

Visitor Survey

A survey of visitors to the area who partook of a “Vacation Package” sponsored by the Mackinaw Area Visitors' Bureau was undertaken during this effort cooperatively between The Chesapeake Group and the Visitors' Bureau. All tabulations of the data were performed by The Chesapeake Group.

It is noted that as of the time of this report preparation a total of 325 responses to the survey had been received. Furthermore, since conducted only among those who received “Vacation Packages”, the sample may contain biases. However, there is no reason to believe that those associated with marketing and aspirations for the area do not reflect the views of all or many of the visitors to Mackinaw City. The following is a synopsis of the findings that are salient to both marketing efforts and visitors' aspirations.

Use of Vacation Package

Most of the individuals that utilized the “Vacation Package” found out about the package through the internet. About six in ten did so in this manner. Other forms of marketing that are effective in promoting the “Vacation Package” include the Mackinaw Area Vacation Guide, the newspapers, AAA and “word of mouth”.

Table 26 - How Respondent Learned of “Vacation Package”*

Method	%
Internet	60
Mackinaw Area Vacation Guide	23
Newspaper	13
AAA	10
A friend	9
Magazine	3
Radio, Billboard, Others	Stat. Insignificant

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

The reasons for utilizing the “Vacation Package” or booking through the package include convenience and value. About three-fourths (74%) of those that used the package did so because of convenience. About one-half (46%) of those that utilize the “Vacation Package” did so because of the “value added” in the package or increasing the affordability of the trip. It is important to note that almost one-quarter (22%) of the users are those not that familiar with the area and used the package as a way of directing them to stay and in where to go once in the area.

Table 27 - Reason for Booking/Utilizing the “Vacation Package”*

Reason	%
Convenient & Easy, One Call Did It	74
Value	45
Unfamiliar with the Mackinaw Area	22

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

Importantly, the availability of the “Vacation Package” had a influence on the decision to come to, stay in, etc. Mackinaw City. In fact, the vast majority, or more than eight of ten defined the availability of the “Vacation Package” as influencing their stay as found in Table 28.

Table 28 – Whether Availability of Package Influenced Stay in Mackinaw City*

Whether Influenced Decision	%
Yes	84
No	16
Total	100

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

Visitor Issues, Aspirations & Desired Changes

Critical to enhancement of tourism component of a strategy for economic enhancement are the issues and aspirations of the visitors as a “market group”, in fact the largest market group for current activity in Mackinaw City.

There are numerous suggested changes to improve Mackinaw City or a visit to the area. In general, they fall into four basic categories. These are food, additional activities, better or enhanced lodging or accommodations, expanded “Vacation Package”. It is noted that most of the lodging or accommodations issues and changes reflect a desire for better quality and care of and for rooms, not related to treatment by staff, management, etc.

Table 29 – Improvements & Changes to Make a Visit to Mackinaw City Better*

Changes, Improvements
Availability later in year
More time (longer vacation)**
Better laser show
Expanded & better shopping
Increased nightlife activity
Bicycle rentals
A Thai restaurant
More “well known” eating establishments
Greater variety of restaurants
More information on “packages”
“Truthfulness”
Evening dinner cruises
More breakfast choices
Re-enactors
Mini “putt-putt” for kids
Better motel/hotel accommodations**
Cheaper room rates
Dining and fudge coupons
More activities in “Vacation Package”
Better room rates through “Vacation Package”
Amusement park for kids
Train trip to Canada
Cheaper restaurants

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

**Not able to control locally.

Table 30 contains additional activities or other changes desired by the visitors. It is noted that in some cases, these activities exist at present. In those cases, the fact that they were mentioned by at least several individuals could represent a need to better publicize the activity. It is also noted that most responses do not reflect on a “negative” condition at Mackinaw City. The only exception are a small minority of individuals that defined “bait and switch” activity. Many can be interpreted as seeking more or greater range of water sports or cultural activity.

Table 30 – Additional Activities or Changes Desired*

Additional Activities
Hiking and biking trails
More plays/theatre and shows
More shopping
Increased diversity of restaurants/better selection
Hot air balloons
More art galleries
No more “bait and switch”
More adult activities (dance club)
Sandy beach
Casino
Small sail boat rentals
More parking
More deals
Craft & art shows
Discounts on places to eat
Package deal that included the Island
Kayaking, jet ski rentals
Spa services
Stay open later at night

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

The survey was also used to define elements of Mackinaw that are most important to the visitor and should thus be given consideration in economic development and other physical planning changes. Table 31 contains the list of elements for Mackinaw that are most important or stand out in the visitor minds.

It is noted that the beauty of the area’s natural resources far surpassed any other response in terms of the numbers noting it. A distant second, although well ahead of any other element, was Mackinac Island. These two elements are noted by “***” in Table 31. It is noted that the outdoor waterpark, one of the newest attractions, was recognized by some of the visitors to the area in spite of its relatively late opening.

Table 31 – Element of Mackinaw That Stands Out*

Elements That Stand Out
Beauty of area**
Cleanliness
Shopping
The Island**
The bridge
Views
Fudge
Friendly people
Serenity, relaxing, stress free
Ability to walk everywhere
Coupons
Live shows
Laser show, fireworks
Variety of things to do
Good food
Ferry trips
Indoor waterpark
Family memories

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau.

As might be expected, the vast majority of respondents intend to return to Mackinaw City in the future. As found in Table 32, 97% intend to do so.

Table 32 – Whether Plan On Returning to Mackinaw City*

Whether Plan on Returning to Mackinaw City	%
Yes	97
No	3
Total	100

*Prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., based on information furnished by the Tourism Bureau>

Economic Development Implications

In general, it is apparent that visitors would like to see a greater range and diversity of food services than currently offered, enhancements to accommodations, coupled with additional activity. Some of the latter may simply mean enhanced marketing and utilization of the area's natural resources. Those natural resources are the backbone of the visitation. New activity, as it is pursued and developed in the future should be sensitive to minimizing degradation or preserving those resources.