

Huntington Beach

The Economics of Lake Erie Beaches

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Lake Erie beaches provide more than a nice setting for recreation; they aid the local economy by attracting diverse visitors to the local community. The results presented here are from a survey of Huntington beach users in 1998. The survey was part of a more extensive study of 1,587 users at 15 beaches along Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline. The overall results suggest that recreational values and trip expenditures are relatively high for beach recreation, but they also show that there is diversity among the beaches. The survey acquired demographic, beach perception, and beach user expenditure and visitation data along with other information. Separate results have been developed for the 15 beaches surveyed: Camp Perry Beach, Conneaut Township Park, Crane Creek State Park, East Harbor State Park, Edgewater Beach, Euclid Beach, Fairport Harbor Beach, Geneva State Park, Headlands State Park (Mentor), Huntington Beach, Lakeshore Beach (Ashtabula), Lakeview Park (Lorain), Lakeview Park (Port Clinton City Beach), Main Street Beach (Vermilion City Beach), and Walnut Beach.

Three tables of information about Huntington beach users are provided below. The tables also contain the aggregated results for all 15 beaches to see how Huntington compares to the average. The first table provides demographic, travel, and expenditure information. The second table shows how visitors spent their time during their trip. The final table shows how visitors responded to several questions relating to their perceptions of the beaches and beach quality. The three tables divide the results into single-day and multiple-day user categories. Single-day users visit the beach and return home that day while multiple-day users include an overnight stay on their trip.

**TABLE 1:
 Demographic, Travel, and Expenditure Information***

Huntington Beach	Single Day		Multiple Day	
	Huntington	All Beaches	Huntington	All Beaches
Number of respondents	68	1,143	5	445
Distance from beach (miles)	23.40	53.52	126.25	361.70
Hours spent at the beach for the entire trip	3.56	3.66	3.75	8.01
Expenditure within 10 miles of beach (dollar amount and percentage of total expenditure)	\$8.73 (54%)	\$14.79 (54%)	\$35.00 (20%)	\$252.47 (67%)
Annual Trips to This Beach	8.67	11.40	1.40	3.66
Annual Trips to Other Beaches	4.55	4.33	1.20	2.49
Annual Household Income	\$53,676	\$49,380	\$60,000	\$55,843

* Date reported are averages.

Table 1 provides a profile of the average Huntington Beach visitor. The average income for beach visitors is greater than \$49,000. Beach users tend to visit frequently, with single day users taking an average of over 13 trips per year; 8.5 of these trips are to Huntington Beach and 4.5 trips are to other Lake Erie beaches. Multiple day users take approximately 2 trips to the Lake Erie region, with 50% of those trips to the same area and beach. A large proportion of total trip expenditure, more than 50%, is spent within 10 miles of the beach. This expenditure data, along with single day visitation and trip estimates for each beach, allow direct economic impact estimates for single day beach visitors. It is estimated that single day visitors to Huntington spend \$675 thousand in the local area each season. Summing the economic impact estimates for the 14 individual beaches (Euclid excluded because of lack of data) indicates that the total estimated 144,000 annual single day visitors provide \$20 million to the local community, or \$1.4 million per beach.

**TABLE 2:
How Visitors Spend Their Time**

Huntington Beach Number of respondents	Single Day		Multiple Day	
	Huntington 68	All Beaches 1,143	Huntington 5	All Beaches 445
<i>Percent of trip time in different activities:</i>				
Beach	79	67	26	28
Fishing	01	02	00	09
Hiking	02	02	00	05
Picnicking	07	05	25	06
Shopping	01	02	11	06
Festival	01	01	10	04
Visiting Family	02	10	20	14
Restaurant	03	04	04	09
Other	06	09	08	19

Note: Columns do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 2 shows that beach visitation is the primary destination for the single-day visitors who spend 67% of their trip time on the beach. Multiple-day visitors spend a much greater proportion of their time in other activities, such as visiting family, and only spend about one-quarter (28%) of their trip time at the beach. These trends tend to hold for Huntington respondents. Although beaches are not a main attraction for individuals taking longer trips to the region, they clearly play a strong role in the set of recreational activities in which these individuals are engaged.

**TABLE 3:
Beach Perceptions*** Scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

Huntington Beach Number of respondents	Single Day		Multiple Day	
	Huntington 68	All Beaches 1,143	Huntington 5	All Beaches 445
This beach is well maintained	3.77	3.67	4.60	3.57
This beach is safe	3.97	3.83	4.40	3.83
This beach is too congested or crowded	2.82	2.30	3.00	2.36
This beach has good facilities (restrooms, parking...)	3.48	3.43	4.20	3.13
I visit because of near by natural areas	2.71	2.75	3.20	2.94
This beach's water quality is good enough for swimming	3.39	3.57	4.00	3.73
Lake Erie water quality is good enough for swimming	3.26	3.45	3.80	3.63
I would visit more often if maintained better	2.80	2.80	1.60	2.85
I would visit more often if less congested	3.01	2.46	2.80	2.45
I would visit more often if this beach had better facilities	2.91	2.84	2.40	2.90
I would visit more often if a natural area was near by	2.73	2.64	2.00	2.64
I would visit more often if this beach had more activities	2.97	2.88	1.60	2.92

* Data reported are averages.

Table 3 presents the average response to a series of questions about the beach they were visiting. In general, visitors appear to believe that beaches are safe and well maintained, and that Lake Erie water quality is good enough for swimming. They do not appear to believe that the beaches are too crowded. Huntington Beach respondents have similar perceptions. The fact that the respondents would not visit more often if changes were made suggests that beach visitors are satisfied with their Lake Erie beach experience.

The entire results for the 1998 beach user survey can be found on the web at www.agecon.ag.ohio-state.edu/Faculty/bsohngen/beach/beachin.htm. This research was made possible by funds from Ohio Sea Grant. Most local visitor bureaus also provided financial and in-kind assistance, including the Ashtabula Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Lake County Visitors Bureau, the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland, the Lorain Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Erie County Visitors Bureau, the Fremont/Sandusky Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Ottawa County Visitors Bureau, and the Greater Toledo Convention and Visitors Bureau. For more information contact Dr. Brent Sohngen at (614) 688-4640 or sohngen.1@osu.edu.

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