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# Tourism & Its Impacts on Rural Communities: Shelby 2018

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# **Tourism & Its Impacts on Rural Communities: Shelby 2018**

Shelby, Montana

Carter Bermingham

Iree Wheeler

Norma Nickerson, Ph.D.

A sample of visitors to Shelby completed a questionnaire regarding their visitation. Results show that most people are passing through, but participate in activities like camping, hiking, and golfing.

# **Tourism & Its Impacts on Rural Communities: Shelby 2018**

Shelby, Montana

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Case Study Report 2019-4

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## Abstract

This study was a collaborative effort between the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research and the community of Shelby, Montana to provide insight into the impacts tourism has on rural communities in Montana. Paper surveys on site were completed by 87 visitors. Results show that 36% of respondents were residents of Montana (outside of Toole County) and 62% were from out-of-state or country. Visitors spent an average of 6.37 nights away from home and 2.45 of those nights were in the town of Shelby, although 24% were only on a day trip. Most spending in Shelby was on hotel/motel/B&B/cabin rental (\$3,235). Respondents to the survey reported a total spending of \$12,956 in the Shelby area. Most respondents in Shelby were in the area because they were passing through but agreed that they visited Shelby because it is on their route, less crowded, and a charming small town. Results provide the Shelby community with useful data for future planning, marketing/promotion, and understanding the visitor spending associated with visitation.

## Executive Summary

Overnight visitors to Shelby were surveyed at the Glacier Inn, Best Western, the Visitor Information Center, Marias Museum, the Carousel Rest Area of Shelby, and by the community coordinator at other random locations in town upon encountering a visitor. The respondents represented out-of-county Montana residents (36%) and out-of-state (62%) visitors to the Shelby area. The visitors, upon arrival, make important economic contributions to the Shelby area. The results of the study are worth considering for future planning within the Shelby community.

- 76% of visitors who reside outside of Toole County spent at least one night away from home. The mean number of nights spent in Montana was 5.45 nights and 2.45 nights in Shelby.
- 50% of respondents who stayed in Shelby reported staying at a hotel/motel/B&B/rental followed by 21% staying at a private campground and 19% with friends or relatives.
- More money was spent by these out-of-county visitors in hotel/motel/B&B/rental (\$3,235), gasoline (\$2,728), and restaurant/bar (\$2,648) than other spending categories.
- 41% of respondents reported that they were spending for a travel group size of two people (including respondent), while 26% were spending for a travel group of 3 or 4. The average travel group size was 3.27 people (travel group spending size).
- Visitors were mostly traveling as a couple (32%). Other group types with high response were: immediate family (31%) & friends (12%).
- Respondents traveled with a variety of age categories in their group – the highest percentages were 65-74 years old (50%), 55-64 year olds (27%), and 35-44 year olds (27%).
- Visitors, whether on this trip or in past trips, were mostly in the area for camping (20%). Other activities with high response rates were: hiking (14%) & golfing (9%).
- 38% of respondents indicated they planned to visit Shelby 1-7 days before arriving, 36% decided to visit the day of arriving.
- Visitors, whether on this trip or in past trips, were mostly in the area to visit or had visited the Carousel Rest Area (60%). Other places that were frequently visited were the Shelby Information Center (28%) and the Veteran's Memorial Flag Park (21%).
- Overall, 55% (44 people) of visitors to Shelby indicated that they were very likely to return to Shelby, with another 34% (27 people) of respondents indicating they were somewhat likely to return.

## Study Implications

Most visitors are visiting Shelby because it is on their route to somewhere else therefore it is not a destination. However, Shelby has the advantage to promote itself as a great stopover spot. It is recommended that Shelby could highlight the advantage of stopping in Shelby either to stretch the legs or spend the night by promoting the historical aspects and recreational opportunities in the area. Visitors wrote that they liked the Shelby Carousel but other activities that currently exist were not visited much providing an opportunity to expand their promotion of the community. It is recommended that the citizens of Shelby review the respondents' comments from Appendix B to gain more insight into people's likes and dislikes of Shelby.

## Introduction

Shelby, MT, the county seat of Toole County, is located in north central Montana. The position of Shelby, 30 miles south of the Canadian border and roughly 80 miles east of Glacier National Park with the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe rail line passing through town makes it a natural transportation hub. Shelby boasts a uniquely picturesque Main Street with several blocks of locally owned businesses offering gifts, area art, clothing, quilting fabric, and jewelry. Multiple restaurants, a movie theatre, and various taverns round out this Northern city. Several camping/RV facilities as well as hotels and motels provide overnight accommodations for travelers.

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the characteristics of visitors to Shelby, visitor spending in Shelby, and levels of satisfaction with different aspects of visiting the area.

## Methods

A community leader of Shelby took on the responsibility to coordinate the survey efforts with the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR). The survey instrument was designed cooperatively with Shelby, printed by ITRR, and distributed in Shelby by the community coordinator. Surveys were provided to the Glacier Inn, Best Western, the Visitor Information Center, Marias Museum, and the Carousel Rest Area of Shelby, all of whom were responsible for asking visitors if they would complete the survey. In addition, some surveys were collected by the community coordinator at random locations in town when they would encounter visitors from out-of-county. Surveys were dispersed from June through September of 2018. Eighty-seven completed surveys were obtained. No documentation of the number of refusals was recorded.

## Limitations

As in all research, there are limitations to the study. Limitations for the Shelby study included the dependence on business owners to ask visitors to complete the survey. Business owners are busy and distributing surveys is not their main focus, therefore a random sampling did not occur. In addition, ITRR personnel were not present during the data collection for quality control.

## Results

Of the 87 valid responses to the residence questions, 39 percent (34 people) were from Montana and 62 percent (53 people) were from out-of-state (see Tables 1 and 2). Of all Montana respondents, 9 percent (3 people) were from Toole County while 91 percent (31 people) were from other Montana counties. Of respondents from out-of-state, 11 percent (6 people) were from Washington, 9 percent (5 people) were from Indiana, 9 percent (5 people) were from Alberta, Canada, and 8 percent (4 people) were from Texas (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Residence of all Respondents**

<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b># of total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Toole County	3	3%
Other MT County	31	36%
Montana=34		
U.S. State	33	38%
Canada	11	13%
International	4	5%
Unknown	5	6%
<b>Total all Residences</b>	<b>87</b>	

**Table 2: Out-of-State, Canadian, and International Residences**

Place of Residence	# of total
Alberta	5
Arizona	1
Australia	1
British Columbia	2
California	3
Canada	1
Colorado	1
France	2
Georgia	2
Indiana	5
Iowa	1
Ireland	1
Michigan	1
Minnesota	1
Missouri	1
Ohio	1
Ontario	2
Pennsylvania	1
Saskatchewan	1
South Dakota	2
Texas	4
United States	2
Washington	6
Wyoming	1

The mean age of respondents was 57 years old. Of those who were from outside Toole County and responded to the survey, 62 people (76%) reported that they spent at least one night away from home. Of those nights spent away from home, the greatest percent of respondents (40%) spent ten or more nights away from home. The mean number of nights spent in Montana was 5.45 nights. The mean number of nights spent in Shelby was 2.45 nights. A full breakdown of nights spent as well as results of all other questions in this survey can be found in Appendix A.

## Expenditures

Spending information was asked of visitors who reside outside of Toole County. The survey asked that they report their best estimate of the total amount of money they and their family/travel group (if applicable) spent in the Shelby area in the following categories: accommodations, restaurant or bar, groceries or snacks, gasoline, guides or outfitters, shuttles or taxis, retail goods and services, and entertainment or recreation.

Table 3 presents the expenditure data of only the non-resident respondents (those who reside outside of Toole County) who reported spending money in the categories. The mean expenditure of those who spent money for each category can be found along with the percentage of people who reported that they spent money in that category. The last column provides the total dollars spent by those respondents in each category. The total reported expenditure for respondents who spent was \$12,956.

**Table 3: Expenditure Data: Expenditures calculated using only non-residents (those who live outside of Toole County) who spent.**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>Mean expenditures of non-residents <u>who reported that they spent money in these categories</u></b>	<b>% of respondents who reported spending money in each category</b>	<b>Total dollars spent in each category <u>by respondents who spent</u></b>
Hotel/motel/B&B/rental	\$202.19 (n=16)	19%	\$3,235.00
Campground	\$61.64 (n=11)	13%	\$678.00
Restaurant/bar	\$71.57 (n=37)	44%	\$2,648.00
Gas	\$77.94 (n=35)	42%	\$2,728.00
Groceries/snacks	\$56.13 (n=30)	36%	\$1,684.00
Retail goods & services	\$87.78 (n=9)	11%	\$790.00
Rented home/cabin/room	\$130 (n=1)	1%	\$130.00
Entertainment/recreation	\$34.29 (n=31)	37%	\$1,063.00
Shuttle/Taxi	\$0 (n=0)	0%	\$0.00
Guide/Outfitter	\$0 (n=0)	0%	\$0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$12,956.00</b>

## Appendix A- Results

**Q1. Are you a resident of Montana? n=87**

39% Yes                      61% No (skip to Q3.)

**Q2. Do you reside in Toole County? n=34**

9% Yes (Skip to Q12. on back)                      91% No (Skip to Q4.)

**Q3. In what state, province, or foreign country do you reside?**

See Tables 1 and 2.

**Q4. Is this your first time visiting Shelby? n=81**

51% Yes                      49% No

**Q5. What reasons are you visiting the Shelby area? (Check all that apply.) n=84**

40% Vacation/recreation/pleasure      43% Just passing through      3% Business/convention/meeting

22% Visiting friends/relatives                      7% Shopping

**Q6. For this trip, how many nights will you spend away from home? n=81, mean=6.37**

24% 0 (Skip to Q.10)	5% 1	4% 3	1% 5	5% 7	1% 9
	11% 2	6% 4	1% 6	2% 8	40% 10 or more

**Q7. How many of those nights are in Montana? n=64, mean=5.45**

0% 0	19% 2	19% 4	2% 6	0% 8	16% 10 or more
16% 1	8% 3	13% 5	9% 7	0% 9	

**Q8. Of your nights in Montana, how many will you stay in Shelby on this trip? n=64, mean=2.45**

34% 0 (Go to Q.10)	22% 1	11% 3	0% 5	2% 7	2% 9
	27% 2	3% 4	0% 6	0% 8	0% 10 or more

**Q9. While in Shelby in which types of accommodation(s) did you stay ON THIS TRIP? (Check all that apply.) n=42**

50% Hotel/motel/B&B	21% Private campground	0% Resort/condominium
0% Rental cabin/home	19% Home of friend/relative	0% Guest ranch
14% Public land camping	0% Second home/cabin/condo	0% Vehicle in parking lot



**Q10. Please enter your best estimate of the TOTAL amount of money in US dollars you (and your family/travel group, if applicable) spent/will spend in Shelby on THIS TRIP. If you did not spend money in a category, please leave it blank. (See Table 3 for expenditures)**

**ACCOMMODATIONS in Shelby**

Hotel/motel/bed & breakfast

\$

Campground

\$

Rented home/cabin or room

\$

**FOOD in Shelby**

Restaurant/bar

\$

Groceries/snacks

\$

**TRANSPORTATION in Shelby**

Gasoline/diesel

\$

Shuttle/taxi

\$

**RETAIL/SERVICES in Shelby**

Retail goods/services

\$

Entertainment/recreation

\$

Guide/outfitting trip

\$

**Q11. How many people does the above spending represent (including yourself, i.e., your travel group/family size)? n=75; mean=3.27**

12% 1	11% 3	12% 5	0% 7	0% 9	4% more than 10
41% 2	15% 4	4% 6	0% 8	1% 10	

**Q12. What option best describes your travel group? n=81**

9% Self	31% Immediate family	7% Family/friends	0% Business associates
32% Couple	7% Extended family	12% Friends	1% Organized group/club

**Q13. Please select all the ages represented in your group: n=86 for each age category**

24% 0-5 yrs.	12% 11-17 yrs.	15% 25-34 yrs.	9% 45-54 yrs.	50% 65-74 yrs.
22% 6-10 yrs.	7% 18-24 yrs.	27% 35-44 yrs.	27% 55-64 yrs.	13% 75 and over

**Q14. How long before this trip did you make plans to spend time in Shelby? n=76**

36% The day I arrived	11% 1-4 weeks before arriving	7% Over 6 months before arriving
38% 1-7 days before arriving	9% 1-6 months before arriving	

**Q15. Please select the option that best corresponds with your level of agreement with each statement below.**

I visit Shelby because it has or is....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Total respondents
On my route	4%	2%	8%	15%	72%	4.49	n=53
Less crowded	5%	5%	16%	26%	47%	4.05	n=38
A charming small town	7%	0%	23%	21%	49%	4.05	n=43
Relaxing	7%	0%	28%	28%	38%	3.88	n=43
Quiet	11%	6%	17%	22%	44%	3.83	n=36
Close to attractions I'm visiting	13%	4%	23%	13%	47%	3.77	n=47
A scenic drive	12%	2%	28%	23%	35%	3.67	n=43
A vibrant small town	11%	3%	36%	22%	28%	3.53	n=36
Close to public lands	21%	3%	30%	12%	33%	3.33	n=33
Outdoor Recreation	19%	7%	29%	26%	19%	3.19	n=31
Where family/friends live	33%	5%	13%	10%	39%	3.15	n=39
Shopping	16%	14%	38%	11%	22%	3.08	n=37
Special places to eat	19%	19%	29%	10%	23%	2.97	n=31

**Q16. On this trip as well as past visits, what places have you visited in the Shelby area (check all that apply). n=87 (Top 5 highlighted)**

6% Shelby Walking Tour      **20% Marias Museum of History and Art**      **60% Carousel Rest Area**  
**28% Shelby Info. Center**      12% Toole County Library and Native American Artifacts  
 13% Champions Park      **21% Veteran's Memorial Flag Park**      **15% Sweetgrass Hills**  
 7% Baker's Massacre Interpretive Signage

**Q17. On this as well as past trips, what activities have you participated in during your visit to the Shelby area (check all that apply). n=87 (Top 5 highlighted)**

**20% Camping**      1% Horseback riding      2% Motorcycle touring      **9% Golfing**  
**14% Hiking**      3% Floating      5% Wildlife watching      **8% Pool & Splash Park**  
**7% Fishing**      3% Hunting      1% Bird watching      **0% OHV/ATV riding**  
 0% Bicycle touring      5% Bowling      0% Tennis      2% Baseball

**Q18. What is your age? n=77; Range=23-82, mean=57.25**

**Q19. What is your gender? n=80**

35% Male      65% Female

**Q20. How likely are you to visit Shelby again? n=80**

55% Very likely      34% Somewhat likely      11% Unlikely

**Q21. Please tell us what you liked about Shelby.**

See Appendix B

**Q22. Please tell us what you did not like about Shelby.**

See Appendix B

## Appendix B: Open-ended Responses

### Q21. Please tell us what you liked about Shelby.

2 quilt shops
A good town to visit
Came for the carousel.
Carousel
Carousel
Carousel
Carousel rest area was awesome!
Carousel rest area. Will be back to visit the town.
Clean, relaxing, small MT town.
Cute little town.
everything
Everything! Favorite of the kids was carousel rest area and veteran flag park.
Extremely friendly people.
Family and friends
Friendliness at Visitor Center. Pretty town.
Friendliness. Pretty.
Friendly
Friendly people- loved the museums and the carousel. Reasonable, comfortable camping (Shel-oole)
Friendly staff at VC
Friendly visitor center. Great info!
Friendly visitor center. Thank you!
Great campground! Easy access from route 2.
Hometown friendliness
Hospitality. Very clean.
I grew up here.
I like the carousel.
I really like the area, similar to western Kansas (my permanent home). Rolling hills and wheat fields.
Just arrived
Library and the people are very friendly.
lively downtown
Love Cottage Keep! Peaceful.
Loved the carousel!!
My family and I are from Cut Bank. When we started reading about the carousel we couldn't wait for it to open.
my mom says to her husband, interesting things go on in small towns!
N/A
Nice people.
Nice people. Friendly.
Nice place to rest and relax.
On my route from Dickinson, ND to Whitefish, MT.
Park-Nice lunch spot.
Pleasant small town.
Quiet, clean friendly town. We were at Days Inn RV Park- Close to Glacier, National Forest, Etc. On way to (illegible).
RV park



N/A
Needs more restaurants.
None (nothing)
None.
Not many family restaurants like town pump used to have.
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing noted.
Nothing yet.
Nothing, everything is great.
Nothing.
Potholes! Revive downtown.
Really not much to do
Roads between liberty county and Shelby.
They could use a Starbucks.
Traffic passes cyclists quickly on 2 (group of 27 cyclists)
Train noise
What's not to like?
Wind

## Appendix C: Letter to Shelby Chamber and Business Owners



To: Shelby Chamber of Commerce and business owners

From: Norma Nickerson, Director, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research

RE: Shelby visitor survey

Date: 6/15/18

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) was approved by the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council to utilize our survey kit for five small towns in Montana. Shelby, through the efforts of a community coordinator, has been selected to participate in this project. The other communities participating in the project are Lima, Deer Lodge, White Sulphur Springs, and Thompson Falls.

The purpose of the project is to assist five small communities with their visitor data through conducting the survey kit customized to their community.

### Objectives

- To assist communities in understanding their local visitor by waiving the \$700 fee for up to five communities;
- To understand the visitor demographics, trip characteristics, activities, attractions to the community, and visitor planning time frame, and;
- To assess the spending patterns of visitors to the community.

The survey kit is conducted as follows:

1. ITRR develops the survey instrument template
2. ITRR works with a community leader to determine the survey methods best suited for the community
3. ITRR prints ~200 surveys and mails them to the community leader
4. The community collects the data based on the methods and time frame chosen
5. Upon completion of data collection, surveys are mailed back to ITRR
6. ITRR conducts data entry, analysis, and report for the community

After discussion with a community coordinator, we decided the most efficient and useful way to collect data is to ask accommodation owners (motels, cabins, rented rooms, campgrounds) to assist by asking each guest all summer long and possibly through September, to complete the questionnaire before they leave Shelby. In addition, one or two restaurants in town could ask patrons to complete the survey while waiting for their meal (but these folks cannot reside in Toole County). Finally, if time allows for some community members to survey visitors at the Carousel rest area, that would give us an idea of who stops in town, but doesn't necessarily spend the night.

We ask that the chamber and business owners provide their 'blessing' and passion for this study. It can only be successful if everyone is on board and persistent throughout the summer in data collection.

The resulting data will provide Shelby with information about their visitor behavior which can ultimately assist the community in economic development. If you have questions, please call or email me at: 406-243-2328; [norma.nickerson@umontana.edu](mailto:norma.nickerson@umontana.edu).

Thank you!

**\*\*\*All community names have been changed for purposes of anonymity\*\*\***