



Smiths Falls
Rise At The Falls

VISITOR INFORMATION

- 2022 -



613 - 283 - 4124

www.smithsfalls.ca

INTRODUCTION

The Visitor Information Collection Program is a new initiative established in Smiths Falls for the purpose of gathering visitor specific data including demographics, spending habits, first impressions and general experience feedback. In order to determine why visitors are coming and what would motivate return visits, the Town of Smiths Falls needed to obtain a collection of data that highlighted the strengths of the Town's tourism and the areas that need improvement.

This data will serve businesses and local stakeholders by indicating what tourism products and services they should build upon and assist the Town in future marketing plans. These plans are intended to grow and support our local and regional tourism economy, and will foster overall community benefit and development.

This program would not have been successful without the support and partnership of local businesses and tourism partners. 13 total businesses participated in 2022.

METHODOLOGY

The Town of Smiths Falls Economic Development and Tourism Department partnered with the Smiths Falls & District Chamber of Commerce and the Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association to develop the 2022 Visitor Survey and Stay and Play Contest. The survey invited visitors to provide feedback about the community of Smiths Falls and then be entered in the Stay and Play Contest for a chance to win a two-night getaway package in Smiths Falls. All data was used in a strict manner and kept confidential unless permitted.

The program launched on May 1, 2022 and ran until December 31, 2022. The contest's purpose was to incentivize visitors to continue to visit Smiths Falls and make it a frequent destination. It also gave insight into where our tourists are coming from, which will isolate our target marketing.

The online survey was marketed through the use of Stay and Play promotional cards that were distributed at various local accommodators, retailers and attractions that visitors frequented. Print marketing was also distributed throughout physical locations around the Town of Smiths Falls. The survey was also marketed through the Town of Smiths Falls social media channels through targeted advertisements catered to tourists who recently/currently visited or were planning to visit Smiths Falls. The Town webpage also hosted a video advertisement for the contest.

Validating responses was an important part of the initial process. This gives a more accurate summary of visitor demographics and trends. Invalid responses were removed. These included; responses provided by a resident of Smiths Falls, someone who worked or went to school in Town, group and/or duplicate responses.

Visitor Information Collection Program

2022



SURVEY INTEREST AND DATA VALIDATION



272

Surveys were completed.

237

Of the completed surveys were valid.

13

Businesses participated.

35

Of the completed surveys were invalid responses.



Additional Insights:

Only 13% of the completed surveys were determined to be "invalid".

PLACE OF ORIGIN

Inter-Province Visitors

89%

(12) Central
(15) Southwestern
(24) Toronto/GTA
(3) Northern
(155) Eastern



Other National Visitors

9%

(10) Western Canada
(12) Eastern Canada



2%

International Visitors
(6) USA



AGE OF VISITORS



Adults (19+)

417

- (59) 19-29 yrs
- (125) 30-44 yrs
- (59) 45-54 yrs
- (80) 55-64 yrs
- (94) 65+ yrs

Youth (13 - 18)

23

- (16) 13-15 yrs
- (7) 16-18 yrs

Kids (0 - 12)

192

- (148) 0-8 yrs
- (44) 9-12 yrs



41%

Families/Group With Kids
(96)



37%

Couples (19+)
(88) 2 Person Groups



11%

Groups With No Kids
(26) Group with 3+



11%

Individuals
(28) 1 Person

Additional Insights:

632 visitors comprised the groups. 34 percent of the groups were 18 years and under while 66 percent of the groups were 19+. A few surveys indicated their groups were only made up of youth under 12, these were counted in the family grouping. Of the 237 total groups, 11 percent were traveling by themselves (groups of 1).

TOP 5 REASONS FOR VISITING



Additional Insights:

With only 2 visitors indicating they visited Smiths Falls for indoor recreation, it is the smallest reason for visiting at 1 percent. Other reasons included; a concert/entertainment, a local festival or event, and other. Other included mostly stopping on the way to another destination or for work.

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS



Additional Insights:

Indoor recreation, concert/entertainment and other all had 2 percent of visitor indication. While here, dining and retail was an interest for many visitors. Several comments indicated they enjoyed the types of stores and restaurants in town. Many had positive comments about the local attractions as well.

PRIMARY DESTINATION



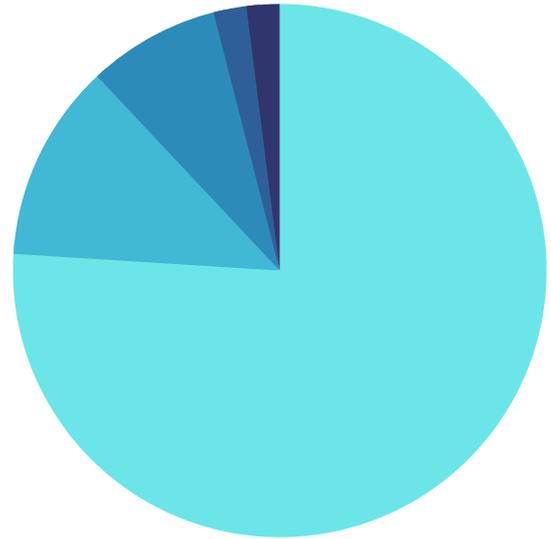
76% Smiths Falls

12% Other

8% Ottawa

2% Brockville

2% Kingston



MODE OF TRANSPORTATION



89%

Cars



3%

Train



3%

Boat



2%

Plane

Additional Insights:

For primary destination, 12% percent of visitors chose Other which included regional destinations such as Rideau Lakes, and Carleton Place. Mode of Transportation survey choices also included Motorcycle (0.4%) and Other (2%). In the Other category, visitors indicated walking and RVS.



LENGTH OF STAY

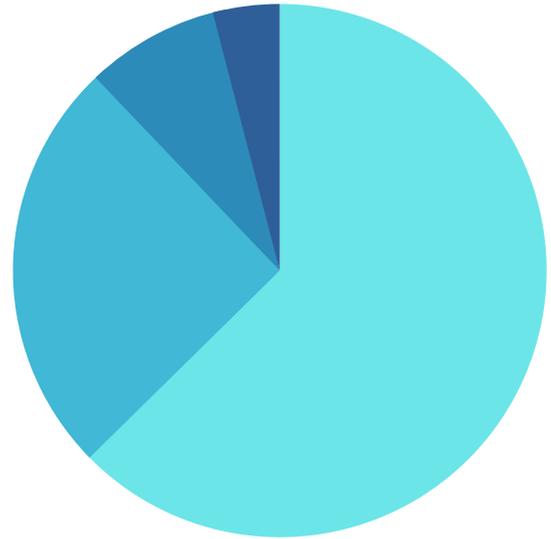


62% Day-Trippers

25% 2-3 Days

8% 4-6 Days

4% More Than A Week



LODGING



16%

Family/Friends
(37)



12%

Hotel/Motel/Inn
(29)



5%

Short Term Rentals
(11) Room/cottage/
Airbnb



2%

Boat
(5) Parks Canada
Lock Station
(3) Victoria Park
Marina

Additional Insights:

For lodging, 64% did not stay overnight in Smiths Falls. The hotels, inns, motels, and rentals that were listed in survey responses included Rogers Motel (5), Hotel Rideau (7), Best western (9), Econolodge (7), RMEO (4), and Simply Comfort Suites (1). Numbers in brackets are individual responses and not percentages. General cottages and AirBnbs were also mentioned.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



5% Less Than \$20,000

16% \$75,000 - \$99,999

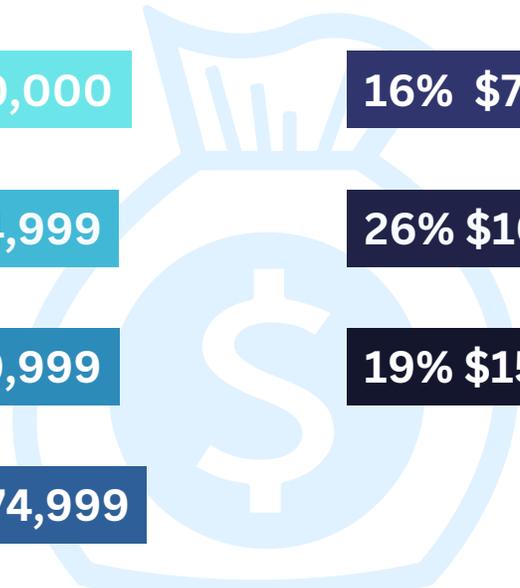
7% \$20,000 - \$34,999

26% \$100,000 - \$149,999

7% \$35,000 - \$49,999

19% \$150,000 +

20% \$54,000 - \$74,999



\$105,254.00 Total Spent by Survey Respondents (Approx.)

\$907.25 Average Spent Per Group/Visit

SPENDING AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

17%

Less Than \$100

39 (\$0-\$99)

60%

\$100 - \$499

139 (\$100-\$499)

14%

\$500 - \$1499

26 (\$500 - \$999)
7 (\$1000 - \$1499)

7%

\$1500 - \$2999

17 (\$1500 - \$2999)

2%

\$1500 - \$2999

4 (\$3000+)

Additional Insights:

There was no clarification in this survey question between regional and non-regional spending. Many of those who are in the 2% of spending group were visitors that stayed 4-6 days or more than a week.

SPENDING BY CATEGORY



Additional Insights:

Visitor overall spending was an open-ended survey question. Visitors were then asked what they spent as a total percentage amount in each category; this was also an open-ended survey question. Therefore, due to human error or spending money on another category not provided, the total amount spent in all categories (\$91,197) was less than the total overall spent (\$105,254).

PLANNING AND RESEARCHING VISITS



Additional Insights:

The total above exceeds 100% as many visitors are using multiple methods when planning their trip or when looking for things to do once they get here. The survey options also included Other (7) in which visitors indicated how they heard, these responses included RMEO, Heritage House Museum Facebook, North Grenville News, Yarns Aplenty Facebook, C'est Tout Instagram, and the Station Theatre Facebook.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE



Visitor Status: 22% First Time Visitors, 43% Have Been a Few Times, 35% Regular Visitors



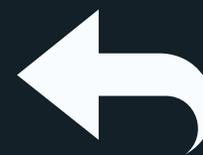
93% Enjoyed their visit to Smiths Falls

6% Neither dissatisfied or satisfied

1% Dissatisfied



50% Wanted direct info on future tourism events, etc.



97% Plan on returning to Smiths Falls

3% Are not returning

WHAT VISITORS SAID THEY LIKE ABOUT SMITHS FALLS

"We love Smiths Falls! We want to retire here!"

"Very nice place people are very kind and respectful"

"Smiths falls I love your passion, festivals and more."

"The newly improved Beckwith has a much better feel, more vibrant."

"Absolutely love all the "Green Space" and activities for Children. Wonderful Destination."

"Loved the town! Bakery and food amazing! Town is beautiful."

Additional Insights:

Many respondents shared positive comments and experiences as part of the survey; they were impressed with the renovations and improvements to the streets and parks made in the past few years.

WANTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

18%

Dining
(44)



21%

Events/Festivals
(84)



11%

Attractions
(53)



17%

Retail
(43)



9%

Traffic/Wait/Idle Times
(22)



18%

Beautification
(44)



DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS? (EXPERIENCES, SUGGESTIONS OR IMPROVEMENTS)

- Renovations to accommodations (Econolodge) & more accommodations
- Waterfront Improvements (play structure, clean-up)
- Evening/extended hours for retail
- Dog-friendly patios
- Travel packages
- Boat/Canoe/Kayak rentals
- Street clean-up/flowers
- Walking paths
- Signage and direction to attractions
- Nature and History preservation
- Winter Activities

Additional Insights:

Totals will not add up to 100% as respondents may have selected multiple areas of improvement and may not have provided additional insights or suggestions for each. We saw a desire for consistent street/garbage clean up and improvements on the waterfronts (Victoria Park and Lower Reach). There was also a desire for more and updated accommodations.

VISITOR GROUPS - OVERVIEW AND INSIGHTS

DAY TRIPPERS

This group of visitors is the **largest survey demographic (62%)** visiting Smiths Falls in 2022.

Most Day Trippers are couples or groups of two (42%), closely followed by groups with kids or youth (41%). Those under 18 years of age make up 32% of all the Day Trippers with the majority being 8 years and under. The largest age demographic of Day Trippers (19+) are those 45-54 years of age (22%).

On average, Day Trippers are spending approximately **\$187/per group/per trip**, with the largest group spending between \$0-\$100 (43%) and \$100-\$250 (50%). In total, Day Trippers surveyed **spent approximately \$27,904.00**. Day trippers spend less on average due to the fact they are not paying for any accommodations.

Since only 5% of total Day Trippers came to visit friends and/or family as their main reason for visiting, the majority are here to enjoy Smiths Falls' amenities. 83% were identified as visiting two or more times or are frequent visitors. While in Smiths Falls their top activities while visiting were dining and shopping. **Their top wants/improvements were to events/festivals, dining, and attractions.**

Many of the comments Day Trippers left were praising the renovations in the Downtown area as well as the friendly attitude of the town. Other comments suggested having tourism brochures at locations throughout the town that showcased different areas of interest, later hours for dining and shopping, more arts and culture, and more things to do.

Main Reasons for Visiting

29%	Shopping
26%	Dining
20%	Local Attractions

Ages

(adult groups only)

22%	30 - 40 years
12%	55 - 64 years
19%	65+ years

Group Make Up

42%	Couples 19+
41%	Groups with Kids
11%	Adult Groups of 3+

Spending Habits

43%	\$0 - \$100
50%	\$100 - \$500
3%	\$500 - \$1500
0%	\$1500+

Top Activities While Visiting

42%	Dining
32%	Shopping
12%	Outdoor Recreation

Top Wants/ Improvements

30%	Events/Festivals
17%	Dining
17%	Attractions

Overall Experience

94%	Satisfied with Visit
98%	Plan to Return

VISITOR GROUPS - OVERVIEW AND INSIGHTS

SHORT TRIPPERS (2 - 3 DAYS)

This group makes up **25% of the total visitor respondents**, and is the second largest group behind day-trippers.

Slightly more visitors that stay 2-3 days are staying with friends and family (38%) than in hotels/inns/BnB's (32%.) 13% are staying in Short Term rentals which includes Airbnb's and cottages. 13% of visitors are also staying in boats at the marina and lock station.

The majority of this visitor groups' main reason for visiting was to visit family and friends (33%). While they were here, their top activities were dining (55%) and shopping (32%). This was followed by visiting local attractions, attending local festivals, and outdoor recreation all at 5%. **Their top wants/improvements were to events/festivals, attractions, and beautification.**

Most visitors in this group are travelling with kids/youth (48%). Those under 18 years of age make up 39% of the all the visitors in this group, with the majority being 8 years and under. The largest age demographics of visitors are those 45 - 54 years of age (18%), similar to Day Trippers.

On average, **this visitor group spent \$560 per group/per trip**, with the largest segment spending within the \$100-\$500 range (60%). In total, **this group spent approximately \$33,050 in 2022**, which is the **highest amount of all visitor spending** of survey respondent groups.

A number of short trippers are return visitors (73%). Most of their comments praised the friendliness and loveliness of the town. Some comments suggested continuing beautification efforts, more work on the waterfront areas, more to do in the Winter season, and dog friendly patios.

Main Reasons for Visiting

33%	Visiting Friends/Family
18%	Local Attraction
13%	Local Event/Festival

Ages

(adult groups only)

15%	55 - 64 years
18%	45 - 54 years
14%	30 - 44 years

Group Make Up

48%	Groups with Kids
32%	Couples 19+
11%	Adult Groups of 3+

Spending Habits

5%	\$0 - \$100
60%	\$100 - \$500
25%	\$500 - \$1500
10%	\$1500+

Where They Are Staying

38%	Friends/Family
32%	Hotel/Inn/BnB
13%	Short Term Rental

Top Activities While Visiting

55%	Dining
32%	Shopping
5%	Local Attraction

Top Wants/ Improvements

68%	Events/Festivals
57%	Attractions
54%	Beautification

Overall Experience

90%	Satisfied with Visit
95%	Plan to Return

VISITOR GROUPS - OVERVIEW AND INSIGHTS

WEEKDAY TRAVELERS (4-6 DAYS)

This demographic of visitors makes up **8% of total visitor respondents**.

Most of these visitors are groups travelling with kids or youth (40%).

Those under 18 years of age make up 39% of the all the visitors in this group, this is the same as the 2-3 Day demographic group. The majority of those under 18 are 8 years and under, the same as Day Trippers and the 2-3 Day group. The largest age demographic of these visitors are those 65+.

On average, this survey group are **spending \$1,480 per group/per trip**, mostly within the \$1500+ range (50%). **In total, they spent approximately \$29,600.**

Just like the 2-3 Day visitor group, slightly more visitors are staying with friends and family (45%) than in Hotels/Inns/BnB's (40%.) 10% are staying in Short Term rentals which includes Airbnb's and cottages. None of these visitors are staying in docked boats.

This visitor group's main reason for visiting is to get away and enjoy the company of friends and family in the great outdoors. While here, they are taking part in a number of activities such as dining and shopping.

60% of these visitors have been to Smiths Falls before or are frequent visitors. **Wants or Improvements requested by this group include retail, attractions, events/festivals and beautification.** Most comments praised local attractions, the dining options, and the green spaces. Some comments suggest more recreation rental options, waterside patios, and bike lanes.

Main Reasons for Visiting

45%	Visiting Friends/Family
25%	Outdoor Recreation
10%	Other

Ages

(adult groups only)

17%	65+ years
16%	30 - 44 years
14%	55 - 64 years

Group Make Up

40%	Groups with Kids
35%	Couples 19+
15%	Adult Groups of 3+

Spending Habits

0%	\$0 - \$100
30%	\$100 - \$500
20%	\$500 - \$1500
50%	\$1500+

Where They Are Staying

45%	Friends/Family
40%	Hotel/Inn/BnB
10%	Short Term Rental

Top Activities While Visiting

75%	Dining
10%	Shopping
10%	Local Attraction

Top Wants/ Improvements

21%	Retail
21%	Attractions
18%	Events/Festivals

Overall Experience

95%	Satisfied with Visit
95%	Plan to Return

VISITOR GROUPS - OVERVIEW AND INSIGHTS

EXTENDED VACATIONERS

This visitor group is the smallest group of respondents, staying the longest, but **making up only 4% of total visitors.**

Similar to all of the visitor groups, most are staying with Friends and Family (55%), while the others are staying in Hotels/Inns/BnBs or Short Term Rentals.

As is similar with other overnight groups, their main reason for visiting was to visit friends and family (66%). Day Trippers were the only visitor group with a different primary reason (shopping). While here they are taking part in a number of activities including dining, shopping, and outdoor recreation.

Most of these visitors are groups travelling with kids/youth (44%). Those under 18 years of age make up 35% of all the visitors in the group. This is the first group where the majority were not 8 years and under. Instead the largest age demographic of these visitors are those aged 30 - 44 (30%).

This visitor group surveyed are **spending the most per group/per trip, an average of \$1,633.** The largest spending bracket was the \$1000-\$1500 range (55%). In total, those who took the **survey spent approximately \$14,700.**

78% of respondents in this category have been to Smiths Falls before or are frequent visitors. All of these visitors plan to return. **Wants or Improvements requested by this group include traffic/wait times and improvements to attractions.** With 58% choosing other for this category the comments focused mainly on picking up garbage (although they did not choose the beautification category). Most other comments complimented the beauty of the town and the festivals. Some comments mentioned how they felt unsafe in Victoria Park, and the unfortunate lack of the water trampoline.

Main Reasons for Visiting

66%	Visiting Friends/Family
11%	Outdoor Recreation
11%	Shopping

Ages

(adult groups only)

30%	30 - 44 years
13%	65+ years
9%	45 - 54 years

Group Make Up

44%	Groups with Kids
22%	Couples 19+
22%	Individuals

Spending Habits

0%	\$0 - \$100
22%	\$100 - \$500
22%	\$500 - \$1500
55%	\$1500+

Where They Are Staying

55%	Friends/Family
22%	Hotel/Inn/BnB
11%	Short Term Rental

Top Activities While Visiting

31%	Shopping
31%	Dining
15%	Outdoor Recreations

Top Wants/ Improvements

58%	Other
17%	Traffic/Wait Times
17%	Attractions

Overall Experience

89%	Satisfied with Visit
100%	Plan to Return

CONCLUSION



ACHIEVEMENTS

Smiths Falls' charm, friendliness and waterfront area continues to draw visitors back annually with 78% noting they have been before and 97% saying they would return in the future.

Several comments mentioned how impressed visitors were with the overall improvements since the last time they were in Smiths Falls including; the Beckwith street renovations, park beautification, waterfront areas, and the general downtown. Many were impressed with the current attractions we do have, with the Heritage House Museum, Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario, Parks, and Station Theatre being mentioned several times. The retail and dining options we do have in town were met with great reviews as well.

Continued renovations, beautifications, and new local businesses will hopefully grow our tourism season and attract returning and new visitors.

SURVEY RESULTS SHOW

- This year families/groups with youth/kids make up the largest group of survey respondents (41%), followed by couples (37%). Visitors are traveling to Smiths Falls primarily for shopping (19%) followed closely by visiting friends/family (17%). Visitors expressed they were interested in mainly dining and shopping.
- 68% of visits occurred in the "Summer Season" between June 1 - August 31. This data is skewed due to the fact that the survey ran from May to December.
- Day Trippers, Short Trippers, and Weekday Travelers' largest age demographic is 8 years and younger.

Visitor Information Collection Program

2022

CONCLUSION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Many of our visitors are day-trippers that are not staying overnight. Those that are staying for lengthier times choose to stay with family and friends followed by traditional accommodations. Several comments referenced having more options for traditional accommodations/updating the ones already available. While the shopping and retail was met with positive comments, many expressed the desire for businesses to have extended hours and be open evenings. More attractions and more events/festivals were the top complaint from survey respondents. The attractions and festivals we do have are excelling, however some visitors are finding there is not a lot to do in Smiths Falls. In order to attract visitors that extend their stay for more than a day trip, investment in additional attractions is needed.

OPPORTUNITIES

Most visitors are getting their information through social media to plan their trips; therefore it is important to continue to market Smiths Falls through all the online avenues. Some respondents noted the want for tourism brochures and information distributed throughout the town.

Visitors were impressed with the local retail and dining options but expressed the desire for businesses to be open later. Many survey respondents noted the need for waterfront improvements including the addition of waterfront patios. There was a large push for dog friendly restaurants and patios as well.

Survey respondents were happy with the attractions, recreation and events that are already being offered, but many requested more options especially during the off-season. This could be an opportunity to increase tourism during the winter months through events like Festival of Lights. There was also expressed desire for more art and cultural events and opportunities in the town.

Smiths Falls has many opportunities to build and grow as a tourism destination by investing in our assets and infrastructure to create new experiences and reasons to visit.