



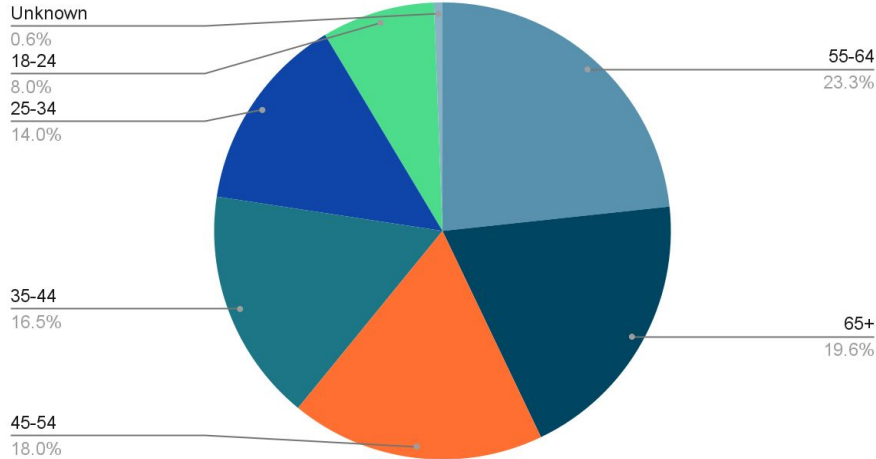
Who is the Great River Road Byway Traveler

MRPC Annual Meeting
September 18-20, 2024 - Winona, MN



Using Website Data

By Age



By Gender

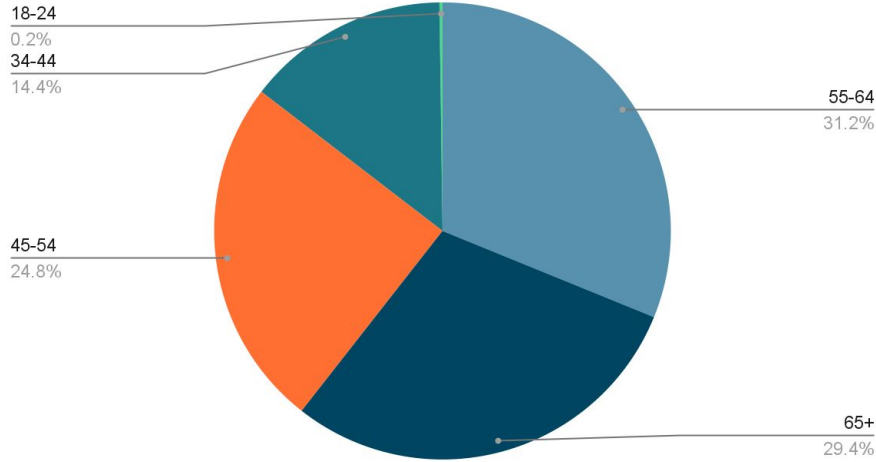
- Women: 61.2%
- Men: 38.8%

43% is 55 and older, **61%** is 45 and older

Using Facebook Data



By Age



By Gender

- Women: 61.2%
- Men: 38.8%

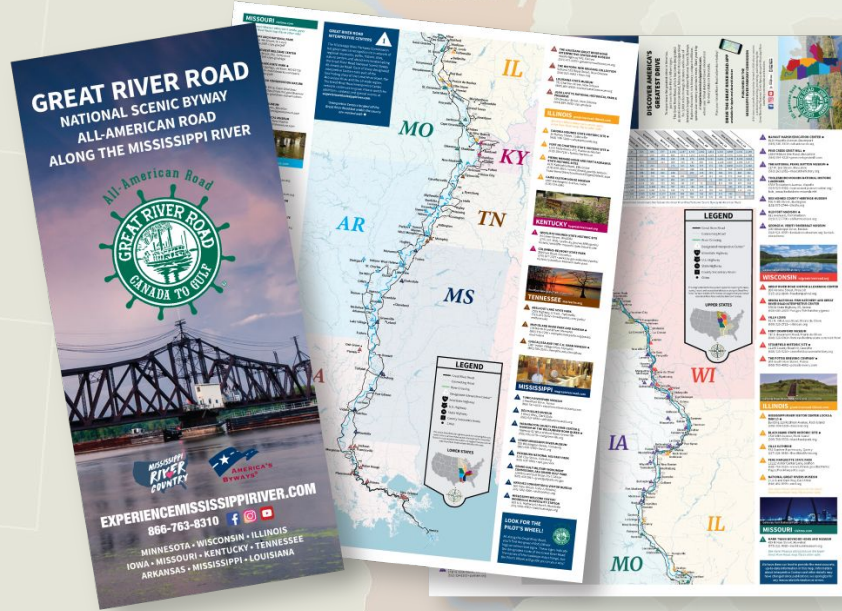
59% is 55 and older, **84%** is 45 and older

Top States - GRR Map Requests

(Excluding the 10 GRR states)



- Florida
- Texas
- California
- Indiana
- Michigan
- Ohio
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia
- Arizona



Overall Travel Trends

- Demand for leisure travel is seeing an upward trend
 - 72% of travelers planning to take at least three trips in the next 12 months
- Domestic travel expected to surpass pre-pandemic levels in 2025
- Solo & small group travel on the rise



Byway Travelers

- Most byway travelers in the US tend to be older (50+)
- Baby Boomers and retirees who have more leisure time and disposable income
- Drawn to slow-paced scenic drives, riverboat tours & cultural experiences
- Millennials and Gen Z are also showing increasing interest in road trips and byways - outdoor activities, national parks, adventure travel



Byway Travelers



- Tourists seeking scenic beauty, cultural landmarks & historical sites
- Want to experience unique landscapes, small towns and natural wonders
- Outdoor enthusiasts - hikers, cyclists, adventurers
- Roadtrippers - couples
- Cultural and history buffs
- Photographers and artists
- Food and music lovers
- Adventure seekers - especially water-based (canoeing, kayaking, etc.)
- Ecotourists - connecting with nature, sustainable tourism
- 1 in 3 byway travelers do not plan their trip in advance
- Also includes repeat travelers that believe they know the route

Byway Travelers



- Destinations based on word of mouth/recommendations (40%)
- Favorite experience on the drive were scenic views
- For those planning the trip, knowing **how long it would take** to drive was equally as important as knowing about **things to do** along the way
- Byway travel gaining popularity - increasing interest in road, trips, outdoor activities & “slow travel” experiences
- Seeking less crowded and more nature-focused travel





Byway Travelers v. General Travelers

- **Byway travelers** prioritize the journey itself (focus on natural beauty, culture, history, & leisurely exploration)
- **General travelers** focus more on efficient travel to reach a specific destination
- **Byway travelers** prefer routes that are aesthetic, historic or cultural significance and may stop frequently at viewpoints, landmarks or towns
- **General travelers** are looking for a fast or direct route
- **Byway travelers** take a slower and more deliberate approach to travel
- **General travelers** often bypass smaller towns
- **Byway travelers** spend more since their trips often involve longer stays, more stops and spending on interest activities - interested in local attractions, dining & lodging v. chains along interstates

Byways and Baseball

- State byways are like the minor leagues
- National Scenic Byways are the Major Leagues
- All-American Roads are the All-Stars - the super-special NSBs offering “a destination and reason for travel unto itself”



Byway Travelers - Great River Road



- Most travelers explore specific sections of the GRR rather than the whole byway
- A smaller subset of visitors travel the length of the byway in one trip - they represent a dedicated group seeking a comprehensive experience

"We started in the fall—September—and followed the season south. A spirit of adventure and desire to see new parts of our country were our motivation. We loved seeing the various cultures and sampling delicious foods along the way. Being from (Tennessee), the pasties and cheese curds were new to us and we loved all Southern foods. In addition to the various cultures, we were interested in the Mississippi commerce. Grains loaded early in the trip were off-loaded near the end. Try it—you'll love it!" – Jane H., Kingsport, Tenn.



Donald Burger

We drove it today from Alton to Grafton. It does not disappoint!

What We Hear from Travelers



"We just finished,
Minnesota to New Orleans.
What a trip!!!"

"From such a small
beginning into something
so magnificent! Ain't God
grand!!"



"I walked across the
headwaters of the mighty
Mississippi River last July.
Awesome trip. Traveled
east side up and west side
back home but toured both
sides. Awesome trip."



What We Hear from Travelers

"Did the entire length in 3 sections. 3 different trips. Just finished St. Louis to NOLA. Minn/WI was wonderful. So many beer choices and the PIE! Natchez is a place I can't wait to get back to. We traveled very slowly with no deadlines. ... Such warm people wherever we went."

"I have traveled the whole road, in parts. I went from Davenport IA to Venice LA on one trip, which included detours for plantations, Civil War battlefields, and New Orleans. On a separate later trip, I traveled from Lake Itasca MN to Davenport IA. ... My favorite parts were the ends, Lake Itasca MN and Venice LA."

"Today grandson Bryant and I completed the GRR. I'm thrilled we did it by car. When I asked (Google AI) about making a road trip along the river, he told me about this awesome drive called the Great River Road. ... It allowed us to experience the creativity, helpfulness, kindness of Americans and the beautiful land we live in from LA to MN."

