



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA®

# COVID-19 Research Roundup

August 31, 2020

Kettle Valley Trail, Christina Lake

## *British Columbia is in Phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan*

*On June 24, 2020, it was announced that British Columbia is taking the next step in [BC's Restart Plan](#) with a gradual transition to Phase 3, including the smart, safe and respectful return of travel and tourism within the province.*

On August 14, 2020, Canadian and US officials agreed to keep the border between the two countries closed to non-essential travel until September 21, 2020.

While BC is in Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan, and is not open to non-essential travel from the US or International countries, information provided in this Research Roundup Report highlights not only local insights, but global insights which may be applicable to BC now.





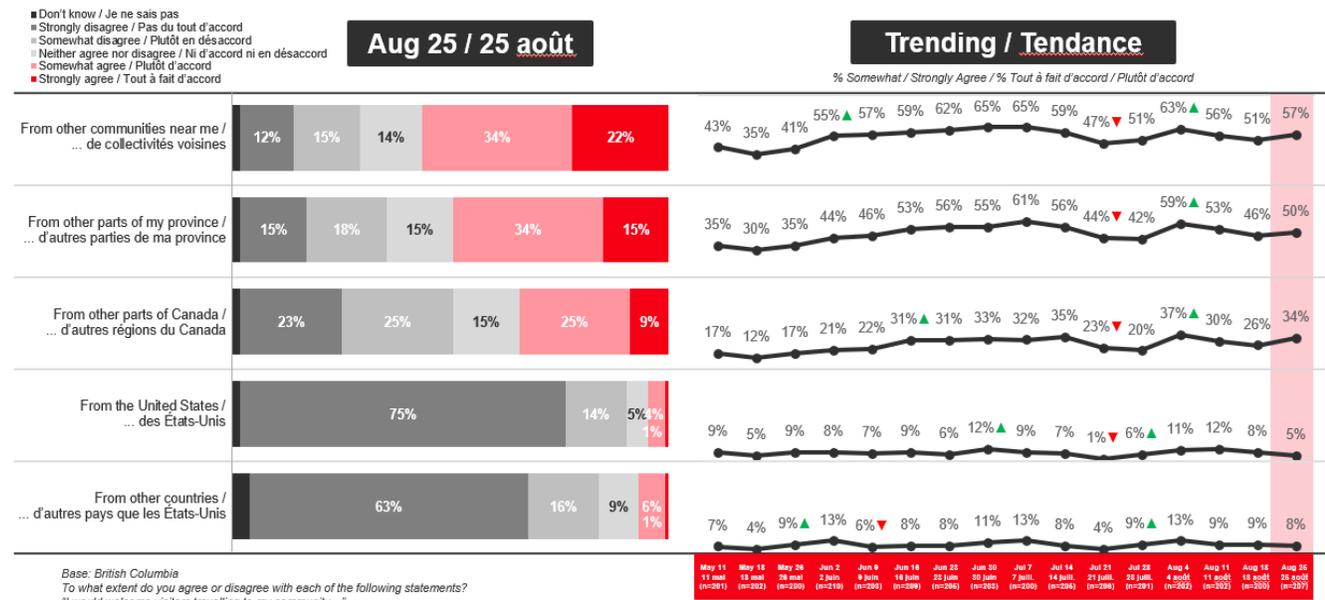
Destination BC is rounding up relevant research and articles each week related to the travel and tourism industry and COVID-19.

Last week in brief:

- BC residents' sentiment towards welcoming visitors increases
- Intentions for overnight trips trend upwards for BC residents
- Movement across BC is down compared to last week
- Nights spent in BC by Canadian travellers during July 2020 were 80% of what was seen in July 2019
- Tourism regions vary in their dependency on international travellers
- Hotel occupancy rates increase across BC urban areas for the week of August 16-22
- BC Hotel Association projects fall/winter hotel occupancy to be low
- Car rental searches in BC increase, while ferry searches decrease
- Big changes expected by global attendees for meetings and events
- Cruises, sporting events, and bus travel considered the most dangerous tourism activities by Americans
- COVID-19 may set global tourism industry back by USD\$910 billion

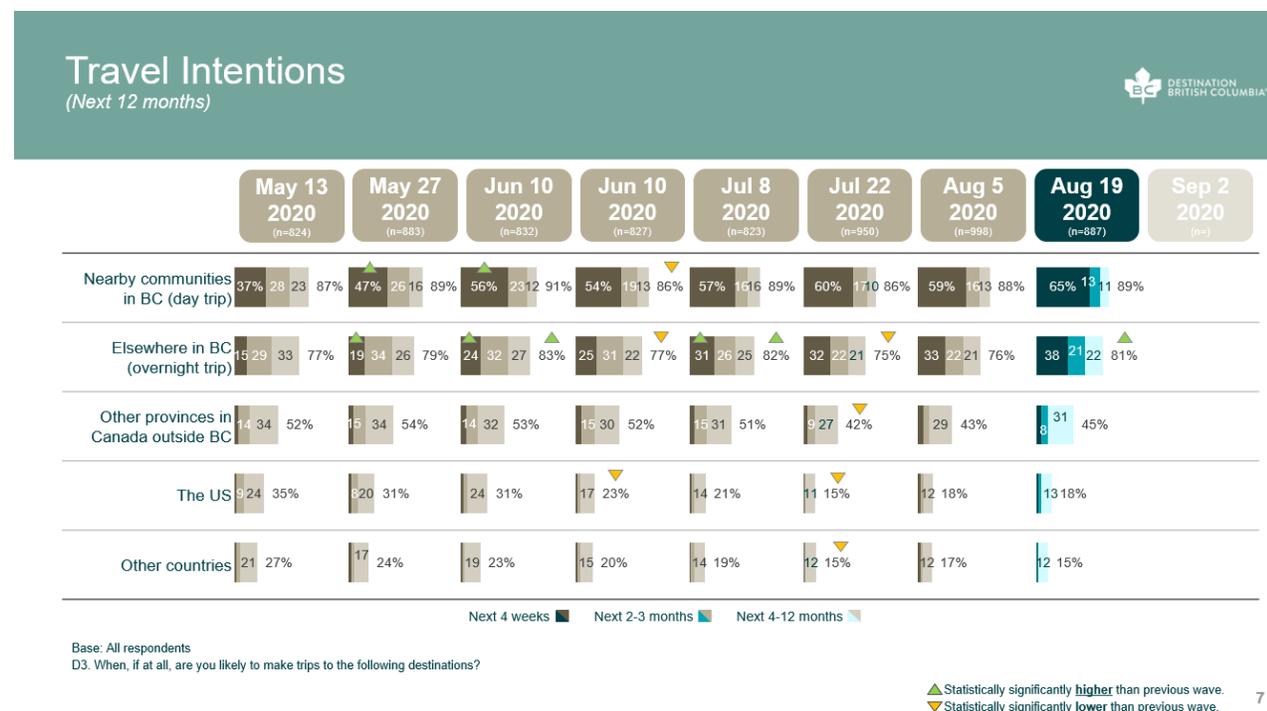
# BC residents' sentiment towards welcoming visitors increases

- Destination Canada's Weekly Resident Sentiment Wave 16 (August 25) report shows that the sentiment of BC residents towards visitors from most areas has trended slightly upward for the first time since August 4.
- 71% of BC rural residents would welcome visitors from nearby communities compared to 55% of urban residents.
- BC residents are increasingly receptive to having their community promoted to nearby communities (net +26 positive), and decreasingly receptive to the US (-73 net negative).



# Intentions for overnight trips trend upwards for BC residents

- According to Destination BC's BC Residents Public Perceptions: COVID-19 Travel and Tourism Wave 8 (Aug 19-23) Report, 89% of BC residents anticipate taking a trip to a nearby community in the next 12 months, and 65% in the next 4 weeks (up from 59% in Wave 7).
- 81% anticipate taking a trip to elsewhere in BC (overnight) in the next 12 months and 38% in the next 4 weeks; intentions to travel have increased for both travel periods since Wave 7 (76% and 33%, respectively).
- BC residents are increasingly less likely to travel to the US or other countries with each wave, down to only 18% likely to travel to the US and 15% to other countries.



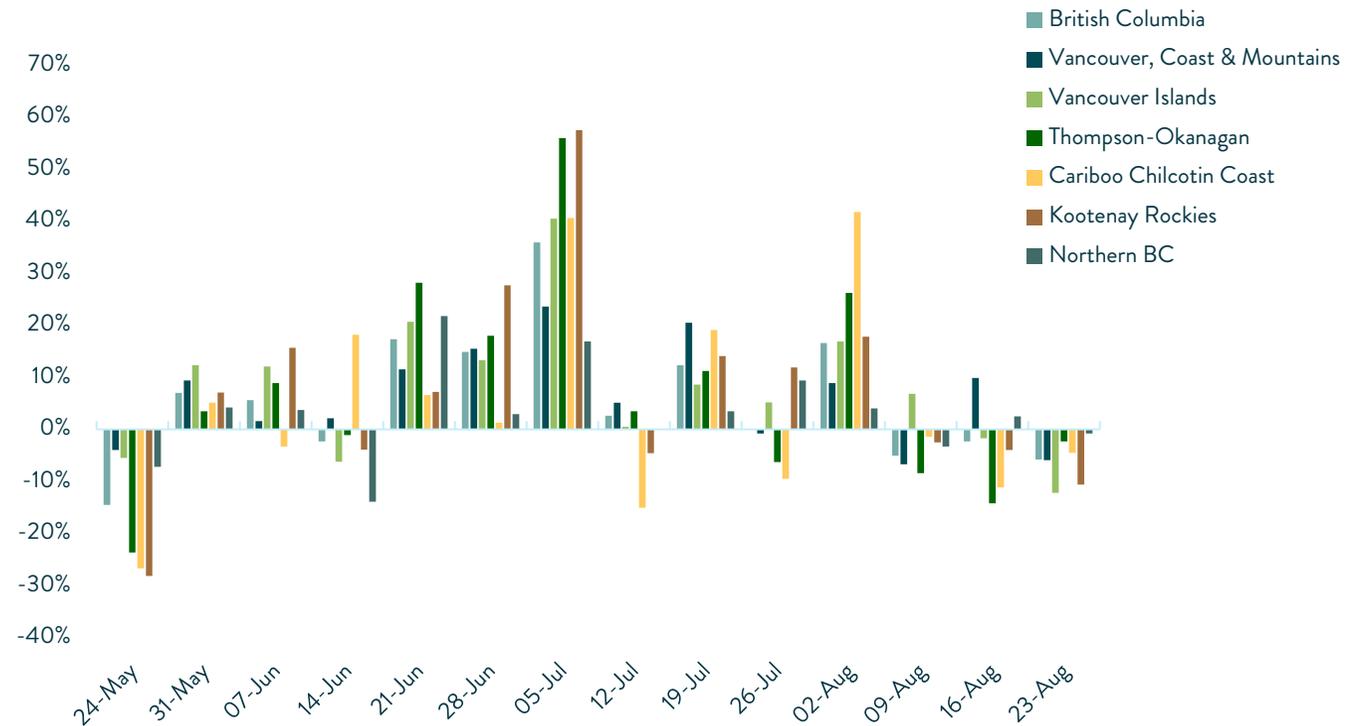
Source: [Destination BC's BC Residents Public Perceptions: COVID-19 Travel and Tourism Wave 8, Insights West, August 19, 2020](#)



# Movement across BC is down compared to last week

- According to Environics Analytics Weekly COVID Tracker Report, a decline in domestic overnight visitation within BC was seen (-5.8%) during the week ending August 23, compared to the previous week, and down -27.1% from the same period last year.
- All areas around the province saw decreases in domestic overnight visitation during the week of August 17-23 (compared to the week prior):
  - Vancouver Island (-12.2%)
  - Kootenay Rockies (-10.6%)
  - Vancouver, Coast & Mountains (-5.9%)
  - Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (-4.5%)
  - Northern BC (-0.8%)
  - Thompson Okanagan (-2.3%)

BC's Domestic Overnight Visitation  
Week over Week Variation

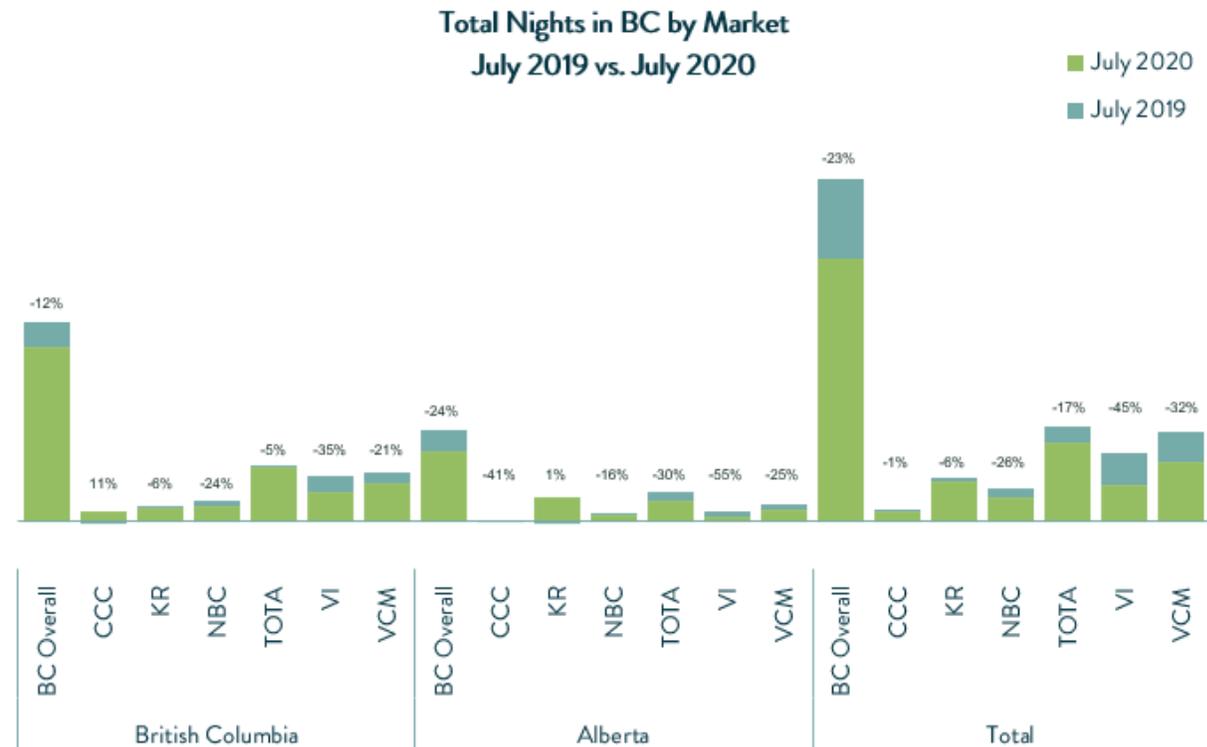


Source: [Environics Analytics Weekly COVID Tracker Report, August 23, 2020](#)



# Nights spent in BC by Canadian travellers during July 2020 were 80% of what was seen in July 2019

- While total trips for the month of July remained below July 2019 levels (-27%), visitors are spending more nights while on their trips in BC compared to July 2019.
- Total nights spent in BC during July 2020 is down -23% from the total nights spent in July 2019.
- Based on Environics Analytics mobility data, British Columbia has managed to achieve the “best case” scenario for travel by British Columbians in July, reaching nearly 90% of nights spent around the province by BC residents.
- However, travel from Alberta has not rebounded as well – which has a disproportionate impact on some parts of BC.

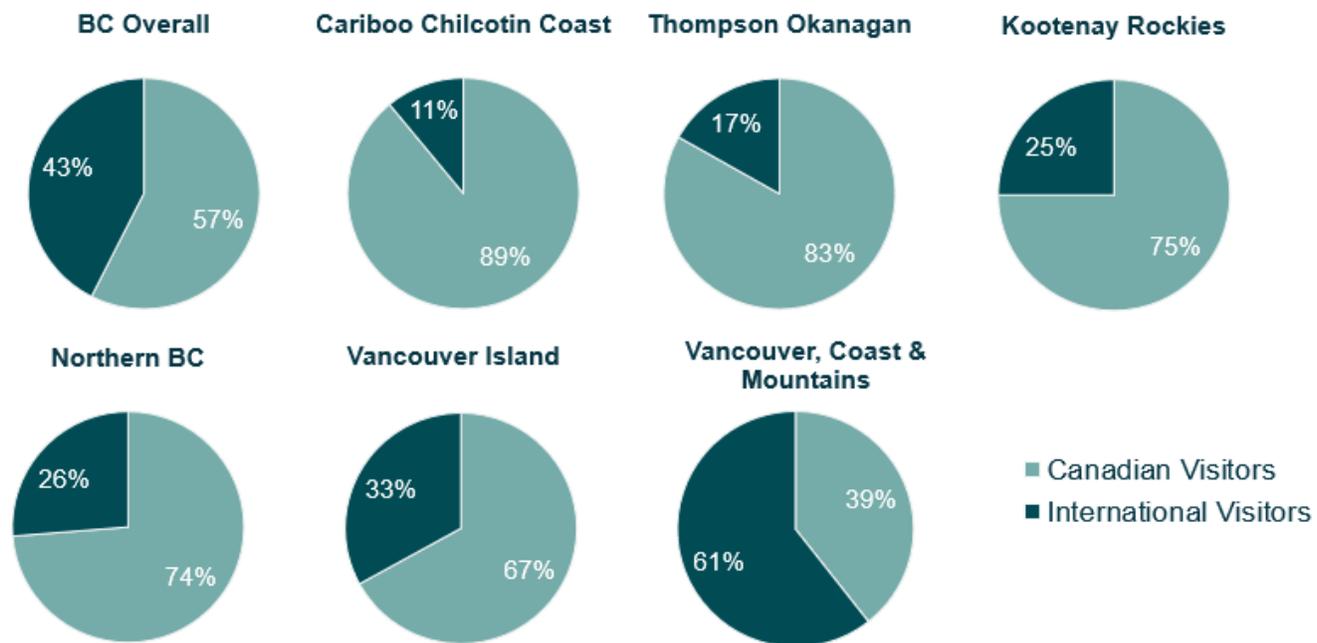


Source: Environics Analytics VisitorView Domestic

## Tourism regions vary in their dependency on international travellers

- Even with BC travel at 80% of last year, tourism regions that are more dependent on international visitors are suffering disproportionately.
- For example, British Columbians and Canadians in general, have not made a significant shift away from Vancouver, Coast and Mountains and to other regions compared to the past, however, since VCM normally welcomes so many international visitors, it has been disproportionately affected by border closures.

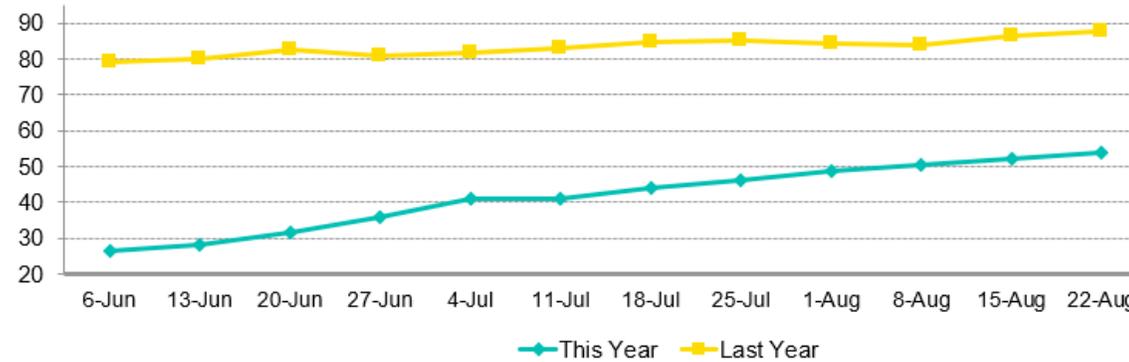
### Canadian vs. International Nights Spent in BC



Source: Destination BC's Estimates based on Statistics Canada National and International Travel Surveys

# Hotel occupancy rates increase across BC urban areas for the week of August 16-22

Weekly Occ (%) - Jun 06, 2020 to Aug 22, 2020



- STR, an agency which captures BC hotel performance, reports a continued, steady rise in BC hotel occupancy week after week.
- BC’s hotel occupancy for the week of August 16-22 was 53.7%. This represents a positive increase of 1.6 points from the previous week and a decrease of -38.9 compared to the previous year (August 18-24 2019).
- The occupancy rate of urban centres has increased this week, however, rates remain below 2019 levels, albeit to varying degrees.

City	Aug 16-22 Occupancy Rate	Week over Week August 16-22, 2020 vs. August 9-15, 2020 Occupancy Point Change	Year over Year August 16-22, 2020 vs. August 18-24, 2019 Occupancy Point Change
Kamloops	63.3%	+2.5	-31.1
Kelowna	82.6%	+1.5	-7.1
Richmond	43.2%	+1.0	-54.3
Whistler	59.4%	+0.5	-31.9
Vancouver (City of)	31.4%	+2.7	-66.9
Victoria	50.6%	+4.9	-43.7

Source: [2020 STR, STR Global Ltd](#)

## *BC Hotel Association projects fall/winter hotel occupancy to be low*

- According to the BC Hotel Association's August 25 Pulse Check Survey, monthly average hotel occupancy across BC is significantly up since the last pulse check, though predictions for fall and winter are low:
  - August: 51%
  - September: 38%
  - October: 28%
  - November: 23%
  - December: 25%
- Vancouver and surrounding areas are still seeing low occupancy. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast currently has the lowest expected occupancy for the remainder of the year, while parts of Vancouver Island and the Interior are seeing higher demand due to resort destinations.



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Current forecasts for Average Expected Occupancy through year-end including August to December are:

- Downtown Vancouver: 25%
- Vancouver Island: 37%
- Vancouver Coast and Mountains (Whistler): 25%
- Thompson Nicola / Okanagan: 41%
- Northern BC: 36%
- Kootenay Rockies: 34%
- Cariboo Chilcotin Coast: 17%



Source: Pulse Check Survey, BC Hotel Association, reported in Hotel Industry Update August 25, 2020

## Car rental searches in BC increase, while ferry searches decrease

- Destination BC's Signals & Sentiment Dashboard reports that local queries in BC for car rentals have increased this past week, while ferry queries decreased. Searches remain below 2019 levels.
- These insights can be found in the Signals & Sentiment dashboard located on the Destination BC COVID-19 Hub, under [Destination BC Response Signals & Sentiment Dashboard](#) tab.

### Local Transportation Queries in BC

Source: Confidential

		Car Rental	Ferry
2020 week over week searches	Decreasing		↓
	Increasing	↑	
2020/2019 year over year searches	Decreasing	↓↓	↓↓



Source: [Signals & Sentiment Dashboard, Destination BC](#)

## Big changes expected by global attendees for meetings and events

- Several surveys by MPI show that meetings and events are likely to change drastically from pre-COVID-19 times.
- Responses show that attendees will expect changes, such as larger spaces, new social interaction and meal rules, hybrid digital and in-person events, and on-site attendee health monitoring.
- Attendees also expect less people in attendance, less in-person meetings, less social activities, and less after-hours events.
- US respondents were particularly expectant of changes. For example, 14% of US-based respondents expect an increase in the number of in-person meetings, compared to 28% of non-US-based respondents



Whenever you resume planning, working and/or attending meetings and events, which of the following do you expect more or less of when compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic?

	EXPECTING MORE
LARGER SPACES TO ALLOW FOR DISTANCING	64.67%
NEW RULES AROUND MEALS AND EATING	60.48%
NEW RULES AROUND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS (e.g. handshakes)	59.05%
HYBRID EVENTS SEPARATELY ACCOMMODATING DIGITAL AND IN-PERSON EXPERIENCE	54.75%
ON-SITE ATTENDEE HEALTH MONITORING	48.60%
DIGITAL ELEMENTS (e.g. augmented reality, social media connectivity, interactive polls)	45.17%
SOCIAL DISTANCING	37.31%
	EXPECTING LESS
PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE	52.26%
NUMBER OF IN-PERSON MEETINGS SCHEDULED	44.19%
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (happy hours, breakfast gatherings, etc.)	44.10%
AFTER-HOUR EVENTS (dinner, drinks, etc.)	39.44%
INTERACTIVE TEAM ACTIVITIES/BREAK-OUT SESSIONS	33.03%
	EXPECTING THE SAME
VENUE ALSO PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS	48.31%
EVENT SPONSORS	48.22%
ENJOYMENT OF THE SURROUNDING AREA OR CITY	44.03%
FOOD VENDORS	39.06%
USAGE OF HOTEL AMENITIES	36.36%
NUMBER OF TOTAL EVENT STAFF	33.93%
TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR MEETING/EVENT	29.19%



Source: [Surveys: Industry Sentiment and Recovery Timing, MPI, August 6, 2020](#)

# Cruises, sporting events, and bus travel considered the most dangerous tourism activities by Americans

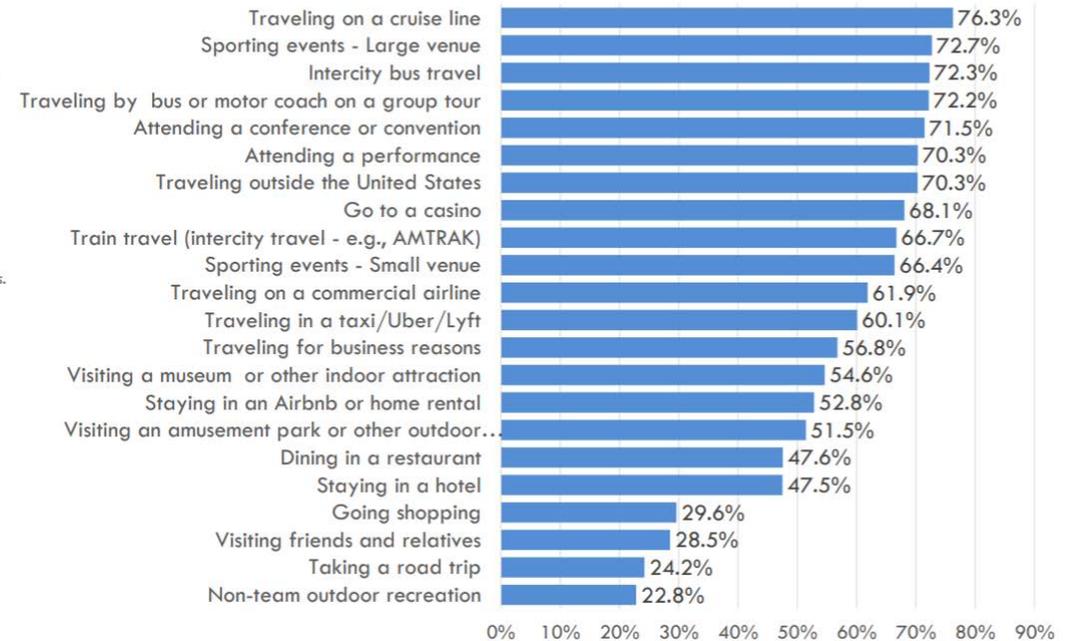
- Destination Analytics reports Americans consider the following tourism activities to be the most unsafe: cruise (76%), sporting events (73%), and intercity bus travel (72%). The safest (from options provided) are considered to be visiting friends and relatives (29%), taking a road trip (24%), and non-team outdoor recreation (23%).
- 32% of Americans say they will be less likely to visit current coronavirus hotspots in America after the virus is over.
- 49% of Americans would be excited to take a weekend getaway in the next month if the opportunity presented itself.
- 44% of Americans are excited to learn about new travel experiences and destinations.

## PERCEIVED SAFETY OF TRAVEL ACTIVITIES

Top 2-Box Score: Percent Selecting Each as "Somewhat Unsafe" or "Very Unsafe"

**Question: At this moment, how safe would you feel doing each type of travel activity?**

(Base: Wave 24 data. All respondents, 1,207 completed surveys. Data collected Aug 21-23, 2020)



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Source: [Coronavirus Travel Sentiment Index Report, Destination Analysts, August 25, 2020](#)

# COVID-19 may set global tourism industry back by USD\$910 billion

- The latest data from UNWTO shows that anywhere from 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs are at risk, while a loss in tourism exports of US\$910 billion to US\$1.2 trillion can be expected. This represents a loss of 1.5% to 2.8% from the global GDP.
- The tourism industry has already lost US\$320 billion in exports over five months. While dependent on when borders will reopen, the UNWTO has stated that international tourism currently risks returning to levels of 20 years ago.



**100 to 120 MILLION**  
direct tourism **jobs at risk**  
(UNWTO)



**Loss of**  
**US\$ 910 BILLION to US\$ 1.2 TRILLION**  
in exports from tourism –  
international visitors' spending  
(UNWTO)



**Loss of**  
**1.5% to 2.8% OF GLOBAL GDP**  
(UNCTAD)



Source: [The Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism, UNWTO, August 2020](#)



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This report can be found online on the [Destination BC COVID-19  
Research & Insights](#) webpage

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