

Attraction Manager Survey

Attraction Survey

Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism (CCDTT) retained Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) to conduct an attraction manager survey with the Currituck, North Carolina, area attractions as part of a strategic planning process for 2012. This report documents the questions asked of participants, the responses and the findings.

Study Methodology:

RTM conducted an attraction survey as part of this overall study. A survey questionnaire was sent to the attractions in Currituck, North Carolina. The Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism provided a list of seven (7) attractions; of these, there were some that did not track visitor behavior.

Of the seven (7) attractions contacted, five (5) elected to participate in this survey. The survey was conducted during the months of December 2011 through March 2012.

This survey instrument was a questionnaire written by RTM and approved by the CCDTT. The results and data obtained from the completed surveys have been tabulated, documented, and included in this report.

Age of attractions - Year attraction opened to the public:

It is important to understand the age of local attractions and their relevance to the current traveling public. The age of attractions should be tracked to determine how relevant the current product offering is for various generations of visitors to Currituck. Product life cycle issues are important to monitor.

Name	Year Opened
Currituck OBX National Estuarine Research Reserve	unknown
Grave Digger	unknown
Currituck Beach Lighthouse	1990
Whalehead Club	2000
Corolla Wild Horse Museum	2006
Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	2006
National Audubon Society Sanctuary	2010

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Overall visitor/guest mix:

RTM asked managers at these Currituck attractions to make their best estimate of the percentage that each of the following 10 market segments had for their total 2011 visitation. The chart below shows the aggregated totals for five (5) attractions providing responses.

ATTRACTION SURVEY	2011
Individual Visitors:	
Local residents	10.0%
Out of town visitors	77.4%
Group Visitors:	
College/university/education groups	5.0%
Sports (tournaments, groups)	0.0%
Group Tour/motorcoach	2.8%
Weddings/reunions/family events	1.2%
Social Clubs (Garden, Book, etc.)	2.2%
Religious/Church	1.0%
Association	0.0%
Other (specify): _____	0.4%
Individual and Group percentages added together must total 100%	100%

RTM would expect out-of-town visitors to make up the majority of visitors to Currituck County attractions.

RTM recommends these attractions consider the following points to sustain and increase visitation from out-of-town visitors:

- Partner with the CCDTT to focus on the preferred marketing messages and outreach efforts to appeal to travelers.
- Be aggressive in placing brochures and other promotional materials in the following:
 - Currituck County Visitor Centers.
 - Area lodging/rental properties. This is where visitors report they are most likely to pick up activity information.
 - Places where visitors are likely to spend time such as shopping and dining areas.
- Ensure operating hours provide access at times when visitors to Currituck area lodging/rental properties are likely to be able to visit the attraction, including nights and weekends.
- Offer an appealing experience that will motivate visitation.
- Partner with local front-line personnel to ensure they are aware of the attraction and enthusiastically recommend it to guests.

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Annual attendance:

RTM requested five year attendance figures from the Currituck attractions. Five (5) attractions provided attendance statistics.

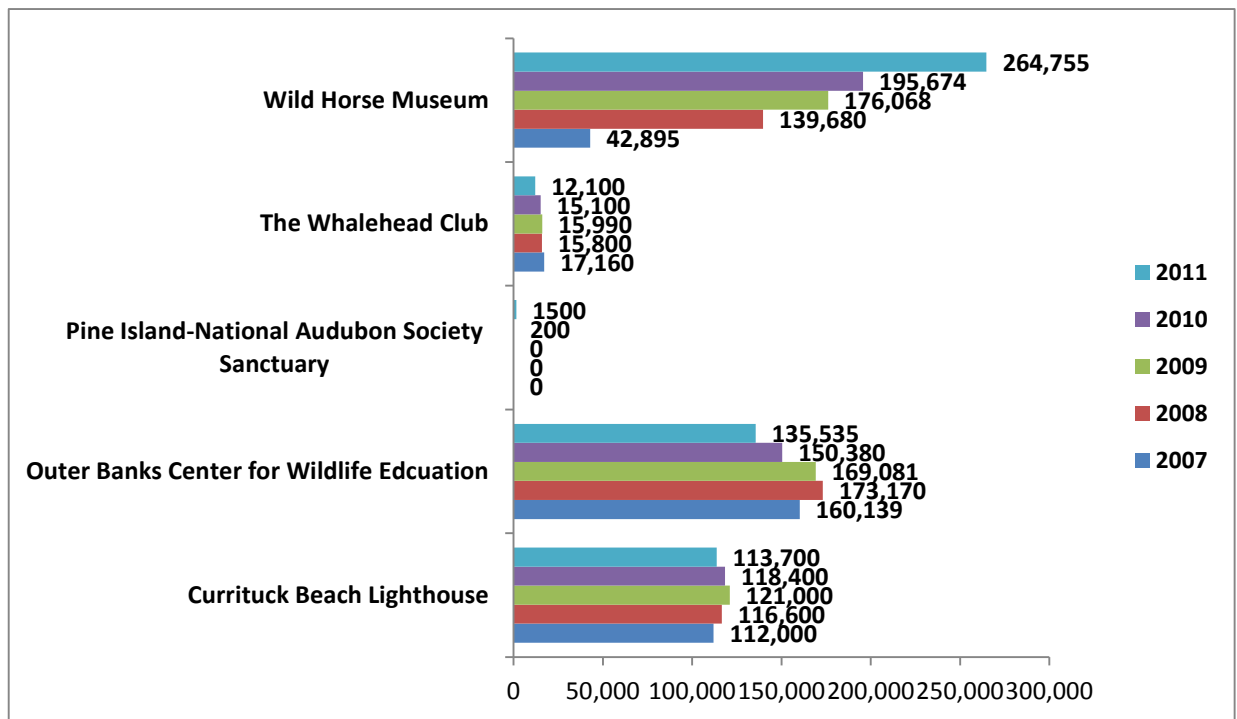
Attraction	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Currituck Beach Lighthouse	112,000	116,600	121,000	118,400	113,700
Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	160,139	173,170	169,081	150,380	135,535*
Pine Island-National Audubon Society Sanctuary	~	~	~	200	1500
The Whalehead Club	17,160	15,800	15,990	15,100	12,100
Wild Horse Museum	42,895	139,680	176,068	195,674	264,755

Source: 2011 RTM Attraction Survey

*Reporting for an eleven (11) month period

Of those reporting two (2) attractions reported a significant increase in attendance, one (1) attraction remained relatively the same and two (2) reported a decrease in attendance over the five year timeframe. Attendance, for those reporting, ranged from 200 to 264,755 with a five year overall average of 100,000.

Currituck Attraction Five Year Visitation Trend



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Visitation patterns:

RTM asked the attractions to report their busiest and slowest times and to rank the four seasons in terms of visitation and attendance to gain insight into the busy and slow times of year.

Month	Busiest	Slowest
Spring	0	1
Summer	5	0
Autumn	0	0
Winter	0	4

Summer was specified as the busiest season for all five respondents which is what RTM would expect for a destination such as Currituck County. Four respondents reported winter as the slowest season and one respondent reported spring as their slowest season.

Top feeder markets of those reporting:

Rank order of states:

- Virginia (3)
- Pennsylvania (2)
- Maryland
- New Jersey
- North Carolina

Specific cities identified:

- Charlottesville
- Virginia Beach
- Pittsburgh
- Raleigh

Attractions reported what they considered to be their top four markets where out-of-town visitors originate. Every attraction should track this information closely. It can be tracked easily with a simple wall map and push pins, so visitors can mark where they live. Of those reporting Virginia clearly ranked first, followed by Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and North Carolina.

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Visitor experience by “season” and time spent at attraction:

RTM asked managers to provide information regarding a visitor experience at their attraction / why did they visit the attraction and the amount of time a typical visitor would spend at their attraction. Overall, of those reporting, the response for **typical time spent** at the attraction ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours with only one attraction reporting three or more hours.

The **visitor experience** ranged from:

In-Season

- “Participate in children’s activities and to see a gentled wild horse and then tour museum”
- “Experience nature”
- “Learning experience that appeals to all ages, with a free admission”
- “Mostly as an alternative to beach”
- “Rainy day activity”
- “to climb, ‘hands-on’ draw”

Shoulder-Off Season

- “Learn about wild horses”
- “Revisiting”
- “Live local but have not visited”
- “Came for the history”

Annual total budgets compared to marketing/advertising budgets:

RTM asked Currituck attractions to report their 2011 advertising budget. Our reason for asking was to determine the amount of advertising spent to market Currituck Outer Banks area. Respondents reported as follow:

- **2011 Advertising/Marketing Budget in Currituck County:**
Everyone who reported indicated that their advertising/marketing budget in Currituck County ranged with a low of \$0 and a high of \$6,000 with an average of \$2,000.
- **2011 Advertising/Marketing Budget in the Outer Banks:**
Of those reporting their advertising/marketing budget in the Outer Banks ranged with a low of \$200 and a high of \$10,000 with an average of \$4,000.
- **Advertising/Marketing Budget outside of the Currituck County market area:**
The majority of attractions in Currituck County do not spend money marketing outside the Outer Banks area. The average is \$2,000. Thus, it is safe to report that essentially marketing of Currituck’s attractions outside of the Outer Banks is virtually non-existent.

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RTM likes to include this data to reinforce that most attractions have very little marketing money allocated in their budgets. Thus, they are dependent upon local awareness, the marketing efforts of the local destination marketing organization (Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism), as well as partnerships among the attractions to promote each other.

Rating of CCDTT services to attractions:

This survey asked attractions to rate the importance of a list of specific services provided to them by CCDTT. The ratings were on a scale of one to five, where one equals low (unimportant) and five equals high (very important). The following is a summary of how they rate the importance of these services:

- 5.00 Exposure on tourism website, social media
- 5.00 Free brochure distribution
- 5.00 Free Visitor Guide & Website Listings
- 4.75 Events Promotions
- 4.50 Marketing Currituck County at Travel Trade Shows
- 4.00 Seasonal Promotions
- 3.80 Co-op Advertising
- 3.25 Co-op Brochure Design & Printing
- 3.25 Educational Opportunities
- 2.75 Maps
- 2.75 Monthly Tourism Reports
- 2.50 News Release Distribution
- 2.00 Other: Improve signage to attractions, unified vision of how to get people to respective attractions