents were females age 55-64, which changed from 2008 with the most common group being females 35-54. Males 65 and older were the second most common group among travelers to South Dakota this past summer.

**Question 15 – Approximately, how much are you spending total per day for your entire travel party?**

The average travel party spending per day in the Aggregate group was \$201.35. The In-Target group averaged a lower value of \$191.04 as their amount spent per day.

**Question 16 – How did you travel to South Dakota?**

Private vehicles were the most popular mode of transportation amongst both groups of respondents. In the Aggregate group, 72% or 1,245 stated that they drove a private vehicle. The In-Target group had 654 respondents or 83% indicated they used this type of transportation.

**Question 17 – Which types of activities do you enjoy participating in on a vacation?**

Visiting National and State Parks was the most popular activity people do while visiting South Dakota. General sightseeing was the second most popular activity. This holds the same as the 2008 results.

**Question 18 – Does your travel party use any wireless internet capable devices (WiFi) while on vacation?**

Forty-four percent of the Aggregate group indicated that they use WiFi while on vacation, while only 38% of the In-Target group does. These percentages are almost exactly the same as last year's responses.

**Question 19 – How satisfied are you with the South Dakota portion of your trip?**

An overwhelming amount of respondents answered this question with either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied". Ninety-five percent of the respondents selected one of the two options when asked how they felt about their time in South Dakota.

**Question 20 – What did you like about your South Dakota vacation?**

The response to this question was very similar in both groups. The most common likes were "scenery", "friendly people", "Mount Rushmore" and "beautiful". The In-Target group also commented on proximity to home as being a reason they like South Dakota.

**Question 21 – What did you not like about your time in South Dakota?**

The comments remained the same from the 2008 results as far as dislikes are concerned. Both groups contained similar responses with gas prices and road construction being the most popular dislikes. A number of respondents commented that they did not have enough time in South Dakota.

**Question 22 – Comments, Suggestions, Feedback?**

The majority of respondents had very positive feedback. The most common responses among both groups included compliments about the rest areas being clean, friendly and helpful people around the state, including knowledgeable staff at information centers and beautiful scenery. The negative feedback predominately revolved around road construction being an inconvenience. Helpful recommendations included providing more information for East-bound travelers, as well as more signage for

attractions. Most individuals stated that they looked forward to visiting South Dakota again.

## Results

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The survey did not undergo many modifications from 2008; therefore there is little variation in the responses this year. There are a few modifications to take note of however. First, the labeling of the regions in South Dakota changed from the 2008 survey with Region One being Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes, Region Two Great Lakes, Region Three Glacial Lakes and Prairies and Region Four Southeast. Another change to make note of for this year's results is the incorporation of the business traveler to our responses. Out of the 1,723 total respondents, 134 indicated that they traveled to South Dakota on business, which makes up roughly eight percent of our surveyed group. The 2008 survey only included the responses of leisure travelers. The inclusion of the business traveler allows for more responses to the survey. Although they make up a fairly small portion of our surveyed group, the business travelers did respond to most or all of the questions and contributed helpful feedback for our survey. The 2009 results reflect the feedback of 1,723 individuals, both traveling to the state for leisure and business purposes, as opposed to the 1,480 leisure only respondents from 2008.

The results from this year's survey mirror 2008 very closely, with some of the responses to the questions being almost equal. For example, the answer to the question regarding the use of WiFi while being on vacation was the exact same as 2008 with 44% using an Internet capable device while traveling.

The In-Target group has remained the same from 2008, which includes the following states: Colorado, Iowa, Manitoba, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Out of the total In-Target group, the majority of respondents came from Minnesota. The second biggest group within the In-Target group was South Dakota and the third largest was Wisconsin.

Similar to last year's results, a number of respondents indicated that their vacation would last a month or longer. These respondents also classified their mode of travel as being an RV. Approximately 274 respondents indicated that they were traveling by RV. Among this group, 31% selected South Dakota as their final destination. The average number of days this group spent on their entire vacation was 46.9 days, with 5.3 days being spent in South Dakota. The average travel party size was two. This information correlates with previous findings.

The quantitative break down of our responses saw little change from the previous year. One of the first questions in the intercept survey asked our visitors if South Dakota was their final destination. Our results from this year are almost identical

to last year's response with 63% of the In-Target group indicating that South Dakota was in fact their final destination. The only change we observe this year is a slightly higher percentage of respondents in the Aggregate group who chose South Dakota as their final destination. Forty-four percent said South Dakota was their final destination last year, while this year's percentage was 46%.

The number of days spent in South Dakota also closely matched the results from 2008. Both groups indicated that two days was the most common amount of time spent in state. The In-Target group reported that on average, they spent 5.43 days in South Dakota, while the Aggregate group spent 4.3 days on average. The entire days spent on vacation did not change a great deal from last year. The In-Target group spends an average of 9.8 days on vacation, while the Aggregate group spends roughly 18.3 days on vacation.

Visitors to the state of South Dakota are largely drawn here because of the scenery. Question six asked our respondents why they traveled to the state. The results of 2008 match 2009 closely with "Scenery" being the number one response for both groups, followed by "Special Attractions." "Friends and Family" remain the third most common choice for visiting South Dakota.

Around 74% of both groups indicated that they did not visit the [www.TravelSD.com](http://www.TravelSD.com) Web site before visiting South Dakota, which has been a common response to this question in the past. Out of the respondents that visited the site (388 total) 88% had a positive response when asked if the Web site answered all of their questions. Additionally, our comments, suggestions and feedback question included a few comments complimenting the Web site. One respondent noted that [www.TravelSD.com](http://www.TravelSD.com) was the most helpful state Web site she/he had ever visited.

Question ten asked our respondents if they have ever been to South Dakota prior to this trip. The Aggregate group indicated that 66% had been to South Dakota before. Among this group, the average time since their last trip to South Dakota had been 10.3 years, which is slightly lower than last year's average of 11.2 years. Out of the In-Target group, 73% indicated that they had been to South Dakota prior to this trip with an average of eight years since their last visit.

One change to note from last year to this year is the average age and gender of the typical traveler to South Dakota. In 2008 the most common gender and age category for both of the groups were females age 35-54. This year the gender stays the same with females being the most popular gender group but the age changes to 55-64 (242 of the In-Target group and 511 of the Aggregate group). The second most common gender and age group for 2009 were males 65 and older (206 In-Target and 507 Aggregate).

The most common activity respondents take part in while vacationing in South Dakota is visiting National and State Parks, as indicated with the response to question number 17. Seventy-seven percent of the Aggregate group selected this choice which resembles the response of the In-Target group with 73%. Both groups selected "Sightseeing" as the second most common choice. Both groups had 66% of individuals choose "sightseeing" as the second favorite activity to take part in while visiting South Dakota.

The qualitative responses were also similar to last year. Once again the last three questions of the survey produced the most information for qualitative analysis. Both groups had similar responses to all of these questions with the exception of the In-Target group commenting about South Dakota being close to home as a like. The majority of respondents who answered this question like South Dakota for the following reasons, the scenery, people, Mount Rushmore, rest areas and beauty. The most common dislikes among both groups included overall prices, in particular gas price and the amount of road construction. The most popular comments, suggestions, and feedback came in the form of something positive. Most respondents noted the clean rest areas as being one of South Dakota's strengths, as well as friendly and helpful people, and wonderful attractions.

Out of the In-Target group, 175 indicated that they are current South Dakota residents. The most common Zip Codes among the South Dakota residents were 57701 and 57702 which are both Rapid City Zip Codes. There were a total of 20 respondents who indicated Rapid City as their origin city. Roughly 143 respondents indicated that South Dakota was their final destination. Eighty-two respondents chose region one or the Black Hill, Badlands and Lakes Region as their primary destination in South Dakota. Rapid City was the most common response to the question regarding which city in South Dakota is your final destination with 37 out of 129 choosing Rapid City. Out of the 30 people who wrote-in responses to where their final destination was if not South Dakota, the answers varied greatly. Ten respondents indicated their final destination was Minnesota, while four respondents indicated they were traveling to Yellowstone. Those were the two most consistent choices among this group.

Roughly 141 respondents considered themselves leisure travelers with five days being the most common number of days spent on their entire vacation and two or three days spent in South Dakota. Friends and family was what prompted most of the South Dakota residents to travel with 80 respondents choosing this option and 71 respondents indicating that they chose to travel in South Dakota because it was close to home. Twenty-six percent of this group indicated that they had visited [www.TravelSD.com](http://www.TravelSD.com) and 83% of those respondents indicated that the Web site answered all of their questions.

The most common travel party size within this group was three people (50%). Similar to the Aggregate and In-Target groups, most travel parties were not traveling with children, however one child was the most common response among parties

containing children. The most common gender and age group within the South Dakota residents were females age 55-64. The second most common group was males age 55-64. Seventy-one percent of the respondents indicated that visiting National and State Parks would be the most common activity, followed by sightseeing. Of the 166 people who responded to the question regarding satisfaction, 75% chose "Very Satisfied".

The qualitative responses proved to be very similar to the other groups with scenery, the Black Hills and friendliness among the most common likes. Interestingly, most of the responses to the dislikes were "nothing" which is a positive answer to this question. Most respondents, who volunteered comments, feedback, or suggestions, complimented the clean rest areas. The most common suggestions among this group included providing more recycling receptacles at rest areas and National and State parks, as well as building more cell phone towers throughout the state so people could have better cell phone reception while traveling. South Dakota residents would also like to see less signage along the interstates.

Overall, the South Dakota residents had very similar responses to the questions. The demographic of this group aligns with the Aggregate and In-Target groups, as does the fact that most of them were not traveling with children. Uniquely most of them selected South Dakota as their final destination, although most of them were partaking in the same activities as the other two groups had indicated.

## Conclusion

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The responses have changed very little from last year. This can be attributed to the fact that neither the survey nor the methodology underwent any modifications. The variation between the In-Target and Aggregate group responses is very small. The responses for both groups are parallel to one another and this has remained constant from last year. Overall, there were more respondents this year which is interesting if we examine what was taking place in the country with the economic down turn and political changes, which may lead us to believe that many people were not deterred from traveling this summer season.

The qualitative data proved to be largely the same from last year. Many of the comments, suggestions and feedback given were phrased exactly the same as the previous year. Not only did these responses not change from year to year, but there was no change between the two groups surveyed. In-Target and Aggregate had an overwhelming amount of similar responses with most of them remaining positive.

Once again, most travelers are coming by way of private vehicle; however, there was a larger amount of RV travelers in the Aggregate group and those within this group revealed that they were on vacation for longer periods of time than the average leisure traveler. The Aggregate group had a total of 274 respondents who selected RV as their mode of transportation, while In-Target only reported 77. The third most common mode of transportation was Fly/Drive with 73 individuals choosing this in the Aggregate group and only five within the In-Target group. With the increase in airline options in both Sioux Falls and Rapid City, this is an important number to analyze in the future.

The Aggregate group indicated that their time on vacation was longer overall, but their time in South Dakota was actually shorter than the In-Target group. This can be proven by the results section of the report. This has not changed from 2008. The average age of travelers matured among the female group, which is the largest gender group traveling to South Dakota. The most common age went from 35-54 to 55-64 in 2009.

To conclude, the average traveler to South Dakota:

- spends, on average, \$198.10 per day while in the state
- is on vacation for 9.8 – 18.3 days
- stays in South Dakota for approximately 4.3 – 5.4 days
- travels by private vehicle
- is typically female and above the age of 55

- travels in a party of approximately three people
- will most likely have less than one child accompanying them
- has visited South Dakota in the past
- is traveling to South Dakota to see a specific attraction or the scenery
- planned their trip in July