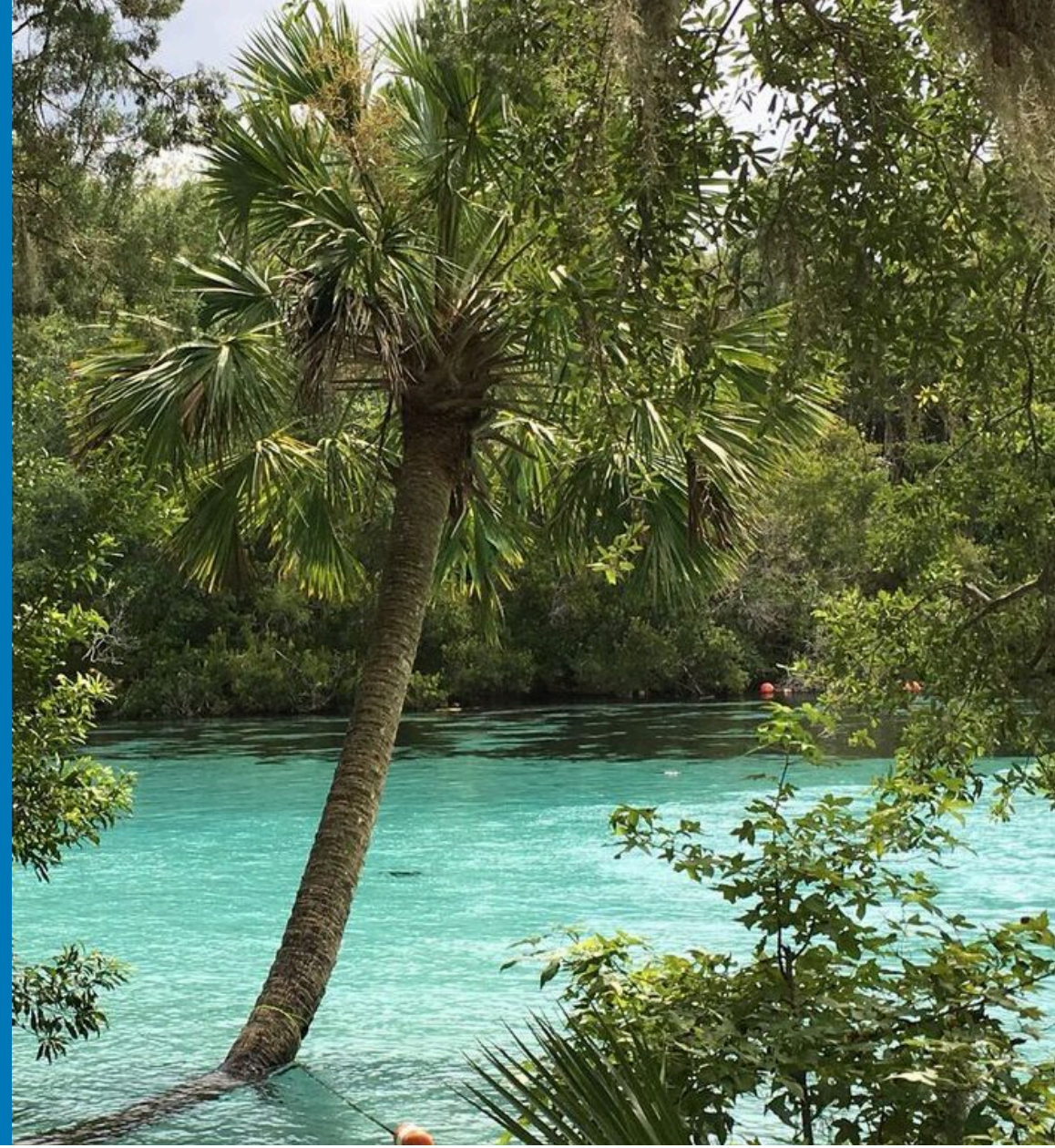


Ocala/MARION COUNTY VCB

Economic Impact Study &
Visitor Tracking Report
Oct-Dec 2024



STUDY OBJECTIVES: VISITOR JOURNEY



- Planning cycle
- Planning sources
- Reasons for visiting
- Recall of destination messaging

- Visitor origin
- Party size
- Party composition
- Demographics
- Number of visits to the area

- Mode of transportation
- Accommodations
- Booking
- Length of stay
- Activities in destination
- Visitor spending

- Satisfaction of Ocala/Marion County area
- Likelihood of returning
- Evaluation of destination attributes
- Painting a picture for others

- Number of visitors
- Expenditures
- Room nights generated
- Occupancy, ADR, RevPAR

Visitor Tracking Study

- » Interviews were completed in person and online with **762 visitors** at local hotels, attractions, and events between **October 1, 2024** and **December 31, 2024**



Partner & Event Involvement

- » Appleton Museum of Art
- » KP Hole Park
- » Silver Springs State Park
- » HDG Hotels
- » Hampton Inn and Suites
- » Circle Square Cultural Center
- » MCA & Brick City Center for the Arts
- » Canyon Zipline & Adventure Park
- » Santos Bike Shop
- » WEC
- » FAST Aquatic Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



VISITOR JOURNEY: ECONOMIC IMPACT



Oct - Dec 2024 TOURISM SNAPSHOT



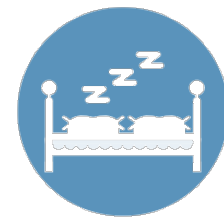
\$1,400,448

TDT
COLLECTIONS



322,700

ROOM
NIGHTS



66.3%

OCCUPANCY
RATE



\$128.54

AVERAGE DAILY
RATE



\$85.26

REVENUE PER AVAILABLE
ROOM

2024 vs. 2023

↑ 25.7%

↑ 32.9%

↑ 20.5%

↑ 12.1%

↑ 35.0%

- » Hurricanes Helene and Milton made landfall in late September and Early October. Hurricane evacuees and recovery workers had a strong impact on visitor and lodging metrics in October to December 2024.
- » There was a return of a longer trip planning cycle as last year, Oct-Dec 2023 was historically a shorter trip planning cycle (48 days) compared to the previous year 2022 and the current year, 2024 which were both averaging a planned trip at 57 days in advance.
- » Average Travel party size decreased from 3.0 people in 2023 to 2.7 in 2024.
- » Length of stay increased from 3.5 nights in 2023 to 3.8 nights in 2024.
- » First time visitation increased from 31% in 2023 to 36% in 2024.

VISITOR & LODGING METRICS

Visitor Statistics ¹	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024	Percent Change
Visitors ²	344,400	360,800	+ 4.8%
Direct Expenditures ³	\$141,948,600	\$166,433,800	+ 17.2%
Total Economic Impact	\$220,020,300 ⁴	\$250,792,600 ⁴	+ 14.0%

Lodging Statistics ⁵	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024	Percent Change
Occupancy	55.1%	66.3%	+ 20.5%
Room Rates	\$114.69	\$128.54	+ 12.1%
RevPAR	\$63.15	\$85.26	+ 35.0%
Room Nights	242,800	322,700	+ 32.9%
TDT Collections	\$1,114,494	\$1,400,448	+ 25.7%
Hotel Units	4,547	5,056	+ 11.2%
Vacation Rental Units	246	232	- 5.7%

¹ Hurricanes Helene and Milton made landfall in late September and early October. Hurricane evacuees and recover workers had a strong impact on visitor and lodging metrics in October to December 2024.

² Visitation is lagging behind other key metrics due to smaller travel party size as well as fewer visitors in unpaid accommodations and day trippers.

³ Includes spending for: accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, shopping, transportation, groceries, and "other" expenses.

⁴ Multiplier decreased from 1.55 in Oct-Dec 2023 to 1.51 in Oct-Dec 2024.

⁵ Lodging figures utilize accommodation metrics from STR, Key Data, and the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR).

VISITOR JOURNEY: PRE-VISIT



TRIP PLANNING CYCLE OCT-DEC 2024

- » **Over half** of visitors planned their trips to the Ocala/Marion County area **a month or less in advance (-10% YoY)**
- » Visitors planned their trip **on average of 57 days in advance of their visit (48 days in 2023)**



TOP TRIP PLANNING SOURCES OCT-DEC 2024*



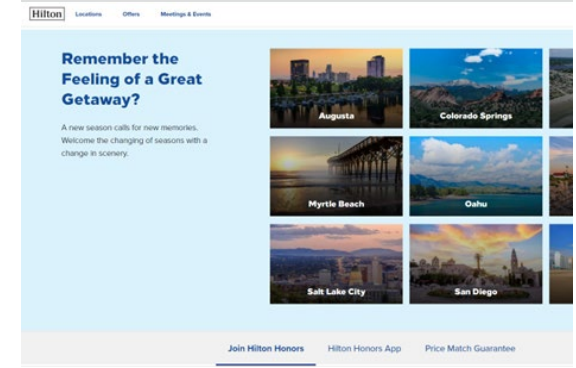
47% Talk to friends and family
(+11% YoY)



45% Search sites
(No change YoY)



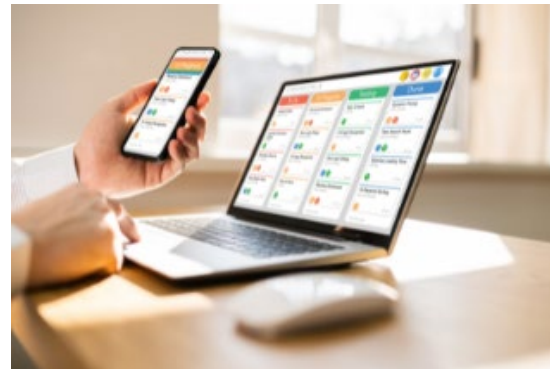
9% Destination social media
(-4% YoY)



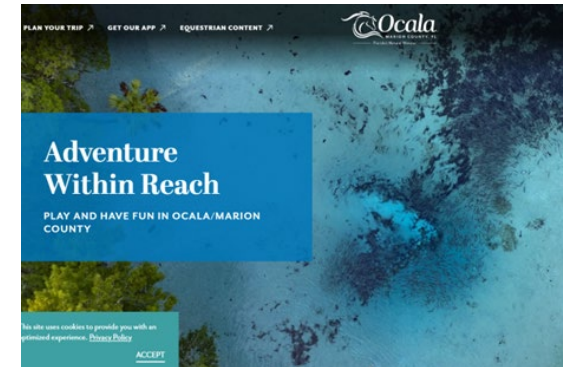
7% Hotel/resort website/app
(-2% YoY)



7% Personal social media
(-7% YoY)



6% Trip planning website/app
(-5% YoY)



5% Online advertisement
(-2% YoY)

TOP REASONS FOR VISITING OCT-DEC 2024*



23% Attend horse shows, sales, events (+6% YoY)



22% Visit friends/relatives (+1% YoY)



19% Visit area springs (+4% YoY)



12% Business or conference (+7% YoY)



9% Sporting tournament/event (+1% YoY)



8% Relax/unwind (-7% YoY)

PRE-TRIP RECALL OF ADVERTISING OCT-DEC 2024*

- » **26%** of visitors recalled advertising about the Ocala/Marion County area (**+4% YoY**)
- » **Over 2 in 3** visitors who recalled advertising were influenced by this information to visit the area which represents **18% of all visitors (+1% YoY)**



SOURCES OF ADVERTISING RECALL OCT-DEC 2024*

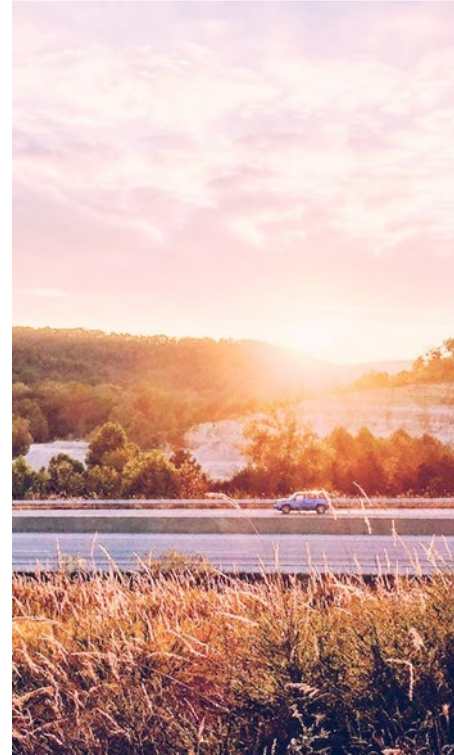
Base: **26%** of visitors who recalled advertising



36% Social media
(-4% YoY)



31% Online
Advertisement
(-1% YoY)



14% Billboard
(-2% YoY)



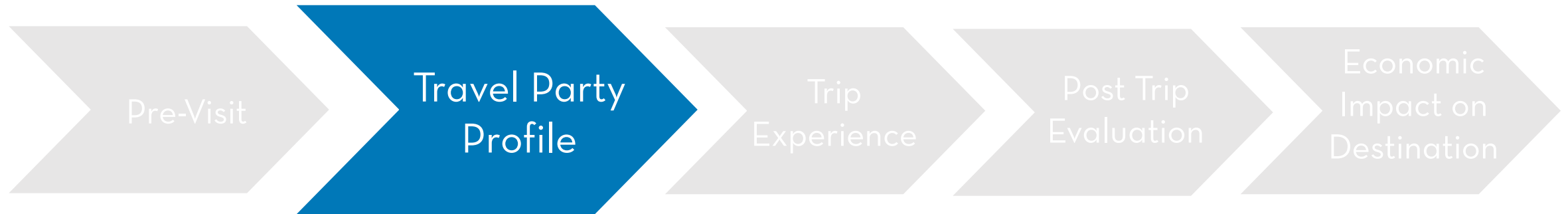
13% Print
Advertisement
(+2% YoY)



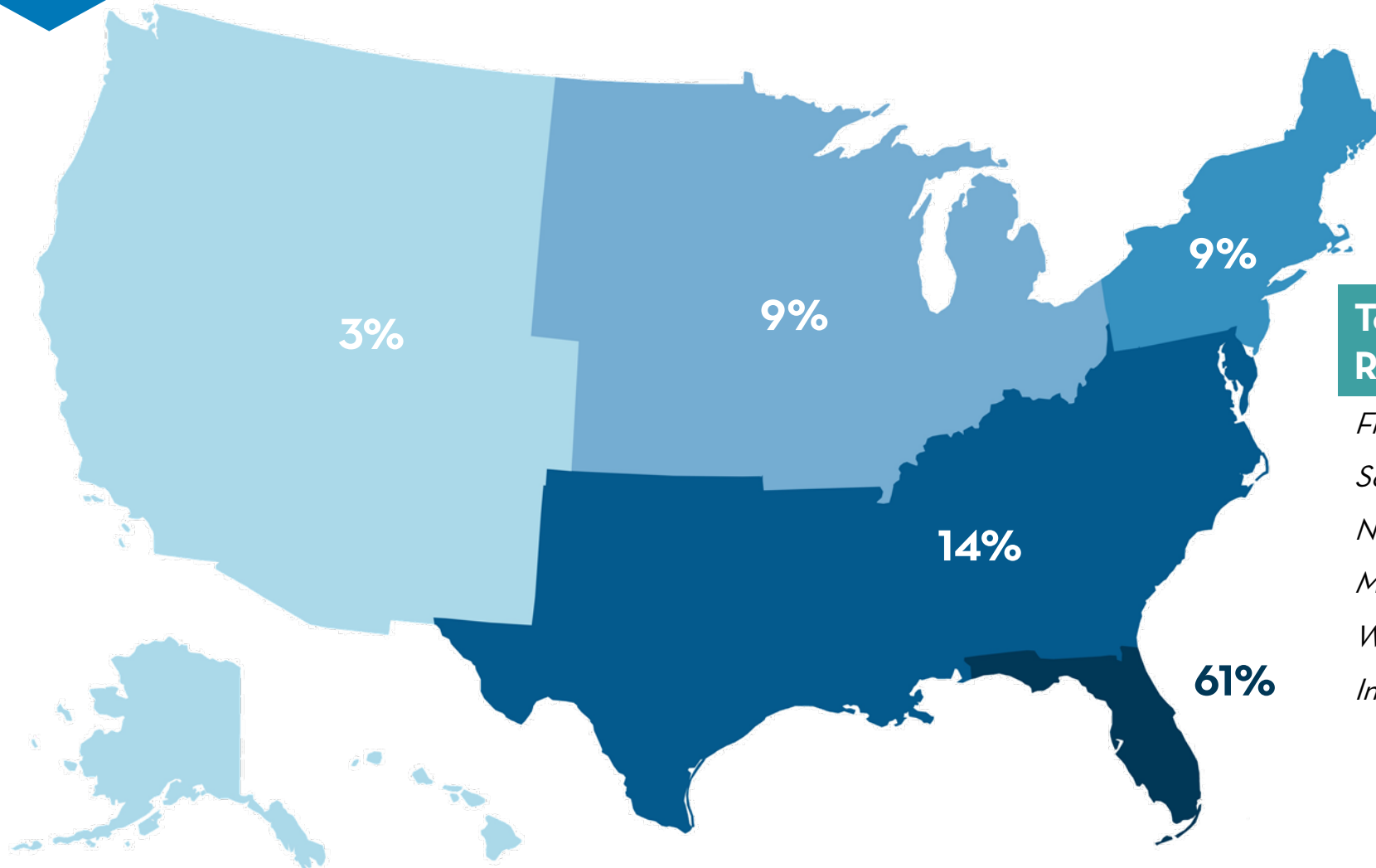
13% Magazine/
newspaper article
(+3% YoY)

*Advertising efforts mentioned on this slide include VCB's efforts and the efforts of other organizations.

VISITOR JOURNEY: TRAVEL PARTY PROFILE



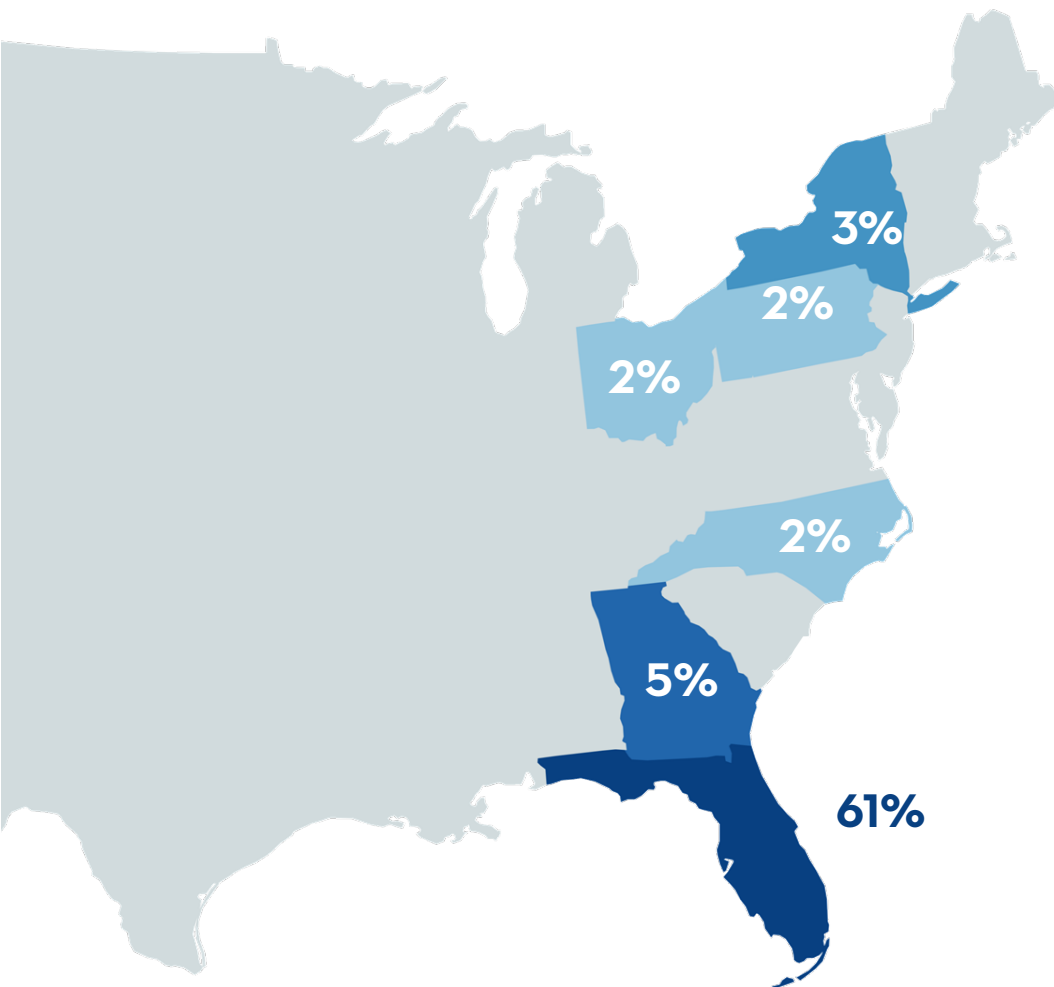
REGIONS OF ORIGIN OCT-DEC 2024



Top Origin Regions	% Difference YoY
<i>Florida</i>	<i>+5%</i>
<i>Southeast</i>	<i>-1%</i>
<i>Northeast</i>	<i>-2%</i>
<i>Midwest</i>	<i>-1%</i>
<i>West</i>	<i>-1%</i>
<i>International</i>	<i>No change</i>

4% of visitors traveled to the Ocala/Marion County area from outside of the U.S.

TOP STATES OF ORIGIN OCT-DEC 2024



3 in 4 visitors traveled to Ocala/Marion County from 6 states:

- 61% Florida (+5% YoY)
- 5% Georgia (+1% YoY)
- 3% New York (No change YoY)
- 2% Ohio (No change YoY)
- 2% North Carolina (No change YoY)
- 2% Pennsylvania (No change YoY)

TOP ORIGIN MARKETS OCT-DEC 2024



17% Orlando - Daytona Beach
- Melbourne **(No change YoY)**



11% Tampa - St. Petersburg
(No change YoY)



8% Gainesville
(+2% YoY)



7% Jacksonville
(-1% YoY)



6% West Palm Beach - Ft.
Pierce **(+3% YoY)**



5% Miami - Fort
Lauderdale **(+1% YoY)**

TRAVEL PARTIES OCT-DEC 2024

» The typical visitor traveled in a party size of **2.7** people (**3.0 in 2023**)



» **35%** traveled with at least one person under the age of 18 (**-7% YoY**)



VISITOR PROFILE OCT-DEC 2024

- » The typical Ocala/Marion County area visitor:
 - » Is **51** years old (**51 in 2023**)
 - » Has a household income of **\$95,000** per year (**\$77,800 in 2023**)



NEW & RETURNING VISITORS OCT-DEC 2024

- » **Over 1 in 3** were first-time visitors to the Ocala/Marion County area **(+5% YoY)**
- » **Nearly 2 in 10** visitors were loyalists, having visited over 10 times **(-4% YoY)**



VISITOR JOURNEY: TRIP EXPERIENCE



- » **79%** of visitors **drove** to the Ocala/Marion County area **(-3% YoY)**
- » **13%** of visitors flew via the **Orlando International Airport (+1% YoY)**



VISITOR BEHAVIOR OCT-DEC 2024

- » Typical visitors spent **3.8** nights in Ocala/Marion County area* (**3.5 in 2023**)
- » **Over 2 in 3** visitors were only visiting Ocala/Marion County during their trip (**+7% YoY**)



TOP ACCOMMODATIONS OCT-DEC 2024



46% Hotel/motel/resort
(+9% YoY)



30% Day tripper
(-2% YoY)



12% Friends' or
relatives' home
(No change YoY)



4% Vacation rental home*
(-1% YoY)

TOP ACTIVITIES DURING VISIT OCT-DEC 2024*



65% Dining out
(+19% YoY)



41% Visit family/friends
(+11% YoY)



31% Visit Downtown
Ocala (+7% YoY)



23% Attend horse shows,
sales, events (+1% YoY)



23% Shopping
(No change YoY)



21% Visit area springs
(-2% YoY)



21% Relax & unwind
(-7% YoY)

ACTIVITIES VS. REASON FOR VISIT OCT-DEC 2024*

Reason for Visiting

23%

22%

19%

12%

9%

8%

5%

5%

5%

5%

5%

4%

3%

3%

Horse-related event

Visit friends/relatives

Visit area springs

Business/conference

Sporting tournament/event

Relax and unwind

Canoeing/kayaking/tubing

Other horse-related events

Special occasion

Special event

Nature/birdwatching

Go to restaurants

Visit Downtown Ocala

Shopping/antiquing

Visitor Activities

23%

41%

21%

12%

9%

21%

9%

10%

10%

8%

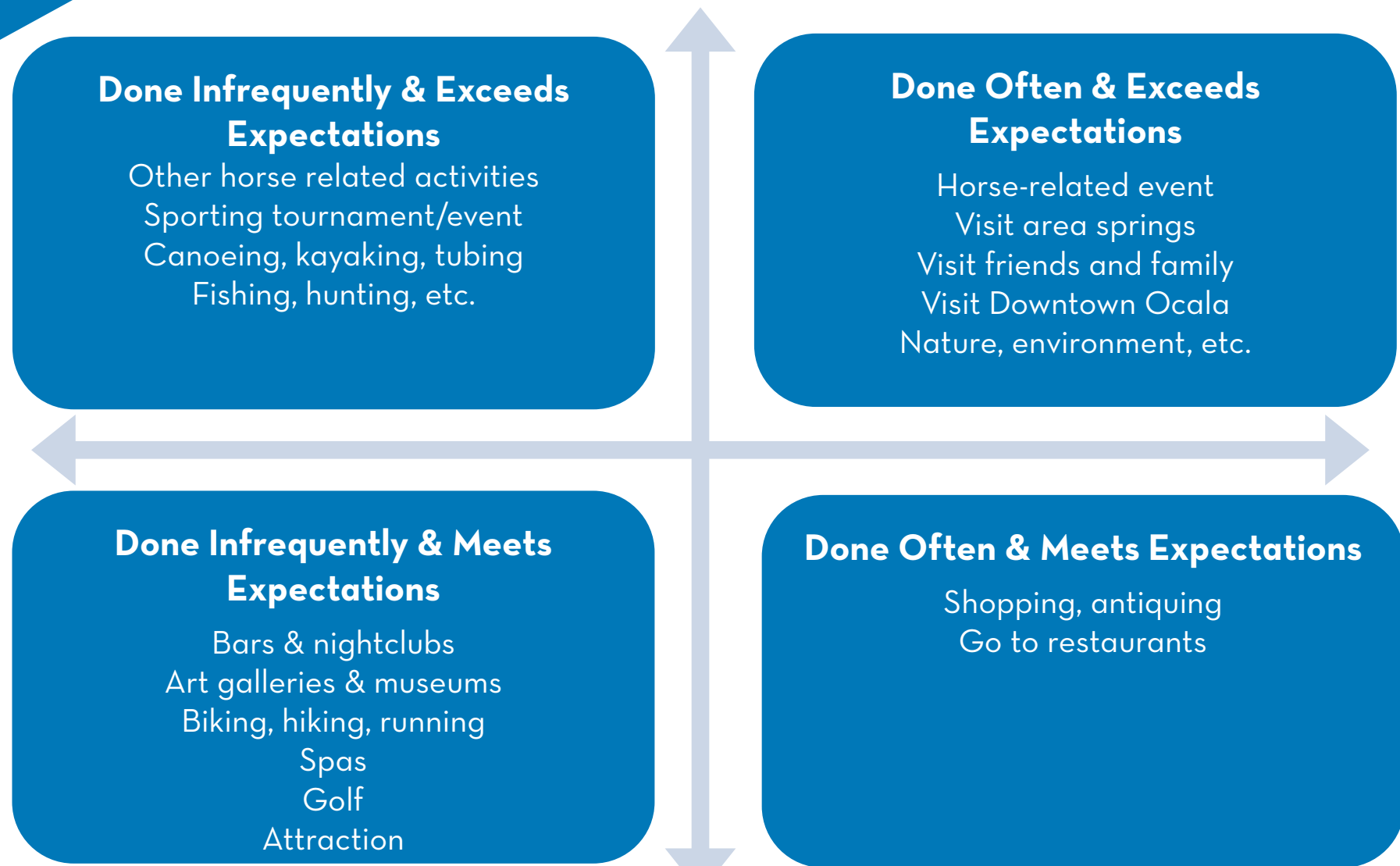
14%

65%

31%

23%

QUADRANT ANALYSIS OCT-DEC 2024



TRAVEL PARTY SPENDING OCT-DEC 2024

- » Travel parties spent **\$320** (**\$324 in 2023**) per day and **\$1,214** (**\$1,134 in 2023**) during their trip



VISITOR JOURNEY: POST-TRIP



VISITOR SATISFACTION OCT-DEC 2024

- » **99%** of visitors said their visit met or exceeded expectations with **39%** exceeded expectations (**-9% YoY**)
- » **94%** will recommend Ocala/Marion County to a friend (**No change YoY**)
- » **95%** will return to Ocala/Marion County with **50%** saying they will definitely return (**-18% YoY**)



AREA DESCRIPTIONS OCT-DEC 2024



“Ocala is Interesting; it’s a small town but there is lots to do. The traffic is light and people are friendly.”



“Ocala is Great! We really like the vibe of the area. It has pretty rural surroundings.”



“Ocala has really nice hiking trails. And the natural springs are pretty! It was a pleasant place to stay.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

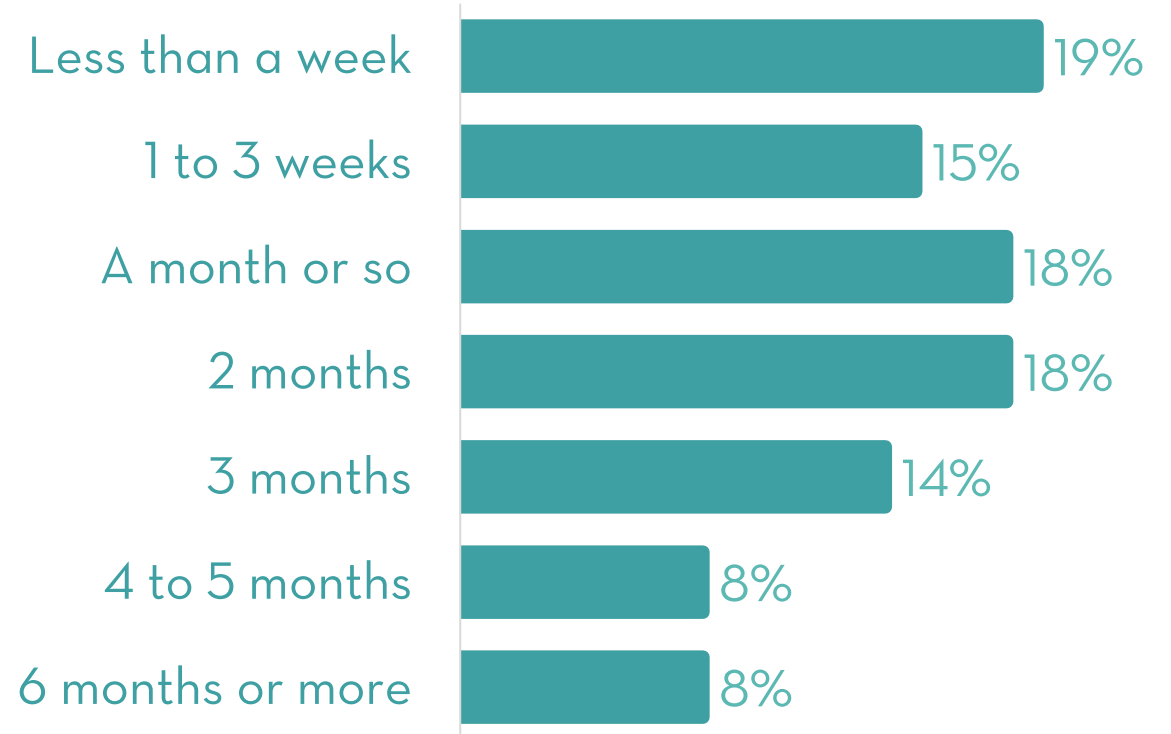


VISITOR JOURNEY: PRE-VISIT



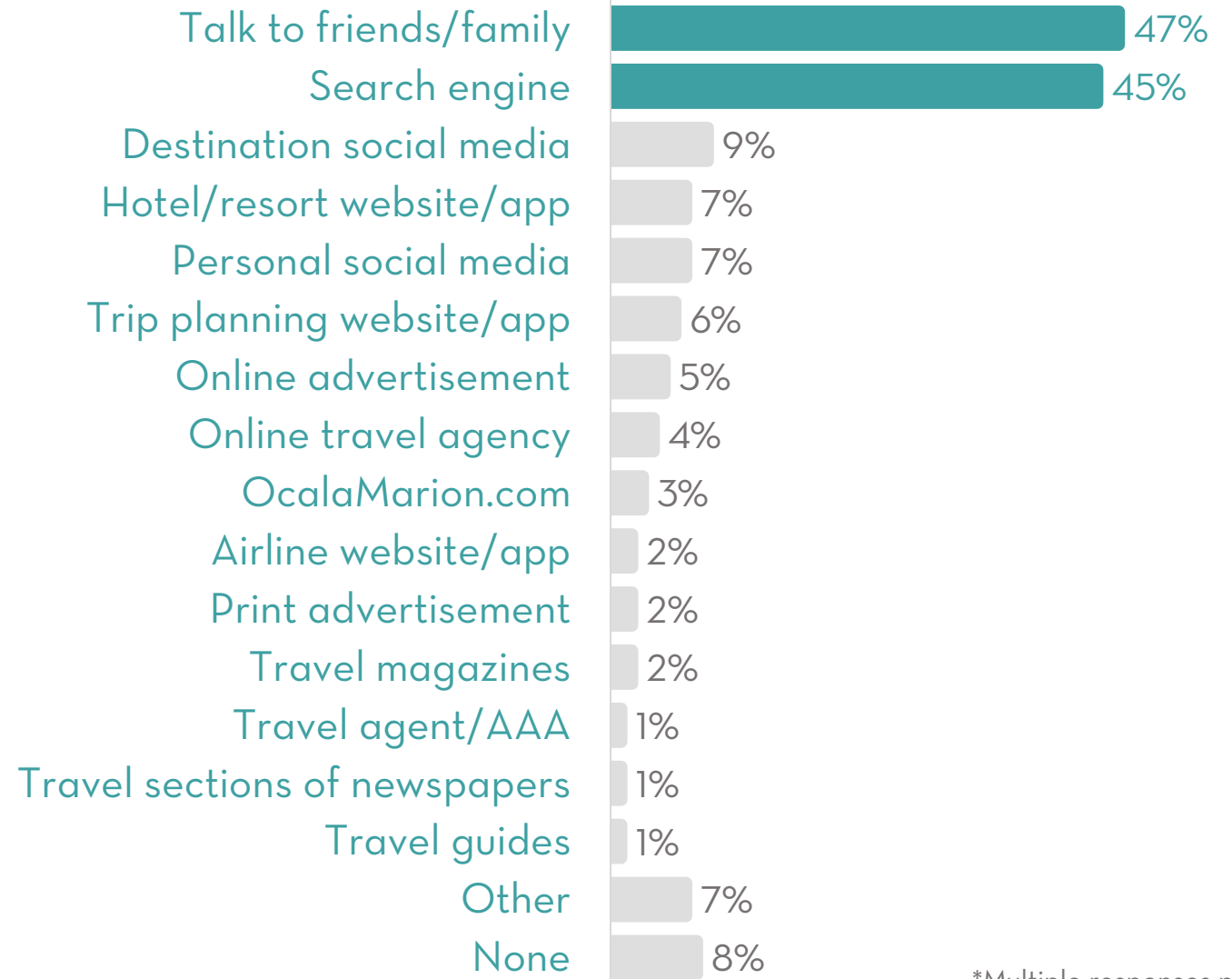
TRIP PLANNING CYCLE

- » **Over half** visitors planned their trips to the Ocala/Marion County area **a month or less in advance**
- » On the other hand, **3 in 10** visitors planned their trips **at least 3 months in advance**
- » Visitors planned their trip **on average 57 days in advance**



TRIP PLANNING SOURCES*

- » **Talking to friends** is the **top planning source** for trips to Ocala/Marion County
- » **Over 2 in 5** visitors used a **search engine (i.e., Google)** to plan their trip



REASONS FOR VISITING*

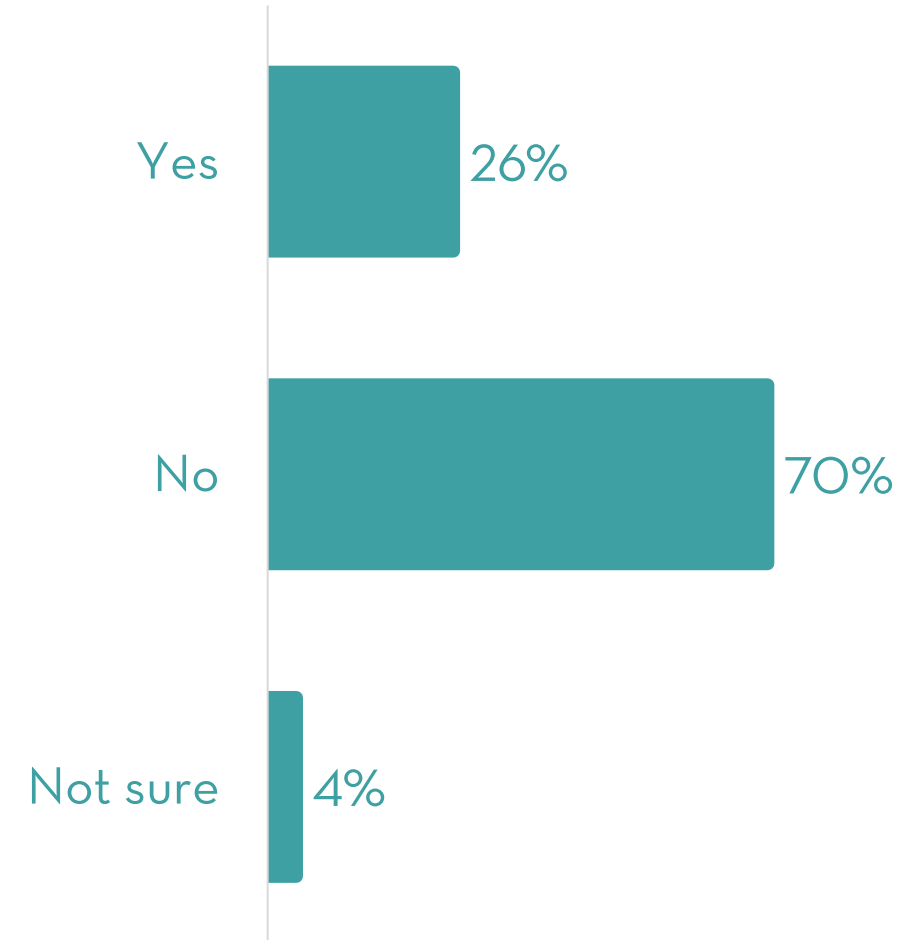
- » **Horse-related events and visiting friends and relatives** are the **top two** choices for coming, as **over 1 in 5** visitors came to Ocala/Marion County for this reason
- » **Nearly 1 in 5** visitors came to Ocala/Marion County for **area springs**



RECALL OF ADVERTISING*

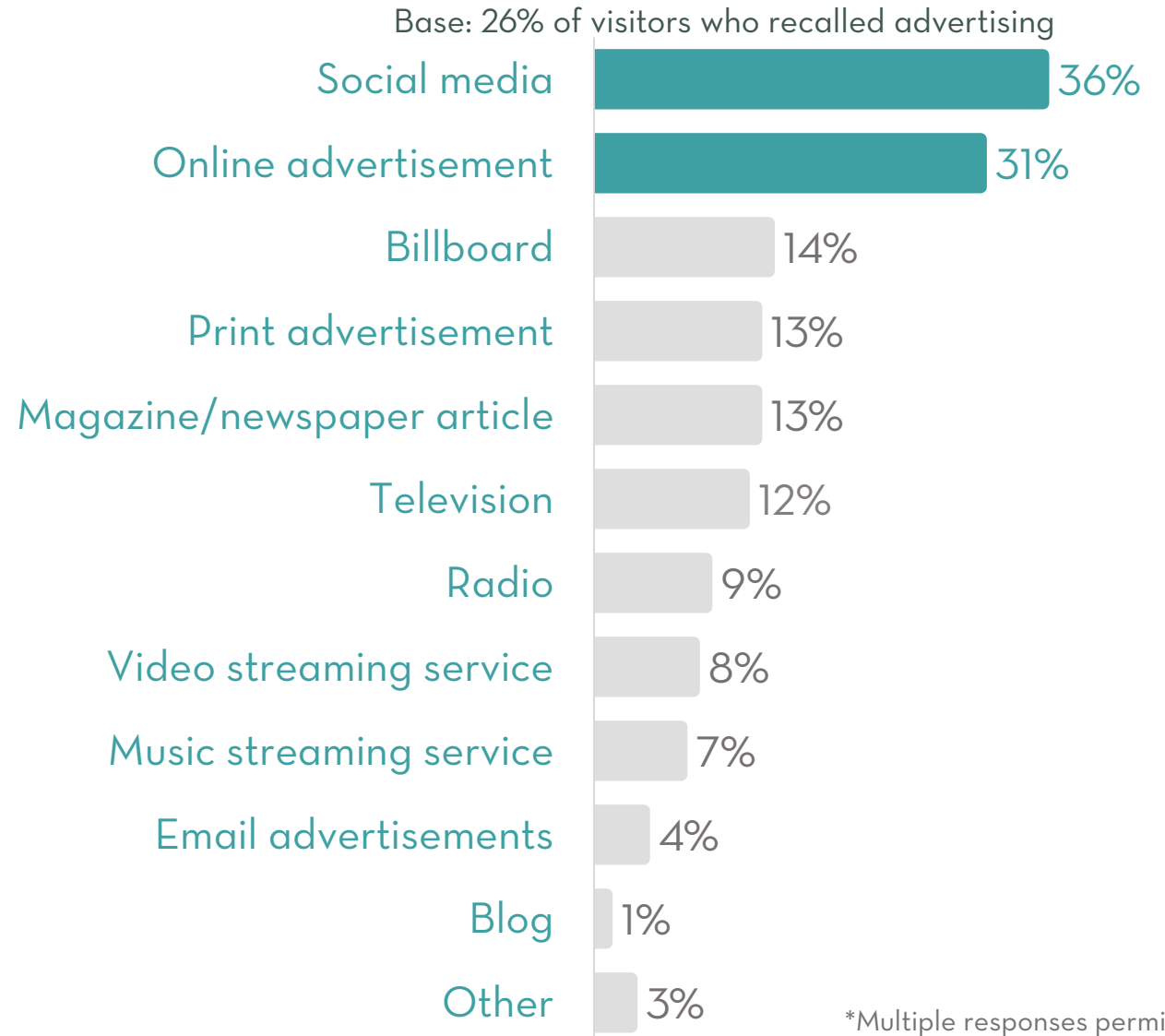
- » **Over 1 in 4** visitors recalled advertising about the Ocala/Marion County area
- » Of the visitors who recalled advertising, **Over 2 in 3 (represents 18% of all visitors)** were influenced by this information to come to the area

Recalled Advertising



ADVERTISING SOURCE*

- » **Over 1 in 3** visitors who recalled advertising for the Ocala/Marion County area recalled advertisements on **social media**
- » **Over 3 in 10** visitors recalled **online advertisements****



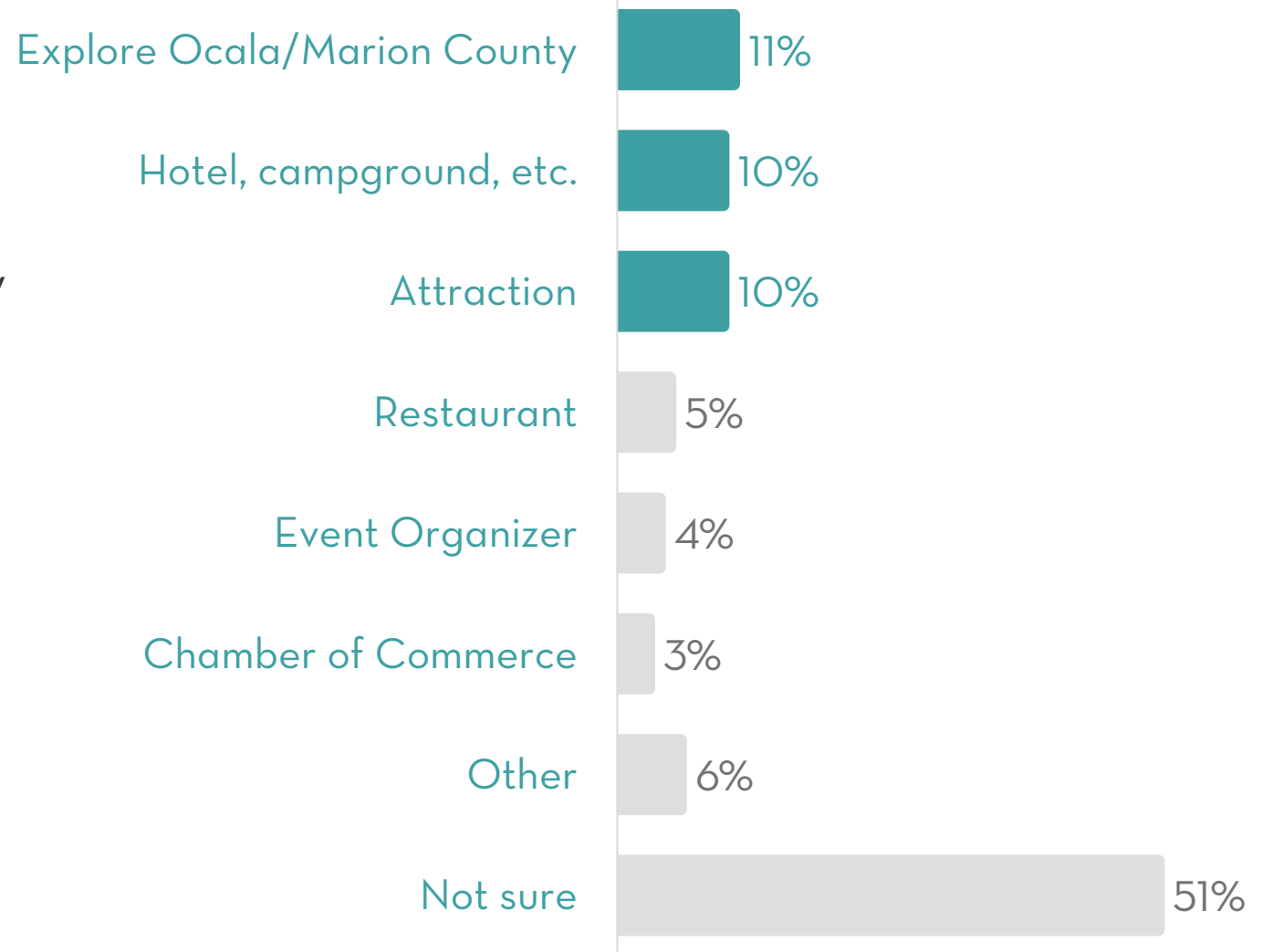
*Multiple responses permitted

** Advertising efforts mentioned on this slide include VCB's efforts and the efforts of other organizations.

SPONSORED ADVERTISEMENT*

- » **Over 1 in 10** visitors who recalled advertising for the Ocala/Marion County area recall **Explore Ocala/Marion County** as a sponsor of the advertisement
- » **1 in 10** visitors stated that they recalled advertisements sponsored by a **hotel, campground, etc. or an attraction**

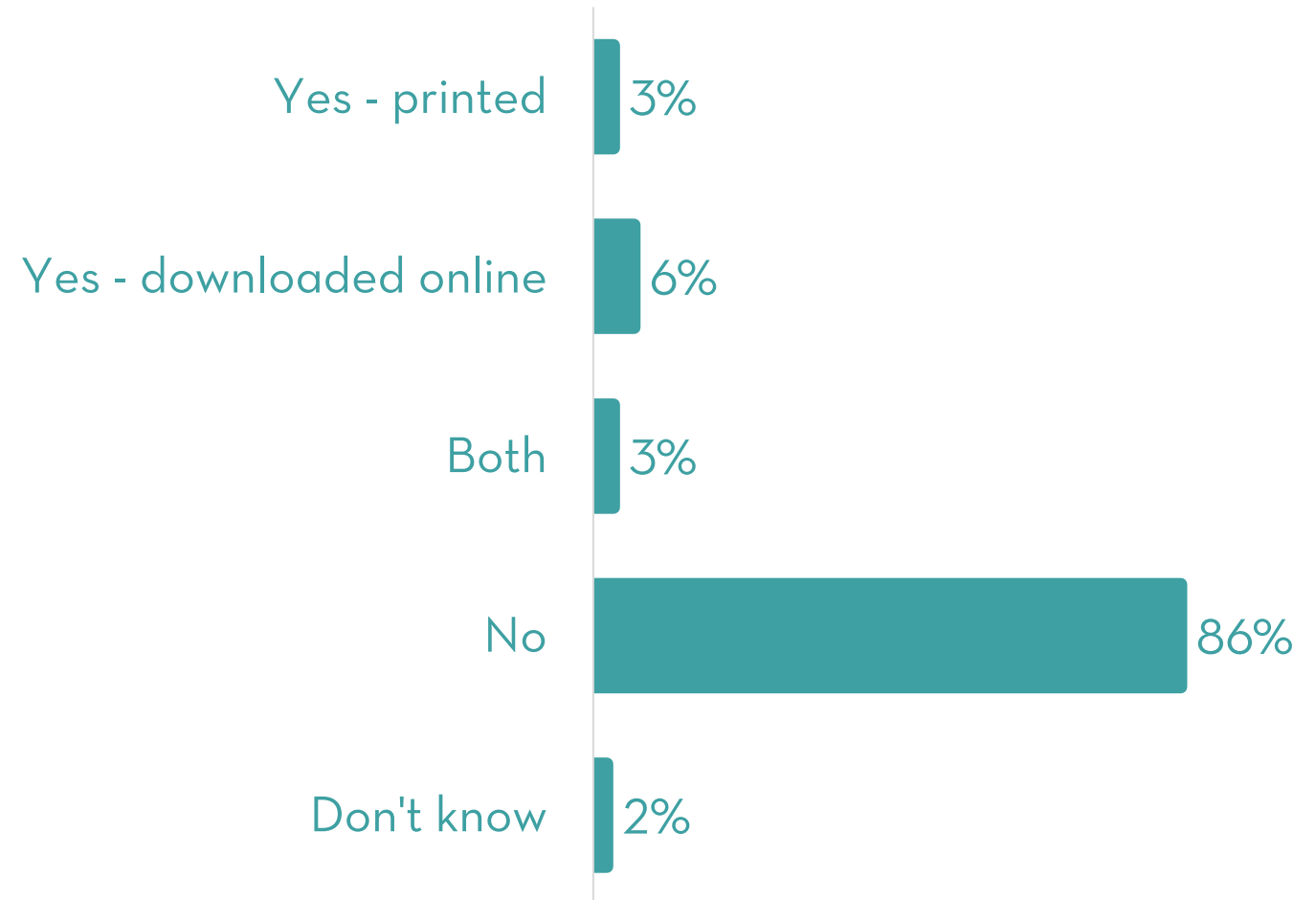
Base: 26% of visitors who recalled advertising



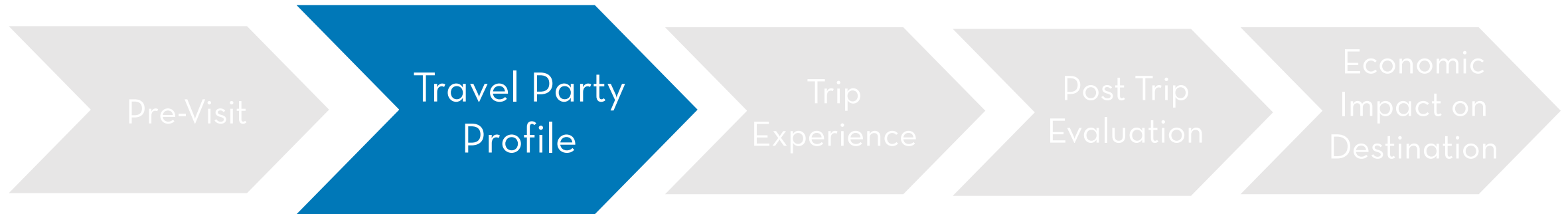
*Multiple responses permitted.

VISITOR GUIDE

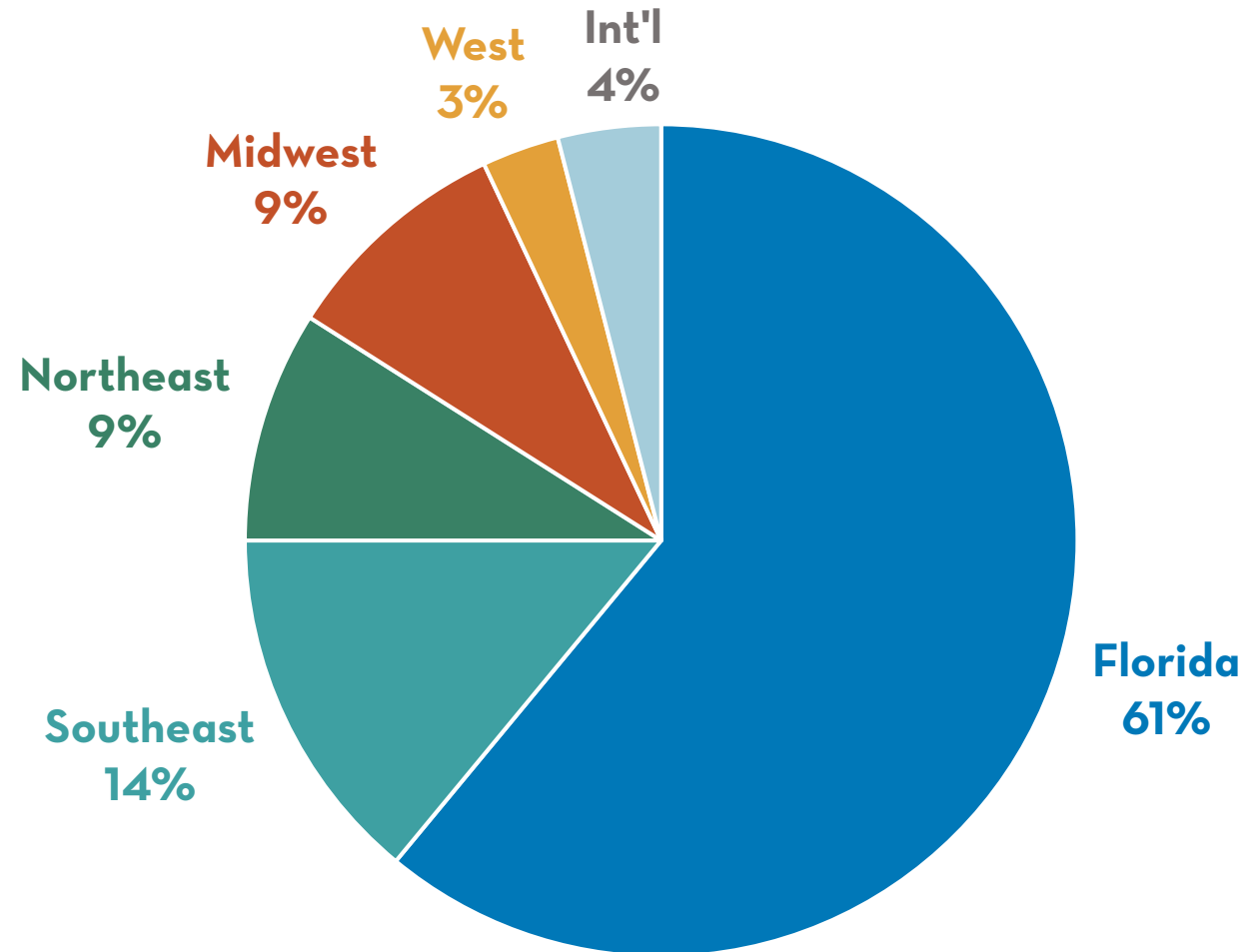
- » **12%** of visitors viewed the **print and/or online visitor guide**
- » Usefulness Rating: **8.3 out of 10***



VISITOR JOURNEY: TRAVEL PARTY PROFILE



REGION OF ORIGIN



TOP ORIGIN STATES

- » **3 in 4** visitors came to Ocala/Marion County from 6 states
- » **Florida** and **Georgia** were key origin states for the Ocala/Marion County area

State	Percent
Florida	61%
Georgia	5%
New York	3%
Ohio	2%
North Carolina	2%
Pennsylvania	2%

TOP ORIGIN MARKETS

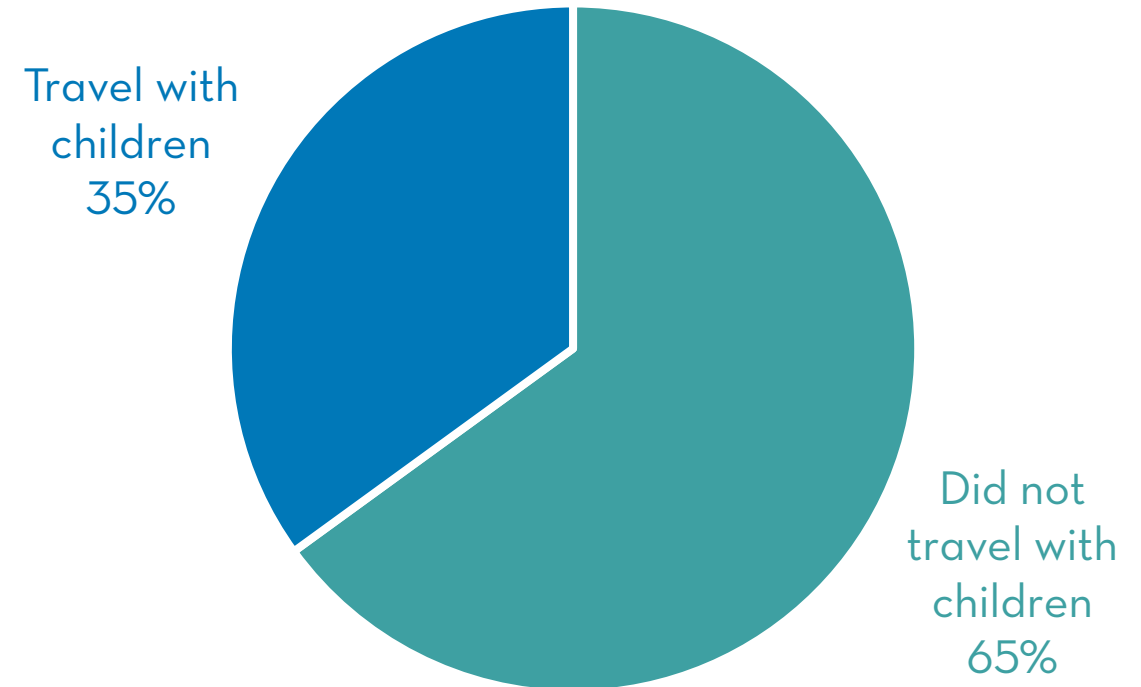
- » **Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, Tampa-St. Peterburg, and Gainesville** were key origin markets this quarter
- » **Florida markets** dominated the top markets for Ocala/Marion County

Market	Percent
Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne	17%
Tampa-St. Petersburg	11%
Gainesville	8%
Jacksonville	7%
West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce	6%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale	5%
Atlanta	3%
New York*	3%
Tallahassee-Thomasville	3%
Fort Myers-Naples	2%

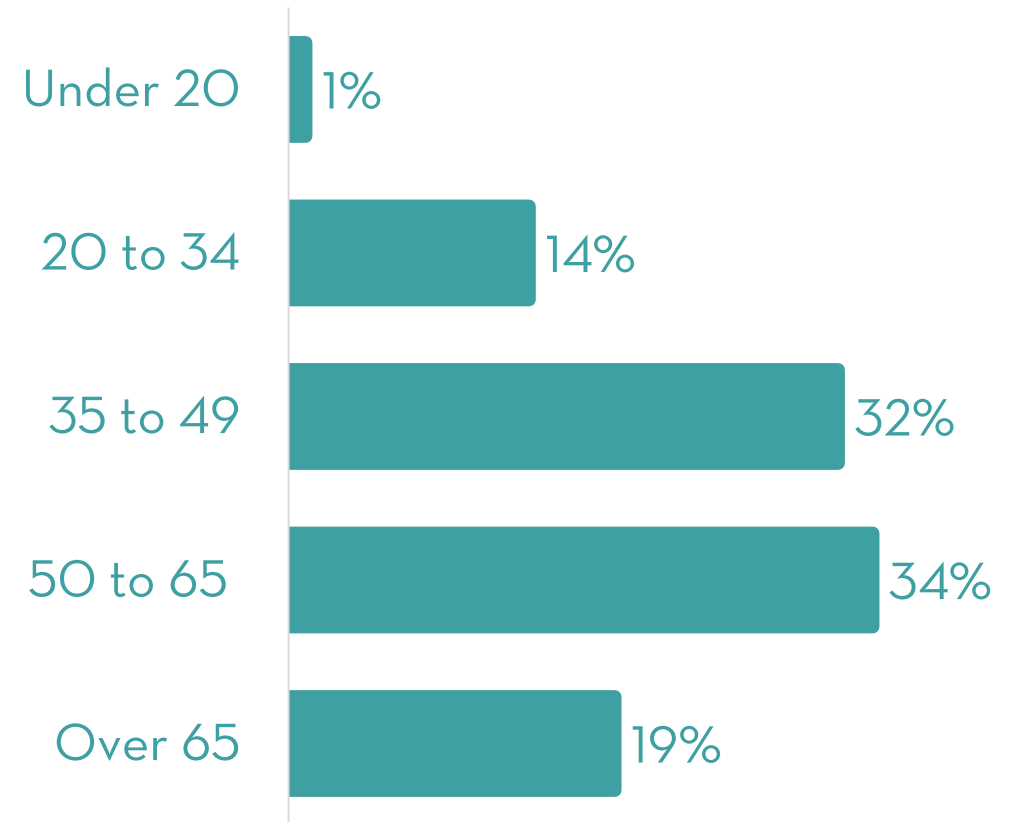
*New York City includes areas of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut

TRAVEL PARTIES

- » The typical travel party size was **2.7** people
- » **Over a third** of travel parties included children under the age of 18

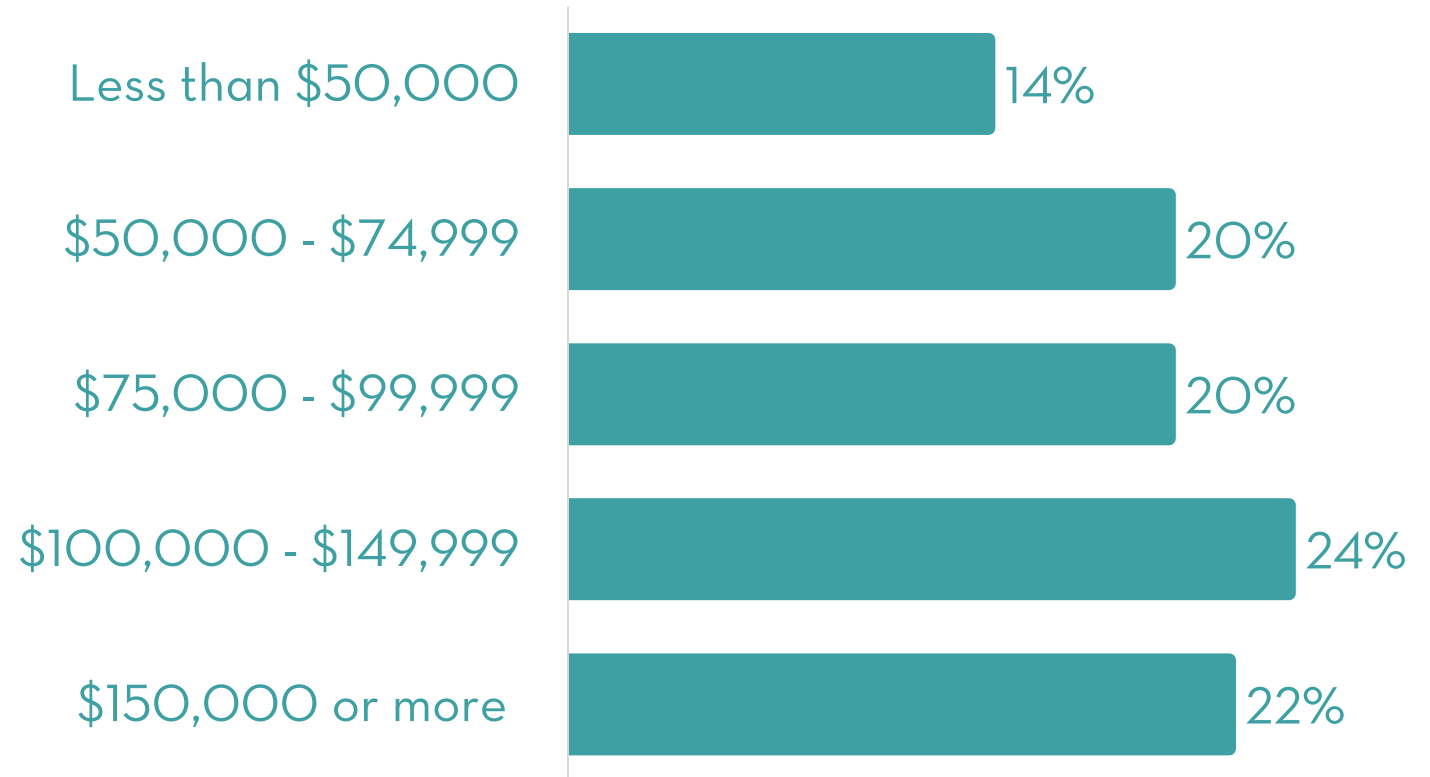


» The median age of visitors to the Ocala/Marion County area was **51**

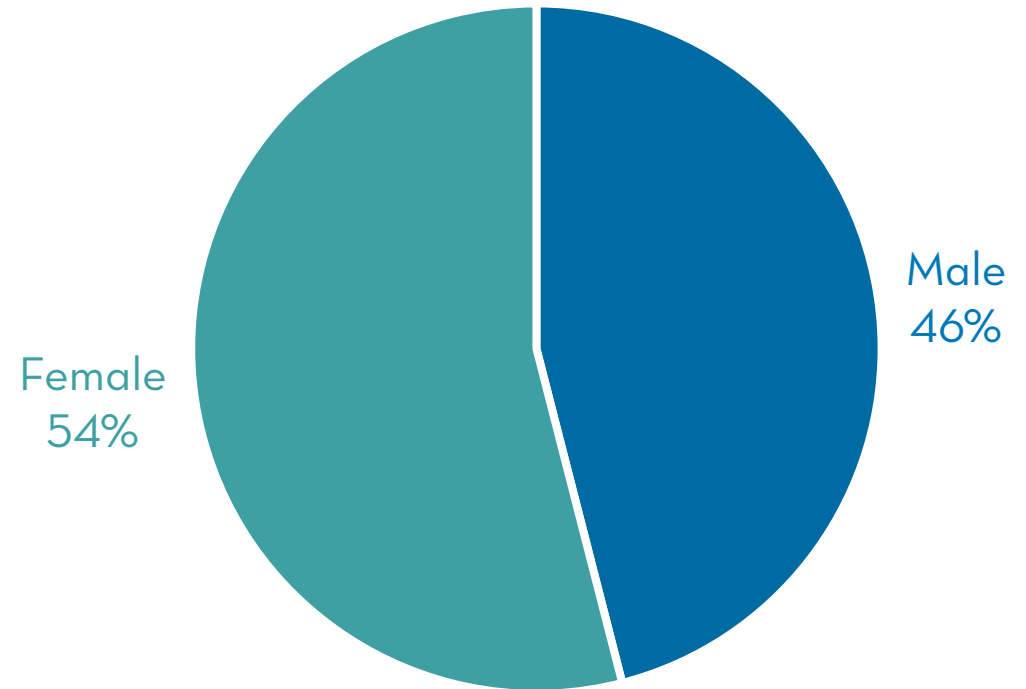


HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- » Visitors to the Ocala/Marion County area had a median household income of **\$95,000** per year
- » **Over 2 in 5** visitors had household incomes over **\$100,000**

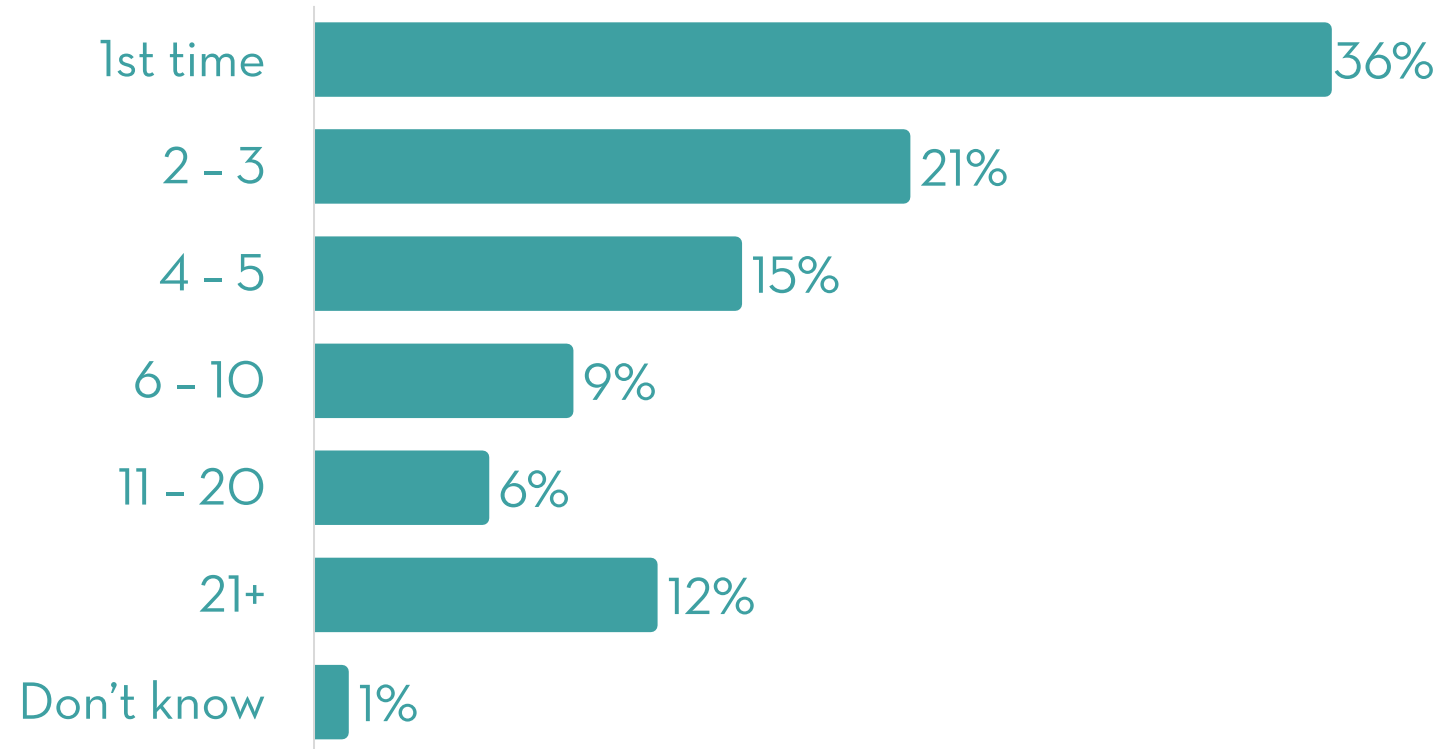


» **54%** of visitors interviewed were **female**



NEW & RETURNING VISITORS

- » **Over 1 in 3** visitors said **this was their first time visiting** the Ocala/Marion County area
- » **Nearly 2 in 10** visitors were loyalists, having visited over 10 times

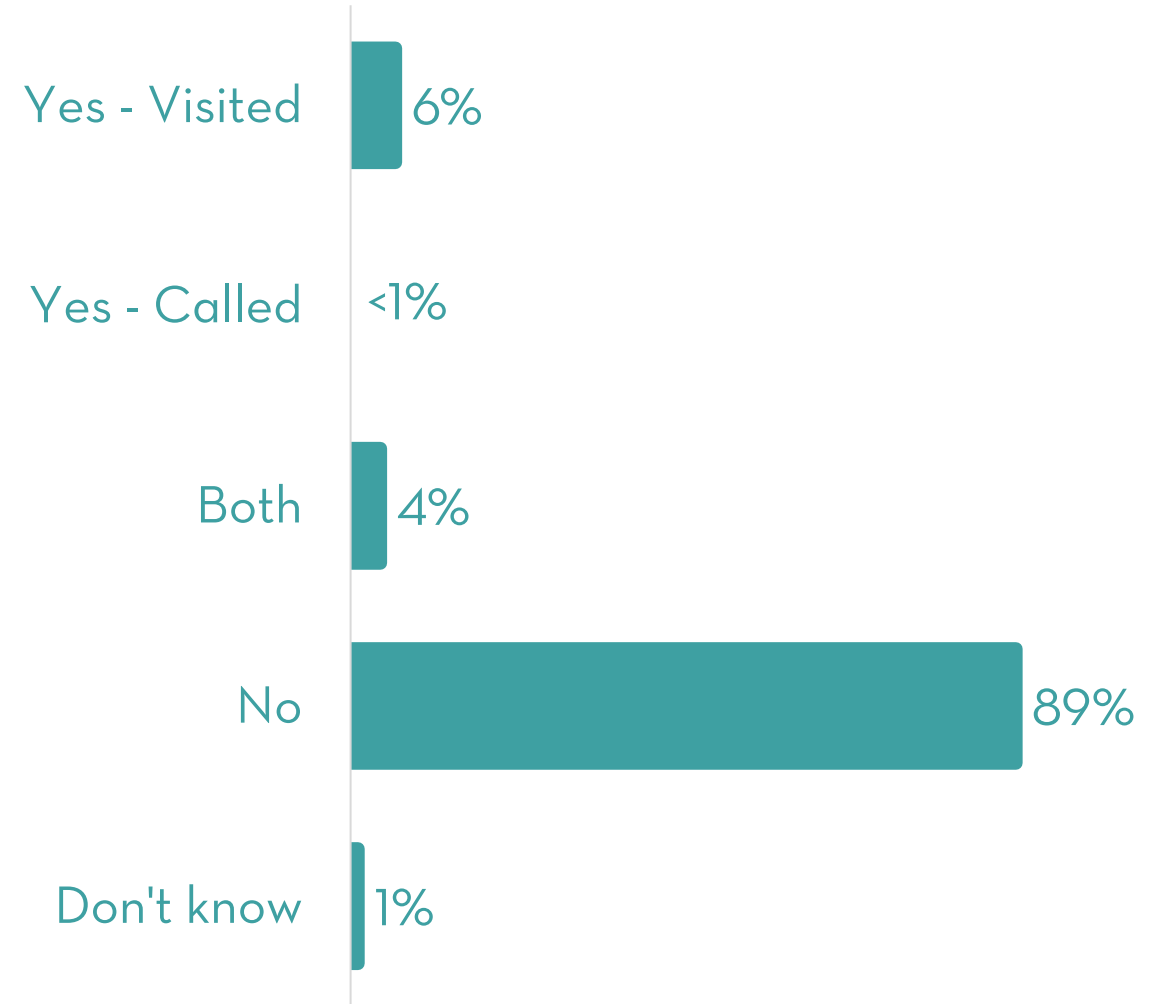


VISITOR JOURNEY: TRIP EXPERIENCE



VISITOR CENTER

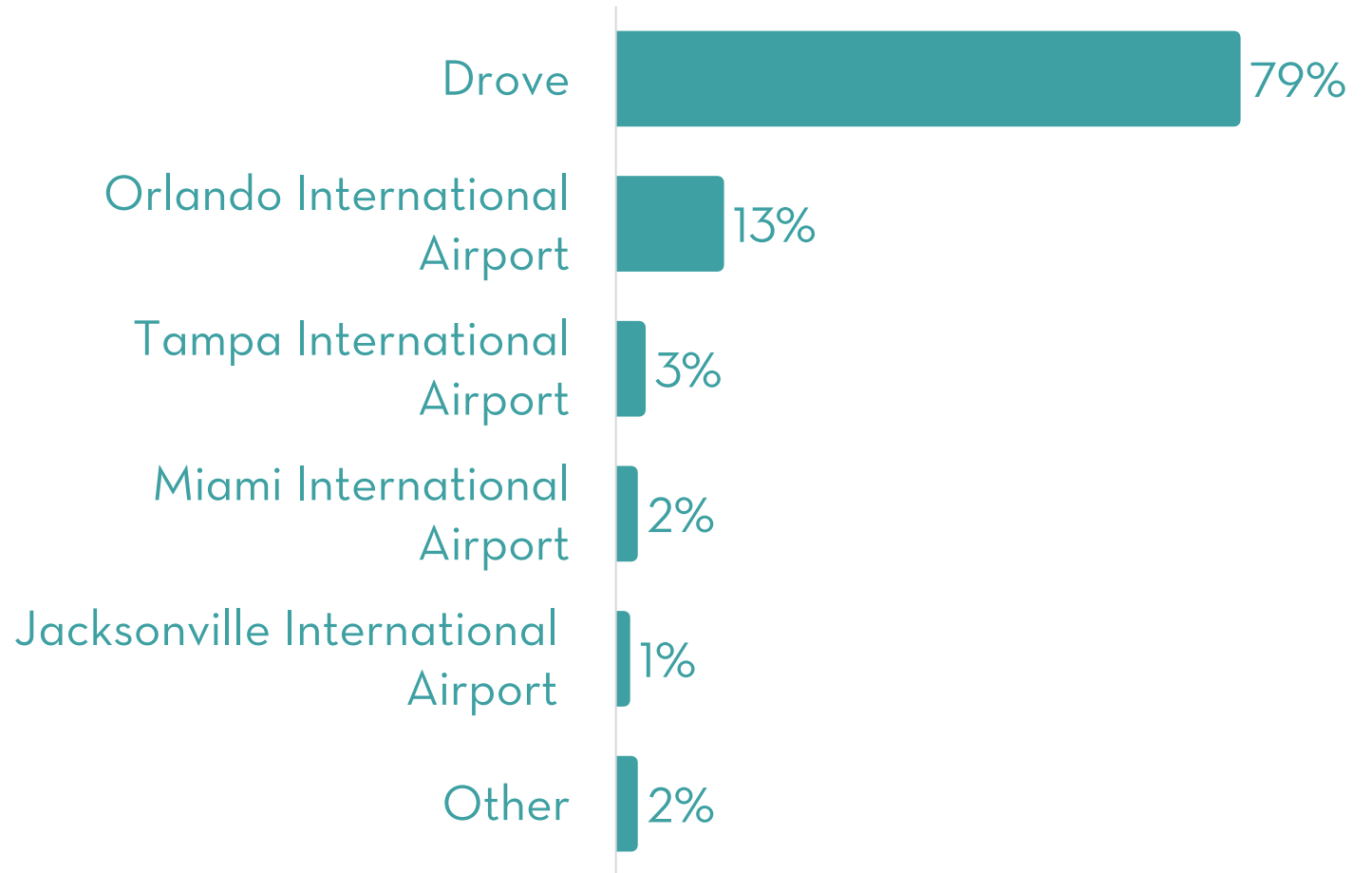
- » **10%** of visitors **stopped at the Visitor Center**
- » Usefulness Rating: **8.5 out of 10***



*On a scale from 1 to 10, where service is rated as is a 10 is Excellent and 1 is poor

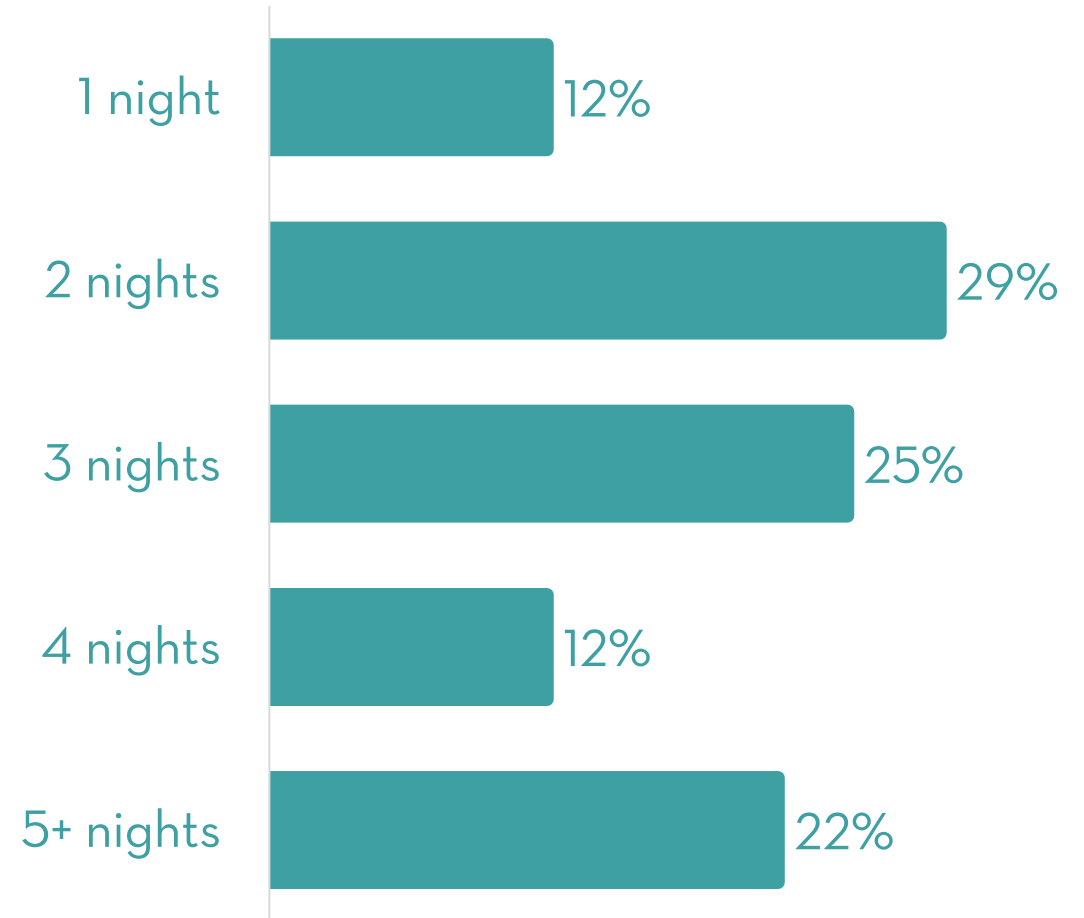
TRANSPORTATION

- » **79%** of visitors **drove** to the Ocala/Marion County area for their trip
- » **13%** of **all** visitors used the **Orlando International Airport**



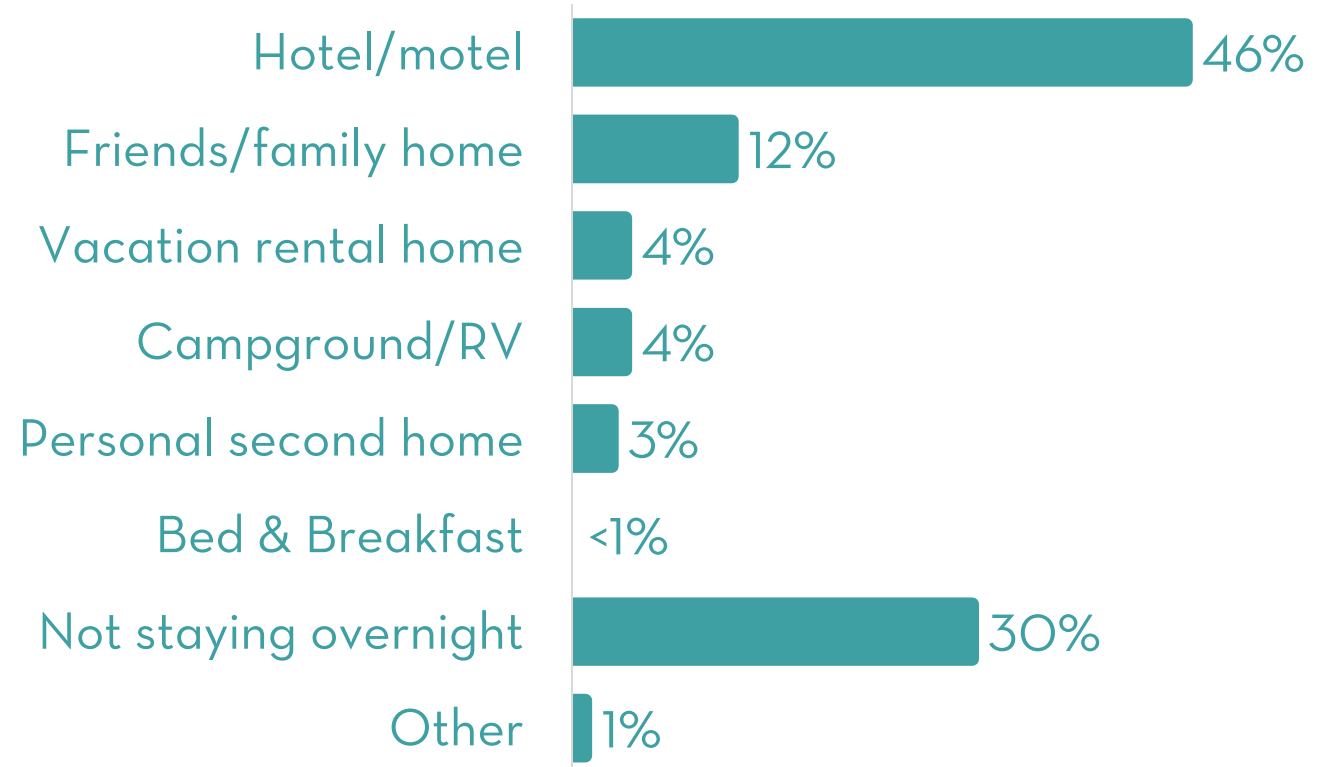
NIGHTS

- » Visitors stayed **3.8** nights in Ocala/Marion County*
- » Visitors staying in paid accommodations stayed **4.5** nights in the Ocala/Marion County area



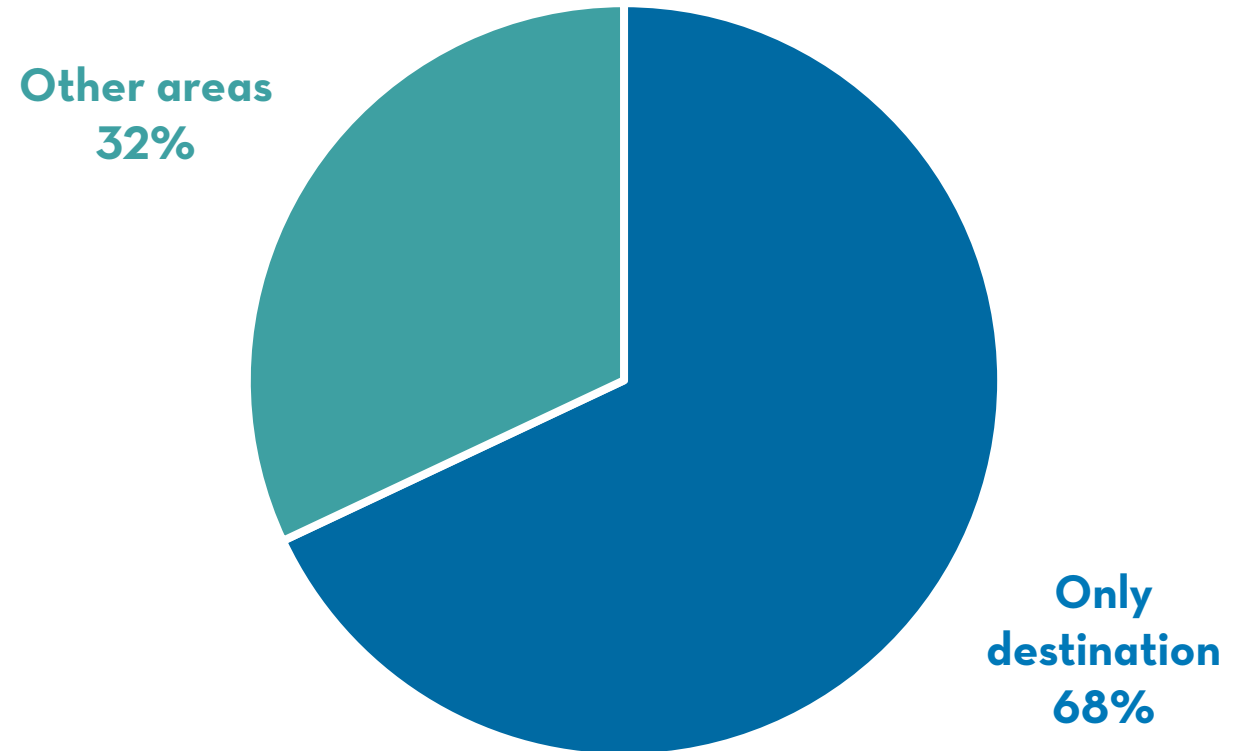
ACCOMMODATIONS

» **Over 2 in 5** visitors stayed overnight in a **hotel or motel**



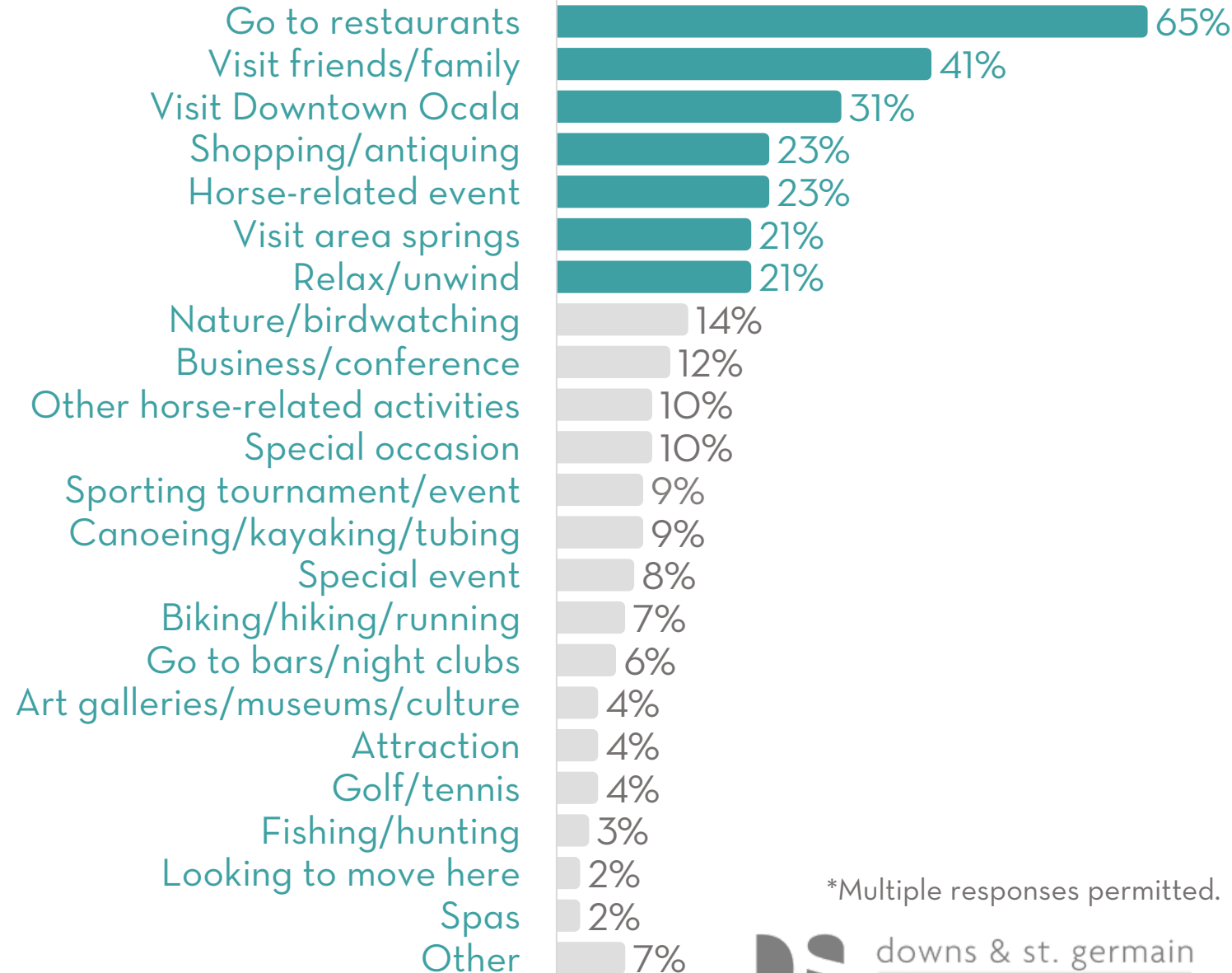
VISITING OTHER AREAS

» **Nearly 1 in 3** visitors were also visiting other destinations on their trip



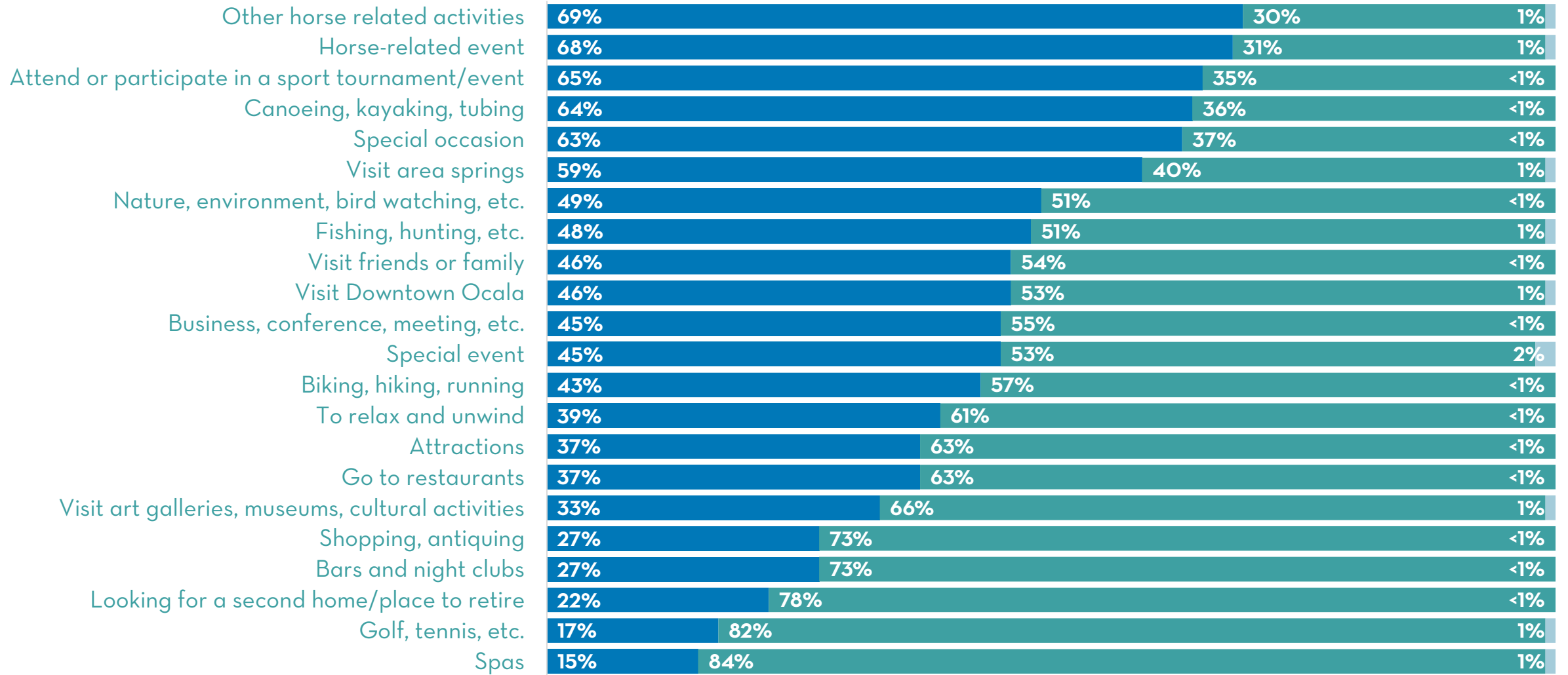
VISITOR ACTIVITIES*

- » **Going to restaurants** is the number one activity, as **nearly 2 in 3** visitors went out to eat
- » **Over 2 in 5** visitors visited **friends and family**
- » **Nearly 1 in 3** visitors enjoyed **Downtown Ocala** during their visit
- » **Over 1 in 5** visitors enjoyed the **shopping in the area** during their visit



*Multiple responses permitted.

VISITOR ACTIVITY RATINGS



ACTIVITIES VS. REASON FOR VISIT*

Reason for Visiting

23%

22%

19%

12%

9%

8%

5%

5%

5%

5%

5%

4%

3%

3%

Horse-related event

Visit friends/relatives

Visit area springs

Business/conference

Sporting tournament/event

Relax and unwind

Canoeing/kayaking/tubing

Other horse-related events

Special occasion

Special event

Nature/birdwatching

Go to restaurants

Visit Downtown Ocala

Shopping/antiquing

Visitor Activities

23%

41%

21%

12%

9%

21%

9%

10%

10%

8%

14%

65%

31%

23%

TRAVEL PARTY SPENDING

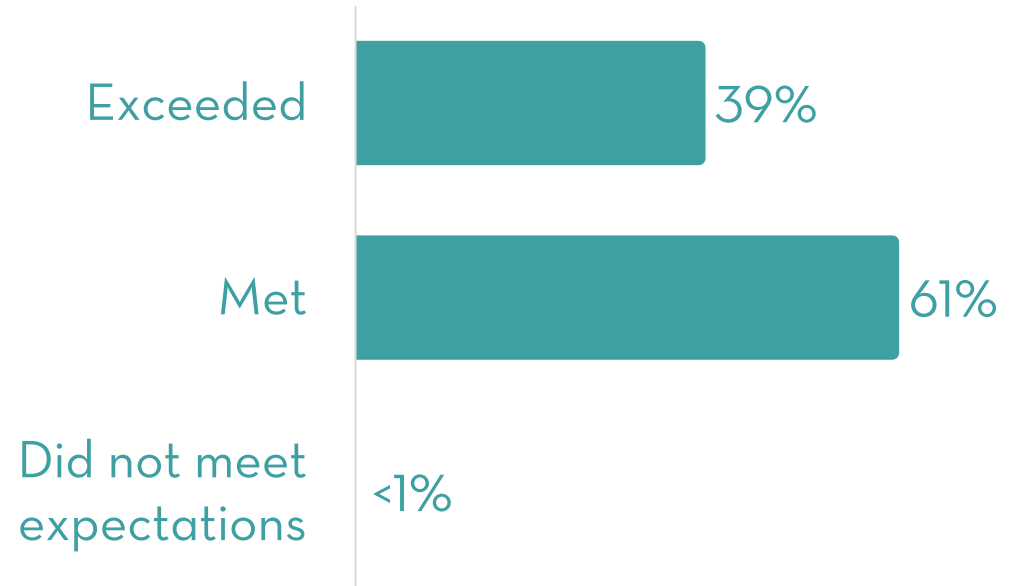
	Daily Spending: All Visitors	Total Spending: All Visitors
<i>Accommodations</i>	<i>\$71¹</i>	<i>\$270</i>
<i>Restaurants</i>	<i>\$71</i>	<i>\$270</i>
<i>Groceries</i>	<i>\$20</i>	<i>\$75</i>
<i>Shopping</i>	<i>\$53</i>	<i>\$200</i>
<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>\$34</i>	<i>\$129</i>
<i>Transportation</i>	<i>\$25</i>	<i>\$95</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>\$46</i>	<i>\$175</i>
Total	\$320	\$1,214

VISITOR JOURNEY: POST-TRIP



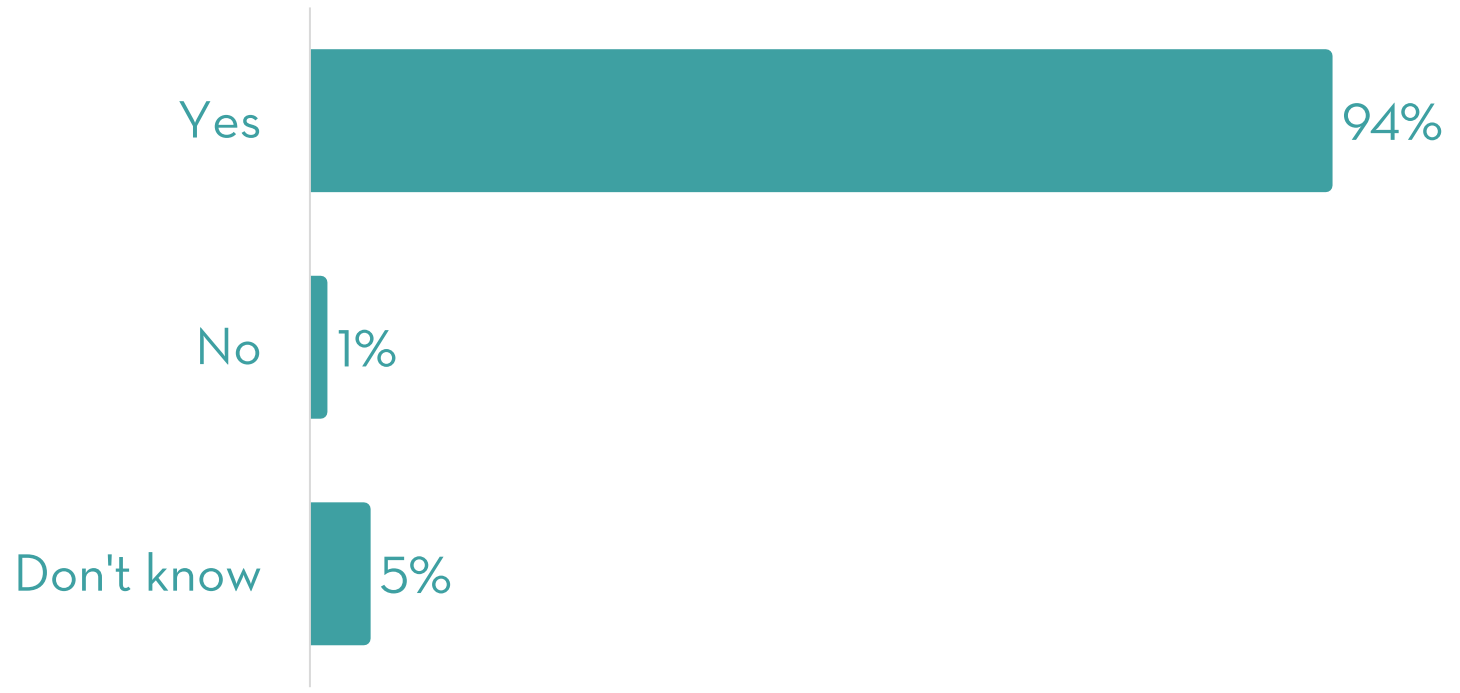
TRIP EXPERIENCE

- » **Nearly 2 in 5** visitors' expectations were **exceeded** on their visit to the Ocala/Marion County area



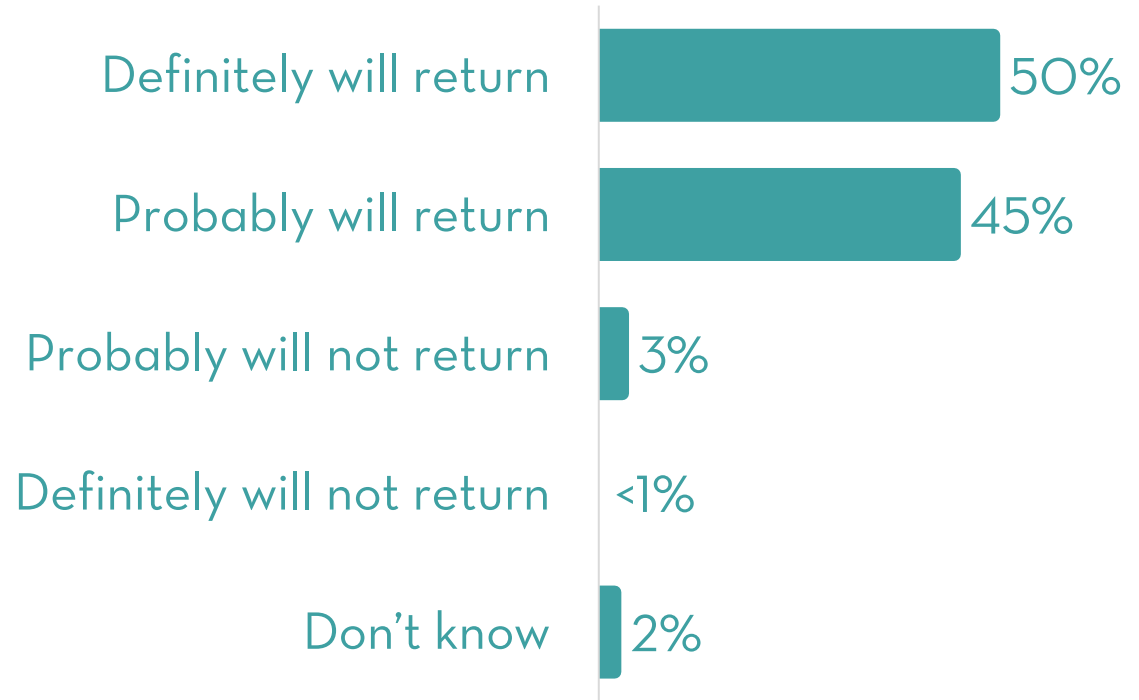
RECOMMENDATION

» **Over 9 in 10** visitors **would recommend** the Ocala/Marion County area to others



LIKELIHOOD OF RETURNING

- » Nearly **all** visitors will **return** to the Ocala/Marion County area
- » Of visitors who will likely not return, a majority state **it's too soon to tell if they would come back** and **they prefer a variety in vacation spots**



2024 to 2023 COMPARISONS



PRE-VISIT

Visitor Metrics	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Ocala/Marion County was the only destination</i>	61%	68%
<i>Viewed Visitors Guide</i>	6%	12%
<i>Stopped at Visitors Center</i>	7%	10%
<i>Planned trip a month or less in advance</i>	62%	52%
<i>Average number of days trip was planned in advance of it being taken</i>	48	57
<i>Used OcalaMarion.com to plan their trip</i>	6%	3%
<i>Recalled Ocala/Marion County promotions</i>	22%	26%

PRE-VISIT

Reason for Visiting	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Horse-related event</i>	17%	23%
<i>Visit friends/family</i>	21%	22%
<i>Visit area springs</i>	15%	19%
<i>Business meeting/conference</i>	5%	12%
<i>Sporting tournament/event</i>	8%	9%
<i>Relax/unwind</i>	15%	8%
<i>Canoeing/kayaking/tubing</i>	4%	5%
<i>Nature/environment</i>	10%	5%
<i>Special event</i>	7%	5%
<i>Other horse-related activities</i>	5%	5%
<i>Special occasion</i>	3%	5%

Reason for Visiting	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Go to restaurants</i>	6%	4%
<i>Visit Downtown Ocala</i>	7%	3%
<i>Shopping</i>	6%	3%
<i>Looking for a second home/place to retire</i>	3%	2%
<i>Biking/hiking/running</i>	3%	2%
<i>Attraction</i>	4%	2%
<i>Art galleries/museums/culture</i>	2%	1%
<i>Go to bars/nightclubs</i>	1%	1%
<i>Fishing/hunting</i>	1%	1%
<i>Golf/tennis</i>	1%	1%
<i>Spas</i>	1%	1%
<i>Other</i>	4%	7%

TRAVEL PARTY PROFILE

Top Origin Markets	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Orlando - Daytona Beach - Melbourne</i>	17%	17%
<i>Tampa - St. Petersburg</i>	11%	11%
<i>Gainesville</i>	6%	8%
<i>Jacksonville</i>	8%	7%
<i>West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce</i>	3%	6%
<i>Miami - Ft. Lauderdale</i>	4%	5%
<i>Atlanta</i>	3%	3%
<i>New York City*</i>	3%	3%
<i>Tallahassee-Thomasville</i>	2%	3%

Top Origin States	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Florida</i>	56%	61%
<i>Georgia</i>	4%	5%
<i>New York</i>	3%	3%
<i>Ohio</i>	2%	2%
<i>North Carolina</i>	2%	2%
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	2%	2%

Top Origin Regions	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Southeast (includes Florida)</i>	71%	75%
<i>Northeast</i>	11%	9%
<i>Midwest</i>	10%	9%
<i>West</i>	4%	3%
<i>International</i>	4%	4%

*New York City includes areas of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

TRIP EXPERIENCE

Visitor Metrics	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Travel party</i>	3.0	2.7
<i>Children <18</i>	42%	35%
<i>Median age</i>	51	51
<i>Estimated median household income</i>	\$77,800	\$95,000
<i>1st time visitor</i>	31%	36%
<i>10+ visits to Ocala/Marion County</i>	22%	18%

Visitor Metrics	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Drove</i>	82%	79%
<i>Nights spent</i>	3.5	3.8
<i>Direct expenditures (entire trip)</i>	\$1,134	\$1,214

TRIP EXPERIENCE

Visitor Activities	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Go to restaurants</i>	46%	65%
<i>Visit friends or family</i>	30%	41%
<i>Visit Downtown Ocala</i>	24%	31%
<i>Horse-related event</i>	22%	23%
<i>Shopping</i>	23%	23%
<i>Visit area springs</i>	23%	21%
<i>Relax and unwind</i>	28%	21%
<i>Nature/environment</i>	20%	14%
<i>Business meeting/conference</i>	6%	12%
<i>Other horse-related activities</i>	7%	10%
<i>Special occasion</i>	5%	10%
<i>Sporting tournament/event</i>	8%	9%

Visitor Activities	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct - Dec 2024
<i>Canoeing/kayaking/tubing</i>	9%	9%
<i>Special event</i>	8%	8%
<i>Biking/hiking/running</i>	8%	7%
<i>Go to bar/night clubs</i>	8%	6%
<i>Art galleries/museums/cultural events</i>	3%	4%
<i>Attraction</i>	6%	4%
<i>Golf/tennis</i>	7%	4%
<i>Fishing/hunting</i>	4%	3%
<i>Looking for a second home/place to retire</i>	4%	2%
<i>Spas</i>	3%	2%
<i>Other</i>	8%	7%

POST TRIP EVALUATION

Satisfaction Metrics	Oct - Dec 2023	Oct-Dec 2024
<i>Visit Met + Exceeded expectations</i>	99%	99%
<i>Will return to Ocala/Marion County</i>	96%	95%
<i>Will recommend Ocala/Marion County</i>	94%	94%

Ocala/MARION COUNTY VCB

Economic Impact Study &
Visitor Tracking Report
Oct – Dec 2024

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