



2016 ANNUAL VISITATION REPORT



Chief Plenty Coups State Park

2016

Montana State Parks

Montana State Parks had a record 2.65 million visits in 2016. Statewide visitation is up 7% from 2015 and up 39% for the 10-year period. Peak season visitation was also the highest on record, with over 1.88 million visits, up 26% for the 5-year period. North Central Region (Great Falls) had the highest overall visitation with over 724,600 visits, and Giant Springs State Park had the highest visitation of all state parks with over 428,000 visits—also the highest visitation for a single park over the last 10 years.

For questions about visitation data or this report, please contact Maren Murphy at 406-444-3364 or marenmurphy@mt.gov.

2016 Annual Visitation Report

JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2016

The following is a summary of the Montana State Parks 2016 annual visitation, as well as comparisons with 2015 data, and visitation trends.

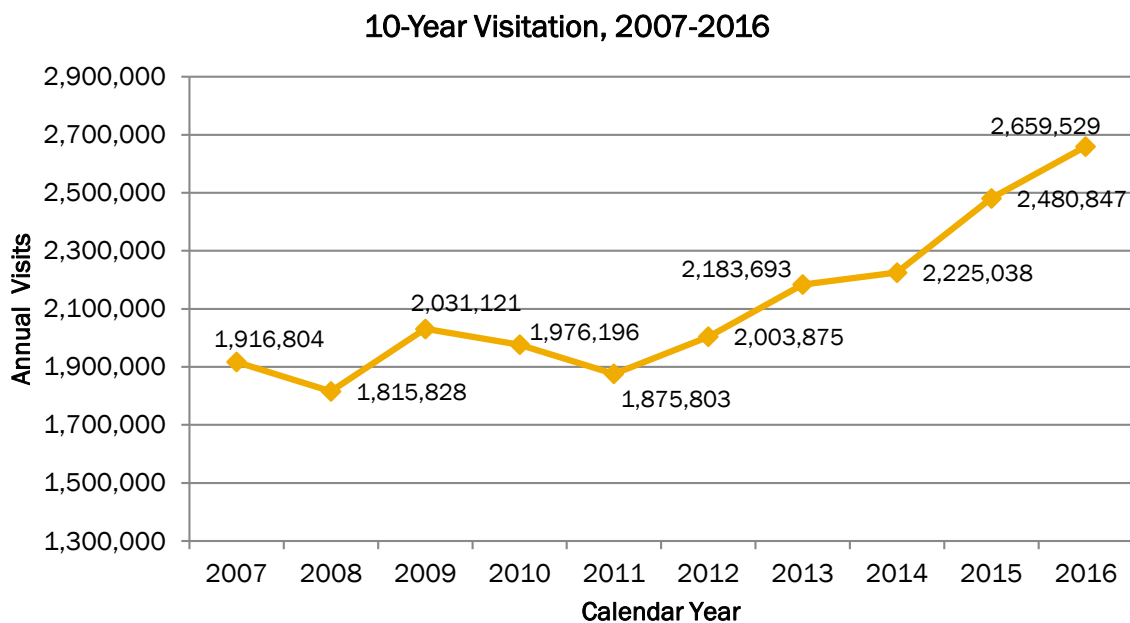
Total statewide visitation is 2,659,529 visits, up **7% from 2015.**

5-Year Trend (2012 to 2016): State Parks visitation is up **33%**.

10-Year Trend (2007 to 2016): State Parks visitation is up **39%**.

STATEWIDE VISITATION

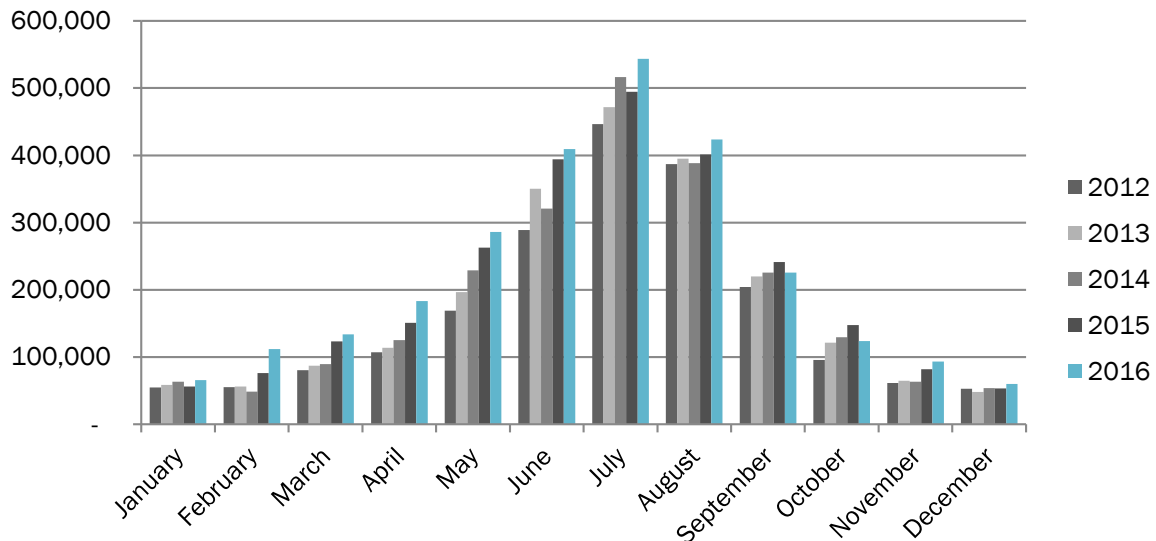
In 2016, Montana State Parks had the most visits in a single year over the past decade—surpassing the previous record in 2015.



The top five parks for annual visitation in 2016 are:

1. Giant Springs – 428,930 visits (up 2%)
2. Flathead Lake – 313,033 visits (up 11%)
3. Cooney – 190,715 visits (up 3%)
4. Lake Elmo – 183,287 visits (up 6%)
5. Thompson Chain of Lakes/Logan – 137,507 visits (up 9%)

Visitation by Month,
2012-2016



Annual Visitation by Region, 2016			
Region	Total Visits	2015 Total Visits	% Change 2015-2016
Northwest (Kalispell)	705,703	648,407	9%
West Central (Missoula)	290,539	249,044	17%
Southwest (Bozeman)	440,018	403,892	9%
North Central (Great Falls)	724,681	727,830	0%
Eastern (Billings)	498,588	451,674	10%

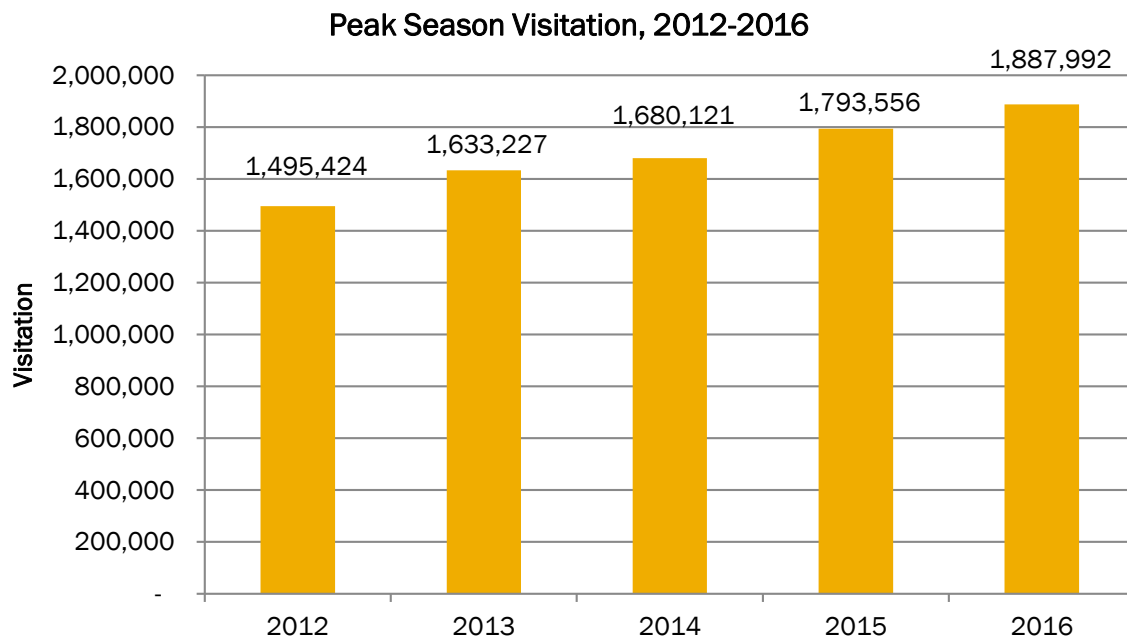
Special Report: Shoulder Season

Following the trend in 2015, 2016 saw major increases in shoulder season again from February-April and October-November. Again, staff believe this is primarily due to warmer weather creating more favorable conditions for visitors to get out into parks earlier than in previous years, particularly at water-based parks and camping parks. Users are able to participate in activities that have traditionally been summer activities earlier in the season, like boating, camping, and mountain biking.

Shoulder Season Visitation				
Shoulder Season	2016	2015	2012	2012-2016 % Change
February - April	429,066	350,295	242,229	77%
October - November	217,047	229,118	156,756	38%
<i>Total Shoulder Season</i>	646,113	579,413	398,985	62%

Peak Season Visitation

Peak season for Montana State Parks is from *May to September*. The 2016 peak season saw a total of **1,887,992 visits**, up 5% from 2015. Peak season visitation is also up 26% over the five year period from 2012 to 2016, making it the highest peak season visitation over the last five years.



The top five parks for peak season visitation in 2016 were:

1. Flathead Lake - 251,002 visits (12% from 2015)
2. Giant Springs - 230,438 visits (-4% from 2015)
3. Cooney - 133,148 visits (-4% from 2015)
4. Lake Elmo - 122,266 visits (4% from 2015)
5. Thompson Chain of Lakes - 82,348 visits (15% from 2015)

A. 2016 Annual Visitation Estimates by Region

January - December: **2,659,529** visits

Region	Park	2016 Total Visits	2015 Total Visits	2015-2016 % Change
Northwest Region (Kalispell)		705,703	648,407	9%
1	Flathead Lake	313,033	281,011	11%
1	Big Arm	42,783	40,512	6%
1	Finley Point	29,171	26,676	9%
1	Wayfarers	158,961	137,278	16%
1	West Shore	35,456	36,400	-3%
1	Wild Horse Island	20,316	16,742	21%
1	Yellow Bay	26,346	23,222	13%
1	Lake Mary Ronan	25,309	19,917	27%
1	Lone Pine	103,998	87,572	19%
1	TCL/Logan	137,507	125,819	9%
1	Thompson Chain of Lakes	107,484	96,131	12%
1	Logan	30,023	29,688	1%
1	Thompson Falls	14,453	14,893	-3%
1	Whitefish Lake/Les Mason	111,403	119,195	-7%
1	Whitefish Lake	80,338	84,849	-5%
1	Les Mason	31,065	34,346	-10%
West Central Region (Missoula)		290,539	249,045	17%
2	Beavertail Hill	21,411	18,926	13%
2	Council Grove	34,611	31,556	10%
2	Fish Creek	5,481	4,353	26%
2	Fort Owen	2,608	2,479	5%
2	Frenchtown Pond	68,904	49,733	39%
2	Painted Rocks	11,384	10,128	12%
2	Placid Lake	57,119	45,251	26%
2	Salmon Lake	51,631	54,719	-6%
2	Travelers' Rest	37,390	31,900	17%
Southwest Region (Bozeman)		440,018	403,316	9%
3	Anaconda Smoke Stack	14,121	10,875	30%
3	Bannack	63,852	45,825	39%
3	Clark's Lookout	8,271	8,101	2%
3	Cooney	190,715	184,780	3%
3	Lewis & Clark Caverns	82,415	77,071	7%
3	Lost Creek	12,426	15,301	-19%
3	Madison Buffalo Jump	15,770	11,706	35%
3	Missouri Headwaters	38,401	32,807	17%
3	Prairie Dog Town	14,047	16,850	-17%
North Central Region (Great Falls)		724,681	726,578	0%
4	Ackley Lake	41,829	32,682	28%
4	Black Sandy	57,265	53,651	7%
4	First Peoples Buffalo Jump	20,280	16,038	26%
4	Giant Springs	428,930	419,799	2%
4	Sluice Boxes	22,971	20,996	9%
4	Smith River	4,607	4,289	7%
4	Spring Meadow Lake	137,303	171,995	-20%
4	Tower Rock	11,496	7,128	61%
Southeast Region (Billings)		498,588	451,674	10%
5	Brush Lake	7,417	9,271	-20%
5	Chief Plenty Coups	13,982	18,455	-24%
5	Hell Creek	26,355	23,700	11%
5	Lake Elmo	183,287	172,195	6%
5	Makoshika	100,623	78,608	28%
5	Medicine Rocks	19,664	16,864	17%
5	Pictograph Cave	54,057	66,065	-18%
5	Pirogue Island	7,954	6,523	22%
5	Rosebud Battlefield	4,801	3,663	31%
5	Tongue River Reservoir	74,790	52,138	43%
5	Yellowstone River	5,658	4,192	35%

Visitation is not reported for Elkhorn, Granite, Beaverhead Rock, Elkhorn, Granite, Marias River, or North Shore.

B. 2016 Annual Visitation Estimates by Total Visits

January - December: **2,659,529** visits

Region	Park	2016 Total Visits	2015 Total Visits	2015-2016 % Change
4	Giant Springs	428,930	419,799	2%
1	Flathead Lake	313,033	281,011	11%
1	<i>Big Arm</i>	42,783	40,512	6%
1	<i>Finley Point</i>	29,171	26,676	9%
1	<i>Wayfarers</i>	158,961	137,278	16%
1	<i>West Shore</i>	35,456	36,400	-3%
1	<i>Wild Horse Island</i>	20,316	16,742	21%
1	<i>Yellow Bay</i>	26,346	23,222	13%
3	Cooney	190,715	184,780	3%
5	Lake Elmo	183,287	172,195	6%
1	TCL/Logan	137,507	125,819	9%
1	<i>Thompson Chain of Lakes</i>	107,484	96,131	12%
1	<i>Logan</i>	30,023	29,688	1%
4	Spring Meadow Lake	137,303	171,995	-20%
1	Whitefish Lake/Les Mason	111,403	119,195	-7%
1	<i>Whitefish Lake</i>	80,338	84,849	-5%
1	<i>Les Mason</i>	31,065	34,346	-10%
1	Lone Pine	103,998	87,572	19%
5	Makoshika	100,623	78,608	28%
3	Lewis & Clark Caverns	82,415	77,071	7%
5	Tongue River Reservoir	74,790	52,138	43%
2	Frenchtown Pond	68,904	49,733	39%
3	Bannack	63,852	45,825	39%
4	Black Sandy	57,265	53,651	7%
2	Placid Lake	57,119	45,251	26%
5	Pictograph Cave	54,057	66,065	-18%
2	Salmon Lake	51,631	54,719	-6%
4	Ackley Lake	41,829	32,682	28%
3	Missouri Headwaters	38,401	32,807	17%
2	Travelers' Rest	37,390	31,900	17%
2	Council Grove	34,611	31,556	10%
5	Hell Creek	26,355	23,700	11%
1	Lake Mary Ronan	25,309	19,917	27%
4	Sluice Boxes	22,971	20,996	9%
2	Beavertail Hill	21,411	18,926	13%
4	First Peoples Buffalo Jump	20,280	16,038	26%
5	Medicine Rocks	19,664	16,864	17%
3	Madison Buffalo Jump	15,770	11,706	35%
1	Thompson Falls	14,453	14,893	-3%
3	Anaconda Smoke Stack	14,121	10,875	30%
3	Prairie Dog Town	14,047	16,850	-17%
5	Chief Plenty Coups	13,982	18,455	-24%
3	Lost Creek	12,426	15,301	-19%
4	Tower Rock	11,496	7,128	61%
2	Painted Rocks	11,384	10,128	12%
3	Clark's Lookout	8,271	8,101	2%
5	Pirogue Island	7,954	6,523	22%
5	Brush Lake	7,417	9,271	-20%
5	Yellowstone River	5,658	4,192	35%
2	Fish Creek	5,481	4,353	26%
5	Rosebud Battlefield	4,801	3,663	31%
4	Smith River	4,607	4,289	7%
2	Fort Owen	2,608	2,479	5%

Visitation is not reported for North Shore, Elkhorn, Granite, Beaverhead Rock, or Marias River.

C. 2016 Peak Season Visitation Estimates by Total Visits

May - September: 1,887,992 visits

Park	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2015-2016 % Change	2012-2016 % Change
Giant Springs	230,438	239,344	179,894	174,452	156,685	-4%	47%
Flathead Lake	251,002	225,357	226,472	212,380	200,118	11%	25%
<i>Wayfarers</i>	123,985	103,942	108,610	99,942	90,643	19%	37%
<i>Big Arm</i>	34,688	31,933	30,229	28,769	30,189	9%	15%
<i>Finley Point</i>	27,088	24,786	19,976	18,736	18,722	9%	45%
<i>West Shore</i>	25,114	28,208	25,995	28,175	24,321	-11%	3%
<i>Yellow Bay</i>	20,181	17,988	22,554	17,921	19,723	12%	2%
<i>Wild Horse Island</i>	19,946	18,501	19,108	18,838	16,519	8%	21%
Cooney	133,148	138,836	122,102	125,107	98,836	-4%	35%
Lake Elmo	122,266	117,051	108,992	119,704	169,540	4%	-28%
TCL/Logan	107,282	93,760	73,765	70,592	-	14%	-
<i>Thompson Chain of Lakes</i>	82,348	71,528	53,567	55,124	-	15%	-
<i>Logan</i>	24,934	22,232	20,198	15,468	15,578	12%	60%
Whitefish/Les Mason	92,699	95,142	58,799	62,154	62,350	-3%	49%
<i>Whitefish Lake</i>	64,004	64,431	46,874	50,166	51,747	-1%	24%
<i>Les Mason</i>	28,698	30,711	11,925	11,988	10,603	-7%	171%
Spring Meadow Lake	80,807	123,841	104,362	124,868	88,091	-35%	-8%
Lewis & Clark Caverns	73,954	69,330	61,046	64,228	59,861	7%	24%
Lone Pine	68,119	52,886	58,806	47,174	40,457	29%	68%
Tongue River Reservoir	57,871	44,868	57,057	65,296	47,464	29%	22%
Makoshika	66,923	50,860	53,987	33,760	42,265	32%	58%
Placid Lake	53,863	40,875	52,495	33,208	43,660	32%	23%
Black Sandy	52,897	17,614	47,349	48,236	50,910	200%	4%
Bannack	51,396	35,665	27,498	13,475	27,362	44%	88%
Salmon Lake	49,152	52,021	57,230	53,220	44,607	-6%	10%
Frenchtown Pond	45,749	36,040	45,173	25,878	25,669	27%	78%
Pictograph Cave	33,263	44,486	43,367	39,700	28,633	-25%	16%
Ackley Lake	32,848	24,058	23,065	27,531	19,442	37%	69%
Missouri Headwaters	28,804	24,250	23,145	23,359	19,914	19%	45%
Travelers' Rest	23,712	20,034	19,181	17,214	15,854	18%	50%
Hell Creek	20,828	25,093	25,162	28,025	25,063	-17%	-17%
Beavertail Hill	20,427	17,702	21,056	17,807	15,228	15%	34%
Council Grove	20,320	18,564	17,905	19,546	18,635	9%	9%
Lake Mary Ronan	19,670	8,424	22,778	22,817	22,870	134%	-14%
Prairie Dog Town	12,186	12,592	8,296	15,114	8,061	-3%	51%
Sluice Boxes	16,098	15,550	13,015	13,470	12,134	4%	33%
First Peoples Buffalo Jump	15,774	11,923	13,606	11,209	10,782	32%	46%
Thompson Falls	12,869	11,523	10,733	11,609	10,515	12%	22%
Anaconda Smoke Stack	11,622	8,404	7,545	7,119	7,220	38%	61%
Medicine Rocks	11,600	11,909	7,457	19,108	7,663	-3%	51%
Lost Creek	10,672	13,842	9,868	9,512	9,487	-23%	12%
Brush Lake	6,724	8,843	6,843	5,255	8,478	-24%	-21%
Painted Rocks	9,227	8,183	11,183	11,538	11,862	13%	-22%
Chief Plenty Coups	8,778	13,077	23,576	18,654	27,932	-33%	-69%
Madison Buffalo Jump	8,626	6,516	8,405	7,375	2,158	32%	300%
Clarks Lookout	4,437	5,069	3,624	4,710	5,091	-12%	-13%
Pirogue Island	3,299	3,336	3,038	2,956	9,094	-1%	-64%
Tower Rock	4,126	6,441	7,881	5,902	7,057	-36%	-42%
Smith River	3,902	3,739	4,924	4,061	4,128	4%	-5%
Fish Creek	3,276	2,050	3,283	3,283	3,283	60%	0%
Rosebud Battlefield	3,102	2,798	2,466	2,525	3,616	11%	-14%
Yellowstone River	2,474	1,454	1,999	2,887	3,210	70%	-23%