

KVIST – Krka National Park Visitor Survey for Sustainable Tourism

Study report

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Prof. Dr. Julius Arnegger

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of an on-site visitor survey conducted in Krka National Park between 23 and 26 April 2026, as part of FH Westküste's *Krka National Park Visitor Survey for Sustainable Tourism (KVIST)* student research project. It is intended as a companion document to the field trip report: where the trip report covers logistics, partner engagement and the student experience, this report presents the empirical results of the visitor survey itself and translates them into implications for park management. The analysis is based on 274 completed interviews, drawn from the module's official SPSS data export, and covers four research topics: sustainability awareness and rules compliance, motivations and the role of social media, visitor spending and regional economic impact, and willingness to pay for conservation.

Respondents are predominantly first-time (85.1%), self-organized (72.9%), well-educated visitors (over three-quarters hold a university degree) who travel as couples or families and cite waterfalls and natural scenery as their main reason for visiting. The sample is notably international, spanning 40 countries, with Croatia (16.4%), France (12.0%), the Netherlands (9.5%) and Germany (9.1%) the leading countries of residence.

Social media is the leading channel through which visitors discover the park, and usage is strongly age-skewed toward Instagram and TikTok among under-30 visitors specifically, while Facebook and YouTube remain popular across all age groups. Self-reported rule compliance and perceived rule fairness are both high, yet factual rule knowledge is uneven: while invented "decoy" rules are almost never mistakenly endorsed, only 58.8% of visitors correctly recognize the genuine swimming-zone restriction, and social media use is independently associated with lower rule-knowledge accuracy, while on-site signage is associated with higher accuracy.

Visitors spend an average of €50.47 per person per day in the wider park region, with overnight tourists spending significantly more than day-trippers (€95.55 vs. €38.16). Applying regionalized input-output multipliers to annual visitor numbers, total regional economic impact is estimated at approximately €76.49 million per year; overnight visitors generate close to four times the per-person economic impact of day-trippers once indirect and induced effects are included, an even larger gap than direct spending alone suggests.

Support for a conservation-earmarked entrance-fee increase is limited: only 43.3% of visitors are supportive, while the majority (55.8%) are not. The leading reason for opposition is that the current fee is already considered too high rather than distrust in how funds would be used.

Taken together, these findings point toward two practical management priorities: strengthening on-site, signage-based rule communication rather than relying on social media alone, and prioritizing growth in the share of overnight visitors, rather than in total visitor numbers, as the more sustainable lever for regional economic benefit.

1 Introduction

1.1 Krka National Park



Figure 1: Tourists posing for photos at Skradinski Buk waterfall. Photo: Arnegger (2021).

Krka National Park is located in the Dalmatian hinterland of Croatia, covering approximately 109 km² of the Krka River canyon system. The park is internationally recognized for its exceptional natural values, including seven travertine waterfall cascades, diverse karst geology, rich biodiversity, and cultural heritage sites including the Franciscan monastery on Visovac Island. Its flagship attraction, the Skradinski Buk waterfall, draws the majority of visitor flows and has become one of

the most photographed natural sites in the eastern Adriatic region (Figure 1).

Krka National Park received over one million visitors in 2023 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2024), placing it among Croatia's most visited protected areas. This level of visitation generates significant economic benefits for the wider Sibenik-Knin County but simultaneously imposes substantial pressure on fragile karst ecosystems. Travertine formations are particularly sensitive to physical disturbance caused by visitor contact, water chemistry changes, and infrastructure demands (Telbisz et al., 2022). The park has consequently introduced a range of visitor management measures in recent years, most prominently the 2021 ban on swimming at Skradinski Buk, which represented a significant policy shift after decades of allowing bathing at the waterfalls.

1.2 Problem statement and research rationale

The rapid and sustained growth in visitor numbers has intensified concerns about overcrowding, uneven spatial distribution of tourism flows, ecological degradation, and the long-term financial sustainability of conservation activities (Jurdana & Smijanovic, 2014). While the park management has responded with regulatory measures, the effectiveness of these measures depends critically on visitor awareness and perceived legitimacy. Research conducted at Krka and comparable protected areas consistently shows that visitor perceptions of landscape value and personal environmental responsibility vary widely across visitor segments, with significant implications for behavioral compliance (Šulc et al., 2023).

Despite its high visitation levels, updated, field-based empirical data on visitor attitudes, motivations, spending patterns, and willingness to pay for conservation at Krka National Park remain limited. Existing studies require refreshing with current data to support evidence-based park management. The KVIST project was designed to address this gap by providing systematic, primary data across five inter-related research dimensions.

2 Research objectives

The KVIST project pursued four empirical research objectives, each corresponding to a thematic block in the survey instrument (Table 1):

Table 1: KVIST research topics

Block	Research Topic	Core Research Question
T1	Sustainability Awareness & Acceptance	Are visitors aware of park rules and restrictions, and do they perceive them as fair and legitimate?
T2	Motivations, Expectations & Social Media	What motivates visits to Krka, what role does social media play in shaping expectations, and how closely does the on-site experience match pre-visit expectations?
T3	Visitor Spending & Regional Linkages	Where do visitors spend money, and to what extent does tourism at Krka generate economic benefits for the surrounding region?
T4	Willingness to Pay for Conservation	Would visitors support higher entrance fees if additional revenues were guaranteed for nature conservation, and what is their maximum willingness to pay?

These objectives were designed to be analytically independent, allowing each student to take primary analytical responsibility for one thematic block while contributing to the shared dataset and the overall project report. Together, the five topics address the central management challenges facing Krka National Park: ecological protection, visitor experience quality, sustainable financing, and communication of conservation measures.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey instrument design principles

The questionnaire was developed collectively during three preparatory sessions prior to the field trip. Design followed established principles for on-site visitor surveys in outdoor recreation settings (De Vaus, 2014). Key design principles applied included: keeping total interview length under ten minutes out of respect for visitors on vacation; using a single-idea-per-question rule to avoid double-barreled items; employing established 7-point rating scales to allow nuanced response capture while remaining familiar to respondents; and placing the most sensitive topic (willingness to pay) at the end of the instrument. A modular block structure was adopted so that any individual block could be analyzed independently and so that lower-priority blocks could be skipped without invalidating earlier responses in the event of time pressure in the field.

The study was conducted in English. The option of translating the questionnaire into several languages was dropped, since most visitors were able to participate in the survey in English.

3.2 Survey instrument structure and administration

The final KVIST questionnaire comprised approximately 30 items administered via tablet using the LimeSurvey platform (hosted at fhwestkueste.limesurvey.net). The instrument was structured as follows:

- Interviewer metadata (interviewer name, location, number of rejections prior to the conducted interview)
- Introduction (short explanation of survey context and length, without revealing too many details of the question logic)
- T1: Motivations and social media (placed first as a non-sensitive engagement opener)
- T2: Sustainability awareness and acceptance
- T3: Crowding perception and experience quality
- T4: visitor spending patterns
- Sociodemographic data
- Open-ended comment and closing

Rating scales used a 7-point format throughout (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; 1 = far below expectations to 7 = far above expectations), providing greater response variance than the 5-point Likert scale while remaining manageable for respondents in a field setting. Several questions used conditional routing to avoid presenting irrelevant follow-up items to non-qualifying respondents (e.g., the maximum willingness-to-pay question was shown only to respondents who expressed at least moderate support for a fee increase).

An important design feature within the T4 block was the inclusion of an information statement informing respondents about the actual use of entrance fee revenues at Krka National Park (park maintenance, conservation measures, visitor infrastructure, and management activities) before the willingness-to-pay items. This follows the information provision principle standard in contingent valuation studies (Mitchell and Carson, 1989) and allows analysis of how transparency about revenue use affects willingness to pay.

3.3 Survey implementation and data cleaning

The KVIST research work in Krka National Park was embedded in a field trip that also covered other topics related to sustainable tourism development, including a joint session with students of the University of Split. The field trip took place from 21 to 28 April 2026. Fieldwork ran from 23 to 26 April 2026.

Interviews were concentrated at Skradinski Buk waterfall, which accounts for 59.9% of all interviews, with the adjacent “Ethno Village”, a complex of restored historic buildings and watermills (Figure 2), and Roški Slap waterfall tied as the next most common locations at 15.3% each, followed by Visovac Island including the boat crossing (6.2%) and Skradin (2.6%). This concentration was a deliberate decision based on known spatiotemporal visitor flows and previous discussions with the park management; however, the concentration on the Skradinski Buk / Ethno Village / Skradin area should be kept in mind when interpreting the results, since visitors at other, more remote locations, may differ in terms of demographics, motivations, activities, or other characteristics.



Figure 2: Ethno Village at Krka National Park. Photo: Arnegger (2026).

On average, interviewers recorded 1.11 rejections per completed interview. Prior to analysis, completed submissions were distinguished from abandoned attempts ($n = 36$), and numeric fields (age,

group size, spending) were range-checked for implausible values. Only fully completed questionnaires were retained for analyses ($n = 274$).

4 Results

4.1 Sample and respondent profile

4.1.1 Demographics

Respondents averaged 39.4 years of age (SD 13.9), with a range spanning from 8 to 75 years. The age distribution in categories is depicted in Figure 3.

The sample is fairly evenly split by sex, with 55.8% female, 43.8% male, and 0.4% identifying as diverse. Educational attainment skews toward the higher end: 36.4% of respondents hold a Master's degree or equivalent, and a further 32.7% hold a Bachelor's degree, meaning that just over two-thirds of the sample (69.1%) hold at least a Bachelor's-level qualification, and a further 7.0% hold a Doctoral-level

degree. Thus, in total, over three third (76.1%) of all respondents have a university degree. Doctoral-level respondents make up a comparatively small share, at 7%, alongside 10.7% with a university-entrance qualification but no degree, 7.4% with secondary schooling only, and 5.5% with a vocational qualification or apprenticeship.

Country of residence spans 40 distinct countries, which points to a notably international and diverse visitor base rather than one dominated by any single market. Domestic Croatian visitors account for 16.4% of the sample, while Germany, Austria and Switzerland combined ("DACH" region) account for 11.7%.

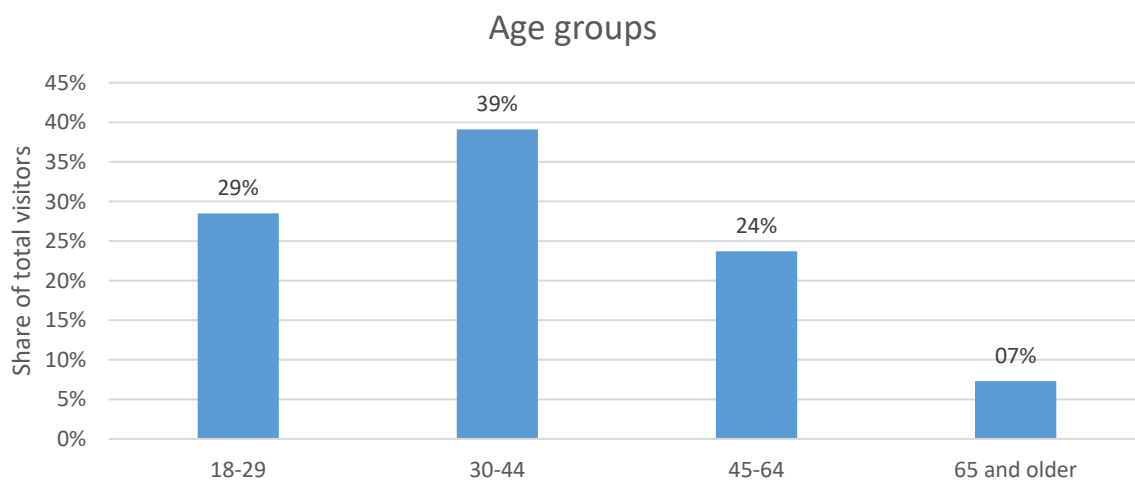


Figure 3: Distribution of age groups in the sample. Source: own survey.

4.1.2 Visit profile

The large majority of respondents, 85.1%, were visiting Krka National Park for the first time; the median respondent has visited once in total, including the visit on the interview day. Most travel as a couple (35.6%) or with family including children (25.9%), with smaller shares travelling with friends (20.7%) or solo (13.7%). The visit is overwhelmingly self-organized: 72.9% arranged their own trip, compared with

13.6% on an organized day-trip, 7.7% on an organized multi-day trip, 4.4% on a cruise excursion, and 1.5% as part of a school or university group.

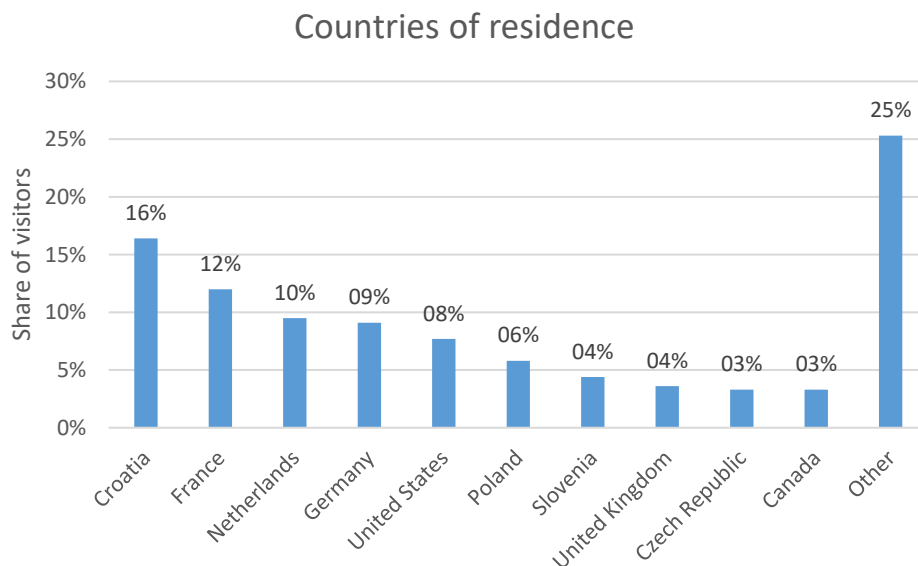


Figure 4: Visitors' countries of residence. Source: own survey.

The average travel group in this sample consists of 3.5 people (median 2). Most visitors are day-trippers: 69.3% are visiting for the day only, while 30.7% are staying overnight somewhere within roughly 30 km of the park. Among the 81 overnight stayers, the average length of stay in the region is 5 nights (median 2); this mean-median gap suggests a right-skewed distribution with a small number of longer-stay visitors pulling the average upward

4.2 Motivations, expectations and the role of social media

Waterfalls and natural scenery dominate as the main reason for visiting, cited by 63.1% of respondents, followed at some distance by hiking or walking (13.9%), relaxation (12.4%), and wildlife or biodiversity observation (4.7%).

On average, visitors' self-assessed prior knowledge of Krka National Park was moderate to low, averaging 3.8 (SD 1.3) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "no knowledge at all" to 7 = "very good knowledge"). Only about one third of all visitors (35.4%) stated that their knowledge was high to very high. This reflects the mass tourism character of the park, specifically the Skradinski Buk area, where the majority of surveys was conducted. Mass tourism sites are often described as attracting relatively indifferent and uninformed visitors.

In general, the park slightly exceeded visitors' prior expectations, with a mean rating of 5.8 (SD 1.25) on a 7-point Likert scale to rate the experience visiting Krka National Park ranging from 1 = "far below expectations" to 7 = "far above expectations".

Expectations & prior knowledge

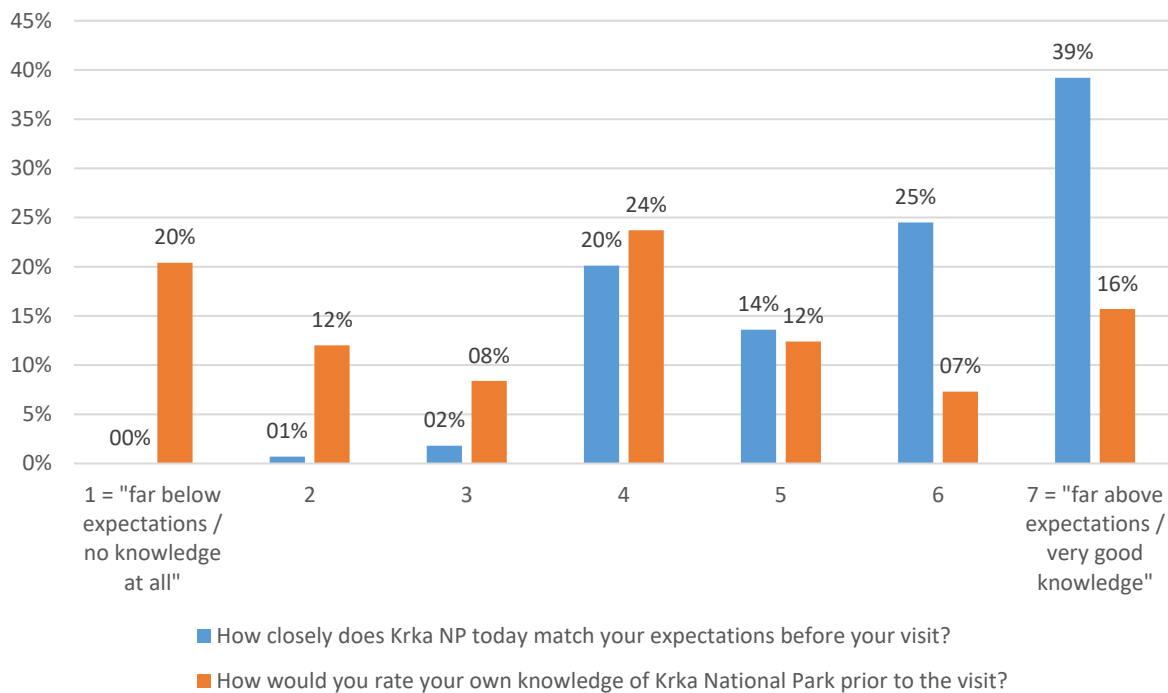


Figure 5: Visitors' expectations and prior knowledge about Krka National Park. Source: own survey.

Social media is the single most-cited pre-visit information source, selected by 36.9% of respondents, ahead of word of mouth (30.7%) and the official park website (27.4%) (Figure 6). That said, there are statistically significant differences between age groups: e.g., older tourists (age 45 and above) are more likely to rely on travel agencies as information source, $\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 11.25, p = .010$. By contrast, visitors in the youngest age group (18-29) are much more likely to rely on social media as information source than older people, $\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 12.35, p = .006$.

Information sources

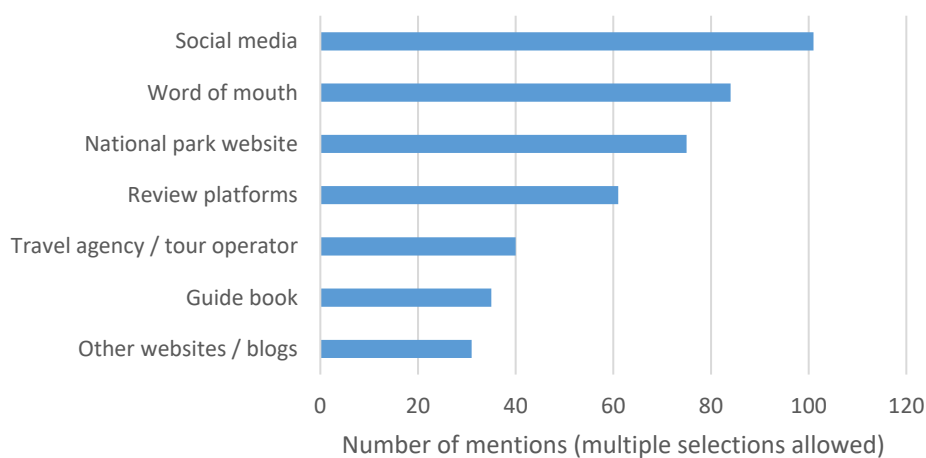


Figure 6: Information sources. Source: own survey

Among individual platforms, Instagram (mean 4.32 out of 7) and YouTube (4.0) show the highest general usage intensity, ahead of Facebook (3.2) and TikTok (2.3). Again, there are notable differences across the age group (Figure 7). Younger visitors are far more active on Instagram and TikTok than older visitors – the results are statistically significant (Instagram: $F(3, 73.1) = 21.9, p < .001$; TikTok: $F(3, 262) = 15.6, p < .001$; both are large effects). Specifically:

- **Instagram:** the 18-29 age group uses Instagram noticeably more than every older group, with usage stepping down again between 30-44 and 45-64. The two oldest groups (45-64 and 65+) do not meaningfully differ from each other – usage is already low by age 45.
- **TikTok:** shows the same pattern but more clear-cut – a sharp drop after age 29, then a second step down for 65+. (One caveat: all respondents in the 65+ group stated they do not use TikTok at all, therefore, the result is clean but based on a fairly uniform group.)
- **YouTube:** age differences are real but smaller and less tidy ($K(3, 264) = 6.9, p < .001$, medium effect) – the 45-64 group stands out as lower-usage.
- **Facebook and other platforms:** there is no meaningful age differences at all (both $p > .25$) – usage (low-to-medium) is flat across generations.

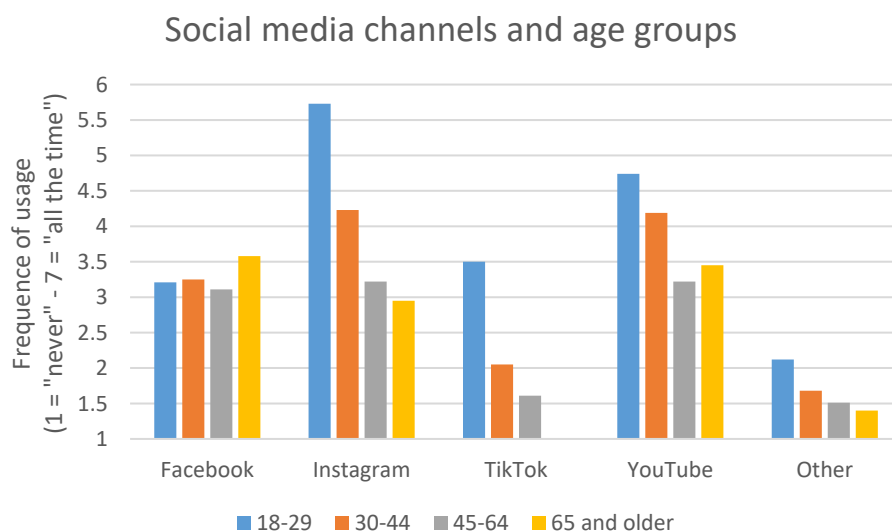


Figure 7: Social media channel use and age groups. Source: own survey.

Management recommendation

For park management and marketing, this means that Instagram- and TikTok-based content (short video, visual storytelling) is the right channel for reaching under-30 visitors specifically, but will not reach older age groups. Those visitors are (still) equally likely to use Facebook regardless of age, and YouTube, overall, is also quite popular (more than Facebook, even among older visitors). Therefore, YouTube and, to a lesser degree, Facebook, remain more age-neutral channel for reaching the full visitor base.

In general, social-media-driven demand plays a meaningful role in how visitors discover and plan their trip to Krka, and suggest the park's own social channels are a relevant lever for shaping expectations before arrival.

4.3 Sustainability awareness and rules compliance

The second main topic of the research project focuses on visitors' awareness of sustainability and park rules to ensure biodiversity conservation. Self-reported compliance with regulations is high, with a mean rating of 6.6 on a 1-to-7 Likert scale (statement: *"I complied with all the park rules during my visit"*, level of agreement from 1 = *"strongly disagree"* to 7 = *"strongly agree"*), and perceived rule fairness is similarly high at 6.5. Self-rated familiarity with the rules, however, is noticeably lower, at 5.3 out of 7 – a classic pattern of visitors reporting that they complied even though they are not fully confident they know the rules in detail.



Figure 8: Self-reported rules knowledge and compliance. Source: own study.

On-site signage is the leading channel through which visitors learned about park rules, cited by 57.3% of respondents, ahead of the park website (38.3%), tour guides (20.8%) and social media (13.9%); only 4.4% said they were not aware of any specific regulations.

To test factual knowledge rather than self-reported familiarity, respondents were shown a list of four genuine park rules alongside three plausible-sounding invented ones and asked which they believed were actually in force.

Table 2: List of true and invented rules included in the questionnaire. Source: own survey.

Statement	% of visitors who believe it is a real rule
Swimming only in marked bathing areas (TRUE rule)	58.8%
Fishing of any kind is prohibited (TRUE rule)	81.4%
Picking/damaging plants is prohibited (TRUE rule)	79.2%
Dogs must be on a leash at all times (TRUE rule)	71.9%
Photography is prohibited at waterfalls (INVENTED / false)	2.2%
Food & drinks are not allowed in the park (INVENTED / false)	2.2%
Dogs are not allowed anywhere in the park (INVENTED / false)	6.6%

Only 58.8% of respondents correctly identified the swimming-zone restriction as genuine, despite this being the single most policy-relevant and most-discussed rule in the park since the 2021 swimming ban, and despite an average self-rated familiarity of 5.3 out of 7 (see above). Reassuringly, the three invented rules were almost never mistakenly endorsed, at between 2.2% and 6.6%, which suggests

respondents were answering attentively rather than agreeing indiscriminately. Separately, 95.2% of respondents report sorting their waste into recycling bins during their visit, and 87.8% report using a refillable bottle with the park's free drinking water.

Rule knowledge was also captured through a composite *rule accuracy score*, calculated from the seven true/false items testing whether visitors could correctly distinguish genuine park rules from the three plausible-sounding invented ones. The score is a balanced accuracy measure: for each respondent, it averages how often they correctly identified true rules as real with how often they correctly rejected false rules as not real, combining both into a single 0-to-1 measure of overall rule-knowledge accuracy. Across the sample, this score averages 0.85 (median 0.88), meaning that, on average, visitors correctly classified roughly 85% of the seven rule statements – reassuringly high, and consistent with the item-level finding that invented rules were rarely mistaken for real ones. The main weakness is at the other end: the swimming-zone rule specifically was the one true rule visitors were least likely to recognize correctly, meaning the strong overall accuracy score is masking a real gap in awareness of a very policy-relevant rule.

Kendall's tau-b correlations showed that number of prior visits was weakly associated only with self-rated rule familiarity ($\tau = .14$, $p = .007$), with no significant relationship to compliance, perceived fairness, or sense of responsibility. This suggests that repeated exposure to the park builds familiarity with the rules but does not, on its own, translate into stronger compliance (although compliance is high across the board, according to visitors themselves), fairness perceptions, or a deepened sense of environmental responsibility. For park management, this indicates that repeat visitation should not be relied upon as an implicit compliance-building mechanism; rather, rule communication and responsibility messaging need to be actively reinforced at every visit, including repeat ones, rather than assumed to accumulate over time.

A multiple linear regression tested whether age, education, first-time-visitor status, and rule-learning channel (six categories) jointly predicted rule-knowledge accuracy. The model was significant, $F(9, 254) = 6.38$, $p < .001$, explaining 18.4% of variance ($R^2 = .184$, adjusted $R^2 = .155$). Age was the strongest predictor ($B = .003$, $\beta = .235$, $p < .001$), with older visitors showing significantly higher rule-knowledge accuracy. Among rule-learning channels, on-site signage was associated with significantly higher accuracy ($B = .065$, $\beta = .204$, $p = .003$), while social media was associated with significantly lower accuracy ($B = -.063$, $\beta = -.135$, $p = .024$), consistent with the earlier bivariate finding. Park website, tour guide, travel agency/booking platform, “*not aware of regulations*”, education, and prior-visit status were not significant independent predictors (all $p > .11$).

This means that three factors reliably predict whether a visitor actually knows the park rules, everything else being equal.

- Older visitors know the rules better than younger ones, regardless of how they learned about them.
- On-site signage genuinely works: visitors who cite it as a source score measurably higher on rule knowledge.
- Social media has the opposite effect: visitors who rely on it know the rules worse, even after accounting for age and every other channel.

The park website, tour guides, and travel agencies showed no measurable effect either way, and simply being aware that “some rules exist” does not guarantee someone knows which ones.

The abovementioned results point to a two-part priority for management: (a) keep investing in physical signage as the most effective communication tool, and (b) find ways to reach younger, social-media-oriented visitors specifically, since they are currently the group least likely to know the rules.

4.4 Visitor spending patterns and regional economic impacts

4.4.1 Detailed regional spending patterns by overnight visitors and day-trippers

In total, visitors to Krka National Park spend €50.47 per person per day in the region, defined as a perimeter approximately 30 km around the national park. Per-person spending differs significantly by visitor type: overnight tourists spend more than double what day-trippers spend on the day of interview ($M = €95.55$ vs. $M = €38.16$), the difference is statistically significant (Welch's $t(83.1) = 3.68$, $p < .001$, Hedges' $g = 0.70$, a large effect).

Breaking this down by category clarifies where the overnight-visitor spending advantage comes from. Entrance fees are essentially identical across both groups (day-trippers €16.85 vs. overnight €16.13), given this is a fixed cost largely independent of trip length. The gap instead concentrates in accommodation, groceries, souvenirs, and guided tours, all markedly higher among overnight visitors – most notably accommodation, where day-trippers by definition spend €0.00 ($n = 183$), while overnight visitors average €45.08. One category reverses the overall pattern: day-trippers spend more on local transport than overnight visitors (€5.82 vs. €4.04), plausibly because day-trippers are travelling a longer round-trip distance into the region for a single day, whereas overnight visitors are already based locally and moving shorter distances.

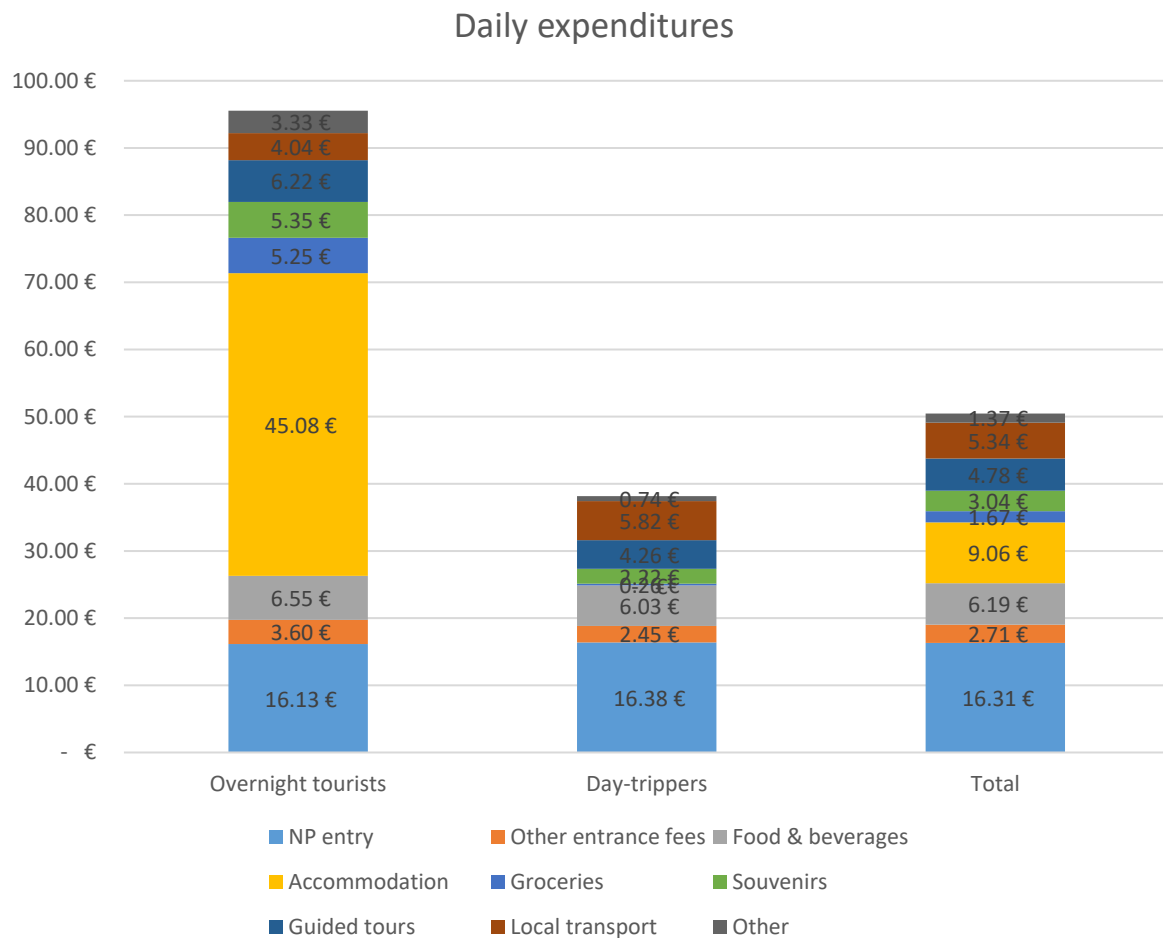


Figure 9: Regional daily expenditures. Source: own survey.

4.4.2 Regional economic impacts of tourism in Krka National Park

4.4.2.1 Economic impact assessment: concept

Beyond the direct spending figures reported above, the broader regional economic contribution of visitors was estimated using a regionalized input-output (I-O) model (Arnegger, 2014; McCann, 2002). This approach captures not only *direct* effects (visitor spending received by tourism businesses such as hotels and restaurants) but also *indirect* effects (spending that ripples onward as those businesses purchase from regional suppliers) and *induced* effects (additional regional economic activity generated when wages paid to local employees are, in turn, spent locally). Some portion of each spending round leaks out of the regional economy through imports, taxes, and savings, which limits how far this so-called *multiplier effect* extends (Archer, 1977; Archer & Fletcher, 1990).

Because no primary input-output table exists specifically for the Krka NP catchment area, the national Croatian input-output table was regionalized using the Flegg Location Quotient (*FLQ*) technique (Flegg et al., 1995), which adjusts national sector coefficients downward for industries that are under-represented in the region (based on their regional share of national output or employment), reflecting that such sectors cannot fully meet local demand and must rely on imports from outside the region. The *FLQ* approach was selected because it is reported in the literature to outperform simpler location-quotient methods (Tohmo, 2004). The resulting regionalized multipliers were then applied to gross tourism sales, calculated by combining the survey's per-person daily spending figures (by day-tripper

vs. overnight segment) with total annual visitor numbers supplied by Krka National Park's administration, to estimate total regional economic impact.

4.4.2.2 Economic impacts: preliminary results

Based on an estimated 693,000 day-trip visitors and 307,000 overnight visitors per year¹, the model estimates a total regional economic impact of approximately €76.49 million annually – around €28.86 million attributable to day-trippers and €47.63 million to overnight visitors.

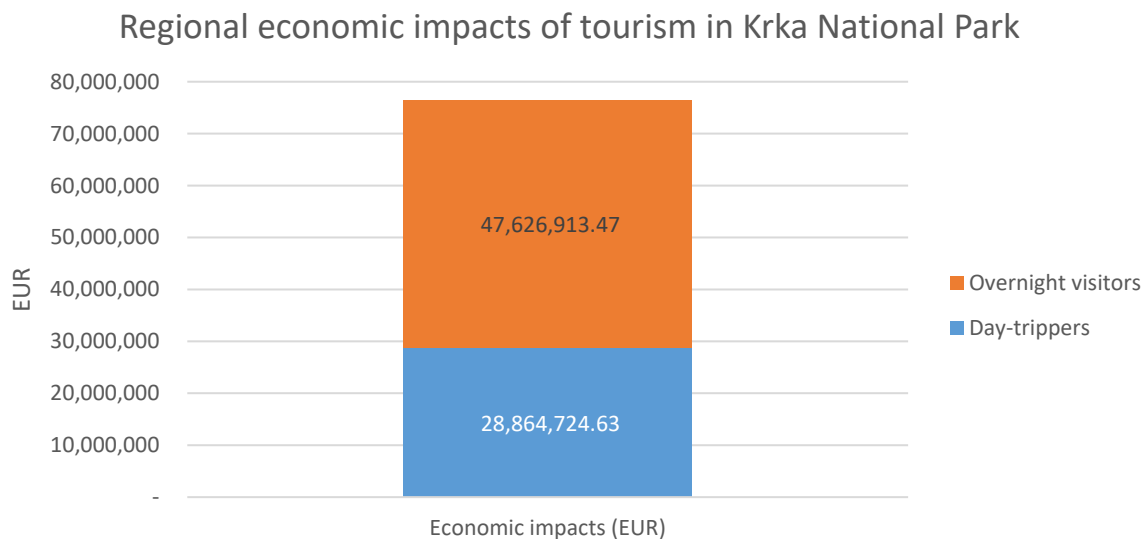


Figure 10: Regional economic impacts of tourism in Krka National Park. Source: own survey, I-O calculations based on Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2026).

On a per-visitor basis, this works out to roughly €41.65 for day-trippers versus €155.14 for overnight visitors: overnight visitors generate close to four times the regional economic impact of day-trippers per person, a noticeably larger gap than the roughly two-fold difference in direct per-person spending found in the survey itself. This suggests the indirect and induced effects captured by the I-O model amplify the overnight-visitor advantage beyond what direct spending alone would suggest, plausibly because overnight-heavy categories like accommodation and food have relatively strong regional multipliers (recirculating through local wages and suppliers).

Management recommendation

With visitor numbers already high, further growth is not a desirable management goal. A more promising lever is increasing the share of overnight visitors, who generate roughly double the direct per-person spending of day-trippers and, once regional multiplier effects are included, closer to four times the total economic impact. Overnight visitors currently make up only 30% of the sample.

¹ Note that these results are based on an assumed total number of 1 million visitors/year, since official visitor numbers were 2025 were not available at the time of writing. The economic impact assessment can be adjusted once official visitor numbers are published.

It is recommended to continue working with regional accommodation and tourism partners to convert day-trips into overnight stays, and track this ratio going forward as a management indicator alongside total visitor numbers.

4.5 Willingness to pay for conservation

Willingness-to-pay (WTP) is a contingent valuation (CVM) measure that estimates the monetary value people place on a non-market good – such as conservation of a protected area – by directly asking what they would be willing to pay for it under a hypothetical scenario (Mitchell & Carson, 1989).

In our study, WTP for conservation was assessed through three linked items: *confidence* in knowing how current entrance-fee revenue is used, *support* for a hypothetical fee increase earmarked exclusively for conservation, and, for those supportive, the *maximum additional amount* they would pay.

Confidence in understanding current revenue use averages 4.34 out of 7 (median = 4.00, SD = 2.12, $n = 270$), but this average conceals a notably polarized distribution rather than a smooth middle-ground pattern: 18.5% report being “*not at all confident*” (the single lowest scale point) while 22.2% report being “*completely confident*” (the highest), with the remainder spread across the middle. In other words, visitors tend to feel either quite informed or quite uninformed about revenue use, with comparatively few holding a genuinely moderate view.

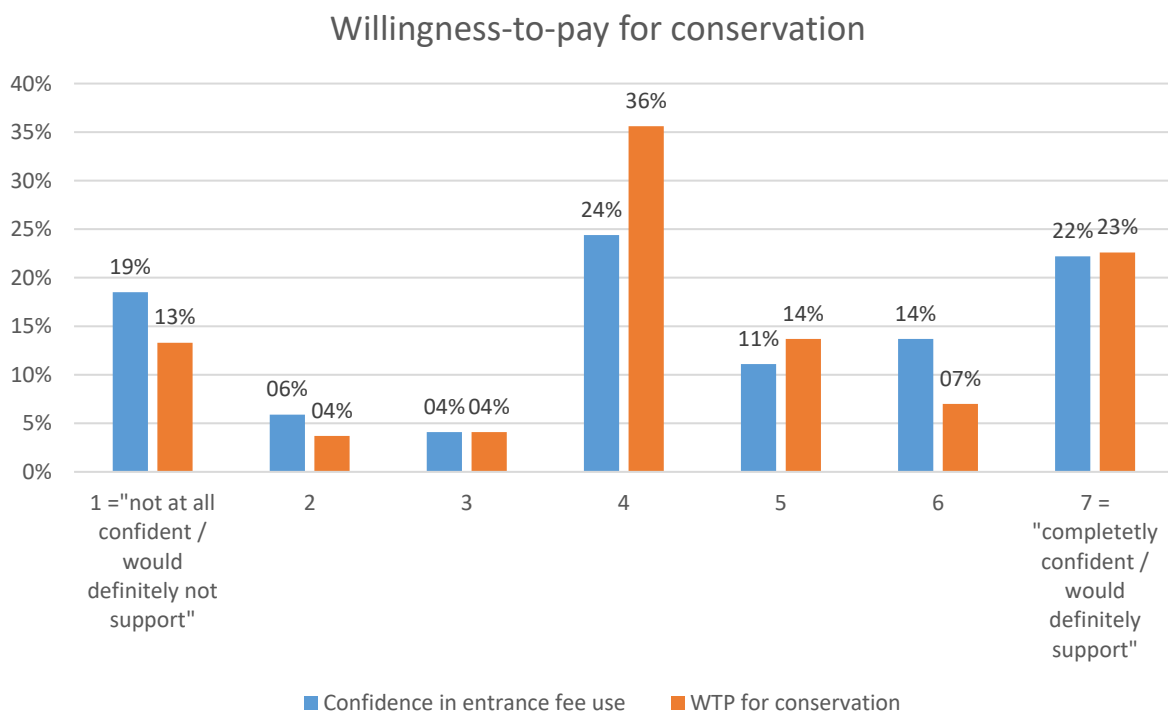


Figure 11: Confidence in knowledge of use of entrance fees and willingness to pay for conservation. Source: own survey.

Only 43.3% of visitors currently support a higher entrance fee for conservation – the majority (55.8%) do not. Support for a conservation-earmarked fee increase averages 4.44 out of 7 (median = 4.00, $SD = 1.91$, $n = 270$). Among the subset who indicated support and went on to name a specific maximum additional amount ($n = 105$; 169 respondents were routed past this question by the skip logic, either because they scored at or below the neutral midpoint or declined to specify a figure), the average

maximum additional amount is €19.54 (median = €10.00, $SD = €14.53$). This distribution is strongly right-skewed and clusters heavily around round-number values – €5 (20.0% of valid responses), €10 (25.7%), €20 (11.4%), and €40 (11.4%) together account for roughly two-thirds of all answers, a pattern consistent with anchoring behavior commonly observed in contingent valuation research, where respondents gravitate toward salient round figures rather than distributing answers continuously (Figure 12).

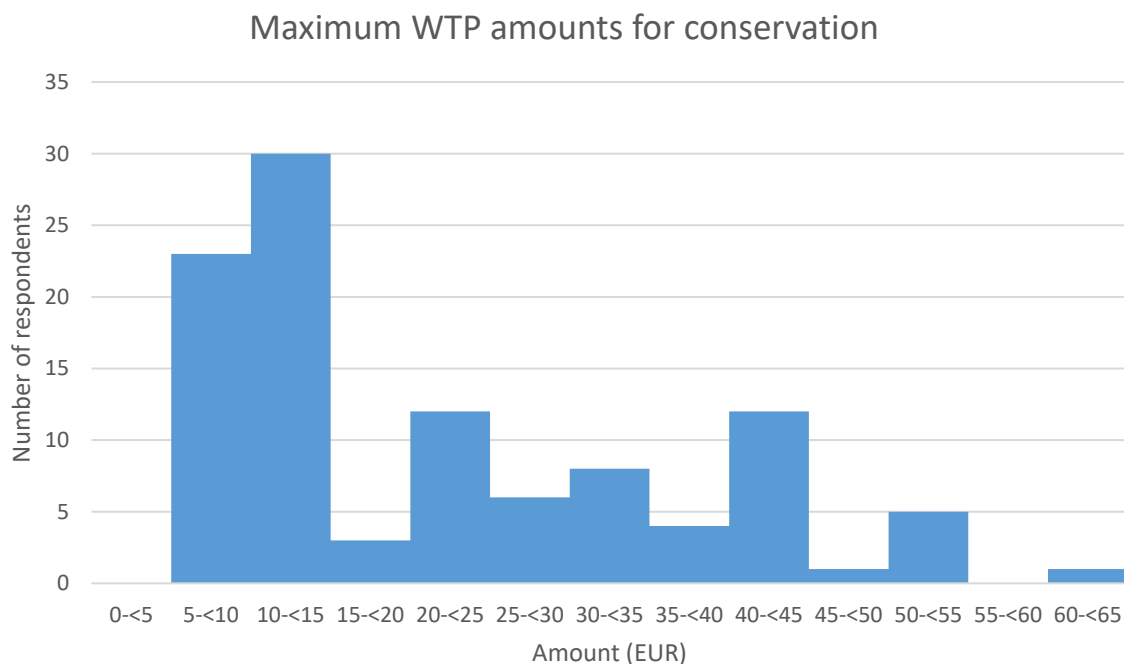


Figure 12: Maximum additional amounts visitors are willing to pay for conservation (included are only visitors who indicated a general willingness to pay additional amounts). Source: own survey.

Among visitors not supportive of a fee increase, the dominant reason was that the current entrance fee is already considered too high (55.4%), followed by the view that conservation should be publicly funded rather than paid for by visitors (23.2%). Only a small minority cited an inability to afford it (7.1%) or distrust that additional funds would actually be used for conservation (7.1%) (Figure 13). This pattern indicates that resistance to a higher fee is primarily a matter of price sensitivity and value perception, rather than skepticism about the park's stewardship of funds- an important distinction for how any potential future fee increase might be communicated.

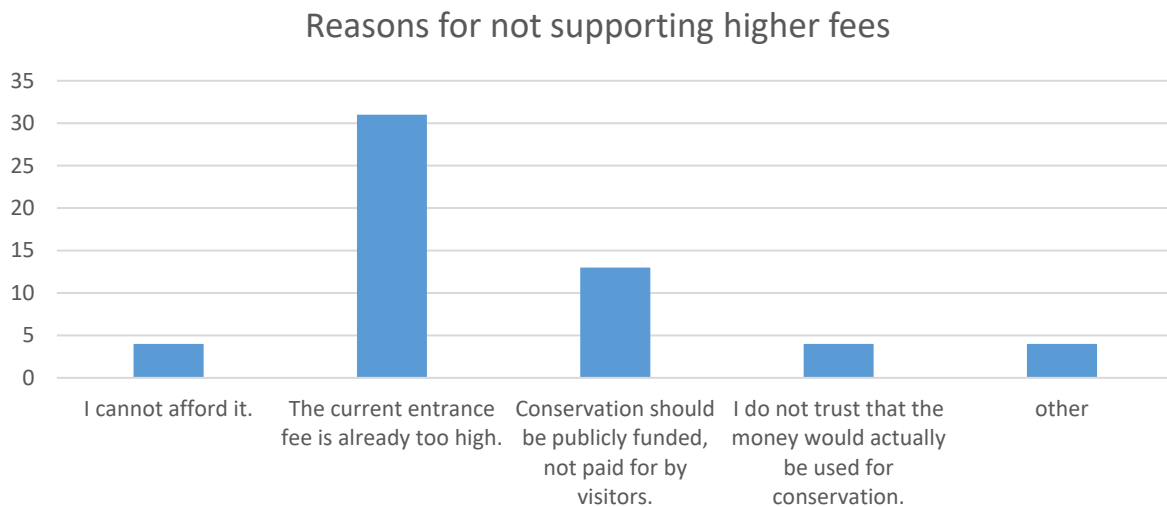


Figure 13: Reasons indicated by visitors who are not supportive of higher entrance fees for conservation. Source: own survey.

Rule-knowledge accuracy was significantly and positively associated with willingness-to-pay support: Kendall's tau-b = .155, $p = .002$ (Spearman's $\rho = .193$, $p = .001$), $n=270$. Visitors who more accurately distinguished genuine park rules from invented ones showed somewhat greater support for a conservation-earmarked entrance-fee increase. While the effect is modest, it is consistent across correlation methods and suggests that better-informed visitors in general tend to be more supportive of conservation funding.

Management recommendation

A fee increase should not be assumed to have broad visitor backing: only 43.3% currently support one, and the main objection is price, not distrust in how funds would be used. Thus, transparency campaigns alone are unlikely to shift support meaningfully. As a lower-risk first step, rather than raising the fee for all visitors, the park could introduce a more visible voluntary donation option at entry or exit points, capturing the willingness already present among supportive visitors without affecting those currently opposed. The strong clustering around round amounts (€5, €10, €20) suggests suggested donation tiers built around these values would align naturally with how visitors already think about the amount. A broader fee increase could be considered later, informed by how this donation scheme performs.

5 Conclusion

The KVIST survey provides current, field-based evidence on tourism and visitation in Krka National Park across four research topics: visitor motivations and the role of social media, rule awareness and compliance, spending and regional economic impact, and willingness to pay for conservation. Several findings converge on a consistent picture of the Krka visitor: predominantly first-time, well-educated, and internationally diverse, drawn primarily by the park's waterfalls and natural scenery, and broadly supportive of conservation in principle – self-reported rule compliance is high, and a majority sort waste and use refillable water bottles. At the same time, the survey surfaces a recurring gap between stated attitudes and demonstrated knowledge or behavior: visitors who feel familiar with the rules often cannot correctly identify the specific swimming-zone restriction, and support for a conservation-earmarked fee increase remains a minority position despite generally positive sentiment toward the park's conservation mission.

Several findings stand out as directly actionable for park management. First, on-site signage remains the most effective channel for conveying specific rules, while social media, despite being the leading channel through which visitors discover the park, is associated with weaker rule knowledge; this argues for continued investment in physical, on-site communication alongside social media outreach rather than in place of it.

Second, the case for growing regional economic benefit lies less in attracting more visitors, given already high visitation levels, and more in shifting the existing visitor mix toward overnight stays, which generate close to four times the regional economic impact of a day visit. Together, these findings support a management approach centered on reaching visitors more effectively where they already are – physically, in the park, and behaviorally, in how long they stay – rather than on further growth in visitor numbers.

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