

# 1998 Market Survey of La Crosse Area Tourists & Visitors

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the La Crosse Area Convention & Visitors Bureau's (LACVB's) missions is to develop marketing and advertising campaigns for businesses located within the La Crosse area. A market survey was developed jointly by the LACVB and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Recreation Management staff and students. Information for this report comes from visitor responses to an insert card that was distributed in the 1998 Area Visitor & Information Guide. This report provides information about visitors who came to the area, and about those that made inquiries, but did not visit La Crosse. The LACVB and La Crosse businesses will use the information from this survey report to: 1) improve the cost effectiveness of future marketing efforts, 2) accurately select those market areas with the best market potential, and 3) collectively enhance the tourist attractions and services that visitors describe as important or very desirable.

An incentive was provided for those survey respondents who completed the survey. Their names were entered in a drawing for an all expense paid weekend in La Crosse. The response rate for this survey was low but still sufficient enough to provide useful information. A total of 813 usable surveys were returned. Of those usable surveys, 64%, or 517 visitors, actually visited La Crosse. Those who did visit were asked to answer a series of questions about their visit. For an explanation of the survey methodology and the survey instrument employed in this study, please refer to Appendix B and C.

## PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this study is to provide valuable information to the LACVB and La Crosse area businesses to help them maintain and improve the growth of La Crosse's tourism industry. Following are some of the key findings that are reported along with other related information:

- Origin of visitors
- Sources for making travel plans
- Month visited
- Type of visiting party
- Reason for visit
- Attractions and activities during visit
- Type of lodging used
- Length of stay
- Parties daily expenditures

Recommendations from these findings will be used to make more effective and efficient use of the LACVB's marketing resources. These findings will also be used by the LACVB members to make vital decisions within their respective businesses.

## RESULTS

The survey results in this section of the report are divided into three segments. The first segment describes results in aggregate form. In the second segment the results are subdivided and described by geographical market regions. Finally, the last segment provides the same type of information as the second segment but is subdivided by place of lodging. All results are based only on the 517 respondents who visited the La Crosse area. The exceptions are Table 1, Market Region, and Table 3, Source Used for Making Travel Plans. These two tables include both visitors and non-visitors.

### General Results

Table 1 shows the survey respondents' place of origin. Maps that visually define the market regions can be found in Appendix A. These maps are self explanatory with one exception, the North Central region of the United States. The four states, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois are excluded from this region. These states are reported individually because they represent primary market areas, where as the other states included in the North Central Region are considered secondary markets.

**Table 1**  
**Origin of Survey Respondents - Visitor & Non-Visitor**

<b>Market Regions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
WI-Southeast	139	17.2%
WI-Northeast	74	9.1
WI-Northwest	71	8.8
WI-South Central	70	8.6
WI-Southwest	21	2.6
<b>State Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>46.3%</b>
IL-North	108	13.3
IL	19	2.3
<b>State Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>15.6%</b>
MN-Metro	63	7.8
MN-Southeast	28	3.5
MN	4	.5
<b>State Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
IA-East	30	3.7
IA-South Central	26	3.2
IA-North Central	21	2.6
IA-West	8	1.0
<b>State Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>10.5%</b>
US-North Central	67	8.3
US-West & Southwest	34	4.2
US-East	22	2.7
<b>State Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
<b>FOREIGN</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>N = 813</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to the survey*

A review of Table 1 shows that La Crosse's major market areas include all of Wisconsin, (excluding the Southwest), Northern Illinois, and Minnesota's Metro area. This primary market represents 64.8 percent of the total geographic market area. Primary market is defined as those market regions containing the largest number of visitors or potential visitors. A secondary market area includes Southeast Minnesota, all of Iowa, (excluding the Western portion), and North Central United States. This secondary market area represents 21.3 percent. The two market areas combined depict 86.1 percent of the surveyed market.

Looking at the immediate four-state region another market pattern is evident. Wisconsin visitors represent 46.3 percent, Illinois represents 15.6 percent, 11.8 percent are from Minnesota (66 percent of the Minnesota residents are from the Metro area) and 10.5 percent are from Iowa. A large concentration of visitors originate from the areas of Southeast Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. These findings of visitor origin are similar to those found in the Wisconsin Department of Tourism 1997-1998 In-Market Four Season Study, which listed Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota as the top three market areas.

**Table 2**  
**Travel Miles**

Miles	Frequency	Percent.
1 - 49	13	2.5%
50 - 99	38	7.5
100 - 149	65	12.7
150 - 199	136	26.7
200 - 249	101	19.8
250 - 299	52	10.2
300 - 349	18	3.5
350 +	87	17.1
	<b>N = 510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Visitors were asked how many miles they traveled to reach La Crosse. Table 2 shows the largest portion of visitors (69.4%) came from within 100 to 299 miles of La Crosse. Another sizable segment (17.1%) came from beyond 350 miles. The average number of miles traveled by the typical party was approximately 200 miles.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 3**  
**Sources Used for Making Travel Plans (N = 607 Visitors)**

Resource	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Travel Agencies/AAA	166	27.3%
Travel Guides & Brochures	147	24.2
Magazine	122	20.1
Visitor Center	108	17.8
Chamber of Commerce	86	14.2
Newspaper	67	11.0
Internet	59	9.7
Friends/Relatives	52	8.6
1-800 Number	22	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>136.6%*</b>

*\*Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Respondents were asked to list the specific sources they used to obtain information when making their travel plans. Table 3 reveals that travel agencies which includes AAA (27.3%), along with travel guides and brochures (24.2%) were the most popular information sources by a sizable margin. The next most popular sources for information were travel-related magazines (20.1%) and visitor information centers/bureaus (17.8%).

**Table 4**  
**Month of Visit**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
January	28	6.0%
February	19	4.1
March	36	7.7
April	38	8.2
May	45	9.7
June	65	14.0
July	73	15.7
August	59	12.7
September	40	8.6
October	55	11.8
November	4	.9
December	3	.6
	<b>N = 465</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

The summer months of June, July and August were the time of year when most visitors came to the La Crosse area, (see Table 4 and Figure 2). These three months account for over 42% of the visitors. October ranked fourth and is likely influenced by the combined effect of Oktoberfest attendees and visitors viewing the fall colors. The slowest season appears to be November and December and there was a slight slump in February as well. The winter months may be underestimated because of the timing of the survey. The survey process began and ended during the winter months. (See Appendix B)

**Table 5**  
**Reason For Not Visiting**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Will Visit in Future	41	35.7%
Time Constraints	37	32.2
Other Interests	21	18.3
Not in Area	13	11.3
Young Children	3	2.6
	<b>N = 115</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

In Table 5 respondents were asked to describe the reason that they could not visit La Crosse in 1998. Thirty six percent of the 813 respondents did not visit the area. Approximately one-third of the non-visitors stated that they would visit in the future, and another third said that time constraints was their primary reason for not visiting in 1998. Although this table provides some evidence of why people did not visit, it should be noted that only 39% of the 296 non-visitors responded to this question.

**Table 6**  
**Number of People in Visiting Party**

<b>Number in Party</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	38	7.6%
2	262	52.4
3	60	12.0
4	72	14.4
5	25	5.0
6	16	3.2
7	7	1.4
8	3	.6
9	1	.2
10	5	1.0
11 or more	11	2.2
	<b>N = 500</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Visitors were asked to identify the number and type of persons in their party, (see Tables 6 & 7). The two-person party (52.4%) made up the largest percentage of visitors. Not only does this party size represent over half of the visitors to the La Crosse area, but it also shows the majority of them are couples (Table 7). The 3 or 4 size party (12.0% & 14.4%) was the next most common, but represented a much smaller portion of the parties who visited La Crosse. The average party size was 3.7 persons.

**Table 7**  
**Type of Party**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single	38	7.6%
Couple	135	27.0
Older Couple (55 & older)	91	18.2
Young Family (children under 12)	39	7.8
Family (children over 12)	67	13.4
Small Group (11 or less)*	120	24.0
Large Group (12 or more)	10	2.0
	<b>N = 500</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

\*A party of two of the same sex was classified as a small group, not as a couple.

The types of visiting parties, as shown in Table 7, were singles, couples, families, and groups. Couples under age 55 was the dominant party type (27.0%) with small groups (2 to 11 at 24.0%) ranking second. It should be noted that approximately 30 percent of the small group parties were of the two-person size. Both persons in these instances were of the same sex; thus, they were not listed as a couple.

The next significant type of party was older couples (18.2%) and then families with older children (13.4%). These results in Table 6 and 7 are similar to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's 1997-1998 In-Market Four Season Study.

**Table 8**  
**Primary Reason for Trip**  
**Frequency**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Vacation/Sightseeing	258	50.2%
Visit Friends/Family	83	16.1
Meeting/Convention	60	11.7
Attending Events	56	10.9
Shopping	23	4.5
Visit a College	18	3.5
Visit Doctor	16	3.1
	<b>N = 514</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Visitors were asked to identify the primary reason for their visit by selecting them from a list of reasons stated in the survey (see Table 8). Vacation/sightseeing (50.2%) was the most frequently selected reason for visiting La Crosse. Some other common reasons were to visit family/friends (16.1%), attend meeting/convention (11.7%), and attend area events (10.9%).

**Table 9**  
**Attractions or Activities Participated in During Visit**  
**N = 488 Visitors**

<b>Attraction or Activity</b>	<b># of Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Participation</b>
Sightseeing	392	80.3%
Shopping	327	67.0
Riverboat Cruise	139	28.5
Museums/Historical	112	23.0
Festivals	90	18.4
Fishing	42	8.6
Bicycling	36	7.4
Attend Events	26	5.3
Sporting Event	13	2.7
Visit a College	10	2.0
Skiing Downhill/X-country	8	1.6
Snowmobiling	5	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>245.9%*</b>

*\*Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses*

Respondents were asked to check off from a list all of the attractions and activities that were a part of their La Crosse visit. Three popular categories of attractions and activities are identifiable in Table 9. The first category includes sightseeing (80.3%) and shopping (67.0%). These were the two most popular activities by a large margin. Similarly, shopping was also listed as one of the most popular activities in Wisconsin's 1998 Urban In-Market Study, and in Illinois's 1995-1997 Pleasure and Travel Study. The less dominant second category included riverboat cruises (28.5%), visits to museums/historical sites (23.0%), and festivals (18.4%). The third category, though smaller than the first two, had notable participation rates. This third category included fishing (8.6%), biking (7.4%), and attending area events (5.3%).

**Table 10**  
**Type of Lodging Visitor Used**

<b>Lodging Used</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Hotel/Motel	342	83.0%
Family and Friends	38	9.2
Campground	20	4.9
Bed and Breakfast	7	1.7
Resort	3	.7
Vacation Home	2	.5
	<b>N = 412</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Table 10 shows hotels/motels (83.0%) were by far the most popular choice of lodging for La Crosse visitors. Staying with family and friends (9.2%) ranked second and campgrounds (4.9%) was third. These findings are similar to Wisconsin's 1997-1998 In-Market Four Season Study. The state's study exhibited the same order of ranking for these three popular choices of lodging.

**Table 11**  
**Number of Nights Visitor Stayed**

<b>Number of Nights</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	93	32.4%
2	102	35.5
3	40	13.9
4	18	6.3
5	12	4.2
6	8	2.8
7 or more	13	4.9
	<b>N = 286</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Over eighty percent of all those who stayed overnight stayed three nights or less (see Table 11), with one and two nights (32.4% and 35.5%) being the most popular choices. Three night stays (13.9%) was the next most prevalent length of stay. The average night stay for a typical travel party was 3.0 nights.

**Table 12**  
**Daily Expenditure of Travel Party**

<b>Dollars</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
\$0-60	293	77.9%
\$61-99	7	1.9
\$100-150	46	12.2
\$151-350	24	6.4
\$351+	6	1.6
	<b>N = 376</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question*

Visitors were asked to identify the amount of money their party allocated for each day of their trip (see Table 12). Most visitors (77.9%) stated that they allotted approximately \$60

dollars per day. A much smaller percentage, 12.2%, stated they allocated \$100 to \$150 dollars per day. The typical travel party spent approximately \$79 dollars per day.<sup>2</sup>

Investigators believe the results in Table 12 may be misleading. Read the Interpretation and Recommendations section in this report before making judgement on the data contained in this table.

## RESULTS BY REGION

La Crosse's geographic market regions were divided into 18 market areas. It was hoped this would help investigators determine whether there were any unique characteristics among visitors coming from certain market regions. Hence, this section explains unique characteristics of regions that differ from the general norms that were reported in the first section of this report. As mentioned previously, Appendix A includes maps that display the market regions.

**Table 13**  
**Sources Used to Plan Trip by Market Region N= 607 Visitors**

Region	Visitor Center	Chamber of Commerce	Friends Relatives	800 Number	Internet	Magazine	Newspaper	Guides & Brochures	Travel Agencies
WI-SW	3	4	2	1	1	4	2	3	2
WI-SC	6	7	6	4	6	9	3	11	19
WI-SE	15	16	6	2	8	20	13	27	25
WI-NE	13	9	1	3	5	9	3	19	22
WI-NW	15	9	4	2	4	10	7	15	6
MN-SE	1	3	1	0	2	2	4	4	7
MN-METRO	9	7	8	1	4	6	4	11	11
MN	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
IL-N	14	5	7	4	5	24	14	23	13
IL	2	0	3	0	2	6	1	2	3
IA-E	6	2	2	2	1	2	4	5	7
IA-NC	2	4	3	1	1	3	2	7	5
IA-SC	2	3	2	1	1	3	2	3	2
IA-W	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2
US-E	3	0	0	0	4	0	1	6	7
US-NC	10	7	3	1	12	16	5	4	20
US-W&SW	5	6	2	0	2	3	1	5	12
FOREIGN	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>									
Responses	108	86	52	22	58	122	67	146	165
Column %	*17.9%	14.2%	8.6%	3.6%	9.6%	20.2%	11.1%	24.1%	27.3%

*\*Column percents are based upon the number of visitors and not the number of responses.*

Table 13 examines the relationship between the information sources visitors used to plan their travel and their place of origin. Travel agencies, (e.g. AAA), and guides/brochures were the primary sources used in planning trips to the La Crosse area. Travel agencies were used by 27.3% of all visitors. The majority of those using travel agencies (52.1%) came from one of four regions - South Central, Southeast, and Northeast Wisconsin, or North Central United States. Next in importance were guides and brochures. In comparison, 24.1% of all visitors

<sup>2</sup>This is not an exact average because it is based upon dollar ranges.



used guides and brochures. The majority of the guides and brochure users (57.5%) came from Eastern Wisconsin, Northwest Wisconsin or Northern Illinois. There were other sources used, but these sources were slightly less popular. These might be termed as secondary sources. Magazines was a good secondary source, especially in Southeast Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, and North Central United States regions. Two other notable secondary sources were visitor centers and newspapers. Visitor centers were particularly popular with Wisconsin and Northern Illinois visitors, while newspapers were quite popular with Southeast Wisconsin and Northern Illinois visitors.

**Table 14**  
**Type of Party by Market Region N= 497 Visitors**

Region	Single N=38	Couple N=134	Older Couple N=89	Young Family N=39	Family N=67	Small Group* N=111	Large Group N=19
WI-SW	5.3%	3.0%	3.4%	0.0%	4.5%	4.5%	10.5%
WI-SC	5.3	6.7	9.0	7.7	6.0	11.7	15.8
WI-SE	18.4	17.2	14.6	10.3	22.4	16.2	10.5
WI-NE	7.9	11.2	9.0	15.4	7.5	9.0	10.5
WI-NW	7.9	5.2	12.4	7.7	14.9	14.4	5.3
MN-SE	5.3	3.7	3.4	2.6	6.0	3.6	5.3
MN-METRO	0.0	15.7	9.0	5.1	6.0	7.2	10.5
MN	2.6	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IL-N	7.9	14.9	6.7	12.8	7.5	6.3	15.8
IL	2.6	3.0	4.5	5.1	1.5	1.8	0.0
IA-E	2.6	4.5	2.2	7.7	1.5	5.4	0.0
IA-NC	2.6	1.5	3.4	10.3	1.5	3.6	0.0
IA-SC	2.6	0.7	1.1	2.6	3.0	3.6	5.3
IA-W	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.5	1.8	0.0
US-E	7.9	3.7	6.7	0.0	1.5	2.7	0.0
US-NC	15.8	5.2	7.9	7.7	7.5	8.1	5.3
US-W&SW	5.3	3.0	4.5	2.6	6.0	0.0	5.3
FOREIGN	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.5	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N= number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category.*

*\*A party of two of the same sex was classified as a small group, not as a couple.*

Table 14 examines the relationship between the make up of the visiting party and the party's place of origin. Couples and small groups appear to be the two most common types of travel party that visited La Crosse. Couples were the larger of the two and the majority of these couples (59.0%) came from four regions - Southeast Wisconsin, Northeast Wisconsin, Minnesota Metropolitan area, and Northern Illinois. In comparison, 51.3% of the travel parties that came as a small group originated from all parts of Wisconsin excluding La Crosse's own region of Southwest Wisconsin. Older couples (over 55) and families with older children (over 12), though smaller in number, represents a discernible segment of the travel parties visiting La Crosse. A large portion of older couples (27%) originated from Southeast and Northwest Wisconsin. Similarly, a large portion of families (37.3%) came from these same two regions.

**Table 15**  
**Place Stayed by Market Region N= 409 Visitors**

Region	Hotel/ Motel N=339	Campground N=20	Family/ Friends N=38	Other N=12
WI-SW	2.1%	0.0%	7.9%	0.0%
WI-SC	9.7	5.0	7.9	0.0
WI-SE	20.1	5.0	10.5	8.3
WI-NE	11.2	0.0	7.9	16.7
WI-NW	8.6	5.0	15.8	33.3
MN-SE	3.8	0.0	2.6	0.0
MN-METRO	9.4	15.0	5.3	0.0
MN	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
IL-N	10.0	15.0	7.9	0.0
IL	2.7	10.0	0.0	0.0
IA-E	3.2	15.0	2.6	8.3
IA-NC	2.9	5.0	2.6	0.0
IA-SC	1.5	0.0	2.6	8.3
IA-W	1.2	5.0	0.0	0.0
US-E	3.5	0.0	2.6	16.7
US-NC	7.4	15.0	5.3	0.0
US-W&SW	2.4	5.0	15.8	8.3
FOREIGN	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N= number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category.*

Table 15 examines the relationship between the travel party's choice of lodging in La Crosse and their place of origin. As a note of explanation, the original survey data recorded responses for bed and breakfast, vacation home and resorts as classifications or categories for lodging. However, the response rate in these categories was too small to provide valid information. Thus, these forms of lodging were combined into one column titled "Other" (also see Table 10). As table 15 shows, hotel/motel was the most common form of lodging used by La Crosse visitors. The largest percentage of these hotel/motel visitors (69.0%) originated from either Wisconsin (excluding the Southwest), Minnesota Metropolitan area or Northern Illinois. In contrast, the lodging categories of campground, family/friends, and other did not exhibit any unique regional pattern. The low N in these three categories precluded investigators from making any accurate interpretation.

**Table 16**  
**Reason for Trip by Market Region N= 514 Visitors**

Region	Vacations/ Sightseeing N=256	Meeting/ Convention N=60	Shopping N=23	Attending Events N=56	Visit Family/ Friends N=82	Visit a College N=18	Visit Doctor N=16
WI-SW	2.3%	3.3%	21.7%	5.4%	2.4%	0.0%	12.5%
WI-SC	6.6	5.0	13.0	10.7	13.4	5.6	18.8
WI-SE	16.0	16.7	8.7	19.6	19.5	33.3	6.3
WI-NE	10.2	6.7	4.3	3.6	14.6	27.8	0.0
WI-NW	7.0	20.0	17.4	14.3	4.9	5.6	18.8
MN-SE	3.9	3.3	4.3	7.1	2.4	5.6	12.5
MN-METRO	9.8	8.3	4.3	8.9	7.3	11.1	6.3
MN	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IL-N	13.7	3.3	4.3	3.6	9.8	5.6	6.3
IL	3.5	0.0	8.7	1.8	2.4	0.0	6.3
IA-E	5.1	3.3	8.7	1.8	1.2	0.0	0.0
IA-NC	3.5	1.7	0.0	7.1	1.2	0.0	6.3
IA-SC	2.7	3.3	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	6.3
IA-W	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.2	0.0	0.0
US-E	3.9	6.7	0.0	5.4	2.4	0.0	0.0
US-NC	6.6	13.3	0.0	8.9	7.3	5.6	0.0
US-W&SW	2.7	5.0	4.3	0.0	8.5	0.0	0.0
FOREIGN	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N= number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category.*

Table 16 examines the relationship between the visitors' principal reason for their trip to La Crosse as compared to their place of origin. Vacation/sightseeing was the most common reason given for visiting La Crosse. Nearly half who said they came to vacation/sightsee (49.7%) were from one of four regions. Those regions were Southeast and Northeast Wisconsin, Minnesota Metropolitan area, and Northern Illinois. Those who said they came to visit family/friends (47.5%) came from three regions of Wisconsin - Southeast, South Central, and Northeast. Another 17% that came to visit family/friends came from Northern Illinois and the Minnesota Metropolitan area. About half of those who said they came for a meeting/convention came from Southeast Wisconsin, Northwest Wisconsin or North Central United States. Lastly, those who attended La Crosse area events came mainly from three regions in Wisconsin - Southeast, Northwest, and South Central.

The relationship between the party's daily travel expenditures and their place of origin was examined. There were no distinguishable patterns between regions because nearly 78% of the survey respondents chose the \$0-60 range. This can be seen in section one, Table 12. Thus, the number of responses for the other dollar ranges was so low it precluded investigators from making any accurate interpretation of this data. The relationship between number of nights stayed and place of origin was also examined producing similar results.

## RESULTS BY LODGING

For the following Tables 17-23, respondents were subdivided into separate lodging groups based upon where they stayed during their visit. Thus, each column represents the different forms of lodging used by survey respondents during their visit.

In the original survey analysis, responses for bed and breakfasts, resorts, and vacation homes were recorded (see Table 10). However, the response rate was too small to provide valid information for this section of the analysis. Thus, these forms of lodging were lumped together into the "Other" column. In addition, the number of responses for each of these forms of lodgings was too small to provide valid information. Campgrounds displayed a similar response problem. Because of their poor response rates, investigators made no comments on these forms of lodging. However, they are included in the tables because they do provide some speculative information. Lastly, the number of responses for the family/friends category was low in some tables as well.

Table 17 examines the relationship between the miles traveled to reach La Crosse and the type of lodging used.

**Table 17**  
**Travel Miles By Place Stayed N= 400 Visitors**

	Hotel/Motel	Campground	Family/Friends	Other
Miles	N= 333	N= 20	N=36	N=11
1-49	0.3%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
50-99	5.1	5.0	0.0	9.1
100-149	13.2	5.0	16.7	18.2
150-199	30.0	25.0	16.7	36.4
200-249	23.4	15.0	11.1	9.1
250-299	8.7	10.0	16.7	0.0
300-349	3.6	20.0	2.8	0.0
350+	15.6	20.0	30.6	27.3.
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

The typical hotel/motel visitor traveled an average of 190<sup>3</sup> miles to reach La Crosse. Two thirds of the hotel/motel visitors traveled from 100-249 miles to reach the area. Another smaller group, but of notable proportion, were those traveling more than 350 miles. Family/friend visitors were somewhat similar in the distances they traveled. Sixty-one percent of those who stayed with family/friends traveled from 100-299 miles to reach La Crosse. Like hotel/motel visitors there was a proportionately notable group of family/friends visitors that traveled more than 350 miles.

**Table 18**  
**Type of Party By Place Stayed N = 391 Visitors**

Party	Hotel/Motel	Campground	Family/Friends	Other
	N= 325	N=19	N=35	N=12
Single	6.8%	5.3%	11.4%	0.0%
Couple	27.4	15.8	20.0	50.0
Older Couple	17.5	36.8	22.9	16.7
Young Family	7.7	10.5	8.6	8.3
Family	13.8	10.5	17.1	0.0
Small Group (11 or less)*	23.1	15.8	17.1	16.7
Large Group (12 or more)	3.7	5.3	2.9	8.3
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

\*A party of two of the same sex was classified as a small group, not as a couple.

Table 18 looks at the party make up as compared to their choice of lodging. Hotel/motel

<sup>3</sup>This is not an exact average because it is based upon mile ranges.

(N= 325) was the most frequent form of lodging chosen by all visitors, with family/friends (N= 35) a very distant second. For hotel/motel lodging, couples (27.4%) and small groups (23.1%) were the two largest types of visiting parties. Next came older couples (17.5%) and families with older children (13.8%). Large groups is the smallest category in the hotel/motel column. Family/friends visitors appear to be evenly mixed, with the exception being the large group. The large group type of party was small in number for all forms of lodging.

**Table 19**

Reasons	<b>Reason for Trip By Place Stayed N = 408 Visitors</b>			
	Hotel/Motel N= 339	Campground N= 20	Family/Friends N= 38	Other N= 11
Vacation/Sightseeing	52.5%	60.0%	21.1%	81.8%
Meeting/Convention	15.0	5.0	2.6	0.0
Shopping	1.8	0.0	10.5	0.0
Attending Events	10.3	20.0	13.2	0.0
Visit Family/Friends	13.9	15.0	52.6	9.1
Visit a College	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Doctor	2.9	0.0	0.0	9.1
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

In Table 19 visitors identified the principal reason for their visit. This was compared with their choice of lodging. Vacation/sightseeing was the prevailing reason for visitors coming to the area regardless of where they stayed. The obvious exception were those visitors who stayed with family/friends. Still, a notable percentage of those visiting family/friends (21.1%) chose vacation/sightseeing as the primary reason for their visit. Other prevalent reasons given by hotel/motel visitors were meeting/convention (15.0%), visiting family/friends (13.9%) and attending events (10.3%). Shopping appears to have importance only for those visitors who stayed with family/friends.

**Table 20**  
**Attraction By Place Stayed N = 395 Visitors**

Attractions	<b>Attraction By Place Stayed N = 395 Visitors</b>			
	Hotel/Motel N= 326	Campground N= 20	Family/Friends N= 37	Other N= 12
Sightseeing	32.6%	33.3%	29.4%	32.4%
Festivals	6.8	11.1	12.7	5.9
Snowmobiling	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bicycling	2.6	3.7	4.9	5.9
Fishing	3.2	3.7	4.9	5.9
Skiing	0.7	0.0	0.0	2.9
Riverboat Cruise	12.8	9.3	10.8	14.7
Shopping	26.9	24.1	27.5	26.5
Museums/Historica	10.4	11.1	5.9	2.9
Sporting Event	0.7	0.0	1.0	2.9
Visit a College	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Attend Events	1.8	3.7	2.9	0.0
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

Visitors were asked to identify the attractions they visited and the activities they participated in during their visit. Table 20, thus, examines the relationship between attractions and choice of lodging. Sightseeing and shopping were the two most prevalent activities. This was true regardless of where the visitor stayed. For hotel/motel visitors, riverboat cruises and museum/historical site visits were the next most popular activities. For those staying with family/friends, festivals and riverboat cruises were very popular activities, but only half again as popular as sightseeing and shopping.

**Table 21**  
**Number of Nights Stayed By Place Stayed N = 282 Visitors**

Number of Nights	Hotel/Motel N= 241	Campground N= 13	Family/Friends N= 18	Other N= 10
1	35.7%	7.7%	16.7%	20.0%
2	35.7	38.5	38.9	40.0
3	13.7	15.4	16.7	10.0
4	4.6	23.1	5.6	10.0
5	3.7	7.7	5.6	10.0
6	2.9	7.7	0.0	0.0
7 or more	3.6	0.0	16.8	10.0
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

Table 21 examines the relationship between number of night's stayed and choice of lodging. For all forms of lodging, the two-night stay was the most popular. Beyond the two-night stay there is a progressive pattern - number of visitors declines as the number of nights increases. One exception to this pattern is visitors staying with family/friends for more than seven nights. Visitors who stay with family or friends (16.8%) may feel more comfortable with longer stays than the hotel/motel visitor may and it is certainly less expensive.

**Table 22**  
**Money Allocation By Place Stayed N = 310 Visitors**

Expenditures	Hotel/Motel N= 258	Campground N= 18	Family/Friends N= 25	Other N = 9
\$0-60	74.8%	83.3%	96.0%	55.6%
\$61-99	2.3	11.1	4.0	22.2
\$100-150	13.2	5.6	0.0	0.0
\$151-350	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
\$351+	1.6	0.0	0.0	22.2
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

Visitors were asked to record/disclose how much money their party spent per day. The average hotel/motel party spent approximately \$85<sup>4</sup> per day. Most hotel/motel visitors (74.8%) said they spent approximately \$60 per day for their party. The next most common expenditure levels for the hotel/motel visitor were the \$100-150 dollar (13.2%) and \$151-350 dollar (8.1%) ranges. In all other lodging categories the \$60 dollar range was the predominant amount spent and it was by a large margin.

<sup>4</sup>This is not an exact average because it is based upon dollar ranges.

**Table 23**  
**Source By Place Stayed N = 445 Visitors**

Source	Hotel/Motel N= 374	Campground N= 23	Family/Friends N= 32	Other N=16
Visitor Center	13.1%	13.0%	15.6%	0.0%
Chamber of Commerce	10.4	8.7	9.4	18.8
Friends/Relatives	6.7	4.3	15.6	6.3
1-800 Number	2.4	0.0	0.0	6.3
Internet	7.8	8.7	9.4	6.3
Magazine	12.3	21.7	6.3	12.5
Newspaper	5.6	4.3	9.4	6.3
Travel Guide & Brochures	20.3	17.4	18.8	31.3
Travel Agencies/AAA	21.4	21.7	15.6	12.5
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*N = number of visitors that responded to this question and/or category*

Visitors were asked to list the specific sources they used to obtain travel information. Table 23 examines the relationship between sources used and choice of lodging. Travel agencies and travel guides/brochures were the most popular sources regardless of the visitors' lodging choice. Visitors who stayed at campgrounds also saw magazines as an additional important source. Family/friends visitors identified visitor center and family/friends as other important sources. Among hotel/motel visitors other favorite sources were visitor center, magazines, and chamber of commerce. These three sources were of course less popular than travel agencies and travel guides/brochures.

## INTERPRETATION AND RECOMENDATIONS

La Crosse visitors come from nearly every region of the United States and a small number even come from other countries. However, more than 6 out of 10 visitors come from Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, or Minnesota's Twin Cities Metropolitan area. When compared with other areas, the Twin Cities, South Eastern Wisconsin, and Northern Illinois are more densely populated and this probably explains in part the high concentration of visitors from these market regions. The customary driving distance for most visitors ranged from 100 to 300 miles with 200 miles being the average distance. This being the case, Iowa is within reasonable driving time of La Crosse and yet in 1998 few visitors came from Iowa. Certainly, Iowa should be given careful attention in future marketing campaigns.

Knowing which advertising media La Crosse visitors use in seeking travel information is very helpful in planning future market efforts. This survey found four good media sources that were used by better than two thirds of the La Crosse visitors. These were travel agencies, travel guides, brochures, and travel magazines. It appears these are the best advertising sources for reaching the typical La Crosse visitor because most visitors used one or more of these four information sources. With respect to market regions it looks as though travel agencies are a very good advertising source for Eastern and South Central Wisconsin as well as North Central United States. Guides and brochures, on the other hand, seem to be quite popular in Eastern and Northwestern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois.

In comparing visitor and non-visitor respondents, the data showed that the larger percentage of respondents (64%) visited La Crosse in 1998 while another 36 percent did not visit.

However, even among non-visitors, over one third said they would visit in the near future. Another one third said time constraints hindered their efforts to visit in 1998. This being the case, future advertising should include creative messages that will help change attitudes about the struggle between insufficient time and the benefits of visiting La Crosse.

According to Robinson and Godbey's studies on American's free time, most people feel rushed with little time for vacations and other leisure activities. In answer to this dilemma, they say the most critical variable is not better technology or time saving skills, but to convince people to appreciate and savor what already exists. In other words, they need to cultivate "time-savoring" skills, so they will return to an appreciation of the simpler delights of life as they occur: nature's changing seasons, cultural heritage of the past, simple rural outdoor activities and shopping in rural America.

Thus, ads for La Crosse need to convince the first time visitor that La Crosse is an experience to be valued and savored. If the ad message is correct, visitors will come to believe it is worth the time and effort to visit La Crosse. The message should portray the feeling that this is a hassle-free place where time stands still. It should also make reference to the comfortable scenic drive to La Crosse. Finally, the message should convey that a typical one or two-night stay includes easy access to an attractive array of sightseeing and shopping opportunities. Equally popular opportunities also include the unique river cruises, the museum/historical sites, and the area festivals. Further studies may be necessary to determine periods in the calendar year when visitors have the fewest time constraints. With this knowledge ad campaigns could be scheduled to strategically coincide with these less constrained time periods. Visitor time constraints are heavily influenced by the visitor's leisure time choices and the priority placed upon those choices. If La Crosse develops creative ad campaigns around this time issue, many potential visitors may free themselves of these self-imposed time constraints and finally visit La Crosse.

Like other tourist areas of Wisconsin, summer attracts the largest number of visitors to La Crosse. Over 40 percent of the annual visitors come during the months of June, July and August. October is also a good month, due in all likelihood to the attraction of fall colors and the traditional Oktoberfest festival. The slowest months are November, December, and February. In fact, these three months represent less than six percent of the annual visitors. Percentages for December are probably lower than the true visitation rates. The reason for this speculation is the survey collection was completed in the first week of December 1998. This early completion date may have contributed to lower visitation rates. The early completion date was chosen so that the report could be published in a more timely manner.

Regardless of the December estimates there still seems to be very low visitation rates during these three winter months. This irregular seasonal demand negatively impacts the cost effectiveness of La Crosse businesses that serve tourists, especially those who operate year around. Raising the number of visitors even a few percentage points could significantly reduce this negative economic impact. In addition, many winter enthusiasts may be unaware that La Crosse not only offers numerous winter attractions and activities, but also has milder weather conditions than regions further north.

According to the survey findings, the average party size was 3.7 persons. Forty-five percent of all La Crosse visitors were couples. They were, in fact, much more common than the other party classifications — singles, family, and groups. The majority of couples tended to be younger. Three out of every five couples were under age 55. Also, there was another seven percent of La Crosse visitors that were couples, but of the same sex (classified as small group



in these results). Small groups, especially the 3 or 4-person party size, were frequent visitors representing 24 percent of all visitors. Families warrant mention as well. They were comparable in size to the small groups representing 21 percent of all visitors. Families tended to have older children with nearly two thirds of the families having children over age 12. Finally, singles amounted to only about 8 percent of all visitors to La Crosse.

When visitors were asked why they came, over half said they came to vacation or sight-see. Other typical reasons given, but much less common, were to visit family and friends, attend conventions, or attend area events. Nearly half of those who came to vacation or sight-see came from either Eastern Wisconsin, Metropolitan area of Minnesota, or Northern Illinois. For those who came to visit family and friends, nearly half originated from Wisconsin. Another 9.8 percent came from Northern Illinois as well as another 7.3 percent from Minnesota.

From a list of La Crosse attractions and activities, respondents identified what they did during their La Crosse visit. Sightseeing and shopping were by far the most frequent activities. The next most frequent activities were riverboat cruises, and visits to museums, historical sites, and festivals. Certain segments of these popular activities in all likelihood include experiences that possess a certain degree of uniqueness. In other words, other tourist destination sites that compete with La Crosse can not duplicate the same unique package of experiences. Therefore, it may be beneficial for the LACVB to assess what elements within each of these popular La Crosse attractions and activities make them unique. Recent plans and changes in La Crosse such as the City Vision 2000 Master Plan for historic downtown, trolley car for Old Town North, Delta Queen visits, local paddlewheel cruises, and new levee and walk ways could be viewed as possible examples. The unique characteristics of these and other attractions could be used as the primary focal point of future advertising campaigns.

The typical night stay was one or two nights and most visitors (83%) stayed at a hotel or motel. The next most common lodging choice was staying with family and friends. However, only 9 percent of the visitors stayed with family and friends. This group, like the hotel/motel visitor, preferred the typical two-night stay.

What the typical travel party spent on a daily basis is questionable. The survey results estimated the typical travel party spent approximately \$79 dollars per day. Some respondents may have been confused with this question. Investigators speculate that some respondents may have excluded certain costs. For example, they may have excluded lodging costs from their estimate. In other cases, they may have calculated their daily expenses on the basis of per person rather than per party. Consequently, the reported daily expenditures in this report may actually underestimate what La Crosse visitors spend during their visit.

In summary, this survey report has provided some insight into the general character of the La Crosse visitor. To some degree it has answered questions that have been plaguing the LACVB decision-makers for years. Where do most La Crosse visitors come from? What is the essential make up of a travel party? What tourist information sources do they use most? Or, what do they like to do most during their visit? Equally important, this report will likely generate further discussion and lead to further unanswered questions. Thus, in the months and years to come, this study will likely be viewed as the initial stepping-stone for future market research studies.

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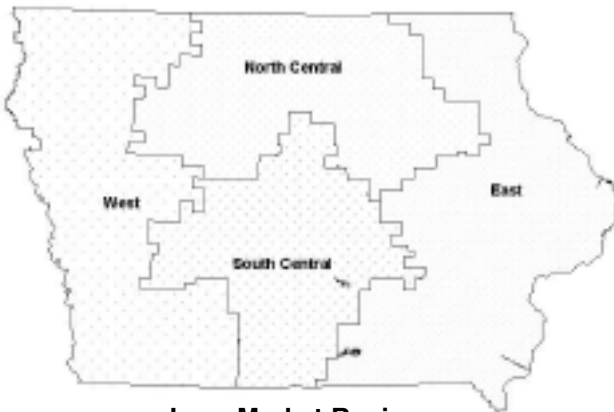
**APPENDIX A:**



**Minnesota Market Region**



**Wisconsin Market Region**



**Iowa Market Region**



**Illinois Market Region**



**United States Market Region**

## **APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY**

All of the information contained within this report was obtained through data analysis of a written survey that was created and distributed by the LACVB. The survey was a “bounce back” insert card that was placed in the LACVB’s 1998 Area Visitor & Information Guide. The survey was conducted between the dates of January 1, 1998 and December 4, 1998. A total of 77,125 guides were distributed with the inserted survey card. Thirty eight percent of the guides (29,595) were mailed directly to people who contacted the Convention & Visitor Bureau for information. From this distribution, a total of 813 usable surveys were returned. As a result, the return rate for the direct mailing was 2.8% and for the total guide distribution it was 1.1%. Both of these return rates are rather low. However, this report still offers some vital information for the LACVB and its members. Of the 813 responses 517 of the respondents visited La Crosse while 296 did not visit.

Some of the data that was gathered from the surveys was not reported in the findings. The small number of responses in certain areas of the findings made the information statistically invalid. An example of this can be seen in Tables 17 through 23 where an “Other” category was created for Type of Lodging. This category includes bed and breakfast, resort, and vacation home. The numbers in each of these three lodging areas was too low to report individually. Consequently, investigators combined them so that they could provide some degree of speculative information. Other minor data was left out of the report because the low frequency within this data could lead to statistically invalid findings. On the other hand, there are areas of the report where categories were added because the response rates were high enough to substantiate their validity. This can be seen in Tables 8 and 9.

Investigators experienced difficulty in statistically coding a survey question that described the size, age and gender of the visiting party. Because there was no easy means of coding the survey question, investigators created a coding system that was done manually as the data was entered into the computer. The codes in question are the party types seen in Table 7. This manual coding caused some minor inaccuracy in frequency and percentage measurements for small and large group parties.

The total responses in Table 3 (responses = 829) and Table 13 (responses = 826) were different. They both should have been equal to 829. There is a logical explanation for this error.

Respondents were asked to write their address on the back of the survey card. The zip codes in these addresses were used to map the place of origin (i.e. market regions) for all of the respondents. Three respondents failed to provide a legible or complete address, however they did fill out the entire survey. Therefore, it was decided these three surveys would be included as valid surveys. Investigators believe this small difference (3 responses) should not have caused any notable statistical error in the reported findings of Table 13.

Data from the survey was coded and analyzed by using a statistical software program called SPSS. The statistical methods used for this report were frequencies and cross tabulations. Means and percentages were also calculated to aid in the data analysis.

### APPENDIX C: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Win a Free Trip to  
The La Crosse Area**

Thanks for taking the time to complete this tourism economic survey for the La Crosse Area.

By simply taking 5 to 10 minutes to complete and return this survey, we will enter your name in our drawing for a Free, Fun and Exciting Weekend in La Crosse.

To be included in this drawing, please complete the information below and the survey.

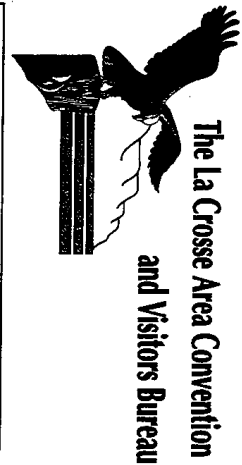
**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Company** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_



What specific source of information do you use to get information for your travel plans? \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, I visited the La Crosse area in (month in 1998) \_\_\_\_\_
- No, I was not able to visit the La Crosse area because \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes to the above, please continue:

Please note the number of people in your traveling party in each of the following categories:

	Male(s)	Female(s)
Under 12 years	_____	_____
12-17 years	_____	_____
18-25 years	_____	_____
26-39 years	_____	_____
40-55 years	_____	_____
Over 55	_____	_____

I spent the night in the La Crosse area.  
 Yes  No

- If yes, I stayed \_\_\_\_\_ night(s):
- in a hotel/motel  with friends/family
  - Campground  Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - Bed & Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

The primary reason for my trip was (check one):

- Vacation/Sightseeing  Attending Events
- Meeting/Convention  Visit Friends/Family
- Shopping  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Check any attractions, events or activities you attended while in the La Crosse area:

- Sightseeing  Downhill/Cross Country Skiing
- Festival  River Boat Cruise
- Snowmobiling  Shopping
- Bicycling  Museums/Historical
- Fishing  Other \_\_\_\_\_

How many miles did you travel one way from your place of residence to the La Crosse area?

- 1-49  200-249
- 50-99  250-299
- 100-149  300-349
- 150-199  Over 350

How much money did you allocate for each day spent on vacation by your party? \_\_\_\_\_

Will you visit the La Crosse Area again?

- Yes  No If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like updated information on the La Crosse area?

- Yes  No