



TOURISM BRITISH COLUMBIA
C A N A D A

RESEARCH SERVICES

VALUE OF THE COMOX VALLEY VISITOR CENTRE STUDY RESULTS - FOR DISTRIBUTION

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Executive Summary

Due to increasing needs in communities around the province, Research Services, Tourism British Columbia has developed a methodology that Visitor Centres (VCs) can use to measure the impact of the VC on traveller behaviour and to determine the economic benefit of the VC. The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre (Comox Valley VC). Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To profile travellers who use the Comox Valley VC in terms of traveller and trip characteristics.
2. To measure the influence the Comox Valley VC has on the decision-making process of travellers in British Columbia: the influence the VC has on the length of stay, expenditures, and selection of additional or alternative activities, attractions or destinations.

A one-location, two-stage survey design was used to examine the study objectives. Travellers were interviewed at the Comox Valley VC to obtain information about the typical traveller to the VC. On-site interviews collected information from travellers during their trip and a mailback questionnaire collected information from travellers after their trip. The purpose of the mailback questionnaire was to gather information about trip motivation, planning, experiences and activities, to compare mid-trip and complete trip perceptions regarding the VC's impact on traveller behaviour, and to understand travellers' perceptions of the Comox Valley and British Columbia upon trip completion.

- Between June 4 and September 4 of 2006, 3,080 people were approached at the Comox Valley VC, 1,756 agreed to the interview, but 757 were excluded because they were from the Comox Valley. Eight respondents indicated that they were part of an organized tour group and were removed from the analysis in an effort to represent the results of independent travellers, resulting in 991 useable surveys.
- Seventy-one percent of travellers at the Comox Valley VC agreed to complete the mailback survey and 64% of these returned their surveys by January 4, 2007, resulting in 393 useable surveys for analysis.
- At the Comox Valley VC, 45% of travellers were from British Columbia, a third (33%) were from other provinces or territories in Canada, while fewer were from the US (11%) or from other countries (10%).
- Overall, the average party size was 2.5 people and 20% of travel parties had children. Those parties with children had an average of 4.1 people travelling in their group.
- The majority of travellers at the Comox Valley VC were travelling for leisure purposes (70%), while fewer were travelling to visit friends and family (18%) or for business (12%).

- Most travellers (93%) at the Comox Valley VC used a car/truck/motorcycle as their primary mode of transportation, 4% travelled in a recreational vehicle, 2% by bicycle and the remaining 1% by other modes of transportation.
- Forty-three percent of travellers were staying in resorts/hotels/motels/B&Bs and nearly a third were staying in campgrounds/RV parks (31%). Fewer were staying with friends or relatives (19%) or in other types of accommodations (8%).
- The majority of travellers (66%) had a destination somewhere within British Columbia, a third (33%) were touring with no particular primary destination and the remaining 1% had primary destinations outside British Columbia. Most of the visitors who were travelling to destinations within British Columbia were travelling to Vancouver Island (91%), including 58% who specified the Comox Valley as their primary destination.
- A third (33%) of mailback respondents originally intercepted at the Comox Valley VC had considered other destinations. The majority (60%) of alternative destinations were other places on Vancouver Island.
- Top motivations to travel for mailback respondents were spending quality time with family and/or friends (27%), rest and relaxation (23%), seeing natural wonders and important natural sites (14%), and experiencing unspoiled nature (12%).
- Travellers at the Comox Valley VC planned to spend an average of 17 days away from home, including 13 days in British Columbia and 5 days in the Comox Valley. A small proportion of travellers (7%) indicated that they were just passing through the Comox Valley.
- Most travellers (80%) at the Comox Valley VC spent three weeks or more planning their trip, with the most common planning horizon being greater than 13 weeks.
- For Comox Valley VC mailback respondents, the Internet (63%), past experience (62%), travel guide books/brochures (60%), and advice from friends or relatives (58%) were among the top information sources used before travel. Travel guide books/brochures, the Internet, and advice from friends or relatives were noted as the most useful information sources to utilize before travel. Visitor Centres were the top information source used during travel as listed by 81% of respondents.
- The majority of travellers (64%) at the Comox Valley VC were flexible regarding trip activities in that they had less than a quarter of their activities in the Comox Valley planned before arriving in the region. In addition, nearly half of the travellers (45%) were very flexible with the amount of time that they could spend in the Comox Valley. Overall, respondents were not as flexible in terms of spending additional time in British Columbia, however, more than a third of the travellers (37%) indicated they could extend their time in British Columbia by an extra day or days.

- Mailback respondents were asked about participation in activities during the trip they were interviewed. The five most participated in activities were soft adventure activities (74%), visiting parks (73%), shopping for local arts and crafts (60%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (50%), and participating in fine dining (49%).
- In terms of interest in activities on future trips, the top five activities were visiting parks (77%), participating in soft adventures activities (75%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (59%), shopping for local arts and crafts (57%), and attending a festival, fair or exhibition (54%).
- Nearly all travellers (96%) at the Comox Valley VC spoke with a Visitor Information Counsellor.
- Most travellers were very satisfied (89%) or satisfied (11%) with the services offered at the Comox Valley VC. Satisfaction with the VC remained high regardless of market origin or primary trip purpose. The biggest difference was seen between travellers who did or did not speak to a Counsellor with those who spoke to Counsellor providing higher satisfaction ratings than those who did not speak to a Counsellor.
- Only 16% of travellers had suggestions to improve the services offered at the Centre. Improving the information available at the VC was the most common suggestion.
- Nearly half (46%) of mailback respondents visited another VC in British Columbia during their trip.
- Positive images of the Comox Valley were dominated by the natural beauty and scenery of the Comox Valley, the presence of family and friends and friendliness of people in general, the ocean/harbour, the activities, and the peacefulness of the region.
- Negative perceptions from mailback respondents at the Comox Valley VC focused on traffic, lack of/confusing signage, urban sprawl/over development, rainy weather, and expensiveness of vacationing in the region.
- A variety of characteristics were identified as unique to the Comox Valley. The most common were beautiful scenery, ocean/harbour, location/proximity, activities, and the presence of family and friends and friendliness of people in general.
- Respondents to the mailback questionnaire were asked to rate various components of their trip and their overall travel experience in the Comox Valley. Nearly all respondents (98%) rated their overall travel experience as good (56%) or excellent (42%). Ratings for each trip component were also high. Customer service (97%), access to information about the Comox Valley (96%), and recreation and adventure opportunities (94%) stand out as strengths with most respondents rating these components as either good or excellent. Local signage received the lowest ratings.

- Respondents to the mailback questionnaire were also asked about their satisfaction with their trip in British Columbia. Most travellers were either very satisfied (84%) or somewhat satisfied (7%) with their experience.
- Over three-quarters of travellers indicated that they were either 'very likely' (58%) or 'likely' (19%) to return to the Comox Valley for a future trip. The majority of travellers (73%) indicated that this return trip would occur in the summer.
- In terms of likelihood of taking another leisure trip in British Columbia, an even larger proportion of travellers indicated that they were 'very likely' (84%) or 'likely' (10%).
- Travellers at the Comox Valley VC spent an average of \$169.19 per party per day. Average daily expenditure **per person** was also calculated, with the result being \$68.88 per person per day. Spending patterns varied only slightly depending on the origin of the travellers. However, there were notable differences in expenditures when broken down by primary accommodation type, travel party size and age.
- In the summer of 2006, Comox Valley VC users were estimated to have spent nearly \$5 million in the Comox Valley and another \$9 million while travelling throughout the rest of the province.
- The Comox Valley VC had a positive impact on traveller behaviour. Half of the travellers said that they learned about new trip activities as a result of their stopping at the VC. Just over one-fifth (21%) replied they would spend extra time in the Comox Valley, 6% would spend extra time in other parts of British Columbia, and over a third (37%) would make another trip in/to British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC¹.

¹ Additional spending as a result of these findings was calculated and presented in the full study results. These estimates can be obtained from the Comox Valley Visitor Centre.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
METHODS	6
DATA COLLECTION - INTERVIEW	6
DATA COLLECTION - MAILBACK.....	8
DATA ANALYSIS	8
RESULTS	10
TOURIST CHARACTERISTICS (DEMOGRAPHICS).....	10
TRIP CHARACTERISTICS	13
TRIP PLANNING	16
TRIP FLEXIBILITY	18
TRAVELLER ACTIVITIES	20
USE OF THE VC	22
PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMOX VALLEY AND BRITISH COLUMBIA	25
EXPENDITURES	29
IMPACT OF THE VC ON TRAVELLER BEHAVIOUR	31
CONCLUSIONS	36
LIMITATIONS	38
APPENDICES	39
APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND INTERVIEWS COMPLETED	40
APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRES	43
APPENDIX C – RESPONSE BIAS TESTING	61
APPENDIX D – SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICES OFFERED AT THE VC	66
APPENDIX E – OTHER VCS VISITED IN BRITISH COLUMBIA	70
APPENDIX F – COMMENTS FROM COMOX VALLEY VC MAILBACK SURVEY	72

Introduction

Visitor Information Counsellors at British Columbia's 114 Visitor Centres (VCs) provided travel counselling and advice to nearly 1.7 million visitor parties in 2006. In addition, many more travellers used VCs without actually speaking with a Counsellor. The use of the VCs provides communities with an opportunity to influence the activities and satisfaction of travellers, thus increasing the length of stay and the probability of a return visit to the community and British Columbia. Due to increasing needs in communities around the province, Research Services, Tourism British Columbia has developed a methodology that Visitor Centres (VCs) can use to measure the impact of the VC on traveller behaviour and to determine the economic benefit of the VC. A pilot project was conducted in 2001 to test the methodology of measuring such impacts. This study at the Comox Valley VC in the summer of 2006 was designed using the methodology developed in the 2001 pilot project.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre. Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To profile travellers who use the Comox Valley VC in terms of traveller and trip characteristics.
2. To measure the influence the Comox Valley VC has on the decision-making process of travellers in British Columbia: the influence the VC has on the length of stay, expenditures, and selection of additional or alternative activities, attractions or destinations.

Methods

A one-location, two-stage survey design was used to examine the study objectives. Travellers were interviewed at the Comox Valley VC to obtain information about the typical traveller to the VC. On-site interviews collected information from travellers during their trip and a mailback questionnaire collected information from travellers after their trip. The purpose of the mailback questionnaire was to gather information about trip motivation, planning, experiences and activities, to compare mid-trip and complete trip perceptions regarding the VC's impact on traveller behaviour, and to understand travellers' perceptions of the Comox Valley and British Columbia upon trip completion.

Similar studies conducted in British Columbia have collected information from travellers at a reference site (a place where tourists congregate in the community) in addition to the VC. The purpose of the reference site is to collect information about the typical traveller to the community and build a profile of travellers who are not presently using the VC. In the Comox Valley, data was not collected at a reference site because of feasibility issues associated with potential sites.

Data Collection - Interview

Two interviewers collected data between June 4 and September 4, 2006. For the most part, the interviewers' schedule consisted of a systematic sample of four continuous days of interviewing followed by two days off (Appendix A).

Potential respondents were randomly selected as they exited the VC. Respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in an eight to ten minute interview and were given a *Super, Natural British Columbia*[®] refrigerator magnet or pin for their time if they agreed to participate. Respondents were then asked if they were residents of the Comox Valley (defined as the area between Fanny Bay and the Oyster River, including Denman and Hornby Islands). If so, they were eliminated from the remainder of the interview ensuring that only non-resident travellers were interviewed. Travellers who were part of an organized tour group were also screened out of the survey in an effort to focus on independent travellers. Business travellers were eliminated after the first few questions of the interview. The interviewers recorded responses on handheld computers (Palm Pilots) using Technes Data Entryware software.

During the interview, questions were asked about (see Appendix B for questionnaires):

- traveller demographics,
- primary trip purpose,
- primary destination,
- primary mode of transportation,
- trip duration,
- length of stay in the Comox Valley and in British Columbia,
- primary accommodation,
- daily expenditures,
- trip flexibility,
- use of the VC,
- perceived impacts of the VC on the rest of their trip,
- satisfaction with the VC, and
- suggestions to improve the services offered at the VC.

In addition, mailing addresses were collected from those respondents in the interview who agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire. A copy of *British Columbia Magazine* and a chance to win a digital camera were used as incentives to achieve a high participation rate in the mailback questionnaire.

Between June and September 2006, 3,080 people were approached at the Comox Valley VC, 1,756 agreed to the interview, but 757 were excluded because they were from the Comox Valley. Eight respondents indicated that they were part of an organized tour group and were removed from the analysis in an effort to represent the results of independent travellers, resulting in 991 useable surveys (Table 1).

Table 1. Travellers surveyed at the Comox Valley VC.

	Travellers Approached	Agreed to Interview	From Local Community ¹	Part of Organized Tour Group	Useable Traveller Surveys ²
Comox Valley VC	3,080	1,756	757	8	991

1. The Comox Valley includes the area north of Fanny Bay, south of the Oyster River, and Denman and Hornby Islands.

2. Includes 120 business travellers who were eliminated from the survey after the first several questions of the interview.

Data Collection - Mailback

Mailback questionnaires were sent to consenting visitors with a business reply envelope and a *British Columbia Magazine* in mid-July 2006 (for visitors interviewed between June 4 and July 17) and in mid-September 2006 (for visitors interviewed between July 18 and September 4). The first mailing was followed by a second mailing of a reminder postcard and a third mailing of just a questionnaire and a business reply envelope. Responses were accepted until early January 2007.

The mailback questionnaire collected a variety of information including (see mailback questionnaire in Appendix B):

- travel party demographics,
- trip duration,
- length of stay in British Columbia,
- primary destination,
- destination decision-making,
- trip motivation,
- trip activities,
- trip planning,
- trip expenditures,
- the VC’s impact on their trip,
- use of other VCs in British Columbia,
- positive and negative images of the Comox Valley,
- unique characteristics of the Comox Valley as a vacation destination,
- satisfaction with the Comox Valley and British Columbia, and
- the likelihood of returning to the Comox Valley and British Columbia.

Seventy-one percent of travellers at the Comox Valley VC agreed to complete the mailback survey and 64% of these returned the surveys by January 4, 2007, resulting in 393 useable surveys for analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Mailback survey response from travellers intercepted at the Comox Valley VC.

	Travellers Asked to Participate in Mailback¹	Agreed to Complete Mailback	Incomplete Addresses	No Response	Useable Mailback Surveys
Comox Valley VC	868	614 (70.7%)	3	218	393 (64.0%)

1. Does not include business travellers (n=120) or 3 respondents who dropped out of the survey.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and summarize results of the report. ‘Don’t know/No response’ answers and responses from business travellers have been excluded from the analyses for all questions unless otherwise noted. For some sections, results are presented by traveller sub-group

(e.g. segmented based on traveller demographics or trip characteristics) to examine the difference among sub-groups.

In an effort to provide practical and actionable information to meet stakeholders’ operational or marketing needs, this report will focus on practical differences rather than statistical differences. The rationale for this approach is that very small and unimportant differences can be found to be statistically significant under certain circumstances. As such, this report typically takes note of where there is a difference of ± 10 percentage points (ppts) or more. In the report’s tables, differences that are 10 ppts or more higher than the overall results are highlighted in blue, while differences that are 10 ppt or more lower are shown in red (Figure 1).

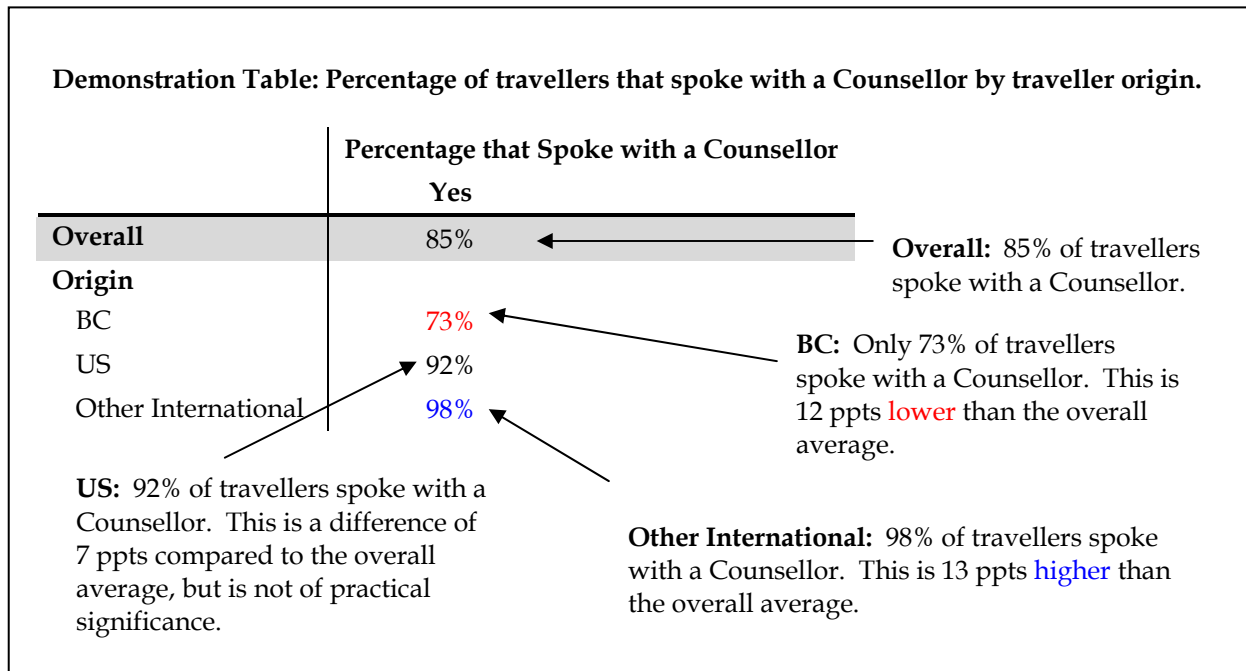


Figure 1. Interpreting the tables. Data is fictitious and for illustrative purposes only.

The study design produced two sets of data – data from the interview and mailback questionnaires. The respondents and the responses could vary between the interview and mailback questionnaires. The respondents could differ because travellers could drop out of the study by not agreeing to complete the mailback questionnaire or by not completing the mailback questionnaire even if they had agreed to complete it (which could cause non-response bias). Both instances could cause the mailback questionnaire results to be unrepresentative of travellers interviewed on-site. In addition, the responses to similar questions in the interview and mailback questionnaires could vary due to real differences in traveller behaviour (for example, a traveller may have perceived that the VC had a different impact on their trip when they were interviewed compared to the responses on the mailback questionnaire).

Response biases were assessed to ensure validity of the final results by way of examining practical differences among the aforementioned data sets. Results of these assessments (Appendix C) and several other factors indicated that the interview information is the best source of data when the same

or similar questions were asked on both the interview and mailback questionnaire. Thus, mailback questionnaire responses were used only when the question was not asked in the interview and when sample sizes permitted. All results presented in the remainder of this report are from the interview unless otherwise noted.

Results

Tourist Characteristics (Demographics)

At the Comox Valley VC, 45% of travellers were from British Columbia, a third (33%) were from other provinces or territories in Canada, while fewer were from the United States (11%) or from other countries (10%, Table 3).

The majority of travellers from outside of British Columbia originated from Alberta (60%), a quarter were from Ontario (25%) and fewer were from Quebec (4%), Manitoba (4%), Saskatchewan (4%), Nova Scotia (2%), New Brunswick (1%), Northwest Territories (1%), and the Yukon (<1%, Figure 2). Travellers from 27 different states were intercepted at the Comox Valley VC (Figure 3). A quarter of these US travellers came from California (25%) and Washington (24%) while fewer were from other States such as Oregon (13%) and Arizona (5%). Most travellers from other countries were European. Thirty percent of travellers from other countries were from the United Kingdom, 19% were from Germany and another 19% were from the Netherlands. Fewer were from countries such as Switzerland (7%) or Australia (6%, Figure 4).

Over half of the travellers (55%) at the Comox Valley VC were between 45 and 64 years of age, 16% were 35 to 44 years, 15% were over the age of 65, and just over a tenth (11%) were 25 to 34 years. Only 3% of travellers were under 24 years of age (Table 3). The majority of travellers (76%) had at least a college or technical diploma, with the most frequently stated education category being a university degree (32%).

The majority of travellers were high income earners with nearly a third (31%) of travellers coming from households with an annual income of \$65,000 to \$99,999 and over a quarter (27%) making over \$100,000 yearly.

At the Comox Valley VC, the average party size was 2.5 people and only 20% of travel parties included children. Those parties that travelled with children had, on average, 4.1 people travelling in their group (Table 3).

Table 3. Traveller demographics at the Comox Valley VC.

	Comox Valley VC	
	Number of Travellers	Percentage of Travellers
Origin		
BC	449	45.3%
Other Canada	330	33.3%
US	112	11.3%
Other International	100	10.1%
Age¹		
Under 24 Years	25	2.9%
25-34 Years	95	11.0%
35-44 Years	141	16.3%
45-54 Years	270	31.2%
55-64 Years	203	23.4%
65 Years or Older	132	15.2%
Education¹		
Less Than High School	6	0.7%
High School	107	12.4%
Some Technical, College or University	97	11.3%
College or Technical Diploma	180	20.9%
University Degree	274	31.8%
Masters or a PhD Degree	197	22.9%
Income²		
Less than \$25,000	4	4.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	17	19.3%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	16	18.2%
\$65,000 to \$99,999	27	30.7%
\$100,000 or More	24	27.3%
Party Size¹		
Average Party Size-Total	868	2.46
Average Party Size-Parties without children	694	2.06
Proportion with Children	174	20.0%
Average Party Size-Parties with children	174	4.05

1. Business travellers were not asked these questions and therefore are not part of the analysis.

2. Annual household income was only asked on a quarter of the mailback surveys through random selection, hence the smaller sample size. This was done to test the impact that the income question has on response rate. Mailback surveys which did not include the income question generated a marginally higher response rate.

Origin of Canadian Travellers from Outside British Columbia

Where do you live (usual place of residence)?

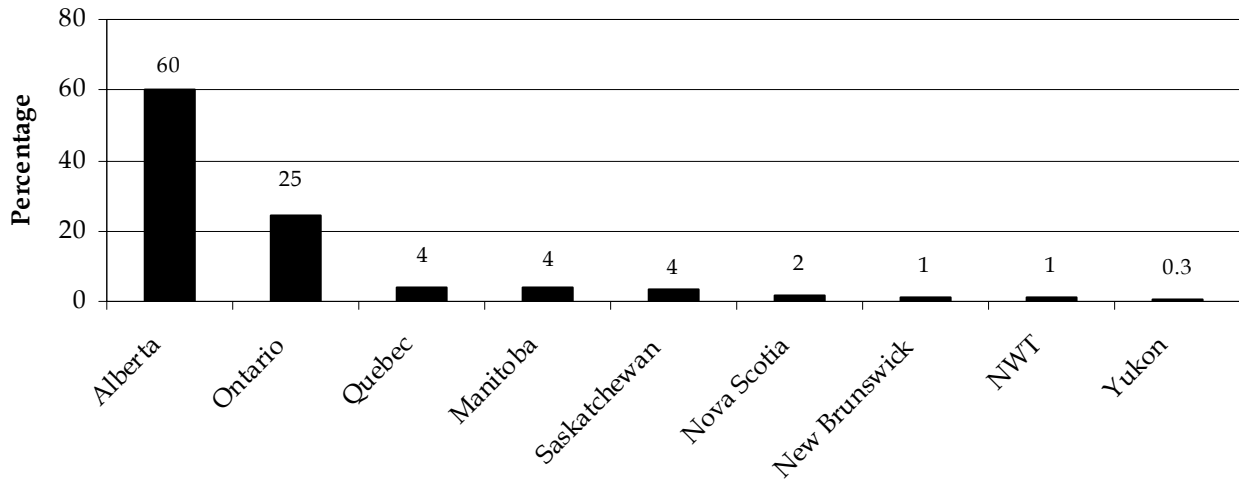


Figure 2. The percentage of travellers from provinces outside of British Columbia at the Comox Valley VC (n=330).

Origin of U.S. Travellers by State

Where do you live (usual place of residence)?

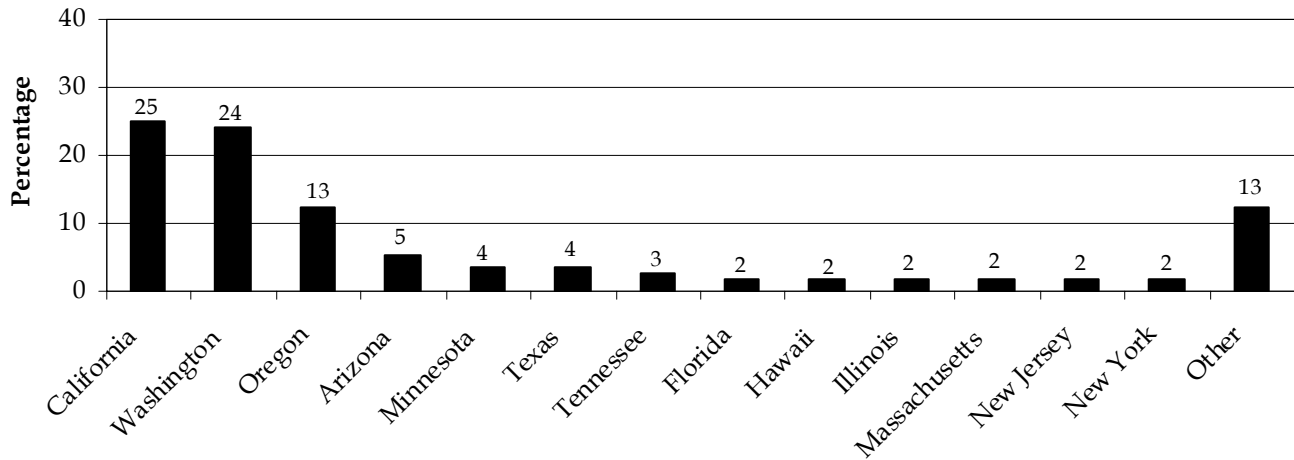


Figure 3. Percentage of US travellers from each state at the Comox Valley VC (n=112). Other includes Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont and West Virginia.

Origin of Travellers from Other International Countries

Where do you live (usual place of residence)?

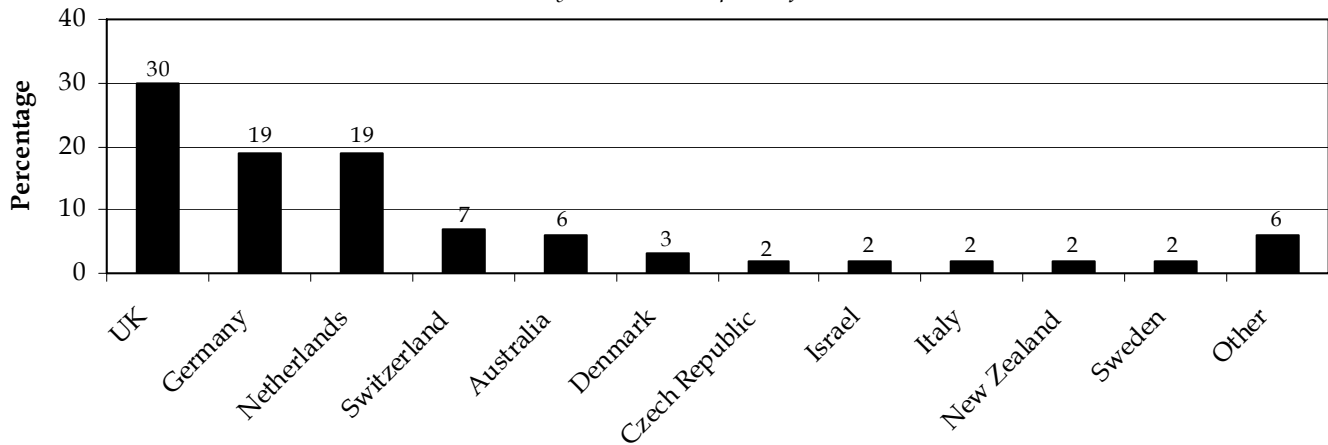


Figure 4. Percentage of travellers from countries other than Canada and the US at the Comox Valley VC (n=100). Other includes Austria, France, Japan, Nigeria, Puerto Rico and South Korea.

Trip Characteristics

The majority of travellers at the Comox Valley VC were travelling for leisure purposes (70%) while fewer were visiting friends and family (18%) or travelling for business (12%, Table 4). Most travellers were using a car/truck/motorcycle (93%) as their primary mode of transportation, while only 4% were travelling in a recreational vehicle and even fewer by bicycle (2%) or other means (1%).

Forty-three percent of travellers were staying in resorts, hotels, motels or B&Bs, 31% in campgrounds or RV parks and nearly a fifth (19%) with friends or relatives. Less than a tenth (8%) stayed in other types of accommodation such as rental homes, hostels, condominiums, cottages and cabins.

The majority of travellers (66%) had a destination somewhere within British Columbia, a third (33%) were touring with no particular primary destination and the remaining 1% had primary destinations outside British Columbia.

Most of the visitors at the Comox Valley VC who were travelling to destinations within British Columbia were travelling to Vancouver Island (91%), including 58% who specified the Comox Valley as their primary destination. Other travel destinations included Vancouver, Coast and Mountains (8%), Northern British Columbia (<1%), Kootenay Rockies (<1%), Thompson Okanagan (<1%) and Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (<1%).

Of the seven travellers at the Comox Valley VC who had primary destinations outside of British Columbia, three were going to Alaska, two were headed to other Canadian destinations, one was travelling to another US destination and one was going overseas.

Table 4. The primary trip purpose, mode of transportation and primary accommodations of travellers at the Comox Valley VC.

	Percentage of Travellers
Primary Trip Purpose	n=990
Leisure	69.5%
Visiting Friends & Family	17.5%
Work/Business Activity	12.1%
Other ¹	0.9%
Mode of Transportation²	n=870
Car/Truck/Motorcycle	93.0%
RV	3.7%
Bicycle	2.4%
Other ³	0.9%
Primary Accommodations^{2,4}	n=818
Resort/Hotel/Motel/B&B	42.9%
Campground/RV Park	30.8%
Friends or Relatives	18.7%
Other ⁵	7.6%

1. Other primary trip purpose responses included moving/buying house (n=3), medical appointments (n=2), funerals (n=2), schooling (n=1) and house sitting (n=1).
2. Business travellers were not included in this analysis because they were not asked these questions.
3. Other transportation responses included bus (n=5) and walking (n=3).
4. Daytrip travellers who were not using accommodation were excluded from the analysis (n=51).
5. Other accommodation responses included rental houses (n=12), hostels (n=12), condos (n=9), second homes (n=8), cottages (n=8), cabins (n=7), boats (n=2), housesitting (n=1), home stay (n=1) and deep forest (n=1).

Mailback respondents were asked if they had considered other destinations or routes in planning their trip. A third (33%) had thought of other destinations. The majority (60%) of alternative destinations were other places on Vancouver Island. Nearly half (46%) of the Vancouver Island alternatives were classified as mid-island communities such as Nanaimo and Parksville, nearly a fifth (19%) were west-island communities like Tofino and Port Alberni, and 15% of the alternatives were Victoria. Significantly fewer responses (less than 10%) were other regions in British Columbia, other provinces/territories in Canada or international destinations.

Three hundred seventy-six mailback respondents from the Comox Valley VC provided 486 reasons for selecting their primary destination. The most frequent responses were as follows:

- Friends and/or family (22%),
- Landscape/scenery/nature (14%),
- Never visited before/recommended (12%),
- Personal business (9%), and
- Past experience (7%).

Mailback respondents were also questioned about their main motivation for travelling (Figure 5). Top responses at the Comox Valley VC were spending quality time with family and/or friends (27%), rest and relaxation (23%), seeing natural wonders and important natural sites (14%), and experiencing

unspoiled nature (12%). Fewer respondents listed participating in a hobby or a sport (6%), looking for places to live (5%), experiencing adventure and excitement (2%), experiencing different cultures and ways of life (2%), or being some place that feels familiar and safe (1%). Six percent of respondents listed other trip motivations including personal business (e.g. weddings, funerals and medical appointments), arts and cultural events, wanting to explore new destinations, business conferences, escaping the heat, and looking for RV sites.

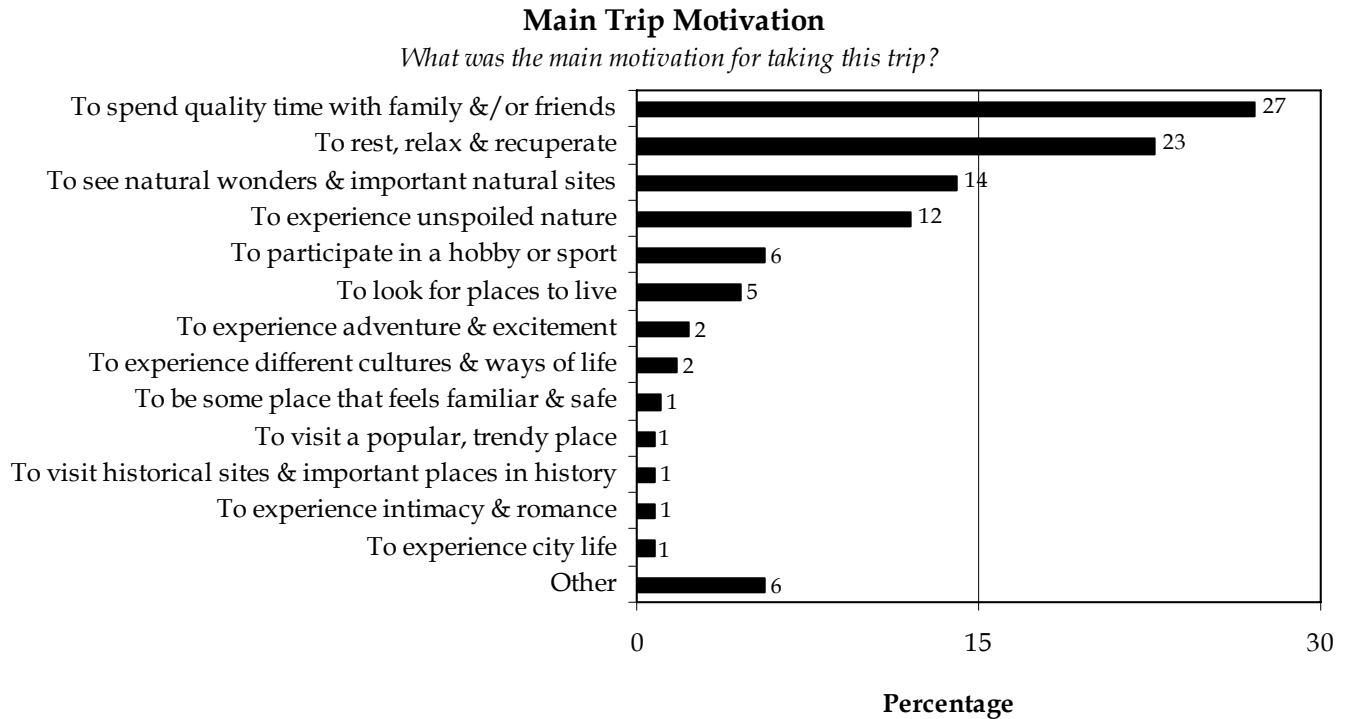


Figure 5. Main trip motivation for travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=391).

Travellers at the Comox Valley VC planned to spend an average of 17 days away from home, including 13 days in British Columbia and 5 days in the Comox Valley (Figure 6). A small proportion of travellers (7%) indicated that they were just passing through the Comox Valley. Overall, visitors from countries other than Canada and the US were on considerably longer trips than visitors from other market origins and were spending notably more time travelling in British Columbia than Canadian travellers. However, time spent in the Comox Valley remained fairly constant regardless of market origin.

Average Days Spent Away From Home and in British Columbia by Travellers at the Comox Valley VC

How many days will you be away from home?

How many of those days will be spent in British Columbia?

How many of those days will be spent in the Comox Valley?

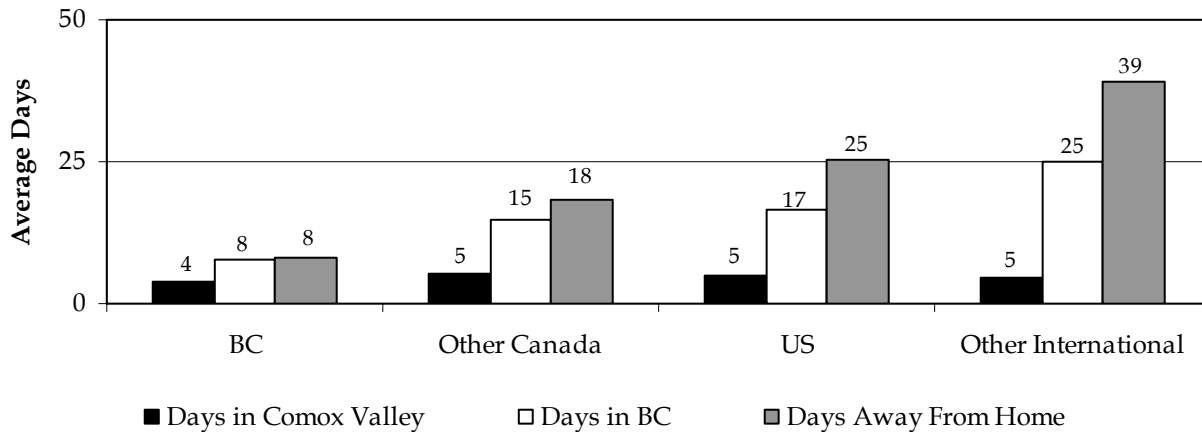


Figure 6. The average number of days spent away from home, in British Columbia and in the region by traveller origin at the Comox Valley VC (n=870 (Away from home), n=870 (Days in BC), n=790 (Days in Comox Valley)).

Trip Planning

Mailback respondents were asked about trip planning. Most travellers (80%) at the Comox Valley VC spent three weeks or more planning their trip, with the most common planning horizon being greater than 13 weeks (35%, Table 5).

Table 5. Trip planning horizons for travellers at the Comox Valley VC.

Trip Planning Horizons	Percentage of Travellers (n=385)
Day of Departure	2.5%
1-6 Days	9.7%
1-2 Weeks	7.6%
3-8 Weeks	28.8%
9-12 Weeks	14.0%
13+ Weeks	35.4%

Travellers were asked what information sources they used before their trip and they were asked to indicate the most useful information sources. The Internet (63%), past experience (62%), travel guide books/brochures (60%), and advice from friends or relatives (58%) were among the top information sources used before travel (Figure 7). Over a third (37%) used Visitor Centres as an information source prior to travel. Less frequently used information sources included travel agents (17%), HelloBC (17%), media coverage (8%), tour operators (8%), advertising (8%) or travel/consumer shows (3%). One percent of travellers listed other information sources, specifically GPS, the library and

time-share information. Travel guide books/brochures, the Internet, and advice from friends or relatives were noted as the most useful information sources to utilize before travel.

Travellers were also asked what information sources they used during their trip (Figure 8). Visitor Centres were the top information source used during travel as listed by 81% of respondents. Also important, but less frequently used during travel included travel guide books/brochures (61%), advice from friends or relatives (36%), past experience (35%), the Internet (16%), and information from tour operators/tourism-specific businesses (11%). Less than ten percent of respondents mentioned using advertising, media coverage, HelloBC, or travel agents as information sources during their trip. Three percent of travellers listed other information sources used during travel, specifically advice from locals or other travellers, ferry schedules, GPS and MLS listings.

Percentage of Travellers Using Each Information Source Before Their Trip

What information sources did you use before your trip?

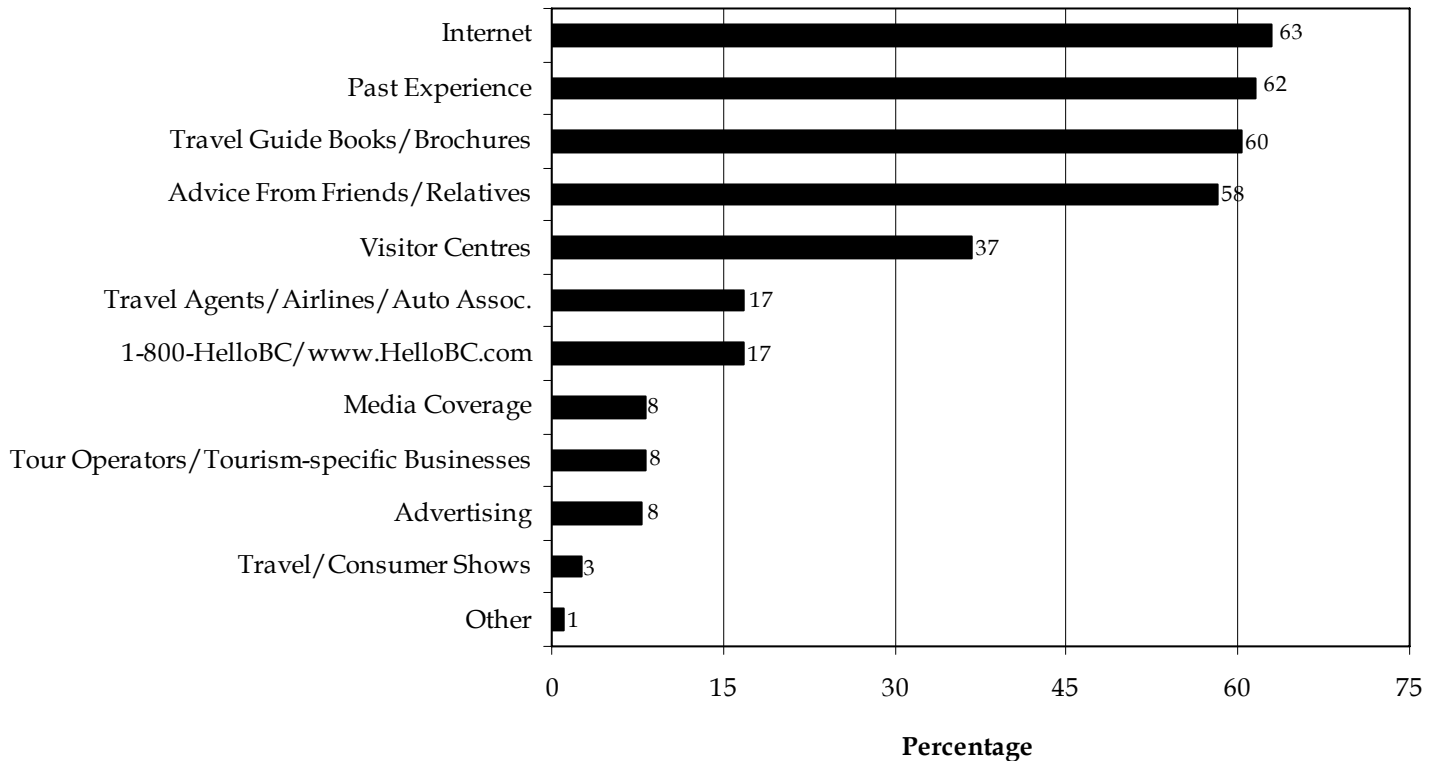


Figure 7. The percentage of travellers using each information source before their trip at the Comox Valley VC (n=393). Percentages add to more than 100% because travellers could use more than one information source before their trip.

Percentage of Travellers Using Each Information Source During Their Trip

What information sources did you use during your trip?

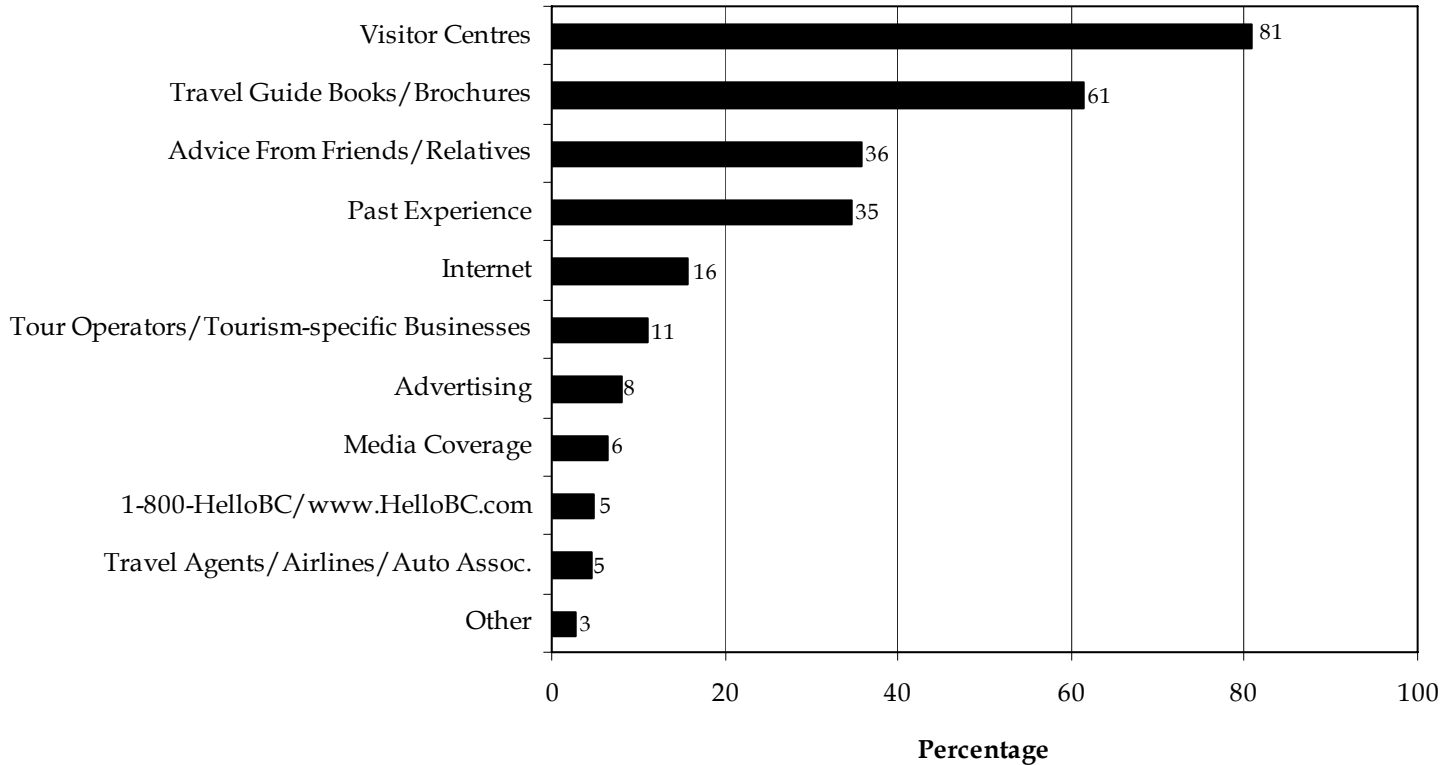


Figure 8. The percentage of travellers using each information source during their trip at the Comox Valley VC (n=393). Percentages add to more than 100% because travellers could use more than one information source during their trip.

Trip Flexibility

Travellers were asked about their flexibility in terms of:

- the percentage of trip activities that were planned before their arrival in the region,
- the amount of time that they had to spend in the Comox Valley, and
- the amount of time that they had to spend in British Columbia.

The majority of travellers (64%) at the Comox Valley VC were flexible regarding trip activities in that they had less than a quarter of their activities in the Comox Valley planned before arriving in the region (Figure 9). In addition, nearly half of the travellers (45%) were very flexible with the amount of time that they could spend in the Comox Valley (Figure 10). Overall, respondents were not as flexible in terms of spending additional time in British Columbia, however, more than a third of the travellers (37%) indicated they could extend their time in British Columbia by an extra day or days (Figure 11).

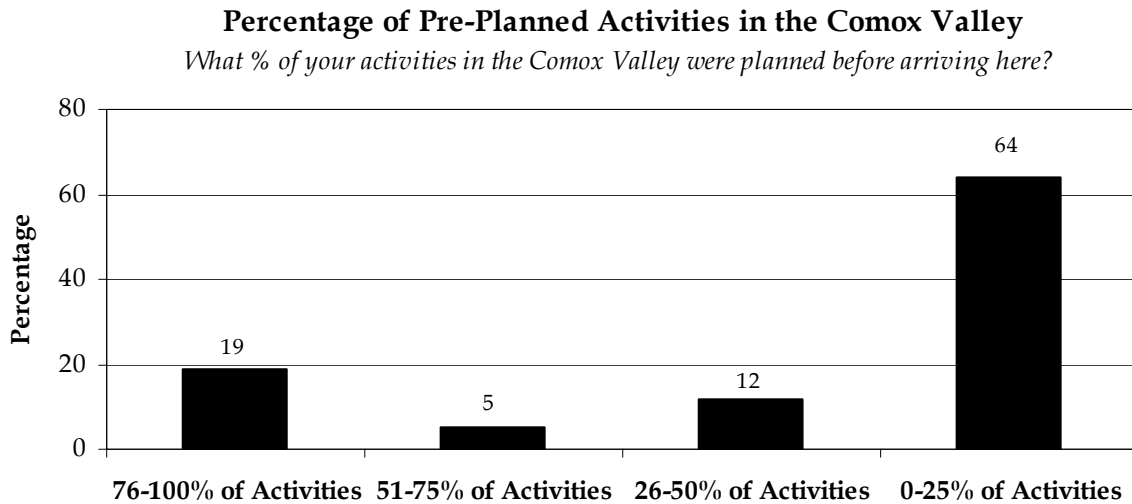


Figure 9. The percentage of pre-planned activities in the Comox Valley for travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=809).

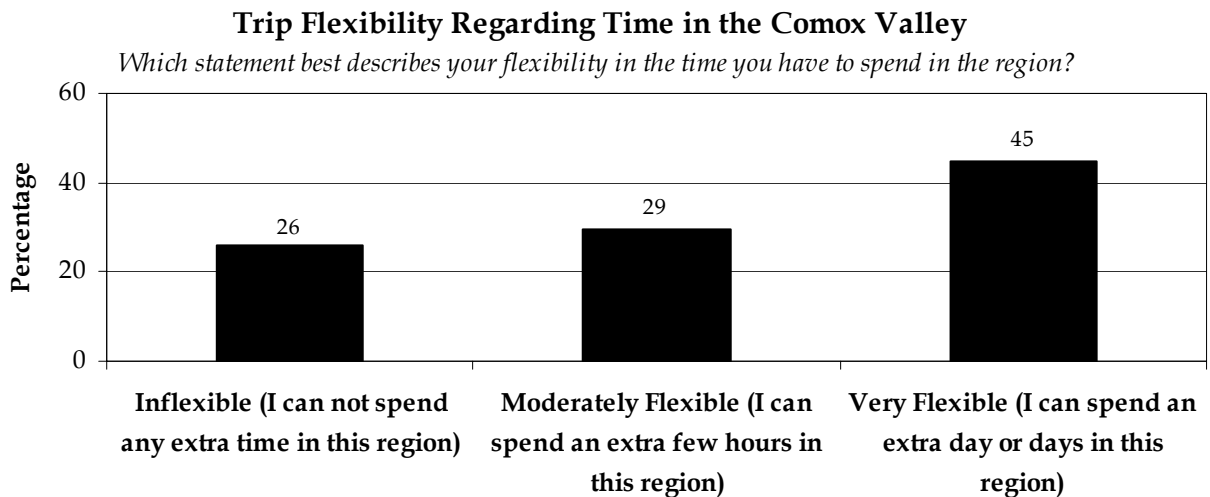


Figure 10. Travellers rating of trip flexibility regarding time spent in the region for travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=869).

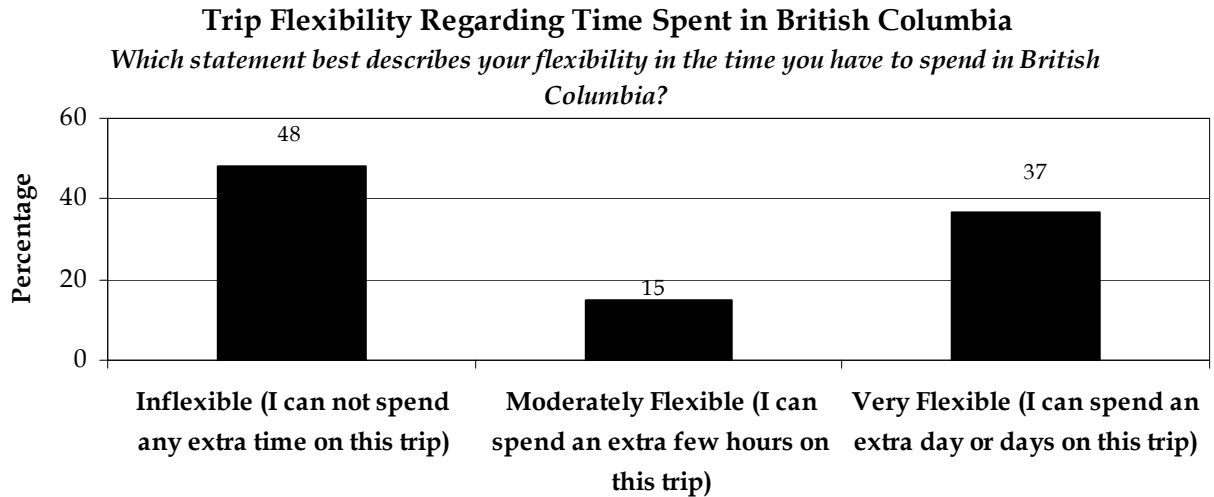


Figure 11. Travellers rating of trip flexibility regarding time spent in British Columbia for travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=869).

Traveller Activities

Mailback respondents were asked about their participation in activities during the trip they were interviewed and their interest in activities on future trips. The five most participated in activities were soft adventure activities (74%), visiting parks (73%), shopping for local arts and crafts (60%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (50%), and participating in fine dining (49%, Table 6). Over a third of respondents visited a farm or farmers’ market (40%), visited an art gallery or studio (39%) or attended a festival, fair or exhibition (33%).

In terms of interest in activities on future trips, the top five activities were visiting parks (77%), participating in soft adventures activities (75%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (59%), shopping for local arts and crafts (57%), and attending a festival, fair or exhibition (54%, Table 7). Other popular activities included visiting farms and farmers’ markets (53%), participating in fine dining (51%), visiting an art gallery or studio (47%), visiting a winery (38%), and visiting First Nations attractions or events (34%).

Table 6. Participation in trip activities for travellers at the Comox Valley VC.

Participation in Activities	Percentage of Travellers Comox Valley VC (n=393)
Soft adventure activities ¹	74.0%
Visiting parks ²	73.3%
Shopping for local arts and crafts	59.5%
Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site	49.9%
Fine dining	48.9%
Visiting a farm, farmers' market, orchard or food processor	39.9%
Visiting an art gallery or studio	39.4%
Attending a festival, fair or exhibition	33.3%
Visiting a First Nations attraction or event	19.6%
Visiting a family attraction ³	15.5%
Attending or participating in a sporting event ⁴	12.7%
Visiting a winery	12.7%
Golfing or attending a golfing event	9.4%
Participating in hard adventure activities ⁵	8.9%
Visiting a spa	6.4%
Other ⁶	5.6%

1. Includes activities such as wildlife viewing, fishing, boating, kayaking, cycling and hiking.
2. Includes municipal, provincial or national parks, or natural areas outside parks.
3. Includes activities such as mini golf, waterslides and zoos.
4. Does not include golf.
5. Includes activities such as white water rafting, rock climbing and mountain biking.
6. 'Other' activities included visiting family/friends, meeting people, attending arts and cultural events/productions, shopping for general goods, camping, visiting airports, attending a wedding, relaxing, general sightseeing, visiting Hot Springs, looking for real estate, fossil hunting, a pulp mill excursion, looking at the steam train, and going to the wharf.

Table 7. Interest in trip activities on future trips for travellers at the Comox Valley VC.

Interest in Activities on future trips	Percentage of Travellers Comox Valley VC (n=393)
Visiting parks ¹	76.8%
Participating in soft adventure activities ²	75.3%
Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site	58.8%
Shopping for local arts and crafts	56.5%
Attending a festival, fair or exhibition	53.7%
Visiting a farm, farmers' market, orchard or food processor	52.9%
Participating in fine dining	51.4%
Visiting an art gallery or studio	46.6%
Visiting a winery	38.4%
Visiting a First Nations attraction or event	33.6%
Visiting a spa	23.2%
Attending or participating in a sporting event ³	22.9%
Visiting a family attraction ⁴	22.9%
Participating in hard adventure activities ⁵	22.4%
Golfing or attending a golfing event	17.6%
Other ⁶	4.1%

1. Includes municipal, provincial or national parks, or natural areas outside parks.
2. Includes activities such as wildlife viewing, fishing, boating, kayaking, cycling and hiking.
3. Does not include golf.
4. Includes activities such as mini golf, waterslides and zoos.
5. Includes activities such as white water rafting, rock climbing and mountain biking.
6. 'Other' activities included visiting family/friends, meeting people, attending arts and cultural events/productions, shopping for general goods, camping, visiting Hot Springs, fossil hunting, looking at the steam train, and going to the wharf.

Use of the VC

Travellers stopped at the Comox Valley VC for a variety of reasons (Figure 12). The most common reasons given were for a map (43%), attraction information (39%), route information (27%), or for adventure and recreation information (24%). Close to a tenth of travellers stopped for information about events (13%), accommodation (10%), camping (10%) and dining (7%). Fewer travellers stopped for ferries information (3%), to use the washrooms (3%), to use the telephone or telephone book (1%), for retail information (1%), or to take a break from travel (1%). Three percent of travellers gave other reasons for stopping such as for bus and train information, real estate information, information on other communities, weather information, to purchase merchandise, to see the nearby train attraction, to use the Internet, and to purchase refreshments.

When travellers were asked what information or other things they actually obtained at the VC, they identified various types of information (Figure 13). Maps were the most common piece of information received, as indicated by 80% of respondents, followed by information about attractions (55%), routes (46%), adventure and recreation opportunities (36%), and events (28%). Close to a fifth

of travellers obtained information about accommodations (18%), dining (18%) and camping (17%). Fewer travellers received ferries information (5%), used telephone services (2%), purchased merchandise (1%), or got information on local retailers (1%). Three percent of travellers obtained other things from the VC such as real estate information, bus and train information, arts and cultural information, information on other communities, weather reports, refreshments, coupon books, and newspapers. Only 2% of travellers said that they did not obtain anything from the VC.

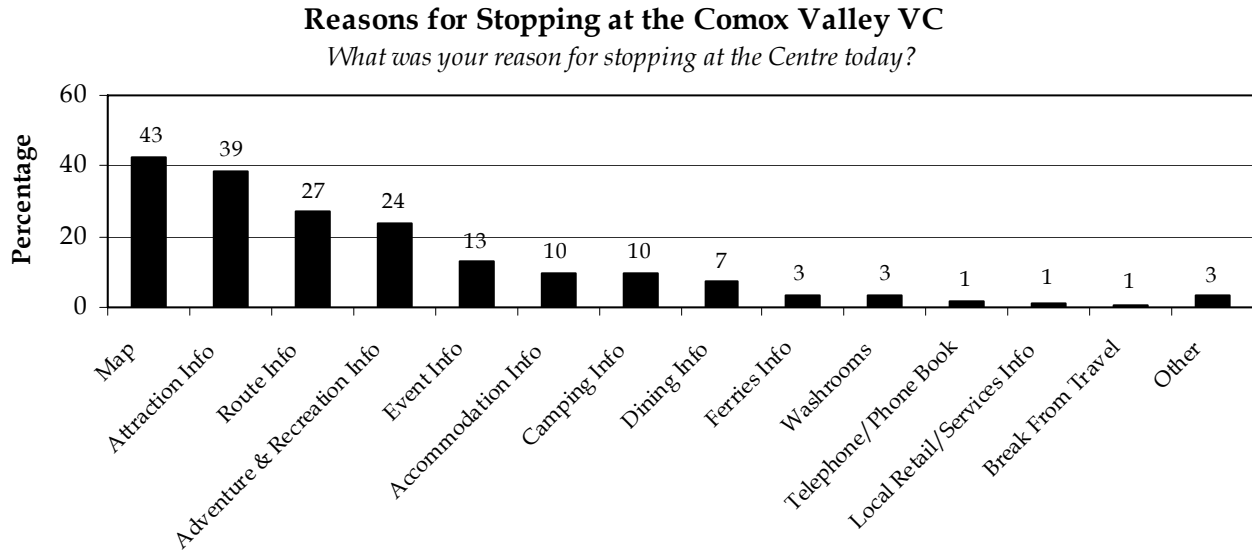


Figure 12. The reasons why travellers stopped at the Comox Valley VC (n=869). The total number of responses exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one reply.

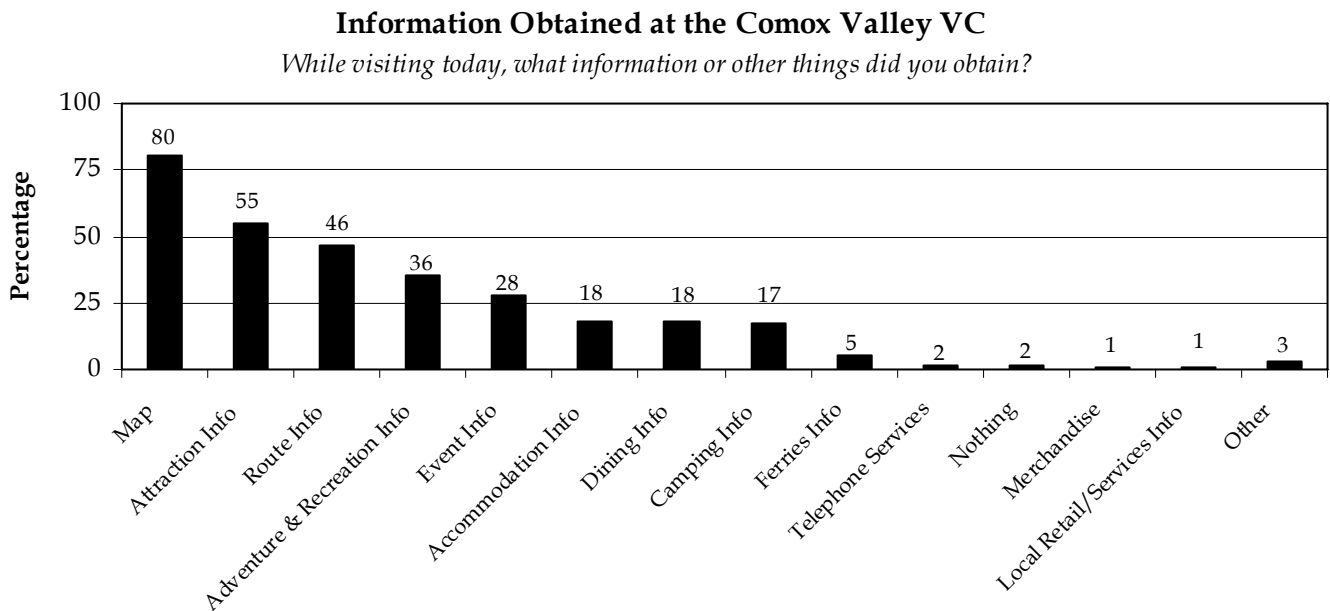


Figure 13. The information obtained by travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=869). The total number of responses exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one reply.

Nearly all travellers at the Comox Valley VC spoke with a Counsellor (96%, Table 8). There was little difference between origin categories, with high proportions of travellers from all residence categories speaking with a counsellor.

Table 8. The percentage of travellers who spoke with a Counsellor at the Comox Valley VC by traveller origin.

Traveller Origin	Percentage that Spoke with a Counsellor	
	Yes (n=835)	No (n=33)
BC	94.7%	5.3%
Other Canada	96.4%	3.6%
US	98.1%	1.9%
Other International	99.0%	1.0%
Total	96.2%	3.8%

Counsellors at the Comox Valley VC record the number of parties that they speak with throughout each day. This number was divided by the proportion of travellers who responded that they had spoken with a Counsellor to determine an estimate of 6,392 parties (excluding locals) that used the Comox Valley VC between June 4 and September 4, 2006. This estimate is approximately 4% more than the 6,143 parties that the VC staff recorded as speaking with a Counsellor during the same time period.

Travellers were asked, "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services offered at the Comox Valley VC?" Most travellers were very satisfied (89%) or satisfied (11%) with the services offered at the Comox Valley VC (100% satisfied or very satisfied, Table 9). Satisfaction with the VC remained high regardless of market origin or primary trip purpose. The biggest difference was seen between travellers who did or did not speak to a Counsellor with those who spoke to Counsellor providing higher satisfaction ratings (100%) than those who did not speak to a Counsellor (91%).

Respondents were asked, "What suggestions do you have to improve the services offered at the Centre?". Sixteen percent of travellers (n=136) had suggestions (Appendix D). Nearly a quarter (23%) of these suggestions referred to improving the information offered at the VC and a further 19% regarded signage to the VC. Fourteen percent of the suggestions related to improving outdoor facilities, particularly parking, and a similar proportion (13%) pertained to improving indoor facilities and services – the idea of Internet kiosks was particularly popular. Suggestions also came forward about the accessibility of the VC (11%), availability of refreshments (7%), staff (5%), hours of operation (4%) and location of the VC (2%). Two percent of responses were general comments that were unrelated to the Visitor Centre.

In the mailback questionnaire, travellers at the Comox Valley VC were asked if they had visited any other VCs in British Columbia. Of the 391 travellers asked, nearly half (46%) indicated that they had visited another VC. The locations of the other VCs visited were diverse, and are listed in Appendix E.

Table 9. The proportion of travellers who were dissatisfied, impartial or satisfied with the services offered at the Comox Valley VC by traveller origin, those that did or did not speak with a Counsellor and primary trip purpose.

	Percentage of Travellers		
	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied (n=1)	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied (n=3)	Satisfied or Very Satisfied (n=864)
Overall	0.1%	0.3%	99.5%
Origin			
BC	0.3%	0.3%	99.4%
Other Canada	0.0%	0.3%	99.7%
US	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Other International	0.0%	1.0%	99.0%
Spoke with a Counsellor			
Yes	0.0%	0.1%	99.9%
No	3.0%	6.1%	90.9%
Primary Purpose			
Leisure	0.1%	0.4%	99.4%
Visiting friends & family	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Perceptions of the Comox Valley and British Columbia

In the mailback questionnaire, travellers were asked “*What positive and/or negative images come to mind when you think of the Comox Valley as a vacation destination?*”. Positive and negative image questions were asked to obtain an understanding of what travellers perceive the Comox Valley to be doing right and what regional stakeholders can work on in terms of attracting and keeping travellers in the region.

The majority of respondents provided positive comments towards the Comox Valley (87%), two-fifths of respondents provided negative comments (40%) and a number of respondents did not provide any comments (11%). Overall, respondents had nearly four times as many positive responses (848) as negative (218) of the region. Positive responses were dominated by the natural beauty and scenery of the Comox Valley (24%), the presence of family and friends and friendliness of people in general (14%), the ocean/harbour (6%), the activities (6%) and the peacefulness of the region (5%, Figure 14).

Negative perceptions from respondents at the Comox Valley VC focused on traffic (11%), lack of/confusing signage (11%), urban sprawl/over development (6%), rainy weather (5%), and expensiveness of vacationing in the region (5%, Figure 15).

Mailback respondents were asked to identify up to three unique characteristics of the Comox Valley that differentiate it from other regions as a vacation destination. These characteristics could be useful for promotional activities to attract travellers to the area. A variety of characteristics were identified as unique to the area (Figure 16). The most common were beautiful scenery (14%), ocean/harbour (12%), location/proximity (9%), activities (8%), and the presence of family and friends and

friendliness of people in general (8%). Less frequently mentioned were the peacefulness of the region (7%), roads/accessibility (4%), weather (3%), attractions (3%) and parks (2%).

Ten Most Frequent Positive Images of the Comox Valley

What positive images come to mind when you think of the Comox Valley?

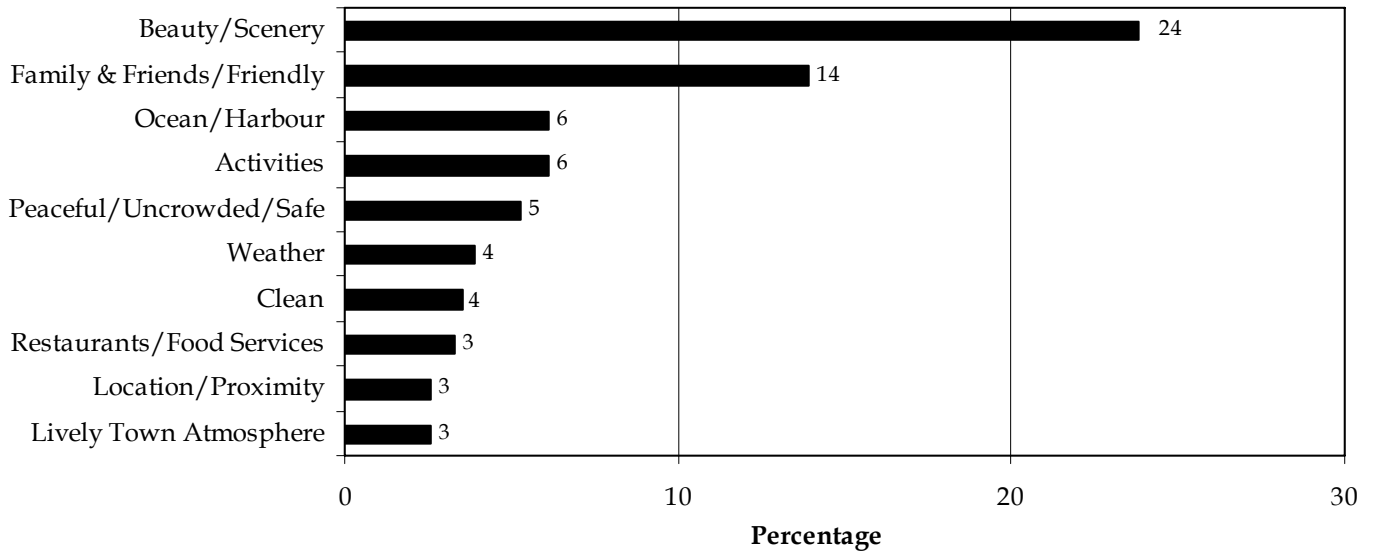


Figure 14. The most frequent positive images respondents had of the Comox Valley. At the Comox Valley VC, 342 respondents replied with 848 images.

Ten Most Frequent Negative Images of the Comox Valley

What negative images come to mind when you think of the Comox Valley?

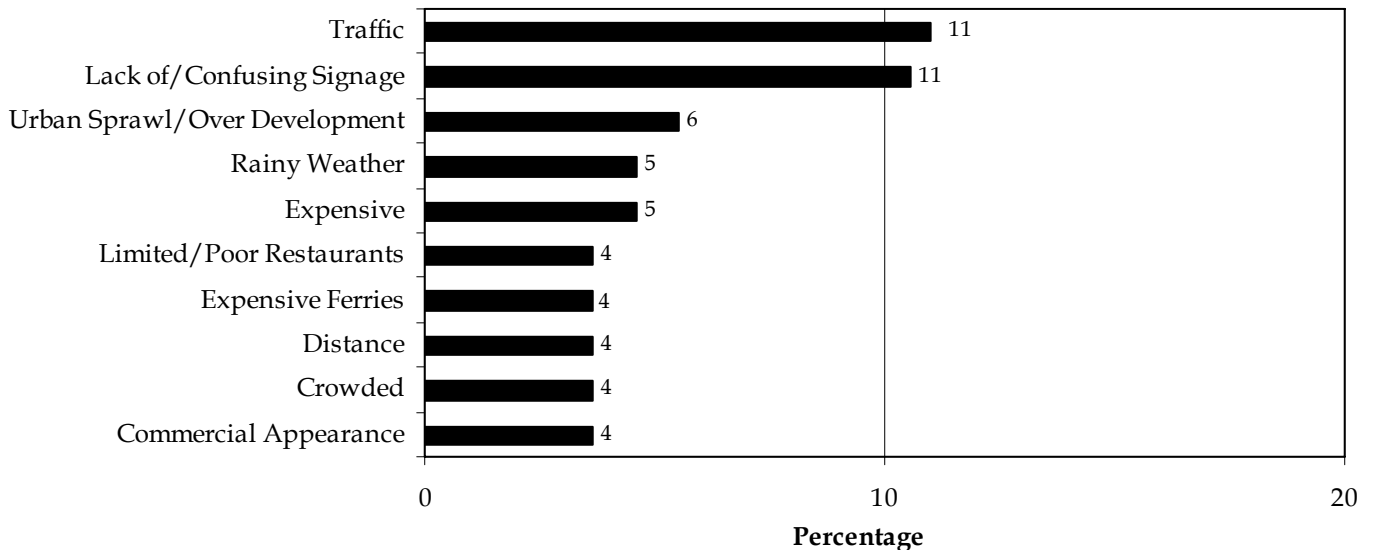


Figure 15. The most frequent negative images respondents had of the Comox Valley. At the Comox Valley VC, 156 respondents replied with 218 images.

Ten Most Unique Attributes of the Comox Valley

*What are the most unique attributes of the Comox Valley as a vacation destination?
Unique attributes are those that make the Comox Valley different from other destinations.*

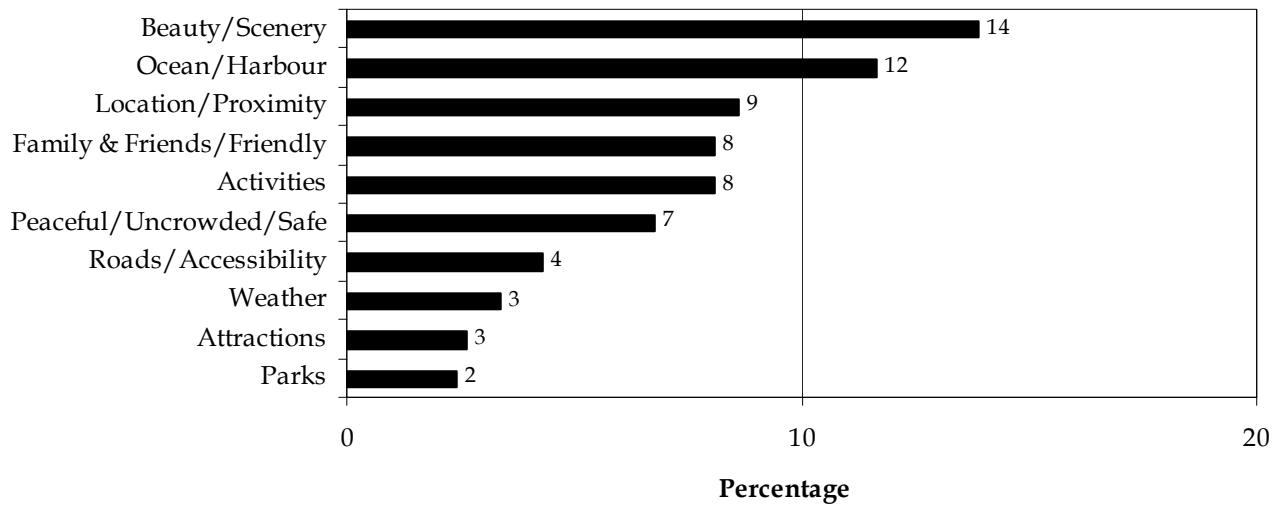


Figure 16. The most frequent unique characteristics of the Comox Valley. At the Comox Valley VC, 248 respondents replied with 533 characteristics.

Respondents to the mailback questionnaire were asked to rate various components of their trip and their overall travel experience in the Comox Valley (Figure 17). Nearly all respondents (98%) rated their overall travel experience as good (56%) or excellent (42%). Ratings for each trip component were also high. Customer service (97%), access to information about the Comox Valley (96%), and recreation and adventure opportunities (94%) stand out as strengths with most respondents rating these components as either good or excellent. Local signage received the lowest ratings.

Respondents to the mailback questionnaire were also asked about their satisfaction with their trip in British Columbia (Figure 18). Most travellers were either very satisfied (84%) or somewhat satisfied (7%) with their experience in all of British Columbia.

Mailback respondents were asked about their likelihood of returning to the Comox Valley or to the province of British Columbia for another leisure trip. Over three-quarters of travellers indicated that they were either 'very likely' (58%) or 'likely' (19%) to return to the Comox Valley for a future trip (Figure 19). The majority of travellers (73%) indicated that this return trip would occur in the summer. Respondents who said that they were not likely to return to the region were asked to explain why not. The most prevalent explanation was the desire to explore other places and attractions. Other reasons included moving to the area, distance, family and/or friends leaving the region, preference to stay in a nearby community, limited public transportation, and dependence on automobiles to get to activities.

In terms of likelihood of taking another leisure trip in British Columbia, an even larger proportion of travellers indicated that they were 'very likely' (84%) or 'likely' (10%, Figure 20). Respondents who said that they would make a return trip to/in British Columbia had many reasons. The top reasons

included activities, the many interesting places/attractions to explore, the beautiful scenery British Columbia has to offer, having family and friends in the province, and the friendliness of British Columbia in general. Respondents who said that they were not likely to return to British Columbia also provided their rationale. Explanations included the desire to explore other places and attractions, costs in general, inconvenience due to age or poor health, and expensive campgrounds/parks. Respondents who were somewhat likely or undecided about taking another trip in British Columbia provided positive commentary as well as barriers or constraints. Family and friends, beautiful scenery, many different places to explore, visiting British Columbia as part of an Alaskan vacation and just loving British Columbia in general were among the reasons to return while the desire to explore other places, distance, costs, and inconvenience due to age or poor health were among the reasons not to return.

Percentage of Travellers Rating Trip Components as Good or Excellent

Please rate your experience with each component of your trip and your overall travel experience in the Comox Valley.

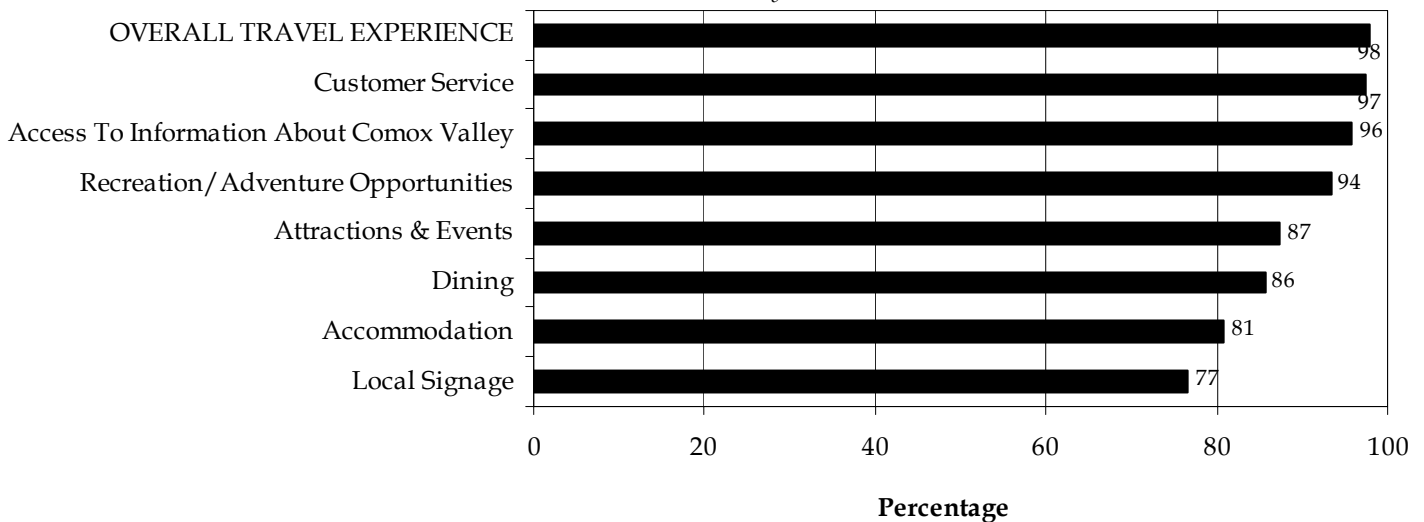


Figure 17. Travellers’ rating of trip components and overall trip experience in the Comox Valley.

Satisfaction With Trip In British Columbia

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your trip in British Columbia?

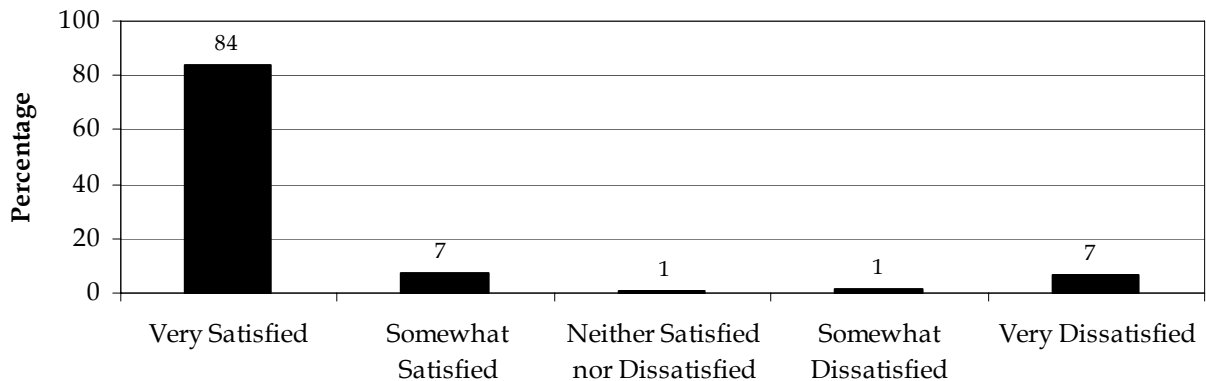


Figure 18. British Columbia trip satisfaction for travellers at the Comox Valley VC (n=389).

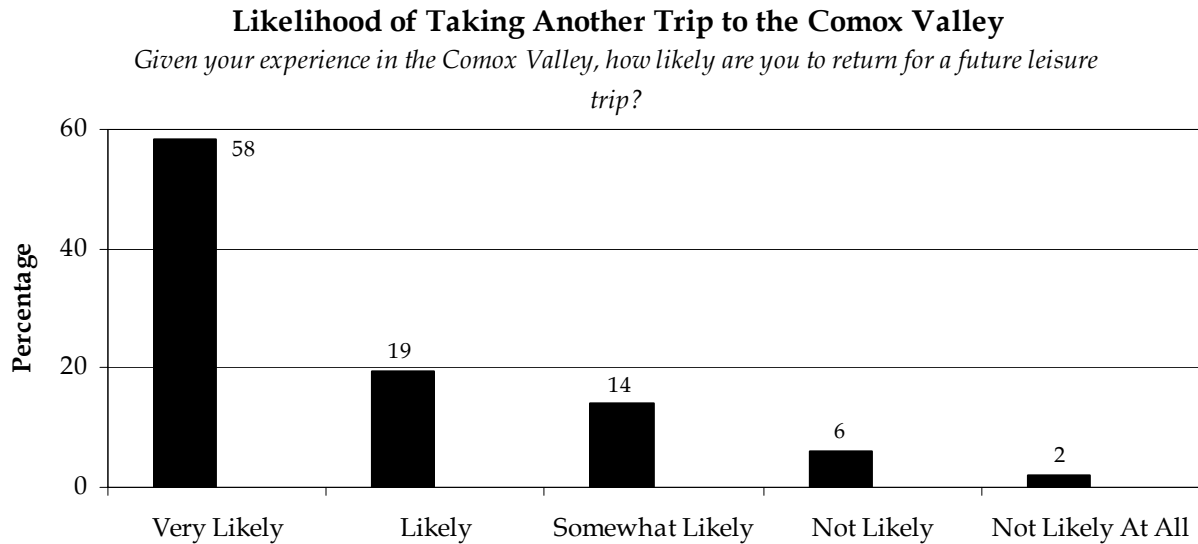


Figure 19. The likelihood of travellers taking another leisure trip to the Comox Valley (n=326).

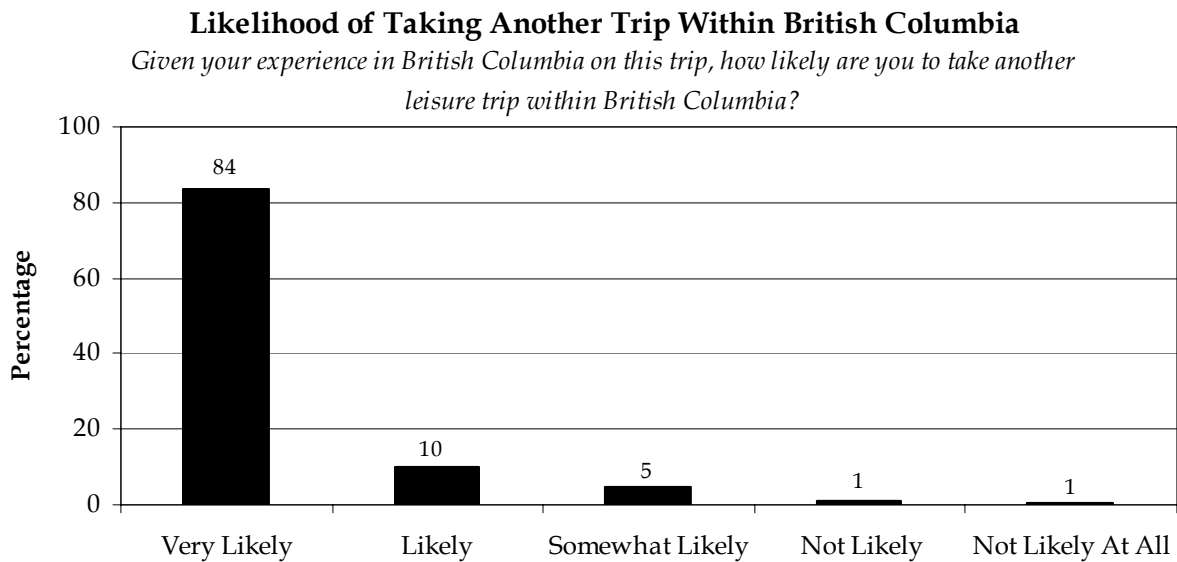


Figure 20. The likelihood of travellers taking another leisure trip to/in British Columbia (n=382).

Expenditures

Travellers were asked, “In Canadian dollars, what were your travel party’s total expenditures yesterday, including accommodations?”. Travellers at the Comox Valley VC spent an average of \$169.19 per day (Table 10). Spending patterns varied only slightly depending on the origin of the travellers. However, there were notable differences in expenditures when broken down by primary accommodation type, which ranged from \$111.34 for those staying with friends or relatives to \$230.30 for those using resorts/hotels/motels/B&Bs. Given that respondents were asked to provide expenditures based upon the spending of their entire travel party, it is not surprising that larger parties spent more than smaller parties. The results ranged from \$98.57 for those travelling alone to

\$307.14 for travel parties containing seven or more people. There were also noteworthy differences in expenditures based upon respondents' age category. Results ranged from \$110.94 for travellers under the age of 24 to \$214.17 for travellers between 35 to 44 years of age.

Average daily expenditure **per person** was also calculated. Travellers interviewed at the Comox Valley VC spent \$68.88 per person per day.

Table 10. The average daily expenditures of travellers at the Comox Valley VC.

\$ CDN Daily Expenditures*	Average Per Party Daily Expenditure Comox Valley VC (n=661) ¹
Overall	\$169.19
Origin	
BC	\$161.24
Other Canada	\$174.73
US	\$172.77
Other International	\$168.35
Primary Accommodations	
Resort/Hotel/Motel/B&B	\$230.30
Campground/RV Park	\$125.15
Friends or Relatives	\$111.34
Other	\$154.77
Travel Party Size	
1 person	\$98.57
2 people	\$169.32
3-6 people	\$193.87
7 or more people ²	\$307.14
Age	
Under 24 Years ³	\$110.94
25-34 Years	\$158.21
35-44 Years	\$214.17
45-54 Years	\$178.23
55-64 Years	\$149.47
65 Years or Older	\$150.30

*The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed to ensure an accurate mean daily expenditure. Practical differences of ± \$10 from the overall average are colour-coded.

1. 16% (n=137) of travellers began trip on the day of interview, and therefore did not have responses, 5% (n=43) Don't Know/No Response. Business travellers were not included in this analysis.
2. Caution is advised when interpreting these numbers because the sample size for this category is low (n=9).
3. Caution is advised when interpreting these numbers because the sample size for this category is low (n=25).

In the summer of 2006, Comox Valley VC users expended nearly \$5 million in the Comox Valley and over \$9 million on their trip throughout the rest of the province (Table 11). These figures do not represent the economic impact of the VC but rather the total expenditures of travellers to the Comox Valley and in the rest of the province while on the trip during which they were interviewed at the Comox Valley VC.

Table 11. Estimated expenditures of travellers who visited the Comox Valley VC.

June 4 -September 4, 2006 ¹	Comox Valley VC
Estimated Total VC parties for June 4 - September 4, 2006	6,392
Average Daily Expenditures	\$169.19
Estimated Total Expenditures in Comox Valley by VC Users	\$4,915,136
Estimated Total Expenditures outside of the Comox Valley by VC Users	\$9,143,559
Estimated Total Expenditures in BC by VC Users	\$14,058,694

1. Visitor party statistics reported by the Comox Valley VC include local residents but exclude visitor parties that do not talk to a Counsellor. Estimated total VC parties in this report exclude residents of the Comox Valley. However, all non-resident visitor parties are included, whether or not they spoke to a Visitor Information Counsellor. An estimated 96% of visitor parties speak to a Counsellor, thus the total number of visitor parties is larger than the number who spoke to a Counsellor.

Impact of the VC on Traveller Behaviour

Travellers were asked several questions to gauge how the Comox Valley VC impacted their trip. The questions were as follows:

1. *While at the Centre today, did you learn about any activities, places or attractions that you were previously not aware of?*
2. *What were those activities, places or attractions?*
3. *Will you spend some extra time in the Comox Valley as a result of the information obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre? How much time?*
4. *Will you spend some extra time in other parts of British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre? How much time?*
5. *Will you make another trip in British Columbia in the future as a result of the information you obtained at the Comox Valley VC?*

Results from these questions indicate that the Comox Valley VC had an impact on traveller behaviour. Half of the travellers at the Comox Valley VC said that they learned about new trip activities as a result of their stopping at the VC. Just over one-fifth (21%) replied they would spend extra time in the Comox Valley, 6% would spend extra time in other parts of British Columbia, and over a third (37%) would make another trip in/to British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC (Figure 21).

Those travellers who indicated they would stay extra time in the Comox Valley region and/or in British Columbia, or would make another trip to/in British Columbia as a direct result of the VC were used to calculate the economic benefit of the Comox Valley VC².

² Economic benefit estimates can be obtained from the Comox Valley Visitor Centre.

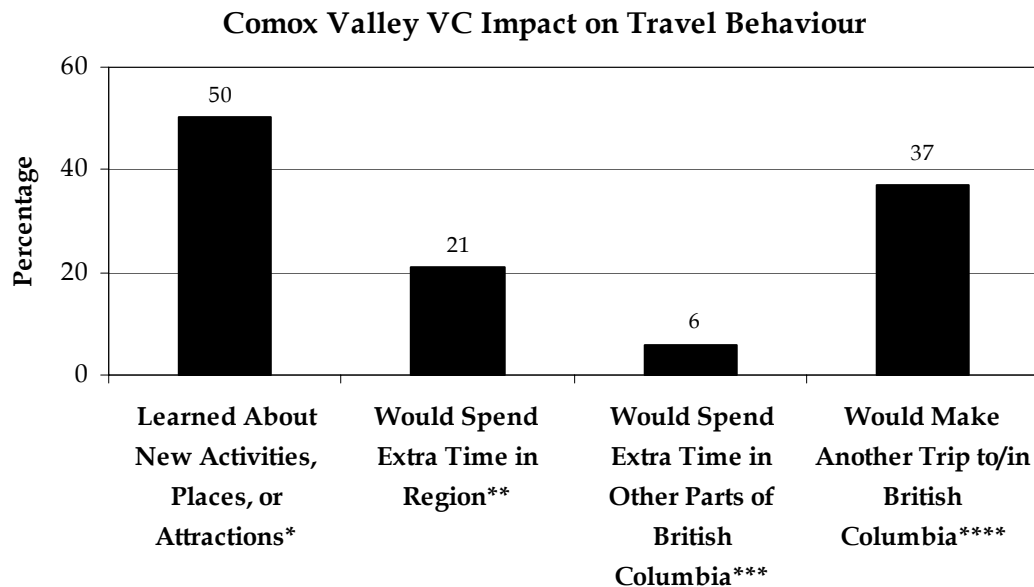


Figure 21. The proportion of travellers at the Comox Valley VC that learned about new activities, places or attractions, would spend extra time in region, would spend extra time in other parts of British Columbia or would make another trip to/in British Columbia as a direct result of the Comox Valley VC. * Don't Know/No Response =15 (1.7%); ** Don't Know/No Response =53 (8.2%); *** Don't Know/No Response =26 (4.0%); **** Don't Know/No Response=39 (4.5%).

A number of trip and traveller characteristics could influence the impact of the VC on traveller behaviour. Characteristics like traveller origin, speaking with a Visitor Information Counsellor, primary trip purpose, flexibility in trip activities while in the Comox Valley, flexibility in the time spent in the Comox Valley, and flexibility in the time spent in British Columbia were examined to understand if they influenced the impact the Comox Valley VC had on traveller behaviour (Table 12).

Affirmative answers to the impact questions varied slightly by market origin. Travellers from the US were more likely to say that they would take another trip to/in British Columbia and travellers from countries other than Canada and the US were more likely to say that they would stay extra time in the region as a result of the VC. In addition, travellers from other countries were much more likely to learn about new activities, places or attractions than travellers from British Columbia.

Travellers who did not speak with a Visitor Information Counsellor were far less likely to be influenced by the VC compared to those that did speak to a Counsellor. A considerably higher proportion of travellers who spoke with a Counsellor learned about new activities, places or attractions; would spend extra time in the region; and would take another trip to/in British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC.

Leisure travellers were more likely to give affirmative responses to the impact questions than travellers who were visiting friends and family. Respondents who were somewhat flexible with their activities in the region were more likely to learn about new activities, places or attractions. Respondents who were very flexible with their time in the region were more likely to learn about new activities, places or attractions and were more likely to take another trip to/in British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC. In terms of time flexibility in British Columbia, those who were very flexible were much more likely to take another trip to/in British Columbia than those who were inflexible.

Travellers at the Comox Valley VC learned about a wide range of new activities (Figure 22). A total of 620 activities, places or attractions were mentioned. The category with the most responses was local parks, walkways and marinas (25%), followed by festivals and events (12%). Nearby provincial parks – particularly Strathcona Park/Mt. Washington (11%), arts and cultural attractions (10%), and land-based recreation opportunities (9%) were also frequently mentioned. Other activities, places or attractions that travellers learned about at the VC included dining/culinary establishments (6%), shopping (6%), water-based recreation opportunities (5%), accommodations (5%), family attractions (3%), communities in the study area (3%), other island destinations (2%), transportation-related information (1%) and local services (1%). Less than one percent of responses referred to spas, casinos, driving tours, scenic viewpoints or natural features of the area.

Additional comments regarding the Comox Valley VC made by respondents to the mailback survey are included in Appendix F.

Table 12. The impact of the Comox Valley VC on traveller behaviour by traveller origin, travellers who did and did not speak with a Counsellor, primary trip purpose and flexibility.

	Percentage of Travellers Who:			
	Learned About New Activities, Places or Attractions*	Would Stay Extra Time in Region*	Would Stay Extra Time in Other Parts of BC* ¹	Would Make Another Trip*
Overall	50.3%	21.1%	5.7%	37.0%
Origin				
BC	43.8%	18.2%	3.8%	33.5%
Other Canada	53.0%	19.4%	7.0%	38.2%
US	57.0%	25.6%	6.9%	48.6%
Other International	59.2%	34.4%	9.4%	33.7%
Spoke With A Counsellor				
Yes	51.6%	21.6%	5.4%	37.5%
No ²	18.2%	11.1%	10.7%	24.2%
Primary Trip Purpose³				
Leisure	52.5%	21.9%	5.9%	38.0%
Visiting Friends & Family	43.0%	18.5%	3.7%	33.7%
Activity Flexibility - Region				
76-100% of activities pre-planned	42.4%	11.7%	5.8%	31.1%
51-75% of activities pre-planned ⁴	55.8%	26.5%	8.3%	46.5%
26-50% of activities pre-planned	63.9%	18.9%	4.2%	41.2%
0-25% of activities pre-planned	51.8%	23.3%	5.2%	38.6%
Time Flexibility - Region				
Inflexible (no extra time)	41.7%	n/a ⁵	6.7%	31.8%
Moderately Flexible	50.6%	18.8%	2.0%	31.8%
Very Flexible (extra day(s))	55.1%	22.6%	6.8%	43.4%
Time Flexibility - BC				
Inflexible (no extra time)	50.2%	27.1%	5.3%	30.7%
Moderately Flexible	51.6%	11.6%	2.3%	39.8%
Very Flexible (extra day(s))	50.0%	20.7%	7.2%	44.2%

* Due to a relatively high number of 'Don't Know/No Response' answers, 'Don't Know/No Response' answers were kept in the denominator to calculate the percent of respondents who said 'Yes.' This approach is consistent with previous years and avoids overestimating impact.

1. Caution is advised when interpreting these numbers because the sample size for this response is low (n=37).
2. Caution is advised when interpreting these numbers because the sample size for this category is low (n=33).
3. Nine 'Other' cases excluded from analysis in order to display the most pertinent information.
4. Caution is advised when interpreting these numbers because the sample size for this category is low (n=43).
5. Respondents who indicated that they had no extra time to spend in the region regarding trip flexibility were not asked the impact question about willingness to stay extra time in the region.

Top 10 New Activities, Places or Attractions Learned About

What activities, places or attractions did you learn about that you were not previously aware of?

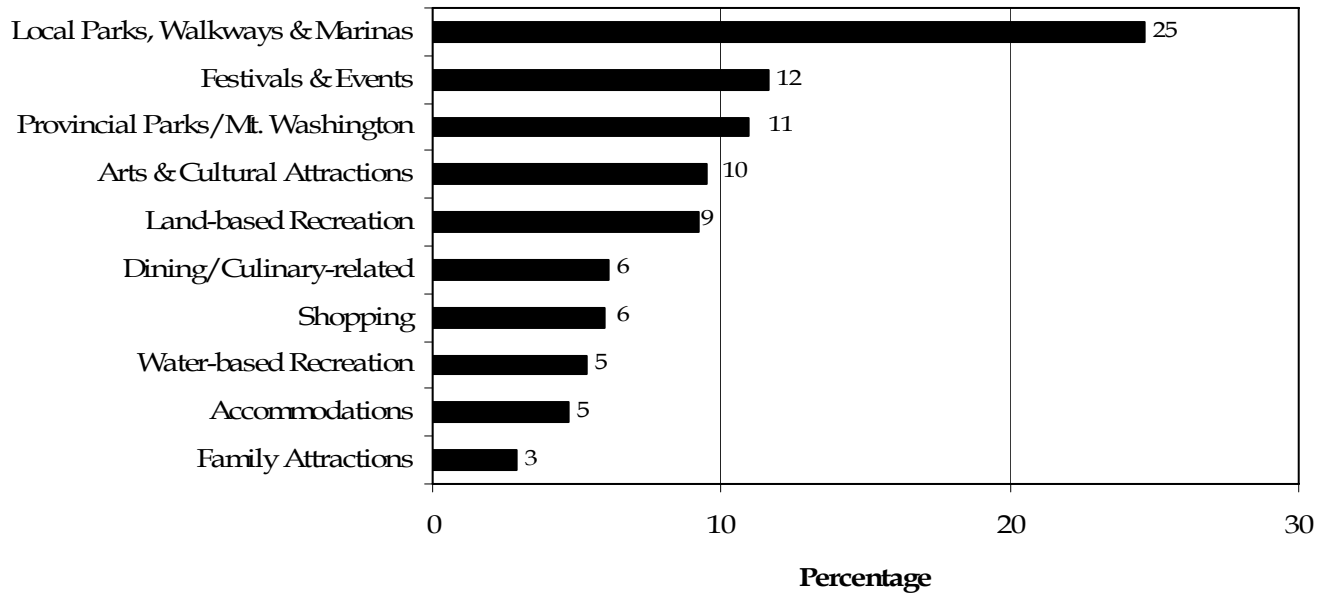


Figure 21. The top 10 activities, places or attractions that respondents learned about at the Comox Valley VC.

Conclusions

1. Travellers who stopped at the Comox Valley VC:

- Were predominantly from British Columbia (45%) or other provinces/territories in Canada (33%),
- Were most likely to be over the age of 45 (70%),
- Were likely to have attained at least a college or technical diploma (76%),
- Were most likely to be travelling without children (80%),
- Were motivated by spending quality time with family and/or friends (27%), rest and relaxation (23%), seeing natural wonders and important natural sites (14%), and experiencing unspoiled nature (12%),
- Were most interested in visiting parks, participating in soft adventures activities, visiting museums, heritage or historic sites, shopping for local arts and crafts, and attending festivals, fairs or exhibitions,
- Were most likely to rate their overall travel experience in the region as good (56%) or excellent (42%),
- Were most likely to rate themselves as either very satisfied (84%) or somewhat satisfied (7%) with their experience in British Columbia.

Trip characteristics of travellers at the Comox Valley VC showed that:

- The primary trip purpose was leisure (70%), followed by visiting friends and family (18%),
- Cars/trucks/motorcycles were the primary mode of transportation for most travellers (93%),
- Resorts/hotels/motels/B&Bs were the primary accommodation type for 43% of travellers, followed by campgrounds/RV parks (31%),
- The majority of travellers (66%) had a destination somewhere within British Columbia, most were travelling to Vancouver Island, including 58% who specified the Comox Valley as their primary destination,
- Most travellers (80%) spent three weeks or more planning their trip, with the most common planning horizon being greater than 13 weeks,
- The Internet, past experience, travel guide books/brochures, and advice from friends or relatives were among the top information sources used before travel,
- Travel guide books/brochures, the Internet, and advice from friends or relatives were noted as the most useful information sources to utilize before travel,
- Visitor Centres were the top information source used during travel as listed by 81% of respondents,
- The majority of travellers (67%) were spending time in the Comox Valley as opposed to just passing through,
- The average time spent in the Comox Valley was five days,
- The majority of travellers (64%) were flexible in terms of their activities in the Comox Valley,
- Nearly half of the travellers (45%) rated themselves as very flexible in terms of having extra time to spend in the Comox Valley and over a third (37%) rated themselves very flexible in terms of having extra time to spend in British Columbia,

- The five most participated in activities were soft adventure activities, visiting parks, shopping for local arts and crafts, visiting museums, heritage or historic sites, and participating in fine dining.
2. The profile of travellers can be applied:
 - To ensure that the current information provided to VC users reflects the needs of travellers using the VC.
 - For business planning and management of new and existing tourism businesses in the Comox Valley. The data presented in this report provides details of the type of clients new tourism businesses in the region can expect and characteristics, interests and trip flexibility of potential clients who could be attracted through marketing (brochures, etc.) at the Comox Valley VC.
 - To design a marketing plan to attract travellers who do not currently use the VC. For example, a plan could be designed to encourage visitors who are in the Comox Valley visiting friends and relatives to visit the Comox Valley VC.
 3. Most travellers were very satisfied (89%) or satisfied (11%) with the services offered at the Comox Valley VC. Only 16% of travellers had suggestions to improve the services offered at the Centre. Nearly a quarter (23%) of these suggestions referred to improving the information at the VC and a further 19% regarded signage. Fourteen percent of the suggestions related to improving outdoor facilities, particularly parking, and a similar proportion (13%) pertained to improving indoor facilities and services – the idea of Internet kiosks was particularly popular. Suggestions also came forward about the accessibility of the VC (11%), availability of refreshments (7%), staff (5%), hours of operation (4%) and location of the VC (2%).
 4. The Comox Valley VC had a positive impact on traveller behaviour. Half of the travellers at the Comox Valley VC said that they learned about new trip activities as a result of their stopping at the VC. Just over one-fifth (21%) replied they would spend extra time in the Comox Valley, 6% would spend extra time in other parts of British Columbia, and over a third (37%) would make another trip in/to British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC.
 5. The proportion of travellers who said that they learned about new activities, would stay extra time in the region or would make another trip to/in British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VC was consistently larger for those travellers who had spoken to a VC Counsellor. This finding highlights the importance of having a Counsellor available at all times to help travellers.

Limitations

1. These results are representative of travellers who stopped at the Comox Valley VC between June 4 and September 4, 2006. Trip and traveller characteristics of travellers at other times of the year could differ from those interviewed during the study period.
2. These results are representative of the impact the Comox Valley VC had on travellers who did not live in the Comox Valley. This study did not explore the impacts that the Comox Valley VC had on travellers calling or emailing for information prior to their visit to the area. In addition, it did not describe the benefits that local residents receive from the Comox Valley VC or the benefits of local residents collecting information for their non-resident guests.
3. Some of the statistics contained within this report were produced with small sample sizes; consequently some of the results should be treated with caution.
4. Findings from similar studies at other VCs in British Columbia have differed from these results; therefore, the findings presented in this report cannot be applied to other Visitor Centres.
5. Results presented here do not represent the full range of analysis that can be completed with the data collected. For example, a profile of travellers visiting friends and family versus those that were travelling for leisure could be developed. Please contact Angela Xu, Research Services Tourism British Columbia (Angela.Xu@tourismbc.com) for more information on obtaining custom reports using this data.

Appendices

Appendix A - Interviewer schedule and interviews completed

Appendix B - Questionnaires

Appendix C - Response bias testing

Appendix D - Suggestions to improve services offered at the VC

Appendix E - Other VCs visited in British Columbia

Appendix F - Comments from Comox Valley VC mailback survey

Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Interviews Completed

Table A1. The day and number of travellers approached, the number who agreed to the interview, the number of residents, number of refusals, number travelling in a tour group and the number of independent tourists interviewed at the Comox Valley VC during the first half of the study period.

	Comox Valley VC (June 4 - July 25, 2006)					
	Number of People Approached	Agree to Interview	Number of Residents	Refusals	Part of Tour Group	Tourists
June 4	24	15	6	9	0	9
June 6	44	27	12	17	0	15
June 10	42	22	4	20	0	18
June 11	27	11	3	16	3	5
June 12	42	30	15	12	0	15
June 13	39	29	12	10	0	17
June 16	39	23	7	16	0	16
June 17	39	21	8	18	0	13
June 18	29	15	6	14	0	9
June 19	30	25	12	5	0	13
June 21	31	27	14	4	0	13
June 22	18	15	10	3	0	5
June 24	41	28	10	13	0	18
June 25	29	18	5	11	1	12
June 28	35	24	15	11	0	9
June 29	57	36	21	21	0	15
June 30	43	22	7	21	0	15
July 1	32	13	5	19	0	8
July 4	54	33	15	21	0	18
July 6	56	28	11	28	0	17
July 7	72	33	12	39	0	21
July 10	66	43	19	23	0	24
July 11	56	30	11	26	1	18
July 12	50	25	8	25	0	17
July 13	62	31	13	31	0	18
July 16	46	28	7	18	1	20
July 17	69	42	18	27	0	24
July 18	60	40	13	20	0	27
July 19	78	43	20	35	0	23
July 22	46	25	11	21	0	14
July 23	28	23	4	5	2	17
July 24	63	22	12	41	0	10
July 25	59	45	13	14	0	32

Table A2. The day and number of travellers approached, the number who agreed to the interview, the number of residents, number of refusals, number travelling in a tour group and the number of independent tourists interviewed at the Comox Valley VC during the last half of the study period.

	Comox Valley VC (July 28 - September 4, 2006)					
	Number of People Approached	Agree to Interview	Number of Residents	Refusals	Part of Tour Group	Tourists
July 28	65	32	12	33	0	20
July 29	69	43	17	26	0	26
July 30	48	26	4	22	0	22
July 31	67	45	22	22	0	23
August 3	56	31	9	25	0	22
August 4	74	44	15	30	0	29
August 5	78	41	14	37	0	27
August 6	42	19	10	23	0	9
August 9	78	37	16	41	0	21
August 10	62	45	22	17	0	23
August 11	63	40	8	23	0	32
August 12	69	41	19	28	0	22
August 15	72	35	17	37	0	18
August 16	58	33	14	25	0	19
August 17	47	25	7	22	0	18
August 18	72	33	15	39	0	18
August 21	76	38	20	38	0	18
August 22	52	23	9	29	0	14
August 23	76	37	22	39	0	15
August 24	63	40	23	23	0	17
August 27	40	24	15	16	0	9
August 28	59	31	19	28	0	12
August 29	30	17	12	13	0	5
August 30	55	31	22	24	0	9
September 2	39	18	12	21	0	6
September 3	34	18	12	16	0	6
September 4	30	17	11	13	0	6
Total	3,080	1,756	757	1,324	8	991

Appendix B - Questionnaires

Interview Questions (Comox Valley VC)

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is _____ and I'm conducting a survey on behalf of Tourism British Columbia. We'd like to ask you about your trip to the Comox Valley and your experiences in British Columbia. Can I please speak with someone in your party that is knowledgeable about your trip planning and expenditures?

1. Would you have approximately 10 minutes to answer some questions? If you participate, we would like to give you a complimentary gift for your time.

YES NO *Are you sure? You will receive a complimentary gift for completing the interview? Thank you.*

2. Are you a resident of the Comox Valley? *The Comox Valley is defined as the area between Fanny Bay and the Oyster River, including Denman and Hornby Islands.*

NO YES *Thanks for agreeing to participate, however, we are only interviewing visitors from outside the area.*

3. Are you part of an organized tour group?

NO YES *Thanks for agreeing to participate, however, we are only interviewing visitors who travel independently.*

4. Where are you live (usual place of residence)?

Province _____ OR State _____ OR Country (Other International) _____

To start with, we have a few questions about your current trip.

IF FROM BC 5. What is the **primary** purpose of your trip? Is it for Leisure, Visiting Friends and Family or Business?

LEISURE

VISITING FRIENDS & FAMILY

WORK/BUSINESS ACTIVITY *Thanks for participating. That completes the interview for business travellers.*

OTHER (SPECIFY _____)

DK/NR

IF NOT FROM BC 5. What is the **primary** purpose of your trip to British Columbia? Is it for Leisure, Visiting Friends and Family or Business?

LEISURE

VISITING FRIENDS & FAMILY

WORK/BUSINESS ACTIVITY *Thanks for participating. That completes the interview for business travellers.*

OTHER (SPECIFY _____)

DK/NR

6. What is your **primary** destination (the place that you will spend the most time)?

_____ NONE, TOURING DK/NR

IF FROM BC 7. What is your **primary** (most often used) mode of transportation while on this trip?

CAR/TRUCK/MC

RV

BUS

BICYCLE

OTHER _____

DK/NR

IF NOT FROM BC 7. What is your **primary** (most often used) mode of transportation while in British Columbia?

CAR/TRUCK/MC

RV

BUS

BICYCLE

OTHER _____

DK/NR

8. Including the day you left your residence and the day you will return, how many days will you be away from your residence for this trip? _____ days (**Consult calendar; include day left and day returning**)

9. How many of those days will be spent travelling in British Columbia? _____ days

10. And how much time will be spent in the Comox Valley? *The Comox Valley is defined as the area between Fanny Bay and the Oyster River, including Denman and Hornby Islands. (Consult study area map)*

NONE - JUST _____ HOURS **OR** _____ DAYS DK/NR
 PASSING THROUGH

11. On this trip, which of the following best describes your **primary** (most often used) type of accommodation?

RESORT / HOTEL / MOTEL / B&B CAMPGROUND / RV PARK FRIENDS OR RELATIVES OTHER _____

12. In Canadian dollars, what were your travel party's total expenditures yesterday, including accommodation?

\$ _____ BEGAN TRIP TODAY DK/NR

IF SPENDING TIME IN REGION 13. Please think about the activities you will participate in or have participated in while in the Comox Valley. What percentage of those were planned before you arrived in this region?

_____ % DK/NR

14. Which of the following statements best describes your flexibility in the amount of time you have to spend in the Comox Valley?

- A. I CAN NOT SPEND ANY EXTRA TIME IN THIS REGION AT ALL
- B. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA FEW HOURS IN THIS REGION (LESS THAN A DAY)
- C. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA DAY OR DAYS IN THIS REGION
- D. DK/NR

IF FROM BC AND ENTIRE TRIP IN BC 15. What about your flexibility in the amount of time you have to spend on this entire trip? *(Read choices, if necessary)*

- A. I CAN NOT SPEND ANY EXTRA TIME ON THIS TRIP AT ALL
- B. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA FEW HOURS ON THIS TRIP (LESS THAN A DAY)
- C. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA DAY OR DAYS ON THIS TRIP
- D. DK/NR

ELSE 15. What about your flexibility in the amount of time you have to spend in British Columbia? *(Read choices, if necessary)*

- A. I CAN NOT SPEND ANY EXTRA TIME IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
- B. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA FEW HOURS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (LESS THAN A DAY)
- C. I CAN SPEND AN EXTRA DAY OR DAYS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
- D. DK/NR

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your use of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre.

16. What was your reason for stopping at the Centre today? *(Do not prompt, check all that apply)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN A MAP | <input type="checkbox"/> TO BUY A BC PARKS PARKING PASS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN ROUTE INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> TO USE THE CENTRE'S WASHROOM FACILITIES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN ATTRACTION INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> TO TAKE A BREAK FROM TRAVELLING AND GET OUT OF YOUR VEHICLE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN ACCOMMODATION INFO (NOT CAMPING) | <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN REFRESHMENTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN CAMPING INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> TO PURCHASE MERCHANDISE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN ADVENTURE & RECREATION INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN EVENT INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TO OBTAIN DINING INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR |

17. While visiting today, what information or other things did you obtain? **(Do not prompt, check all that apply)**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> NOTHING | <input type="checkbox"/> DINING INFO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MAP | <input type="checkbox"/> BC PARKS PARKING PASS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ROUTE INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> REFRESHMENTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATTRACTION INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> MERCHANDISE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACCOMMODATION (EXCLUDING CAMPGROUND) INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CAMPGROUND INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADVENTURE & RECREATION INFO | <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EVENT INFO | |

18. While visiting today, did you or anybody in your travel party speak with a Visitor Information Counsellor?

- NO YES DK/NR

19. While at the Centre today, did you learn about any activities, places or attractions that you were previously not aware of?

- NO - Go to #21 YES - Go to #20 DK/NR - Go to #21

IF YES 20. What were those activities, places or attractions? **(Record up to three)**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SKIP IF Q14 = A (NO EXTRA TIME IN REGION) 21. Will you spend some **extra** time in the Comox Valley as a result of the information obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre?

- NO YES How much? _____ hours **OR** _____ nights DK/NR

SKIP IF Q14 ≠ A (SOME EXTRA TIME IN REGION) AND Q15 = A (NO EXTRA TIME IN BC)

22. Will you spend some **extra** time in **other parts of British Columbia** as a result of the information obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre?

- NO YES How much? _____ hours **OR** _____ nights DK/NR

23. Will you make another trip in British Columbia in the future as a result of the information you obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre?

- NO YES DK/NR

24. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services offered at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre?

- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> VERY
DISSATISFIED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISSATISFIED | <input type="checkbox"/> NEITHER
DISSATISFIED
NOR
SATISFIED | <input type="checkbox"/> SATISFIED | <input type="checkbox"/> VERY
SATISFIED | <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

25. What suggestions do you have to improve the services offered at the Centre? **(Record up to three)**

Now, I'd like to ask you a few more questions about yourself.

26. Including yourself, how many people are in your travel party today? How many are children under 18 and how many are adults?

_____ Adult(s) _____ Child(ren) (under 18) = _____ Total

27. In which of the following age category are you?

- A. UNDER 24 YEARS
- B. 25-34 YEARS
- C. 35-44 YEARS
- D. 45-54 YEARS
- E. 55-64 YEARS
- F. 65 YEARS OR OLDER
- G. DK/NR

28. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- A. LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
- B. HIGH SCHOOL
- C. SOME TECHNICAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY
- D. COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL DIPLOMA
- E. UNIVERSITY DEGREE
- F. MASTERS/PHD DEGREE
- G. OTHER _____
- H. DK/NR

29. Gender of respondent (**Record, don't ask**)

- MALE
- FEMALE

30. As a follow-up to this interview, we would like to contact you after your trip to inquire about the rest of your trip in British Columbia. Participation would involve completing a questionnaire that will be mailed to you. In exchange, we are pleased to offer you one free edition of British Columbia Magazine and a chance to win a digital camera. All contact information will be kept confidential and only used for this study. Would you be willing to participate?

- NO
- YES

IF YES Can I get your name and mailing address?

Name:
Mailing Address:
City:
Province/State:
Country:
Postal/Zip Code:

Thank you for participating!

Mailback Questions (Comox Valley VC)

The Comox Valley Visitor Centre
What was your experience?



Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to:

**Tourism British Columbia
Research Services
Box 9830, Stn Prov Gov't, 300-1803 Douglas Street,
Victoria, BC Canada V8W 9W5**



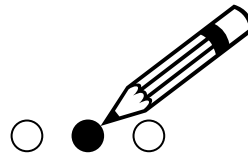
Your opinions are important...

Thank you for participating in this survey. Tourism British Columbia and its partners are working together to better understand your trip experiences and activities, and your impressions of the Comox Valley region and British Columbia.

*If you have travelled within British Columbia more than once this year, **please tell us about the trip during which you were asked to participate in this survey.***

Your responses and personal information will be kept confidential and used only for this survey.

Please answer the survey questions by shading your answer using a pen or pencil. This will help us process the surveys accurately.



Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to:



Tourism British Columbia
Research Services
Box 9830, STN PROV GOV'T
300-1803 Douglas Street
Victoria, BC
Canada V8W 9W5



If you have any questions, please call
(toll free) 1-877-877-8811 in North America
or 1-250-356-5629 from elsewhere.

About your trip...

*This section asks questions about characteristics of your trip within British Columbia. **Please answer all of the following questions with respect to the trip you were on when we interviewed you at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre in Courtenay.***

1. How many days did you spend away from your residence on this trip?

_____ day(s) away from residence

2. How many of those days were spent in British Columbia? If you are from British Columbia and you spent your whole vacation within the province, this should be the same as your reply to Question 1.

_____ day(s) in British Columbia

3. What was your **primary destination** on this trip? Your primary destination is the place you stayed the longest or the place that immediately comes to mind as your destination when describing your trip. *Choose one answer only.*

Our primary destination was _____

We had no specific destination – we were touring around

4. When planning this trip, did you and/or your travel party consider other destinations or routes?

Yes

No

Don't know

↳ Where? *Please list up to three.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. In general, what made you and/or your travel party choose the destination or route indicated in Question 3?

6. What was the **main** motivation for taking this trip? Choose **one** answer only.

- To rest, relax and recuperate
- To be some place that feels familiar and safe
- To spend quality time with family and/or friends
- To experience intimacy and romance
- To experience different cultures and ways of life
- To visit historical sites and important places in history
- To see natural wonders and important natural sites
- To experience unspoiled nature
- To visit a popular, trendy place
- To experience adventure and excitement
- To experience city life (e.g. nightlife, shopping)
- To participate in a hobby or sport (e.g. golfing, fishing, photographing)
- Other (*specify*) _____
- Don't know

7. A. What activities did you and/or your travel party participate in while on this trip?

Mark all that apply.

B. Will you and/or your travel party be interested in participating in these activities on future trips?

Circle one answer only.

Your activities	A Participated in during this trip <i>Mark all that apply</i>	B Interested in on future trips <i>Circle Yes, No or DK (Don't Know)</i>		
Golfing or attending a golfing event	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Shopping for local arts and crafts	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Participating in fine dining	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Attending a festival, fair or exhibition	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Attending or participating in a sporting event (other than golf)	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK

Your activities (continued...)	A Participated in during this trip <i>Mark all that apply</i>	B Interested in on future trips <i>Circle Yes, No or DK (Don't Know)</i>		
Participating in soft adventure activities (wildlife viewing, fishing, canoeing, cycling, hiking, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Participating in hard adventure activities (white water rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Visiting a:				
municipal, provincial or national park, or natural area outside a park	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
First Nations attraction or event	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
museum, heritage or historic site	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
art gallery or studio	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
winery	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
farm, farmers' market, orchard or food processor	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
family attraction (mini golf, zoo, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
spa	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK
Other (<i>specify</i>) _____	<input type="radio"/>	YES	NO	DK

8. How far in advance did you start planning for this trip? *Choose one answer only.*

- Day of departure
- 1-6 days
- 1-2 weeks
- 3-8 weeks
- 9-12 weeks
- 13 weeks+
- Don't know

9. We would like to know the information sources you used to plan your trip before and during your trip. This includes information about where to stay, what route to take, where to eat and/or what to see and do.

A. What information sources did you use **before** your trip? *Mark all that apply.*

B. What were the **three most useful** information sources you used before your trip?
Mark top three only.

C. What information sources did you use **during** your trip? *Mark all that apply.*

Information sources	Before trip		During trip
	A Used before trip (<i>mark all that apply</i>)	B Most useful information (<i>mark top 3</i>)	C Used during trip (<i>mark all that apply</i>)
Past experience/ been there before	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advice from friends/relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1-800-HelloBC or www.HelloBC.com	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet (other than HelloBC website)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel agents, airlines, auto associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tour operators, tourism- specific businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel guide books, visitor guides and brochures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising on TV / newspapers / magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media coverage (e.g. travel articles in newspapers, programs on TV)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visitor Centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel / consumer shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. What were your travel party's **total** expenditures during the trip?

*Please include all purchases, taxes and tips **except long-haul flights**.
If you pre-paid any items prior to leaving on your trip (e.g. accommodation, tours, etc.), please include these in your estimate.*

TOTAL \$ _____ Canadian dollars

11. Approximately what percentage of the total expenditures was attributed to the following categories? Please fill in the appropriate proportions, **excluding long-haul flights**.

Categories	% of total
Accommodation (hotels, motels, lodge, camping/RV fees, etc.)	_____ %
Transportation (short-haul flights within British Columbia, vehicle rental, gas, repairs, ferry, taxi, bus, etc.)	_____ %
Food & beverage (include any taxes and tips paid)	_____ %
Shopping (clothing, gifts, film, books, etc.)	_____ %
Attractions (admission, shows, tours, etc.)	_____ %
Outdoor recreation (park pass, nature guide, etc.)	_____ %
Other entertainment (spa, etc.)	_____ %
Other (<i>specify</i>) _____	_____ %
TOTAL	= 100 %

About the Comox Valley Visitor Centre...

*This section asks about your use of the **Comox Valley Visitor Centre in Courtenay** on the trip that we interviewed you.*

12. Did you spend any **extra** time in the **Comox Valley region as a result of** the information obtained at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre? The Comox Valley region is defined as the area between Fanny Bay and the Oyster River, including Denman and Hornby Islands.

- No
- Yes → How much additional time? _____ hours OR ____ night(s)
- Don't know

13. Did you spend any **extra** time on your trip in **other parts of British Columbia as a result of** the information obtained at the Visitor Centre?

- No
- Yes → How much additional time? _____ hours OR ____ night(s)
- Don't know

14. Will you take another trip in British Columbia **as a result of** the information obtained at the Visitor Centre?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

15. We interviewed you at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre in Courtenay. On this trip, did you visit any other Visitor Centres in British Columbia?

- No
- Yes → Where? Please specify

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre?

Your travel experience...

17. What positive and/or negative images come to mind when you think of the **Comox Valley region** as a vacation destination? *Please list up to three.*

Positive	Negative
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

18. What are the **unique** characteristics of the **Comox Valley region** as a vacation destination? Unique characteristics are those that make the Comox Valley region different from other destinations. *Please list up to three.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

19. During the trip that we interviewed you, did you spend time in the **Comox Valley region**?

Yes *Go to Q20* No *Go to Q22* Don't know *Go to Q22*

20. Please rate your experience with each component of your trip and your overall travel experience in the **Comox Valley region**? *Choose one answer for each row.*

	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Don't Know	N/A
Accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dining	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to information about Comox Valley	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractions and events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation/adventure opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall travel experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Given your experience travelling in the **Comox Valley region**, how likely are you to return to the Comox Valley region for a future leisure trip? *Choose one answer only.*

- Not likely at all
- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Likely
- Very likely
- Don't know

} → Please explain why.

↓

In which season are you most likely to take this leisure trip to the Comox Valley region? *Choose one answer only.*

- Winter
- Spring
- Summer
- Fall
- Don't know

22. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your trip in **British Columbia**? *Choose one answer only.*

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know

23. Given your experience travelling in **British Columbia** on this trip, how likely are you to take another leisure trip within British Columbia? *Choose one answer only.*

- Not likely at all
- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Likely
- Very likely
- Don't know

} → Please explain why.

24. Who was in your travel party when you stopped at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre in Courtenay? Please indicate their relationship to you, age and gender. Please start with yourself.

Who? <i>e.g. wife, husband, partner, son daughter, parent, friend...</i>	Age <i>(in years)</i>	Gender <i>(M=Male, F=Female)</i>
1 Myself		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

25. Are you willing to participate in future research about your travel patterns and preferences in British Columbia? Participation may involve answering paper-based questionnaires similar to this one or web-based surveys. Your address information will be kept completely confidential and used only for research purposes.

No

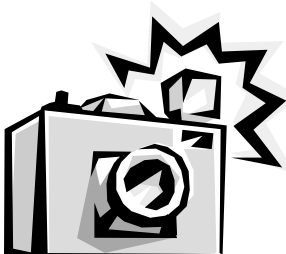
Yes → What is your email address?

Please clearly print your email address.

_____@_____

Thank you for your help!

All completed surveys will be entered in a draw for a digital camera. The draw will be held in December 2006.



Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to:

Tourism British Columbia
 Research Services
 Box 9830, Stn Prov Gov't,
 300- 1803 Douglas Street,
 Victoria, BC Canada V8W 9W5

Appendix C - Response Bias Testing

Response Bias Testing

Methods

The study design produced two sets of data that are available for analysis – the interview and mailback questionnaires. The respondents could differ because travellers could drop out of the study by not agreeing to complete the mailback questionnaires or by not completing the mailback questionnaire if they had agreed to complete it. Both instances could cause the mailback questionnaire results to be unrepresentative of travellers interviewed (non-response bias).

A series of tests were conducted to assess the mailback questionnaires' representativeness or, in other words, if the mailback questionnaire results portray the actual population of travellers interviewed.

Representativeness was assessed by:

1. Comparing demographics, trip and traveller characteristics between those that agreed and did not agree to complete the mailback questionnaire (Tables A3).
2. Comparing demographics, trip and traveller characteristics between those that responded and those that did not respond to the mailback questionnaire (Tables A3).

Responses to similar questions in the interview and mailback questionnaires could vary due to real differences in traveller behaviour (for example, a traveller may have perceived that the VC had a different impact on their trip when they were interviewed compared to the responses on the mailback questionnaire). Therefore a series of questions were asked in the same way on both the interview and mailback questionnaire. Differences between responses to the two questionnaires were assessed by comparing responses to key questions that were asked in both the interview and on the mailback questionnaire (Table A4).

Results

Differences in Respondents who Agreed or Did Not Agree to Mailback

- At the Comox Valley VC, there was only one difference between respondents who agreed to participate with those who did not agree to participate in the mailback questionnaire.
- Respondents who agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire were more likely to indicate that they would take another trip to British Columbia in the future as a result of the information obtained at the VC.

Differences in Respondents that Returned/Did Not Return the Mailback Questionnaire

- There were only two differences between respondents who returned the mailback questionnaire compared to those that did not. There was a higher proportion of respondents 55 years and older who returned the mailback survey. In addition, those who returned the survey had a slightly lower daily expenditure than those who agreed to complete the survey but did not follow through.

Differences in Interview/Mailback Responses

- Responses to the mailback survey were generally consistent with those given during the interview at the Comox Valley VC.
- The proportion of travellers with primary destinations within the study area was significantly lower for mailback respondents. This is likely attributed to respondents providing a broader location to the question upon reflecting on their completed trip (e.g. recording primary destination as Vancouver Island on the mailback survey versus saying Courtenay during the interview). The proportion of respondents with a primary destination within Vancouver Island was similar between data sets, which validates the above hypothesis and suggests that the difference is unlikely due to response bias.
- Additional differences between the data sets were seen in how respondents answered the questions about the impact of the Visitor Centre.
- A higher proportion of respondents said that they spent extra time in the Comox Valley as a result of the Visitor Centre in the mailback survey than in the interview.
- A higher proportion of respondents also said that they spent extra time in the rest of British Columbia as a result of the Visitor Centre in the mailback survey than in the interview.
- A higher proportion of respondents said that they would take another trip to/in British Columbia as a result of the Visitor Centre in the mailback survey than in the interview. More respondents marked 'Don't Know' to this question during the mailback than during the interview.

Conclusions

- Overall, few differences existed between those who agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire and those who did not agree to participate in the mailback questionnaire.
- Mailback responses are generally representative of the population that was interviewed.
- Most of the variables tested did not indicate significant difference between the mailback questionnaire and interview results.
- Responses to the questions regarding the impact of the VC were different in the mailback questionnaire than in the interview with fewer affirmative responses recorded in the interview.

Table A3. A summary of the comparisons between those that agreed to the mailback questionnaire and those that did not, those that did and did not respond to the mailback questionnaire and between the interview and mailback responses for the Comox Valley VC.

Comox Valley VC	✓ Indicates a Practical Difference		
	Agreed to Mailback	Mailback Responses (Non-Response Bias)	Interview/Mailback Responses
Origin	N	N	n/a
Gender	N	N	N
Age	N	✓	N
Party Size	N	N	N
Parties With Children	N	N	N
Education	N	N	n/a
Satisfaction with VC	N	N	n/a
Days Away from Home	N	N	N
Days in BC	N	N	N
Daily Expenditure ²	N	✓	N
Primary Destination - Study Area	N	N	✓
Primary Destination - Vancouver Island	N	N	N
Learn About New Activities	N	N	n/a
Extra Time in Region	N	N	✓
Extra Time in Other Parts of BC	N	N	✓
Take Another Trip To/In BC	✓	N	✓

1. Expenditure comparisons only include those that could answer the question in the interview. Those that started their trip on the day of the interview and those that did not answer the question were excluded. The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed.

Table A4. A summary of differences in data between the interview and mailback questionnaire at the Comox Valley VC.

Concept/Questions	Trip Characteristics Results		Practical Difference?
	Interview	Mailback	
Mean Days Away From Home	17.3	16.7	No
Mean Days In BC	13.3	12.9	No
Mean Daily Expenditure	\$169.19	\$173.87	No
Mean Party Size	2.5	2.4	No
Age - Under 24 Years	2.9%	1.6%	No
Age - 25-34 Years	11.0%	6.1%	No
Age - 35-44 Years	16.3%	15.0%	No
Age - 45-54 Years	31.2%	30.0%	No
Age - 55-64 Years	23.4%	29.7%	No
Age - 65 Years or Older	15.2%	17.6%	No
Gender - Male	47.4%	45.1%	No
Gender - Female	52.6%	54.9%	No
Primary Destination - Within Comox Valley	57.2%	47.0%	Yes
Primary Destination - Within Vancouver Island	90.2%	87.3%	No
Parties with Children	20.0%	18.4%	No
Extra Time in Region (% said 'Yes')	21.1%	37.7%	Yes
Extra Time in Other Parts of BC (% said 'Yes')	5.7%	19.3%	Yes
Take Another Trip To/In BC (% said 'Yes')	37.0%	51.2%	Yes

Appendix D – Suggestions to Improve Services Offered at the VC

What suggestions do you have to improve the services offered at the Centre? (number in brackets indicates total responses)

Information Related

- Better maps
- More detailed maps (2)
- Better medical info on maps or brochures
- Free detailed maps
- Free maps (4)
- Free map of area
- Paid maps, free elsewhere
- Street maps
- Map of Courtenay outside
- Maps of British Columbia
- Maps of Texada Island
- Maps outside updated
- More availability of maps (2)
- Put maps on internet
- New maps in earlier
- Paper map for island
- Surfer maps
- Update maps
- More comprehensive map, description for CV Strathcona Park
- More info on Strathcona Park
- More info on parks
- More fishing info
- More specific info on activities
- More posters from wildlife officials
- Special events more clear
- More info on planned communities
- More recommendations on places to stay
- Price shown
- Too much paper
- British Columbia tourism brochure improved
- Book for children's activities
- Campsite listings
- Comox Valley recreation available elsewhere
- Details on artists

VC Signage/Directions

- Better signage (14)
- Better signage from Powell River Ferry (3)
- Better signage off of Highway
- Better signage when in town
- Better signs, more warning of VC coming up
- More signage (5)
- Clearer signs
- More visible to find

- Signs should say which side of road centre is (2)
- Signs on walkway to get to VC
- Sign whether it's open or closed that can be seen from road
- Directions on website

Outdoor Facilities

- Better parking (10)
- Bigger parking lot (4)
- More parking (3)
- Better parking for RVs (3)
- Need easy parking
- More picnic tables
- Pay phone

Indoor Facilities and Services

- Computer for internet access (7)
- Database of accommodation that allows people to search
- Email access for tourists
- Live weather feed
- Self-guided kiosk
- Currency converter
- Better design for men's washroom
- Toilet seat cover
- Tampon disposal
- Display some native art
- Music inside
- Shelves not so high
- Bags
- Number system
- Quicker response rate for mail-outs

Accessibility

- Better accessibility (12)
- Better accessibility, hard to make left hand turn (2)
- Left turning lane (4)
- Turning lane from south

Refreshments

- Cold water (4)
- Free coffee (5)
- Free drinks (2)
- Pop machine

Staff Related

- More staff (2)
- Ask areas of interest
- Better camping knowledge
- Know what campsites are really like
- More knowledge of British Columbia's culture

- Better local knowledge
- More knowledge of major developments

Hours of Operation

- Better hours
- Extended hours
- Later hours (5)

Location of VC

- Info Centre near ferry
- Centre in Comox
- Centre on highway
- Should be on edge of town with RV parking

General (Unrelated to VC)

- Britishcolumbia.com website needs to be clearer, more info
- General maps on the side of the road, possibly on highway
- Have city/car tours of the valley a couple times a day

Appendix E - Other VCs Visited in British Columbia

Table A5. Location of other VCs visited by mailback survey respondents.

Location of Other VC Visited ¹	Number of Responses	Location of Other VC Visited ¹	Number of Responses
Abbotsford	1	Oliver	1
Alert Bay	1	Pacific Rim NP*	15*
Banff*	2	Parksville	12
BC Ferries*	1	Port Alberni	11
Burnaby*	1	Port Alice*	1
Campbell River	35	Port Hardy	13
Chemainus	5	Port McNeill	7
Clearwater	2	Port Renfrew*	1
Courtenay	2	Powell River	10
Cowichan	1	Prince Rupert	2
Cranbrook	1	Quadra Island*	1
Creston	1	Qualicum	10
Cumberland	4	Queen Charlotte Islands	1
Duncan	8	Revelstoke	4
Enderby	1	Richmond	1
Field*	1	Salmon Arm	1
Fort Nelson	1	Salt Spring	3
Fraser River*	1	Sayward*	1
Gibsons	2	Sechelt	5
Glacier NP*	1	Shuswap*	1
Gold River	3	Sicamous	1
Golden	5	Sidney	7
Grand Forks	1	Smithers	2
Hope	1	Sooke	6
100 Mile House	3	Squamish	2
Houston	2	Stewart	1
Jasper*	1	Sunshine Coast*	1
Kamloops	6	Tofino	17
Kelowna	5	Ucluelet	9
Ladysmith	2	USA Border*	2
Lake Cowichan	1	Valemount	2
Lillooet	1	Vancouver	20
McBride	1	Vancouver Island*	3
Merritt	2	Vernon	3
Mill Bay	2	Victoria	44
Mission	1	Waterton Lakes*	1
Mt. Robson	4	Wells Gray NP*	2
Nanaimo	22	Whistler	8
Northern BC*	1	White Rock	1

1. The locations marked with a * are not part of the official British Columbia VC network but are listed here because they were mentioned by respondents.

Appendix F – Comments from Comox Valley VC Mailback Survey

Comments are typed exactly as they appear in the mailback surveys – sentences were not corrected for spelling and grammar.

Comments are grouped into the general categories of staff friendly and helpful, appreciated VC services and amenities, suggestions for VC improvement, enjoyed Comox Valley area and other.

Staff Friendly and Helpful

- The girls were very helpful and printed off additional information off a website.
- Very friendly, informative and helpful staff. Answered all of our questions about local sites and unknown treasures to visit.
- Very helpful and knowledgeable staff
- Very friendly girls
- Everyone was extremely helpful and friendly.
- Staff were super friendly and were easier to accommodate us with regards to our questions.
- Informative, friendly
- Very friendly and very helpful staff
- Pleasant, helpful experience; information accurate and cheerfully given
- The staff are very friendly, helpful and well informed!
- Very helpful, knowledgeable and proud of area
- Positive attitude from staff, well-informed
- Very polite, helpful, well informed, pleasant, a very good experience. British Columbia has best travel services, advice, free travel literature (except road map, only province to not include one) of all provinces in Canada. Thank you for all your help.
- Very friendly, helpful and well informed
- Staff very friendly and helpful
- Staff very friendly and helpful
- Staff were helpful and courteous.
- Friendly staff
- Very courteous and helpful staff
- Very welcoming and informative. A pleasant environment.
- Very useful and helpful
- Staff were very helpful.
- The folks were very friendly that interviewed us.
- Very friendly & useful knowledge of the area.
- Extremely helpful/friendly.
- Very pleasant staff.
- People were very friendly & helpful.
- People were very helpful.
- Girls were very friendly.
- The two young students were most welcoming, helpful and informative.
- Very friendly and helpful staff. Please encourage businesses to decorate their frontages with more flowers. You have the climate to do this! Offer visitor coupons & discounts.
- Very friendly and helpful.
- Competent, friendly, info at hand.
- They were very helpful and friendly.
- The staff were very helpful & friendly.
- Knowledgeable staff, helpful & friendly.
- Very helpful and pleasant service.
- Very friendly and very informative.
- Girl was very informable.
- The girls were very friendly & helpful.

- Helpful. We changed our plans on what we saw, but did not stay longer.
- Very knowledgeable staff.
- Very courteous and helpful staff.
- Staff were very friendly and took the time to find out our interest & made appropriate suggestions for all age groups in our party. Many suggestions were cost free which is a bonus for a family group.
- Very helpful and friendly staff. Very positive experience.
- Staff friendly and helpful.
- Staff were very helpful, friendly and well informed.
- Friendly and courteous.
- Charming spokespeople.
- Very helpful and friendly staff.
- Staff were very friendly and extremely helpful.
- Helpful, friendly staffers.
- We found the staff very helpful. Nothing was too much trouble. As we had planned our holiday carefully we did not need much assistance from Visitor Centres.
- The most helpful and friendly personnel we've ever talked with.
- Kindly, interested, good information.
- Very friendly and helpful.
- Very polite always helpful. We really needed on Visitor Center for info!
- The staff was very informative and suggested very interesting areas to visit which would take 2 to 3 days; we'll be back.
- The employees at this Visitor Centre were the most helpful and friendly; out of any other places we visited for information (including BC, AB and NWT).
- Everyone helpful and informed.
- Staff were very helpful.
- Very friendly, helpful in providing info or local services availability.
- Volunteers very helpful with knowledge of accommodations especially Tofino and Ucluelet.
- Very good; friendly.
- Very pleasant staff. We always stop here before heading north on the Island!
- Helpful and informative, good suggestions given on attractions for both adults and children.
- Very helpful. Requested and received a campsite list and info.
- The staff was very friendly and helpful. Excellent! Nice clean bathroom too.
- Personnel very polite and informative.
- Friendly staff
- Very helpful staff, assisted with locating the phone number of a friend of mine, as well as tourist info.
- No. Friendly, helpful.
- Friendly, helpful, but my friend is well knowledgeable in this matter.
- The kids were great to talk to.
- Very helpful information
- Helpful local information. Friendly, courteous staff.
- Very friendly and helpful, a good experience.
- Good service - stopped to get directions to a local address.
- They were wonderful and very helpful. The best I have experienced.
- Excellent information obtained. The information person was polite, helpful, and

knowledgeable.

- The staff were very friendly and knowledgeable.
- The best Visitor Centre in British Columbia or Alberta. Young enthusiastic staff. Very knowledgeable and helpful.
- It was very friendly and helpful.
- Friendly and helpful as in all Visitors Centres on the Island.
- Staff were very helpful and made an effort to help me.
- Nice people, helpful. A little disappointed about the hike information nearby.
- They were extremely knowledgeable, helpful and friendly, gave excellent suggestions of places to visit in Comox Valley.
- Were friendly and helpful. We had stopped to ask for some directions.
- The staff is very nice and friendly.
- Staff were very friendly and helpful.
- Everyone was very pleasant and helpful. I would go back next year.
- They were helpful in explaining activities and times.
- Excellent services and a very knowledgeable staff. Very friendly.
- Very helpful and friendly. I received clear driving instructions to a few destinations in the area!
- The staff there was really helpful.
- The girls were all very hospitable.
- Very pleasant & helpful.
- The representatives were friendly, well informed & helpful. We enjoyed the special events hosted there eg. BBQ.
- Very intelligent young ladies!
- Very friendly, informative personnel.
- Everyone was very friendly and fun!
- Staff were very friendly and knowledgeable about the area.
- Excellent help & service.
- Staff: friendly & knowledgeable.
- Friendly, helpful
- Neat - great staff!
- Friendly, helpful, over and above
- Most helpful and informative and friendly
- Friendly and helpful staff. Thanks
- The 2 ladies there did their utmost to answer our questions.
- Extremely friendly and good service, the best on the entire vacation.
- Very, very helpful staff
- The most helpful and friendly staff of all the centers we visited.
- The person I dealt with was very friendly and gave good advice.
- Very courteous.
- Friendly service. Lots of information.
- Very helpful & friendly, very clean washroom facility.
- Great, helpful staff.
- Very helpful.
- Extremely friendly and helpful.
- Knowledgeable, enthusiastic, helpful staff.

- Very helpful with advice.
- They were very friendly.
- Very friendly & helpful ladies!
- Very helpful and pleasant staff.
- Very helpful, very friendly, not rushed.
- All questions answered with educated advice and guides showed interest in the theatre and concert we had experienced in Courtenay.
- Very helpful, very knowledgeable. Good reaching abilities, instructional ability.
- Wonderful staff! Clean & tidy.
- Very helpful staff, helped us maximize our time hiking/camping in Strathcona Park. Thank you!
- Very pleasant & helpful & the interview was not time consuming or distracting.
- Helpful staff.
- Staff were helpful & friendly.
- Fabulous staff, very fun, informed & personable.
- Courteous & informative
- Very friendly & helpful & enthusiastic.
- Everyone there was very helpful. I was looking for some listing of the area, which they helped me with. Everyone was very friendly.
- The staff were very friendly, knowledgeable and helpful.
- Very helpful.
- The representatives were very friendly and helpful.
- Staff very helpful in locating a business
- Very friendly staff, very welcoming. Thank you!
- Impressed with staff's courtesy and knowledge of area attractions.
- Very friendly, helpful staff
- Overall good experience. You seem to have a very enthusiastic and helpful staff. We just regret that we weren't there an hour earlier to take in your appreciation day. Maybe it wasn't the easiest place to find - maybe more signage?
- Polite, friendly, helpful staff, patient, smiling & courteous.
- Very friendly & helpful.
- Friendly, informative.
- Very friendly, helpful. Planning to spend sometime in Comox visiting museums - Chamber of Commerce, etc. As my father was born there in 1906 (04?) and would like to research.
- Extremely helpful, interesting history shared as well.
- Great people, good info & this applies to all (maybe 8+) other that I stopped at.
- While very friendly, we were asking for a map/directions and got incorrect info.
- Friendly reception, good information.
- Very friendly and knowledgeable.
- Very delightful girls, helpful.
- Very helpful/courteous
- Very friendly, helpful staff.
- The employers were friendly and very helpful to find an accommodation.
- People there were so knowledgeable and helpful.
- Very helpful, friendly staff.
- I have made two visits to this center this year and found the staff very friendly and helpful.

- Very well served.
- Your representatives were more than happy to help, went out of their way to help with info.
- The staff & interviewers were exceptionally friendly & helpful.
- Counter staff was very friendly and accepting of my suggestion about better Courtenay Farmer's Market signage. Also, they appreciated knowing about the "no show" Comox Farmer's Market.
- The attendants at the centre were pleasant and helpful.
- Friendly, clean, nice.
- Very pleasant, helpful people.
- Very impressed, friendly & knowledgeable.
- Your staff was very friendly and helpful. They suggested 2 nearby locations that had good wildlife viewing.
- Love the knowledgeable people, especially about where to eat, drink.
- Helpful staff, answered difficult questions. The centre was clean & pleasant.
- Good, adequate information.
- Very helpful & pleasant.
- Very friendly and helpful.
- The people we spoke with were very, very kind!
- Very friendly & helpful.
- The staff very friendly & helpful. Please continue the service.
- The people at the center were very informative and had lots of reading material.
- Very nice and friendly staff, was very helpful.
- The staff were very knowledgeable about local events & places to shop.
- The people were very helpful and friendly.
- People were friendly & knowledgeable.
- Great, friendly service.
- Very helpful
- Very courteous and helpful in all ways.
- People were friendly, welcoming and informative.
- Extremely helpful, staff was very knowledgeable and friendly.
- Very friendly
- Friendly helpful staff
- They were very friendly and enthusiastic about our trip to Cape Scott. They told us from experience where to go and what to do (and what not). Next time (!) we will prepare ourselves on a longer stay in the Provincial Park.
- Extremely friendly staff who went out of their way to find/book me youth hostel in the area as well as introducing me to the Chamber of Commerce and local industry individuals!

Appreciated VC Services and Amenities

- We specifically went to the Comox V/C to obtain info on camping/parks and recreation activities for a future visit. Because of the info received, we were back in beginning July and had a fabulous time, all info was perfectly accurate and made a huge difference in the quality of our visit.
- Helped about Vancouver, was able to explore more of the Comox Valley than we had thought about. We are needing to know if we can claim the PST while we were in British Columbia. Would you please get back to us on that. Thanks.

- Good parking for a car, very friendly staff, a variety of “things to do”.
- Our sons love the train engine. It's a highlight of our trip that they can climb in, drive it and ring the bell!
- Great service!
- Beautiful building. Displays are awesome. Help is very beneficial & friendly.
- Received friendly directions and map.
- Learned of art show at park by sea & visited before flying home.
- We spend time in this area every year and tend to do a few of the same things every time we come back. A visit to the Visitor's Centre is one of them! They are always happy to help with requests from “What's the weather forecast for Tofino tomorrow?” to “Where can we rent a boat to take us to Sandy Island?”.
- We were very pleased that the people from the Visitor Centre called to the RV Park to ask if there was enough room for us for the next few days.
- Got some good information as to where to find 2 of the gardens we were looking for.
- Lots of information available to pick up about other places we were interested in. Very helpful Visitor Centre employees.
- Their info was correct, they helped us with directions. I was surprised how many restaurants were closed in Courtenay, not many people in town at night/evening.
- Staff provided local information.
- It was very pleasant. We picked up a local map and did some shopping. We returned a few weeks later, went to Powell River also.
- Excellent service: we just need info for the road to follow.
- We've gone to the visitor centre each time we visited and it's always been worthwhile.
- The staff at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre made it possible for us to locate both Quadra and the Kingfisher. I would also like to inform you that we were treated extremely well.
- I found brochures about the area that impressed me enough to decide to make the Comox Valley in the area - organic farming and Farmers Market, etc. My new home, e.g. Artist/Craft people.
- Very helpful in directing to appropriate campground
- Nice, clean bathrooms.
- Very convenient place to gather info when in Comox Valley or heading further north.
- We stopped specifically for Red Tide info.
- Excellent information on weekly local events.
- Good information, clean facilities & good service.
- A very friendly woman gave us great instructions and maps to get to local swimming holes. She had drawn the maps herself.
- It had a lot of good information about camping & parks.
- Attended the festivals as a recommendation of the visitor centre. Well worth it, thank you.

Suggestions for VC Improvement

- Parking for RV's need better signage. Need more staff.
- Need list of what/where to go & do with kids
- Seemed strange to me that they were having maps of the valley printed at the beginning of July, in prime tourist season.
- Difficult parking RV at centre.
- Yes, please, put a sign outside that shows it's open! (And opening times) looks like it's closed

from outside.

- The map is not helpful, even the updated one.
- Parking access door
- Found by chance. No info about it on ferry from Powell River.
- Very pleasant and helpful; would suggest/request more facilities and material for cycle-tourism e.g. comprehensive area maps (touring, not just trails), better, lit, covered racks at picnic site.
- Parking problem, excellent staff.
- Need better information signage for vehicles getting off ferry, ie. to turn right to go to Courtenay, rather than right into Comox.
- It wasn't open on my way to Courtenay about 6 pm, so I had trouble finding my cousin without a detailed map.
- Parking too tight for a motorhome.
- Have more maps of the Comox Valley.
- The interviewer was very pleasant. Actually the info from the centre was not detailed enough & we drove a long way to campsite that we didn't stay at. It was listed as waterview, but it wasn't at all. The campground we stayed at was quite rundown too, but were the only 2 the visitor centre told us about.
- Inadequate parking facility for trailers, etc.
- A public access internet or wireless access in visitors centres would be great benefit for tourists.
- They didn't have a list of potters in the area. All other info was good.

Enjoyed Comox Valley Area

- My daughter has a fabulous time at CYMC. We will go back for sure and next year will take a few more days of holiday on either end of the camp.
- Great music festival.
- The green space welcomes.
- We enjoy Filbert Festival.
- Weather lovely, people friendly.
- Comox has a beautiful harbour. We watched the Breast Cancer Boat Races.
- Enjoyed hiking at Mt. Washington
- Filberg Festival was good value and fun/interesting.
- The woman recommended the fair and boat races which I went to and enjoyed very much.
- It's always a pleasure exploring the Comox/Courtenay region.
- Beautiful!
- Discovered downtown Comox for 1st time, a great place!
- Beautiful country, loved it. Will come again & spend more time.

Other

- We will move to Comox from Ontario on 17th of Aug.
- The research lady did a good job of "meeting the public".
- The interviewer is my future daughter-in-law.
- Enjoyed the great weather. Sunny, no rain.
- Thank you
- Quite positive.
- All centres provided good info in a friendly manner.

- Very nice.
- Wonderful
- Sorry, it's been too long ago, it was the beginning of my trip touring across Canada.
- Cannot really say, only spent approx. 5 min. inside after outside interview, had to rush to visit CFB Comox - my main sight to see.
- I had just one specific question: Where is the Camera Repair Shop?
- Excuse me; it takes time to answer you. My English is not very good. I'm 50 years old. I have to think a lot. But I have done as well I can. We had a wonderful time in British Columbia, nothing was negative. I hope we can come back some times. We could not come to Alaska because of a big fire. But that is a dream. My ankle was a golddigger in name and now we save money too this trip. Of course we will travel thru British Columbia.
- No. I always enjoy my experiences there and I make a point of going to each one in all the British Columbia towns/cities I've been to. This was the first survey I've done.
- Yes, we wanted to go to Stotan Falls. We needed to travel on the Logging Rd and we didn't enjoy the experiences, so we turned back. Stotan Falls looked beautiful on the web photos and a pub owner, in Courtenay, replied to my email I sent out as an inquiry about the waterfalls. Since, it is such a beautiful fall, there should be an easier way to get there. We didn't get to go to the falls, however, the reunion did happen & they went shopping.
- All around great.
- Very pleasant.
- It was a successful trip for us as we were looking at in not as tourists, but to move there in the future. We have decided to move in 2 years time. We loved the area!
- Love British Columbia, live here. The feedback at the time was fine but this is expensive and I think unnecessary.
- Very nice
- The interviewers were pleasant and engaging. The small Canadian flag pin now lives on my ball cap.
- Not really
- It was great
- The girl that interviewed us did a good job.
- Everyone we talked to was very pleasant and friendly. I contacted BC Tourism in March 06 and indicated I would be in British Columbia at Easter and again in August, I asked for travel information at that time. It came in October. The post mark on the envelope reads 06, 10, 03. Don't you think that is just a little too late. Also I received a letter with this questionnaire that starts out "In late September, we wrote you" the post mark reads 2006, 11, 14. Somebody needs to get on the ball there. Yours truly. This is the first correspondence we have received.
- The young lady was very pleasant and very polite when she interviewed me. There is lots of info on British Columbia and communities, to be obtained from there.