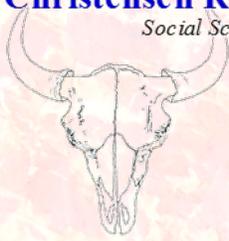


**Christensen Research**

*Social Science for Natural Resource Management*



## **2016 Red Rock Rendezvous Participant Assessment**

**Economic and Social Benefits Resulting from  
the Southwest's Largest Outdoor Climbing Festival**

Neal Christensen, PhD  
Social Scientist  
Christensen Research Company  
1626 S. 6th W.  
Missoula, MT 59801  
406-207-0423

[Neal@ChristensenResearch.com](mailto:Neal@ChristensenResearch.com)



# 2016 Red Rock Rendezvous Participant Assessment

## Economic and Social Benefits Resulting from the Southwest's Largest Outdoor Climbing Festival

### Executive Summary

Taking account of all of festival and tourism-related spending, the 2016 Mountain Gear Red Rock Rendezvous (RRR) brought as much as one million new dollars into the Las Vegas economy. The economic benefits resulting from the RRR also go far beyond the annual contribution of the festival to Las Vegas. The festival supports and encourages interest in the sport of climbing and related activities

throughout the country. When attendees purchase gear after being introduced to it at the festival, local businesses throughout the country benefit. Enthusiasts also support local entertainment, food and lodging businesses across the country as they pursue climbing opportunities. Additional benefits are more social and health related. One of the focuses of the RRR climbing clinics is to teach Leave-No-Trace techniques and outdoor ethics to new members of the climbing community. Overall, there are many benefits derived from the RRR by the participants, as well as benefits to the larger climbing community, outdoor enthusiasts in general, and to society at large.

#### **1,200 participants:**

- **97% from out-of-area**
- **43% flew to Las Vegas**
- **31% rented vehicles in Las Vegas**
- **33% stayed in Las Vegas hotels**
- **68% stayed extra days beyond the Red Rock Rendezvous**
- **Contributed as much as \$1 million to the Las Vegas economy**



# The 2016 Red Rock Rendezvous Participant Assessment

## Economic and Social Benefits Resulting from the Southwest's Largest Outdoor Climbing Festival

### Introduction

The Mountain Gear Red Rock Rendezvous (RRR), an annual outdoor rock climbing festival, was held April 1-3, 2016, just outside Las Vegas, NV. Some 1,200 climbing enthusiasts attended the sold-out clinics and events at the 13<sup>th</sup> annual festival, held each year at the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. This year, a questionnaire was given to festival participants in an effort to better understand the attendees and the benefits derived from the event. The participants returned 246 surveys; their responses were summarized and interpreted in this report by Christensen Research Company.

### Red Rock Rendezvous Participant Characteristics

The festival activities spanned three days, from Friday through Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> through April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. About 1,165 of the 1,200 participants came to the festival from outside of the Las Vegas area. Overall, our post-event survey tells us that 43% of attendees flew to the event, 31% rented vehicles, 28% purchased campsites, and 33% purchased hotel rooms. The average length of stay in the Las Vegas area for nonresident participants was



4.5 days, or about one and a half additional days beyond the festival for each of the 1,165 nonresident participants. In fact, only about a third of the attendees came to Las Vegas just for the festival, with 68% staying additional days beyond the organized event. The average length of stay for the 68% staying extra was 5.5 days, nearly twice the length of the festival. About half of the nonresident participants that spent extra time in Las Vegas (49%) stayed in hotels, with others camping or spending time with friends and relatives.

## **Red Rock Rendezvous Participant Local Expenditures**

The RRR generated a wide variety of benefits for the local Las Vegas economy. Festival participants, through their registration and camping fees, provided revenues to the local BLM recreation program and to the Nevada state park system. Participants spent money with vendors while attending the RRR. Most of the attendees also spent money outside of the festival while they were in the area, with benefits going directly to local tourism and outdoor recreation businesses.



Considering only those participants that stayed additional nights in hotels in Las Vegas (about 400 festival attendees), it is estimated that they spent almost a half million dollars in the local area beyond what they spent while attending the festival (based on a Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Bureau 2015 visitor spending profile study). According to the Convention and Visitor Bureau visitor profiles, attendees that spent extra time in Las Vegas likely spent additional money on hotel rooms (\$82,000), food and drink (\$117,000), local transportation (\$29,000), shopping (\$49,000), sightseeing (\$6,000), and gambling (\$170,000).

In addition to the approximately 400 attendees that extended their stay in hotel rooms (and, we assume, behaved like typical Las Vegas visitors), another 400 attendees stayed extra nights in the area camping or staying with friends and relatives. While these folks were not likely to spend as much money in the area as those staying in hotels, they certainly would have infused additional money into local businesses during their stay in the area. Taking account of all of this festival-related and tourism-related spending, it is likely that the RRR was responsible for bringing as much as one million dollars to the Las Vegas economy as a result of the 2016 event.

### **Broader Economic Benefits**

The economic benefits resulting from the RRR go far beyond the annual contribution of the festival to the Las Vegas area. The festival supports and encourages interest in the sport of climbing and related activities throughout the country. The festival introduces many people to new sporting opportunities as well as to new gear options. The RRR serves a vital role in

#### **Benefits from RRR on BLM lands:**

- **\$1M contribution Las Vegas economy**
- **Broader economic impacts, personal & health benefits from outdoor activities**
- **Festival education & climbing code of ethics = environmental benefits**
- **Festival supports social networks & vibrant climbing community**

maintaining and growing the climbing community over the long term. The festival survey indicated that two-thirds of the RRR attendees came to the annual event for the first time in 2016. Festival attendees, many introduced to new activities that they are not equipped for, will return home and subsequently purchase new gear. When attendees purchase gear after being introduced to it at the festival, local businesses where attendees live benefit. Others benefit as well, including suppliers, equipment manufacturers, and related industries. Gear manufacturers benefit from the opportunity to interact with and receive feedback from climbing enthusiasts about current gear, trends, emerging techniques, and suggestions for future improvements. Outdoor recreationists also support local tourism economies when they travel for weekend and vacation adventures.

### **Social Benefits**

The benefits derived from outdoor activities and organized events that take place on public lands also go beyond the dollars that are spent or the jobs that are supported in local communities. The personal, health, and societal social benefits derived from participation in outdoor recreation are significant. An event like the RRR produces noneconomic benefits that are substantial and long-lived. There are many benefits derived by the participants, themselves, as well as benefits to the larger climbing community, outdoor enthusiasts in general, and to society at large. For example, one of the focuses of the RRR climbing clinics is to teach Leave-No-Trace techniques and outdoor ethics to new members of the climbing community. This emphasis on proper and sustainable behaviors assures that these outdoor enthusiasts practice and teach appropriate

techniques that protect the natural environment and enhance the enjoyment of all who use the public places. The climbing clinics teach safety along the proper use and selection of appropriate equipment. The festival introduces participants to the state-of-the-art in safe and appropriate techniques. These correct techniques will then be passed along by festival attendees to other climbers back home.

The festival provides opportunities to introduce new people to climbing and related outdoor activities like mountain biking. It provides a chance for young people to interact with experts and to be introduced to the outdoors. Participants form social bonds with others in the climbing community that may lead to a lifetime of healthy outdoor pursuits. Participants interact across generations and build a sense of community and belonging in the outdoors.

### **Summary**

The survey of participants to the RRR suggested that a number of positive benefits resulted from the annual event held on public lands near Las Vegas, Nevada.

Benefits include:

- As much as \$1 million contribution to the local Las Vegas Economy
- Broader economic impacts also result from outdoor activity participation
- Personal and health benefits result from participation in outdoor activities
- Social networks and a vibrant climbing community are supported by the interactions that occur at the festival
- Environmental benefits occur through teaching of ethical outdoor behaviors at the festival as well as through the development of a strong climbing community code of ethics



