

# WEST KOOTENAY/REVELSTOKE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## HIGHLIGHTS



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



# THANK YOU

The West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development Strategy is the outcome of a ten-month process of information gathering, discussion and direction-setting guided by input from over 100 tourism partners, representing diverse communities, organizations, businesses, interests, and passions.

We thank the First Nations on whose traditional territories we travelled and gathered for our community meetings including Ktunaxa Nation and Sinxt Nation.

Thank you to our tourism partners who participated in the process by attending planning workshops, conducting interviews, participating in webinars, hosting site visits and responding to surveys. Special thanks to the members of the Working Committee as well as the facilitator of the West Kootenay/Revelstoke destination development process.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## WHY A STRATEGY?

The West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development Strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of the West Kootenay/Revelstoke tourism destination over the next 10 years and beyond. The strategy was developed as part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program to support and guide the long-term growth of tourism in British Columbia. This document presents the key highlights of the West Kootenay/Revelstoke strategy.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

The West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development Strategy is a guide for tourism partners as they work collaboratively to grow the visitor economy. The strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities, and market conditions. Results will be tracked and emerging learning outcomes will inform future implementation activities thereby optimizing their effectiveness in increasing economic, social, and cultural benefits for the entire West Kootenay/Revelstoke area.

## WHERE IS IT FOR?

The West Kootenay/Revelstoke planning area stretches from Rossland, Trail, and Castlegar in the west, to Revelstoke in the north, and Creston in the south-east. The southern boundary is formed by the border with the USA. It includes the communities of Revelstoke,

Nakusp, New Denver, Silverton, Slocan, Kaslo, Creston, Nelson, Castlegar, Salmo, Rossland, Trail, Montrose, Fruitvale, Warfield, and all areas of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, Areas A and B of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, and Area A of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District. Once fueled by mines, mills and turbines, tourism and recreation opportunities as well as amenity migration have begun to shift the dependence from a resource based to a more diversified economy. Alongside tourism, forestry, mining, and agriculture remain important sectors. There is evidence of a growing service sector which includes health and education and, more recently, technology. Columbia Power and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) have a long history of partnership working in the planning area.

## WHERE DOES IT FIT?

West Kootenay/Revelstoke is one of 20 planning areas across BC for which destination development strategies are being developed. Each planning area represents a logical destination for visitors in and around the province. As planning areas cross multiple jurisdictions, the importance of adopting an integrated approach with a shared vision and coordinated investment is critical. The West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development Strategy is one of four planning area strategies being prepared for the Kootenay Rockies tourism region. Others include the Columbia Valley, the Highway 1 Corridor and the Highway 3 Corridor. In time, informed by the outcomes of all relevant planning area destination

development strategies, regional strategies will be developed. These will, in turn, inform the creation of a provincial strategy thereby ensuring a truly integrated and cohesive combination of bottom-up and top-down destination planning.

## A KEY IMPERATIVE

The recommendations contained within the West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional, focused, and aligned discussions regarding implementation. It will be important to ensure that the strategy becomes embedded in local, regional, provincial, and federal decision making processes. It is only by working collaboratively in an integrated way to a shared agenda that the full potential of West Kootenay/Revelstoke will be realized.

## AT A GLANCE

In what follows, the distinctiveness of the West Kootenay/Revelstoke destination is summarized and its vision for tourism introduced. While acknowledging the challenges the sector faces, its potential for growth is set out in terms of key priorities and experience development potential. A consideration of each development priority and associated actions then follows. While further detail on each of these elements is available in the full strategy, they are brought together "At A Glance" to demonstrate the scope of the integrated nature of the approach being taken.

# 2 REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

## A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

Part of the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa and Sinixt First Nations, the West Kootenay/Revelstoke planning area is dominated by mountains — the Purcells, the Monashees and the Selkirks — and some of the most outstanding and untouched wilderness anywhere in the world. Within these ranges hundreds of rivers and streams feed numerous lakes. The mighty Columbia River, along with the Slocan and Kootenay, carve their way through the destination, swelling to form the long, deeply incised, ribbon-like lakes of Upper and Lower Arrow, Slocan and Kootenay. Long regarded as a place of refuge, retreat and resistance, small towns and villages dot the lakeshores and riversides with larger settlements such as Revelstoke, Trail, Castlegar and Creston providing key points of access to the destination by road and air. Both a blessing and a challenge, the sparse road network, especially in northern parts, relies heavily for its continuity on lake ferry crossings. The destination includes national and provincial parks, winter and summer resorts, hot springs, backcountry lodges and championship golf courses. Dwarfed by the immensity of the area's natural splendour, there are countless opportunities to experience world-class skiing, snowboarding, hiking, kayaking, mountain biking and climbing. While, immersed in the spiritual significance of its special places, mind, body and soul are nurtured and restored. The area's cultural strengths, inspired by the 'Kootenay Vibe', lie in the depth of its arts, culture and heritage, including an emerging agri-tourism and culinary scene.

## A SHARED VISION

With its stunning beauty, reputation for inclusivity, down to earth credentials and undeniable appetite for fun, West Kootenay/Revelstoke has all the ingredients needed to move from being a great destination to becoming a truly remarkable one. Richly rewarded for making the journey, visitors discover a landscape of epic proportions enriched by engaging encounters with communities who care passionately about the future of this place. Adopting a sustainable approach and working together are key to realizing the following vision:



“THE WEST KOOTENAY/REVELSTOKE AREA IS A DESTINATION OF AWE-INSPIRING BEAUTY — A PLACE TO BE NURTURED AND THAT, IN RETURN, NURTURES THOSE WHO VISIT AND THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO STAY. PASSIONATE TRAVELLERS WITH A SENSE OF ADVENTURE AND THOSE SEEKING DISCOVERY BOTH BEYOND THE HORIZON AND WITHIN THEMSELVES ARE DRAWN HERE FOR

THE AREA'S REMARKABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND THE WELCOMING ECCENTRICITY OF THE AREA'S MANY SMALL COMMUNITIES, EACH OFFERING THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION OF THE EVER-PRESENT 'KOOTENAY VIBE'”

## KEY PRIORITIES

While the destination faces a number of challenges in terms of reliable access, season extension, community and natural carrying capacity, low monetisation of the natural resource for tourism and year-round business sustainability, key priorities include the need to:

- Address access, signage, and infrastructure
- Create an attractive business climate for new and expanding tourism businesses
- Enhance experiential quality and variety
- Protect the environment, educate and pursue environmental sustainability
- Value and maintain small town character and community sustainability
- Manage the destination collaboratively and effectively for the benefits of residents, tourism businesses, and visitors



# 2

# REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

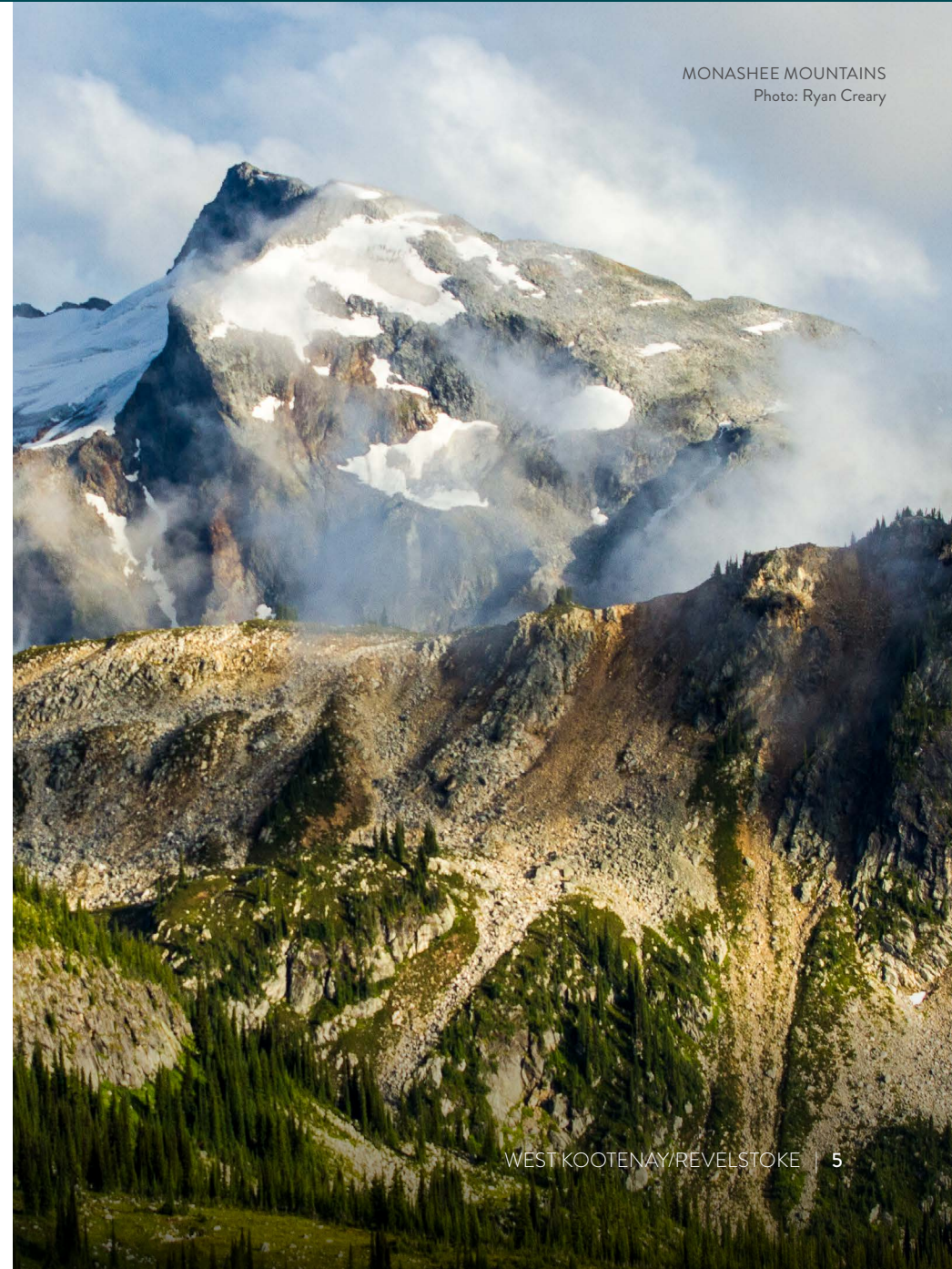
## EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

Given the area's existing draw, which is largely concentrated in some key locations, it will be important to build on these current strengths, support developing opportunities and identify future potential. This will ensure that the benefits of a sustainable approach to tourism are felt throughout the destination, particularly in less well-known yet equally attractive locations.

**Product experiences with world class appeal to motivate travel, encourage longer stays and sustain year-round tourism throughout the destination include:**

- Lakes and Rivers — with a focus on boating, rafting, floating, paddling, wildlife watching, and angling
- Mountains and Trails — with a focus on backcountry access, backcountry lodges, hiking, mountain biking, climbing, road cycling and, where appropriate, mechanized movement
- Deep Powder Snow — with a focus on ski resorts and heli/cat ski operations
- Rejuvenation — with a focus on hot springs and spas, zen sports, backcountry immersion, retreats, boutiques, and retail
- Arts, Culture, Heritage — with a focus on Indigenous cultural experiences, the heritage of successive arrivals — miners, immigrants, exiled citizens, free spirits — artistic clusters, events, and festivals
- Agri-tourism — with a focus on craft breweries, wineries, locally sourced organic produce and field-to-table food experiences

MONASHEE MOUNTAINS  
Photo: Ryan Creary



# 3 AT A GLANCE

**VISION STATEMENT** The West Kootenay/Revelstoke area is a destination of awe-inspiring beauty — a place to be nurtured and that, in return, nurtures those who visit and those who choose to stay. Passionate travellers with a sense of adventure and those seeking discovery both beyond the horizon and within themselves are drawn here for the area’s remarkable outdoor recreation and the welcoming eccentricity of the area’s many small communities, each offering their own interpretation of the ever-present “Kootenay Vibe”.

THEME 1	VITALLY CONNECTED — IMPROVE ACCESS, SIGNAGE AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
	<b>COHESIVE COMMUNICATIONS</b> Whether arriving by air or road, reliable, convenient and maintained access to and within the destination is essential. Seamless journeys on routes, ferries and resource roads will enable visitors to go further and immerse themselves more fully in the natural splendour of the destination.	<b>ON THE RIGHT TRACK</b> From maps to apps to signage, develop an integrated, accurate and reliable system of information to enable visitors to navigate the destination. Supported by online and on-site interpretive storytelling, engage them in compelling narratives of the place and its people.	<b>GO THAT EXTRA MILE</b> From Wi-Fi to washrooms, look outs to pumpouts, campsites to stage lights, ensure that the needs of visitors are understood, appreciated and responded to through the provision of well-planned, strategically located key infrastructure. Promote responsible waterway and backcountry user behaviours supported by a well-resourced search and rescue service.
THEME 2	POISED FOR GROWTH — IMPROVE BUSINESS OPERATING CONDITIONS		
	<b>LOUD &amp; CLEAR</b> Communicate a clear and consistent message to key audiences about the value of tourism. Ensure that the policy and regulatory environment facilitates, encourages and supports the business of tourism.	<b>TURN THE KEY</b> Within the context of an affordable accommodation strategy, effect the right balance between the need to regularize short term / sharing economy rentals with a critical need to accommodate industry employees and key workers.	<b>SURVIVE &amp; THRIVE</b> Find creative ways to pool resources, liabilities and funding know-how to ensure year-round availability of skilled staff, provide quality assured experiences and activities and embrace non-profits and new entrepreneurs in growing the visitor economy.
THEME 3	FEEL THE VIBE — ENHANCE EXPERIENTIAL QUALITY AND VARIETY		
	<b>BEST IN CLASS</b> Match industry needs with the capacity of educational institutes to deliver relevant skills. Offer tailored, affordable, on-site training and mentoring to existing tourism businesses. Through product familiarisation initiatives and excellence recognition incentives, equip business owners and residents to become ambassadors for the destination.  <b>PLACE ON A PLATE</b> Curate additional experiences which feature local products, craft breweries and wineries. Add value to the visitor experience and promote business opportunities by linking growers to producers to create field-to-table food experiences.	<b>BREATHTAKING ENCOUNTERS</b> Within the context of local trail planning for hiking, mountain biking, trail running and mechanized movement, prioritise support for at least one iconic trail experience in each community. Ensure strategic linkages between communities, supporting infrastructure and business opportunities — gear rental, shuttle services, etc. — are developed in tandem.  <b>AUTHENTIC VOICES</b> Support the development of Indigenous cultural tourism by providing market intelligence, capacity building and business planning support to Indigenous entrepreneurs, augmented by a dedicated regional resource for First Nations communities developing tourism.	<b>GO WITH THE FLOW</b> Develop an inventory of all waterway — lake and river — experiences from canoeing to kayaking, paddling to angling, wildlife watching to lakeside camping and identify associated business opportunities such as gear rental and guided tours.  <b>SHOWCASE &amp; CELEBRATE</b> Develop a coordinated regional plan for festivals and events to better align their timing, capacity to extend the season and potential for shared resourcing with the needs of the sector.
	<b>TOTAL IMMERSION</b> From immersion in hot springs to forest bathing, spas to zen sports, develop a network of themed routes to better showcase the depth and range of wellness experiences on offer throughout the destination.  <b>THEN AND NOW</b> Celebrate the history and heritage of the area by integrating its key stories — chapters in a book — into the visitor experience. Within the context of creative expression, explore the scope to augment art and culture tours with, for example, culinary experiences to create truly motivating events.		

# 3 AT A GLANCE

THEME 4	NATURE FIRST – PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND PURSUE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY		
	<b>GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT</b> Within the context of an agreed framework, promote the pro-active management of the shared use of land and water based assets on which the development of tourism depends. Ensure that the framework provides certainty for development, promotes appropriate uses and affords environmental protection.	<b>MONITOR &amp; MEASURE</b> Supported by a program of monitoring and measuring the long-term health of the ecosystem to ensure its protection, ensure that the impacts of tourism are managed and mitigated.	<b>LEAVE NO TRACE</b> Keep sensitive areas completely free from visitation, guard against invasive species and promote the responsible use of backcountry by residents and visitors.
THEME 5	SIZE MATTERS – VALUE AND MAINTAIN SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY		
	<b>VIBRANCY IS KEY</b> Ensure that attention is focused on keeping downtown areas energized. Provisions need to be made to support those communities with significant visitation and smaller populations to sustain their role in the visitor economy.	<b>NO SURPRISES</b> Ensure that the development of tourism sits comfortably with local communities and remains true to their values and to the spirit of place. Promote a type of tourism that responds to the needs of visitors, nurtures the support and participation of local people and is good for the environment.	<b>ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE</b> While recognising that there are limits to growth, ensure that best use is made of the asset base for tourism and that the impacts of visitation in terms of the wear and tear on basic infrastructure are acknowledged and, through re-investment, are restored and maintained.
THEME 6	STRONGER TOGETHER – MANAGE THE DESTINATION COLLABORATIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY FOR MUTUAL GAIN		
	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b> Initiate a range of functionally specific, task oriented, collaborative arrangements for working together at a regional level supported by cross-ministry advice on the priorities for tourism development and key perspectives on matters affecting the development of the visitor experience.	<b>GOOD RELATIONS</b> In building awareness of Indigenous culture, continue to nurture relationships with First Nations, local communities and tourism operators. Work collaboratively to realise real local benefit for all those involved both directly and indirectly in growing the business of tourism.	<b>HEARTS &amp; MINDS</b> In raising awareness of the value of tourism to local economies, encourage more inter-community collaborative projects. Build positive relationships with user groups, environmental stewardship groups, search and rescue and others to better communicate the benefits and challenges of tourism.



# 4 GEARING UP

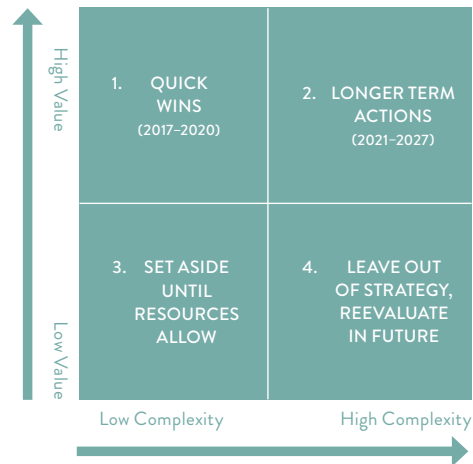
## SUCCESS NETWORKS

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in the local, regional, and provincial decision making. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will achieve better development decisions, drive greater tourism revenues, and realize benefits for businesses and communities in West Kootenay/Revelstoke. All this will contribute to a thriving, vibrant, and growing economy.

Joint strategy ownership among all planning area tourism partners is a critical component of this program's success. The strategy identifies a suggested success network of tourism partners to champion and move actions within each objective forward.

## FRAMEWORK

The strategy presents the destination development objectives using a consistent framework to determine the prioritization of each objective and the relative timing for implementation. Objectives with a provincial or regional scope are identified and will inform the regional and provincial destination development strategies.



HALFWAY RIVER HOT SPRINGS  
Photo: Kari Medig





## CATALYST PROJECTS

The following twelve actions were identified as catalyst projects for immediately moving the strategy into implementation.

**Vitality Connected****— Improve Access, Signage and Infrastructure**

- Provide training to experience providers in Google listings/maps, Apple maps to increase presence, accuracy of locations
- Create a planning area map of high use areas (land and water) to be used to inform priority setting of public sector plans for infrastructure in these areas (rest stops, lookouts, washrooms, parking, signage, boat launches, pumpouts, shelters, wifi/ connectivity, etc.)
- Present information on increasing cycle and motorcycle usage and the associated tourism potential to TRAN with the objective of influencing road maintenance contract standards to secure early and more frequent road sweeping
- Monitor wait times at inland ferries in peak season and survey impact on visitor intention to return — provide data and findings to TRAN to help guide capacity and scheduling

- Communicate the opportunity and facilitate the approval/ licensing process with the intention of attracting private sector investment in additional services (café, etc.) at inland ferries on Arrow Lake

**Poised for Growth****— Improve Business Operating Conditions**

- Benchmark and communicate the value of tourism in each community and collectively
- Continue to educate local government on value of tourism

**Feel the Vibe****— Enhance Experiential Quality and Variety**

- Develop an easy reference guide with Top 15 Must Dos in each community and promote widely amongst residents, businesses
- Cross-educate Visitor Centre staff from across the region (fam tour, experience showcase, “fun bus”)

- Expand current trail forum to include regional trail planning; share information, lessons learned, review and optimize local trail planning efforts, identify the ‘iconic’, and create appropriate strategic linkages
- Identify and invest in at least one iconic trail experience in each planning area community and in strategic linkages between communities

**Nature First****— Protect the Environment and Pursue Environmental Sustainability**

- Educate and communicate to visitors re: backcountry safety — include in backcountry code of conduct

# LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

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You can likely find it in the more detailed West Kootenay/Revelstoke Destination Development strategy or you can reach us at:

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: IDAHO PEAK LOOKOUT, Kari Medig



KOKANEE CREEK  
PROVINCIAL PARK  
Photo: Dave Heath