

Mount Agamenticus Visitor Use Survey Results 2021

Introduction

The Mount Agamenticus Visitor Use Survey is a tool that allows us to collect and analyze data on who is visiting Mount A, the popular activities on the mountain, and offers us a chance to receive direct visitor feedback. This data is gathered annually to allow for the analysis of changing trends. This year, we made some minor changes, but continued to track where visitors are from, how often people visit, and what activities they do on the mountain. Like last year, we conducted surveys in person and chose to provide an online option, available to subscribers of our e-mail list and as a QR code that visitors could scan from designated access points. We want to thank everyone who spoke with us directly or who filled out the survey online. We greatly appreciate your feedback, suggestions, and support!

In-person surveys were conducted during the last two weeks of July into the first week of

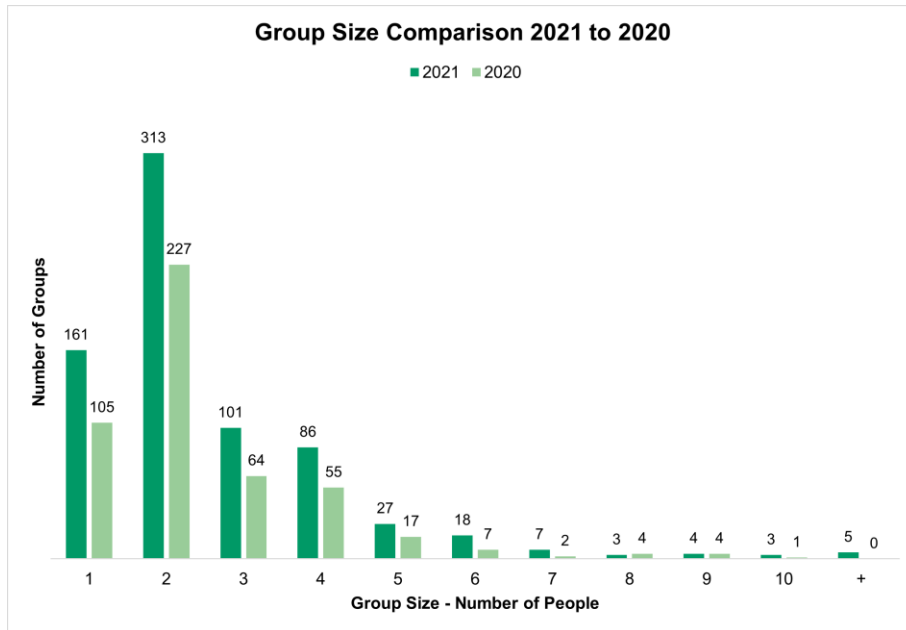


August, and our online survey was available from August through October. From three in-person survey sessions per day for seven days at two locations (Base and Summit of First Hill), we spoke with 1,567 visitors in 613 total surveys. We received an additional 115 online surveys, bringing the total survey count to **728** and individual visitor count to 1,908. This is an increase of 209 surveys over last year, which was the first year we offered an online option. Unless otherwise noted, results for this report are calculated based

on *total surveys*, rather than individual visitors. It should be noted that all survey questions are optional and that no personal identifying information is collected from online or in-person surveys.

Group Size

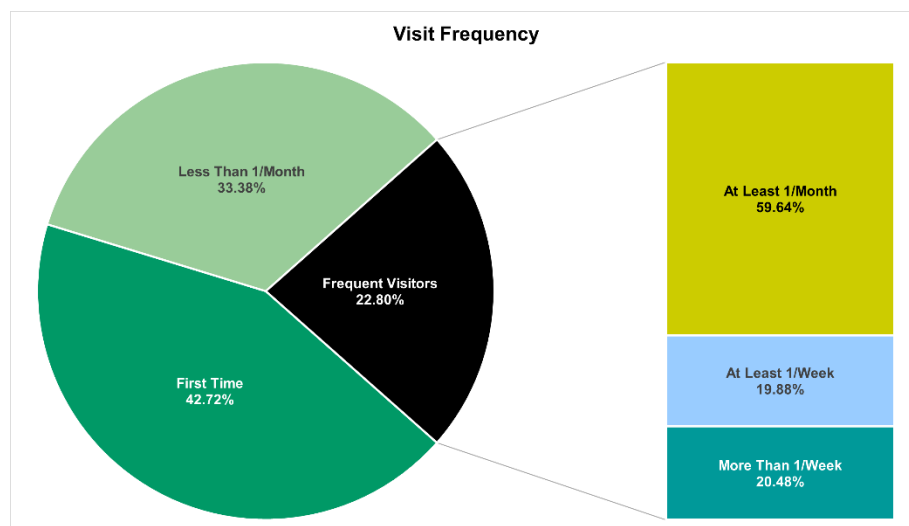
Nearly 43% of groups surveyed this year were visiting in pairs, as were the majority of last year's surveyed groups (46%). Single visitors made up 22.12% of those surveyed this year, and groups of three people made up 13.87% percent. Just over eleven percent of visitors surveyed were in groups of four; 3.71% in groups of five; and 2.47% in groups of six people. There were 22 groups of the 728 surveyed that included more than six people, and only five groups with ten or more people. Last year, we surveyed no groups of ten or more people, and only 11 groups with six or more.



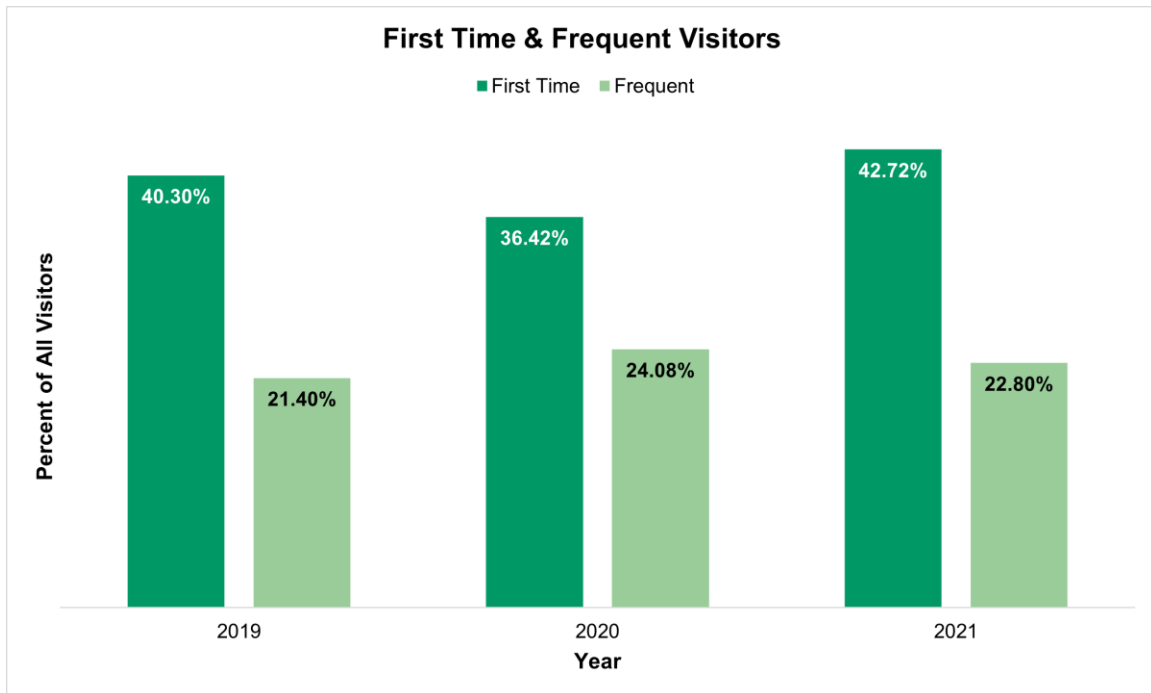
Group Size Comparison 2021 to 2020 - Click to Enlarge

Visit Frequency

Last year, possibly due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, we did see a decrease in first-time visitors to Mount A, 36.42% of those surveyed. This year, however, there was an increase. 42.72% of surveyed visitors were here at Mount Agamenticus for the first time. Of those first-time visitors, 13.18% were local, living less than fifty miles away. Another 33.38% of our visitors come to Mount A less than once a month. Frequent visitors, those coming at least once per month, made up 22.80% of all visitors, down from 24% last year. Most of our frequent visitors (59.64%) come to the mountain at least once a month, 19.88% visit at least weekly, and 20.48% visit more than once a week.



Visit Frequency - Click to Enlarge



First Time & Frequent Visitor Comparison 2019-2021 - Click to Enlarge

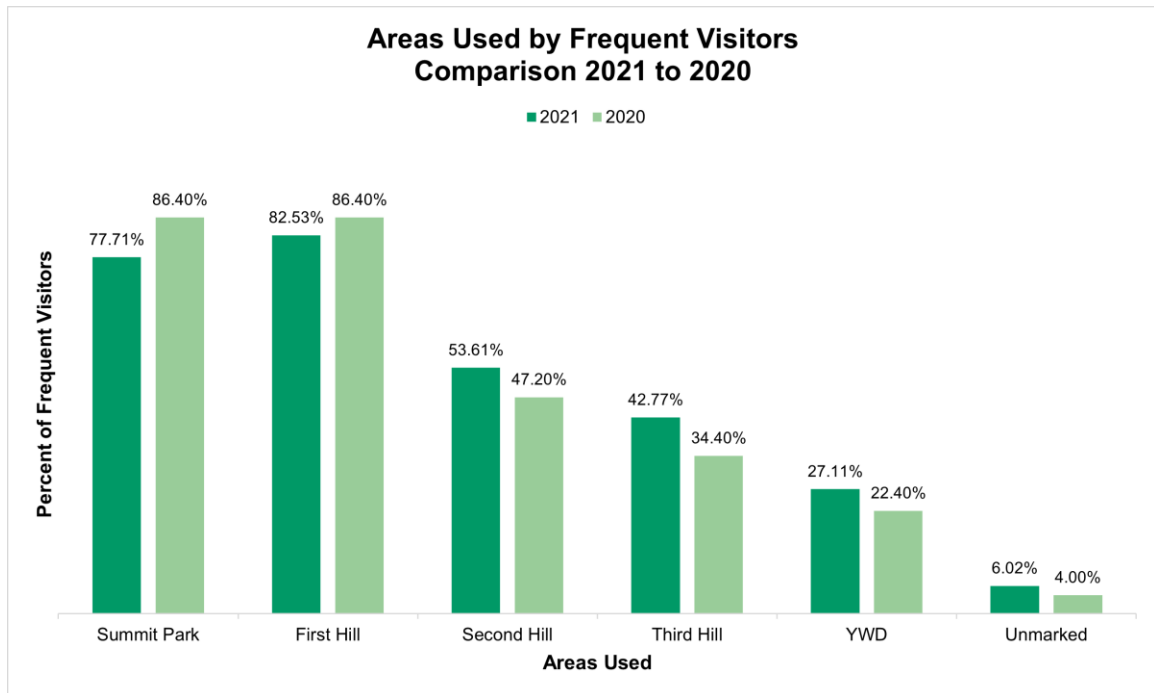
How First-Time Visitors Heard About Us

This year, 39.23% of our first-time visitors heard of Mount A through friends or family. Another 29.58% heard about Mount A through the internet or an app, with most of those visitors utilizing Google or AllTrails. Another 8.36% of first-time visitors heard of Mount A through a local business, and 8.04% via word of mouth. Less than 3% of first-time visitors discovered Mount A through street signs, welcome and information centers, or print media.

About Our Frequent Visitors

Seasons Of the 166 total frequent visitors to Mount A, 86.14% also visit in the fall, 57.23% visit during winter, and 79.52% visit in the spring. Over half (53.01%) of the frequent visitors who answered this question visit the mountain all year round!

Areas Frequent visitors were asked which areas of the Mount Agamenticus region they typically use. This year we saw a decrease in the use of more heavily trafficked areas by our frequent visitors, though these places (the Summit Park and First Hill trails) still see more use compared to other areas. 129 people (77.71% of all frequent visitors) utilize the summit park, a decrease of 8.69% from last year. Another 137 visitors (82.53%) use First Hill trails; 89 (53.61%) go to Second Hill, and 71 (42.77%) of our frequent users venture out to Third Hill. Four percent of this year's frequent visitors surveyed use unmarked trails in the area, and 22.4% access the neighboring York Water District trail system. There is an increase in use of Second and Third Hill trails among frequent visitors compared to last year (up from 47.20% and 34.40% respectively). Reported use of unmarked trails is up by 2% from last year and reported use of York Water District trails has increased by 4.71% from last year.



Areas Used by Frequent Visitors Comparison 2021 to 2020 - Click to Enlarge

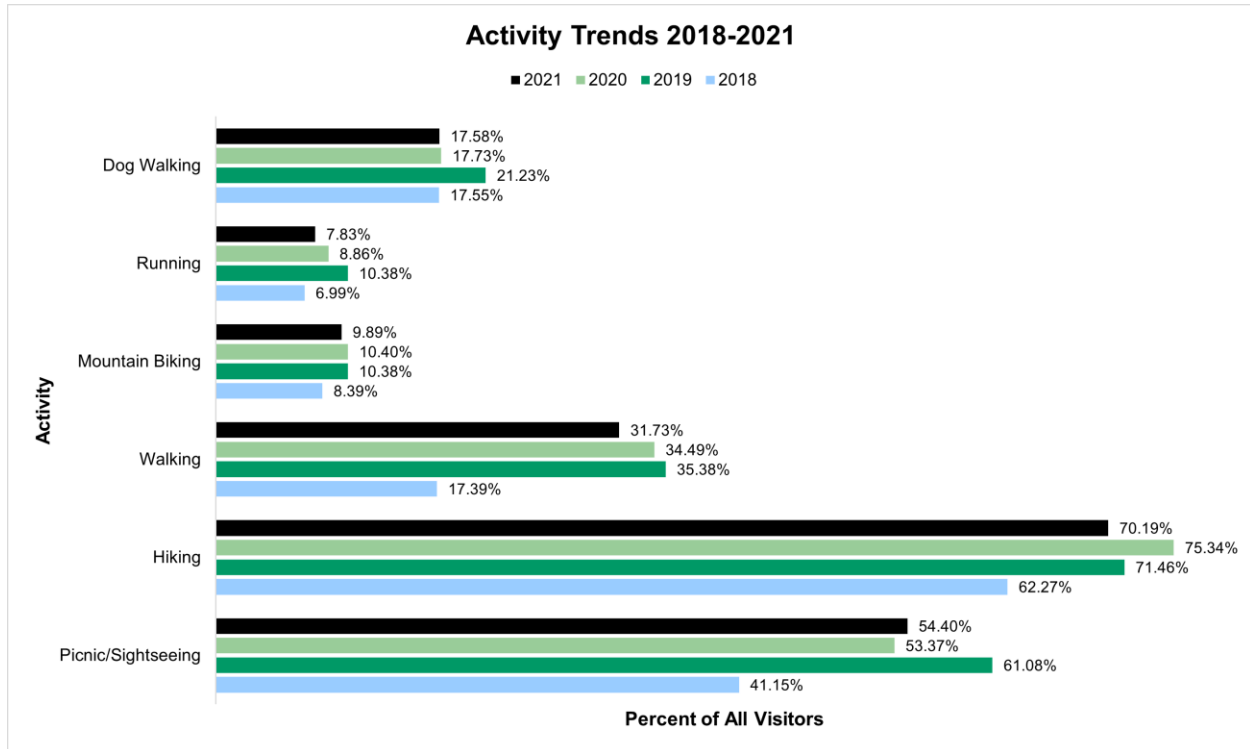
Favorite Trails Answers to this question varied this year from a single trail to areas of the Conservation Region, to multiple trails, to even specific routes or loops. Ring Trail was a favorite among frequent visitors once again, with 33.87% naming it on its own, or as part of a favorite route. Another 15.32% named Blueberry Bluff, and 11.29% named the Big A Trail.

Trail Feedback We asked our frequent visitors to think critically about the trails they use, and if they think there are areas where trails could use improvement. Of the 146 frequent visitors who answered this question, 28.77% said that directional signage clarity could use improvement; 24.66% noted rocks and roots on the trail, 28.77% said that blazing and designated use indicators could be improved, and 21.23% thought that standing water and drainages were an issue. Another 82 people (56.16% of all those who answered) said that there was nothing they thought could use improvement. Another 14.38% of those who answered noted other issues not included on the survey, including downed trees, excessive “fluffing” in the closing and blocking of social trails, issues at parking areas, and other concerns that were not necessarily related to trails, specifically.

Activities at Mount A

Of those surveyed, 65.93% of our visitors engage in multiple activities at Mount Agamenticus, a decrease from last year (70.91%). Most visitors this year (70.19%) come to hike the trails, but this is a decrease of 5.15% from last year. The chart below shows four years of usage trends for the more common recreational activities at Mount Agamenticus (those which have consistently seen an 8% or greater visitor participation rate over the years), from 2018-2021. We saw an increase over last year in visitors coming to the mountain for sightseeing or

picnicking at the summit. Sightseeing was up by 1.03% from last year, however, in 2020 we saw a 7.71% decrease from 2019, so this is still low compared to previous years.



Activity Trends 2018-2021 - Click to Enlarge

Walkers and dog walkers make up 31.73% and 17.58% of those surveyed, respectively. Mountain bikers make up 9.89% of trail users surveyed, cyclists 2.88% (a decrease of 1.17% from 2020), and ATV users 2.61%. Other uses this year include birding (7.55% an increase of 1% over last year); participating in public programs or visiting the Learning Lodge (3.98%, a slight increase) running (7.83%, a decrease of just over 1% from last year), and winter activities including cross-country skiing, 1.79% and snowshoeing, 4.95% of those surveyed.

Where Visitors Are From

The majority of our visitors this year (57.28%) live 50 miles or further away from Mount Agamenticus. Local visitors (those living within 50 miles of Mount A) make up 41.76% of those surveyed. In 2020, we saw an increase from previous years in local visitors, and a decrease in those who live further away. Our results from this year’s survey follow the trends from years prior; it is possible that travel restrictions during the earlier stages of the pandemic made an impact on visitation last year. It’s also worth noting that the parameters of “local” and “non-local” were changed in 2020; in previous years, “local” visitors were those who lived within 30 miles, rather than 50.

Local and Non-Local Visitors 2020



Local and Non-Local Visitors Last Year (2020) - Click to Enlarge

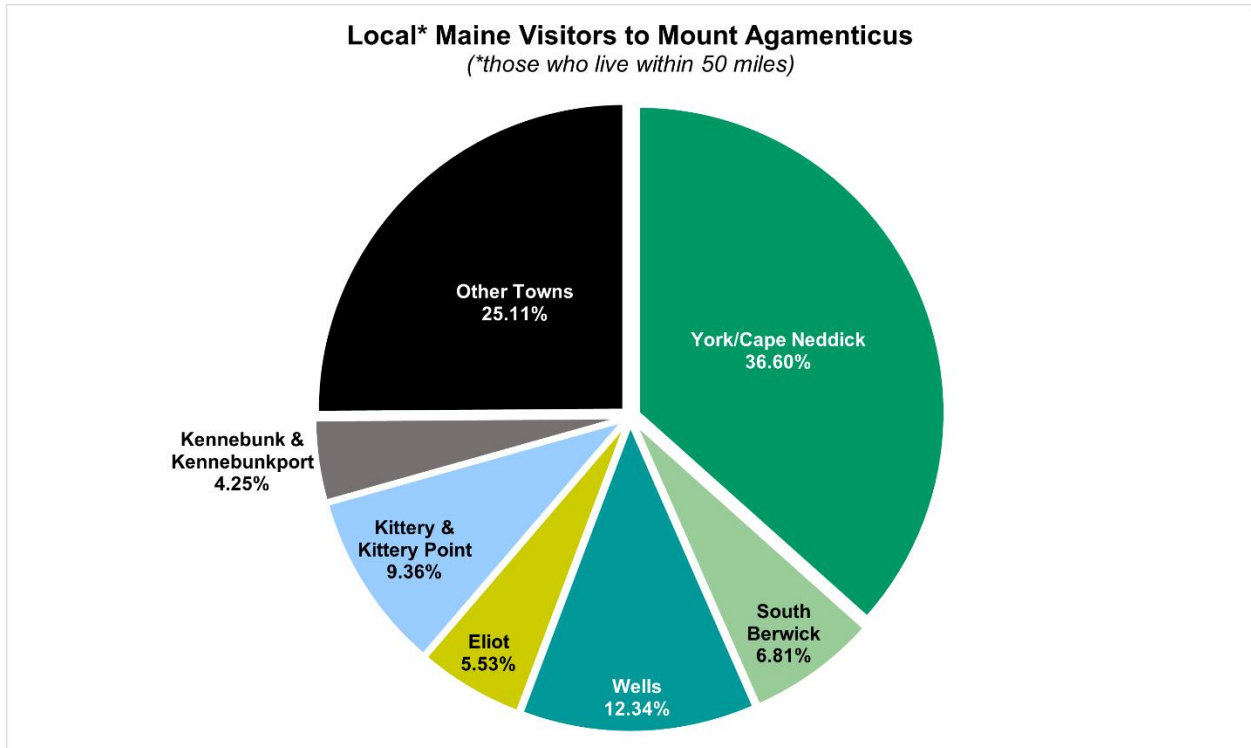
Local and Non-Local Visitors 2021



Local and Non-Local Visitors This Year (2021) - Click to Enlarge

Most of our local Maine visitors live in York or Cape Neddick (28.38% of all local visitors, 36.60% of local visitors from Maine). Neighboring South Berwick residents make up

5.28% (an increase of half a percent over last year) of all local visitors surveyed, 6.81% of local Maine visitors.¹ Residents of Wells make up 9.57% of all local visitors (an increase 3.30% over last year); Eliot, 4.29%; residents from Kittery and Kittery Point make up 7.26%, and those from Kennebunk and Kennebunkport make up 3.30%. Towns with 3% or fewer visitors are not listed individually in this report, but this year we saw local Maine visitors come from another thirteen towns. The graph below shows the breakdown of local visitors who live in the state.



Local Maine Visitors to Mount Agamenticus - Click to Enlarge

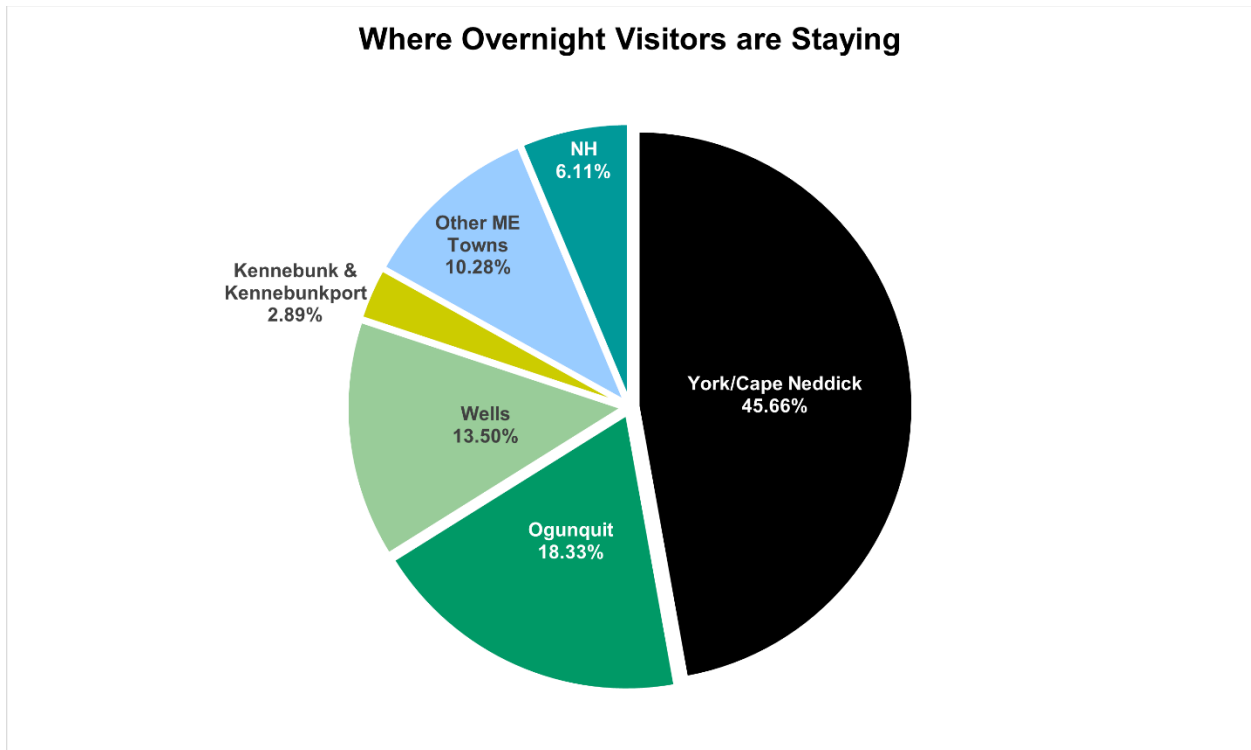
Most of the local visitors we surveyed who come from New Hampshire live in Portsmouth (6.27% of all local visitors) and Dover (5.61%). There was a slight decrease in surveyed visitors from the local New Hampshire area, 70 total surveys in 2020 and 66 total surveys this year.

Of our 530 visitors from “away,” the majority (31.70%) are from Massachusetts, 12.26% are from New Hampshire (a decrease of 2.85% from last year), 20.38% from New York, and 6.79% from Maine. We surveyed visitors from thirty-two states and three countries outside the United States (Canada, Hungary, and Vietnam).

¹ In 2018, we were able to take additional in-person surveys from Cedar, and South Berwick residents represented 16.17% (a much larger percentage) of local Maine visitors; we have not surveyed from the Cedar access point since that time. While we did include QR codes to an online survey at multiple alternative access points this year (including Cedar), the bulk of our data came from in-person surveys at the Summit and Base; surveys accessed through the QR code made up just over 11% of all surveys.

Day Trips and Overnight Visitors

We asked all visitors whether they were visiting for a day or if they were in the area overnight or on an extended stay. Of the 724 groups who answered this question, the majority were visiting the area on a day trip (56.91% of respondents); the other 42.96% were in the area for an overnight stay or longer. Those visitors here for more than a day were also asked where they were staying. Most overnight visitors (142 people, 45.66%) were staying in York or Cape Neddick; another 18.33% stayed in Ogunquit, and 13.50% stayed in Wells. Compared to last year, there was a 1.58% decrease in visitors staying in York or Cape Neddick, as well as a decrease in visitors staying in both Ogunquit (by 3.14%) and Wells (by 1.84%). Overnight visitors stayed in a total of 28 different towns in Maine and NH; some overnight visitors did not indicate which town they were staying in. The following graph shows the breakdown of overnight visitors (towns hosting fewer than 2% of all overnight visitors are not shown individually).



Where Overnight Visitors are Staying - Click to Enlarge

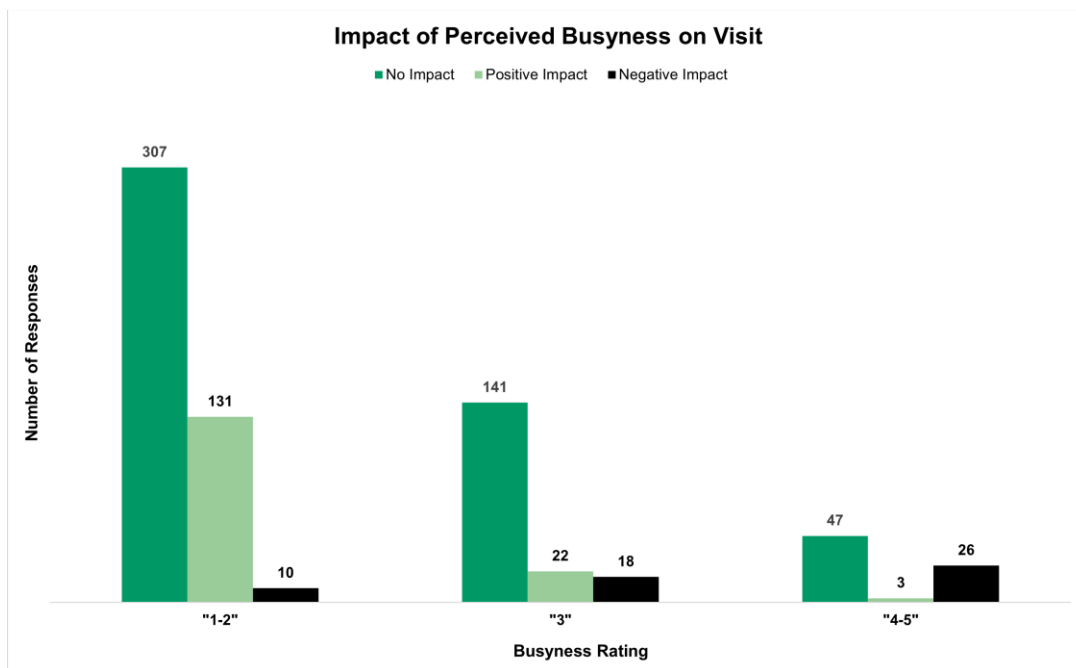
Visitor Perception of Busyness

Visitors were asked to rate how busy they thought it was at Mount Agamenticus during their visit. "Busyness" at Mount A was based on a scale of 1-5, with a rating of "1" being least busy and "5" being most busy. Of all 728 surveys received, 701 people provided an answer to this question. Those visitors were then asked whether their perception of how busy it was had any impact on their visit and, if so, how. Answers to the first portion of this question are displayed in the table below. Most of our visitors (35.34%) thought that it was not very busy at the time of their visit; the fewest number of visitors (2.43%) thought that it was very busy.

“How Busy” Scale of 1-5	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Those Who Answered
1 - Least Busy	247	35.24%
2	198	28.35%
3	179	25.53%
4	60	8.56%
5 - Most Busy	17	2.43%

Of the 77 visitors who answered with a “4” or “5,” 58.44% of those were visiting Mount Agamenticus on a Saturday or Sunday, when we do typically see a higher rate of visitation. Of those who thought it was busy at the time of their visit (rated a “4” or “5”), 21 people were first time visitors to Mount A. Of the remaining 56 people, 46.42% were frequent visitors to Mount A, visiting at least once monthly or more often.

Twenty-nine percent of the people who answered the second part of this question said that how busy they thought it was made an impact on their visit. We asked about both positive and negative impacts and received a wide variety of answers as to how the number of other people present affected visitor experience. Of the 217 visitors who answered all three parts of this question, 25.35% felt the number of other visitors impacted their visit negatively, while 71.89% felt a positive impact on their visit. Of all visitors who rated Mount A’s busyness a “1,” or a “2,” 43.86% indicated that this had no impact, 60.37% indicated a positive impact, and 4.61% indicated a negative impact. Of those that rated a “3,” 20.14% indicated that this had no impact, 10.14% indicated a positive impact, and 8.29% indicated a negative impact. Of those who rated a “4” or a “5,” 6.72% indicated no impact, 11.98% indicated negative impact, and 1.38% indicated a positive impact.



Impact of Perceived Busyness on Visit - Click to Enlarge

It seems that most visitors to Mount Agamenticus prefer to come during times they perceive as less busy, and many returning visitors make decisions about when to visit based on how busy it seems. For example, many of the return visitors we spoke with choose to visit on weekdays or in the early morning, rather than at peak times. While the pattern seems to trend that most visitors are negatively affected if the mountain is at its “most busy,” we still received a variety of comments, both positive and negative, for each of the ratings on the scale. The table below shows a few sample responses.

“How Busy” Scale of 1-5	Positive or Negative Impact	Comment
1 - Least Busy	Positive	“It’s more peaceful, you know?”
2	Positive	nice to have fewer people when mountain biking
3	Negative	purposely travel away from 1 st Hill to get away from crowds
4	Positive	meet people, get help with trails, etc.
5 - Most Busy	Negative	too busy

What Visitors Enjoy Most

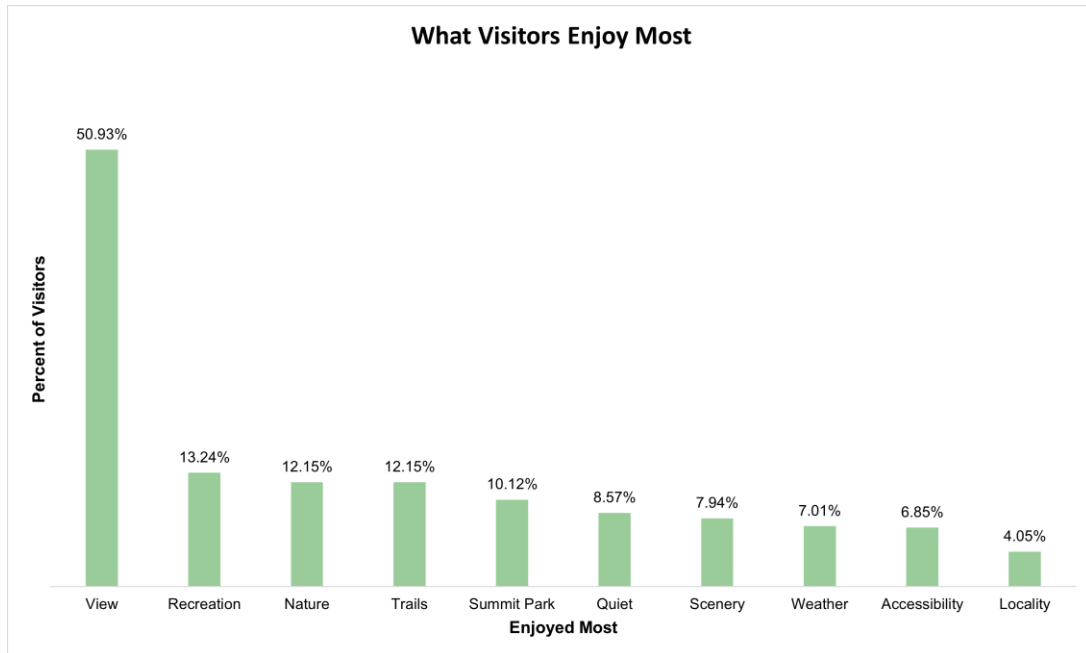
There’s a lot to love about Mount Agamenticus! As is the case most years, many people who answered this question provided us with multiple answers. Responses to this question were tagged with broad categories and then counted.

The breakdown is displayed in the graph on the following page. Categories that received less than 2% of responses (fewer than 15 total) are not shown, but included: “StoryWalk,” “staff interaction,” “nostalgia,” “the ocean,” “time with family or friends” and additional, outlying responses that did not fit into a set category.



What Visitors Enjoy Most - Click to Enlarge

As in previous years, most people who visit Mount Agamenticus most enjoy the view. Of the 642 visitors who answered this question, 327 (50.93%) gave this answer. Another 13.24% of those surveyed said that they most enjoyed some form of recreation or exercise (their hike, mountain bike route, general exercise, etc.). Just over 12% of visitors most enjoyed the trails or being outside in nature, and another 10.12% of those surveyed said they most enjoyed some aspect of, or facilities within, the summit park, specifically.



What Visitors Enjoy Most - Click to Enlarge

Visitor Comments and Suggestions

At the end of our time surveying each group, we ask them for any additional comments, questions, or suggestions. Each year, we receive a wide variety of answers. While some visitors and trail users do offer criticism or have concerns, the majority of the comments we receive are positive. Utilizing an online survey in addition to our in-person survey sessions has allowed an additional opportunity for people to provide comment while remaining anonymous.

This year, we received a handful of comments expressing interest in specific-use trails, as well as several concerns about fees, overcrowding, and dog waste on the trails. A few frequent users expressed concerns about trail erosion and drainage problems, and some visitors who were new to Mount A noted that blazing, signage, and our trail map could use improvement. Many visitors simply asked us to “keep up the great work,” while others appreciated more specifically our efforts in accessibility and preservation of public history. Visitors were divided about our “Carry In/Carry Out” trash policy as well as the upcoming parking project.

Conclusion

This year continued to challenge us in many ways, but these challenges have showed us that places like Mount Agamenticus continue to be important. Our yearly survey is only a snapshot of our estimated 50,000 plus yearly visitors. Mount Agamenticus is frequented not only by many vacationers, but by local visitors that love coming as often as they can. As always, we are surprised by the number of people who are finding their way to the mountain for the first time, and we hope that they will return for many years to come. We will continue our efforts to provide all-important recreational access to the outdoors while maintaining a delicate balance with habitat and water quality.