TOURISM 101

BC's Tourism Ecosystem

BC's Tourism Ecosystem

Whether we notice it or not, tourism is an essential part of the day-to-day lives of all people living in British Columbia. BC welcomes millions of visitors from around the world each year. In 2024, BC's total tourism revenue was $23 billion, generating $2.1 billion in provincial and municipal taxes. The tourism industry paid $5 billion in wages and salaries to the 113,760 people employed by tourism in the province, working at over 16,925 tourism-related businesses.

Tourism's positive impact extends beyond economics and job opportunities to social, cultural and environmental advantages. There are many indicators that show the breadth, depth and benefits of the tourism economy. For up-to-date information, see the Destination BC's Research and Insights Hub.

All of this is possible because of an interconnected composite made up of numerous organizations and partners known as BC's tourism ecosystem.

Simply defined, BC's tourism ecosystem is the network of national, provincial, regional, and local partners collaborating with tourism industry businesses and organizations. At the core of the BC's tourism ecosystem is the host community. Each component of the industry has a role to play, and together the BC's tourism ecosystem's purpose is to support social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits for all people living in British Columbia.

In addition to the host community, BC's tourism ecosystem includes:

National Partners: Destination Canada (DMO); Government of Canada Ministries including the Ministry of Tourism, Official Languages & La Francophonie; Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada; Tourism Industry Association of Canada; National Sector Associations; and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada.

Provincial Partners: Destination British Columbia (DMO); Government of BC ministries including the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport; Indigenous Tourism British Columbia; Tourism Industry Association of BC; go2HR; and provincial sector associations.

Regional & Local Partners: 50+ DMOs (including members of the BC Destination Management Organization Association); 16,925 tourism businesses; local governments (including First Nations, municipalities and regional districts); Indigenous councils; local business associations; visitor services; other industries.

Vancouver

What is a DMO?

DMO stands for Destination Management Organization, though these are often referred to as destination marketing organizations and sometimes destination marketing and management organizations. DMOs are the official tourism organization responsible for attracting people to visit a specific destination or geographic area, whether that be a country, a province or territory, a region or a community. DMOs can play a role in destination stewardship as part of their management work, maintaining the social, cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of an area. DMOs also work with BC's tourism ecosystem in their area to create a suitable environment and quality experience on the ground to ensure that visitors' expectations are met once at the destination. You may also see the term CDMO or RDMO. These are Community and Regional Destination Management Organizations, which are DMOs that operate at a community or regional level.

The Host Community: The Core of BC's Tourism Ecosystem

The host community is comprised of people who live in the area where tourism activities occur. We might call these people locals or residents, and they are at the core of BC's tourism ecosystem.

- The host community shapes the cultures, traditions, and lifestyle in the destination. This often forms many of the attractions that draw visitors: things to do, places to see, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and more.
- Among other activities, this community may be directly or indirectly involved in tourism through owning or being employed by tourism businesses, developing or maintaining the destination, or interacting with visitors.
- Host communities influence a visitor's experience through daily interactions and have the power to make visitors feel welcome and appreciated.
- Locals may be involved in ensuring the sustainability of the host community for both residents and visitors. This might include guiding the preservation and respect of local customs, lifestyles, and natural resources.
- When locals no longer feel their home is being respected by visitors, they have the power to make their voice heard. This makes sustainable tourism practices essential, which requires ongoing engagement with the host community.

What is the Visitor Economy?

There are many terms used around the world to define tourism. The term 'visitor economy' is often used to describe the direct economic benefit of visitor activity. This includes the direct tourism industry, and the indirect and induced economic activity resulting from visitors' interactions with a destination. For more on the visitor economy, see the next article in this series.

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Liard

Rossland

Government's Role in Tourism Management

Aside from the host community, governments have perhaps the strongest ability to shape BC's tourism ecosystem. Their roles include policy formation (such as hotel taxes, land use, and inclusivity), infrastructure development, tourism promotion (in addition to and in collaboration with the DMO), investment attraction, and even maintaining the safety and security of the destination. In this way, the federal, provincial, and local governments influence the operating environment of those within BC's tourism ecosystem.

The government also provides and maintains public facilities. Their roles include public infrastructure, public services, preservation and maintenance, and accessibility:

- Public infrastructure: this includes infrastructure such as airports, border crossings, roads and rest areas, parks, public gathering spaces, and internet and mobile phone connectivity.
- Public services: both visitors and residents benefit and rely on services such as waste management, snow removal, emergency management, and hospitals.
- Preservation and maintenance: this might apply to visitor-friendly spaces such as cultural heritage sites, parks, and public campsites.
- Accessibility: it is the role of the government to ensure public facilities have acceptable levels of accessibility that enable all visitors and residents to use and enjoy them.

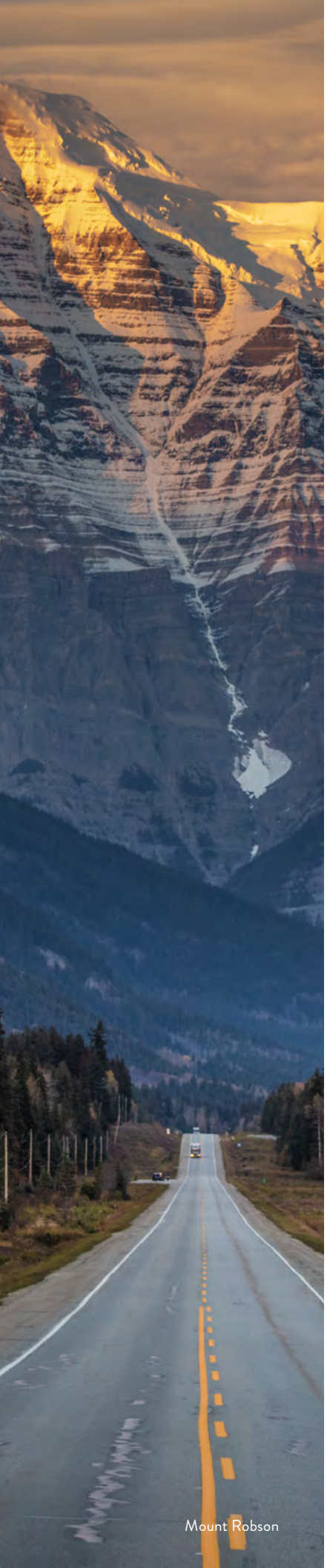
The Government of BC plays an active role in creating the operating environment for the tourism industry by supporting tourism development, managing tourism resources, investing in public infrastructure that supports tourism, and promoting BC as a travel destination through the Crown corporation, Destination BC.

Destination BC supports a strong and competitive future for BC's tourism industry through a combination of global marketing, iconics, destination development, industry learning, cooperative community-based programs, and visitor servicing. Destination BC's programs help to improve the visitor experience, support businesses and communities across the province, and strengthen BC's worldwide reputation as a destination of choice.

The Government of BC also supports true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through tourism while respecting Indigenous rights and cultural heritage, and is committed to sustainable tourism development that balances the needs of the tourism industry, local communities, and the environment.

Another important role the Government of BC has is to collect data and conduct research to gain insights into the tourism industry, visitor trends, and economic impacts. This can be both directly, such as through government departments like BC Stats, as well as indirectly through Crown corporations such as Destination BC, BC Pavilion Corporation, and Royal BC Museum. This information helps inform policy decisions, marketing strategies, and investment priorities in tourism.

Kispiox Valley



Mount Robson

Community Tourism Management

At the local level, BC's tourism ecosystem includes local government, Community & Regional Destination Management Organizations (CDMOs and RDMOs), tourism businesses, transportation, suppliers, and community-based organizations.

- The municipal government plays similar but separate roles to the Government of BC on a local scale. This includes creating policies and maintaining infrastructure, such as public spaces.
- Tourism in BC communities and regions is typically managed and marketed by Community Destination Management Organizations (CDMOs) and Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs). Many of these organizations also operate local Visitor Centres.
  - In communities without a formal CDMO, tourism responsibilities may fall to municipal governments, chambers of commerce, economic development offices, or other organizations.
  - Some regions may include sub-regional organizations, depending on the size and complexity of their tourism ecosystems. Here is an example from the Thompson Okanagan.
- Tourism businesses provide direct services to visitors and residents alike, such as adventure tours and gift stores. They create experiences, provide jobs, and fulfill needs from hotel rooms to dining options.
- Transportation is just as important at a local level for getting around as it is for getting to the destination. This might include public transportation, taxi services, car rentals,
  ride-share, and active transportation such as cycling.
- Suppliers work directly with tourism businesses, providing goods and services and supporting the local economy. They might be local farms, outfitters, or cleaning companies.
- Community-based organizations may include historical societies, museums, festival organizers, performing and visual arts organizations, recreation clubs, and nature-based guiding groups.

Did You Know?

British Columbia is divided into six tourism regions. Five are managed by Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs) with funding and support from Destination BC; one is managed by Destination BC directly—the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains tourism region.

To see contact information for all six tourism regions, click here.

The Experience Sector's Role in Tourism Management

The experience sector in BC's tourism ecosystem is made up of various organizations that represent services, attractions, and activity interests, from golf and wine to culinary experiences and adventure tourism, among others. These sector organizations often act as a bridge between businesses, government, and consumers. Experience sector organizations often work to educate their members about best practices, industry trends, and essential skills. Simultaneously, they aim to create awareness about the sector's value and importance among the public, government, and other partners.

- They may conduct research to gather data on market trends, consumer behaviour, industry performance, and challenges faced by businesses within the sector. This data is essential in shaping industry strategies, policies, and planning.
- Sector organizations advocate on behalf of their members with government and other partners. This can include lobbying for policies that support the growth and sustainability of the sector.
- These organizations often contribute to policy development and standard setting within the industry. This can include creating industry benchmarks, developing guidelines for sustainable practices, or helping establish quality standards for service delivery.
- Finally, a core function of sector organizations is to promote the services of their members. This can involve marketing campaigns, organizing trade shows or fairs, and collaborative promotions with organizations such as Destination BC through co-operative marketing.

Tofino

There are many experience sectors in BC, including:

- Camping and RVing
- Guest Ranches
- River Outfitters
- Backcountry Lodges
- Farmer's Markets
- Guide Outfitters
- Ski
- BC Craft Brewers
- Fishing
- Mountain Biking
- Snowmobile
- Bear Viewing
- Gardens
- Paddling
- Wilderness Tourism
- Birding
- Golf
- Power and Sail Cruising (Ocean Boating)
- Wine

Wine BC

Through the Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program, Destination BC provides millions of dollars in funding each year for collaborative tourism marketing ventures throughout the province. One of the sectors supported by the program is Wine BC. Wine BC is spearheaded by the Wine Growers of BC, which is the unified voice of over 180 licensed BC wineries that produce certified 100% BC grape wine, and support the continued growth of wine tourism. Their dedicated expertise and commitment to their members make experience sectors and their respective organizations vital to BC's tourism ecosystem. By supporting projects such as Wine BC with co-operative marketing funding, Destination BC is able to drive industry collaboration, align industry marketing efforts, and support the provincial strategy to grow industry success as well as social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits for all people living in British Columbia.

Osoyoos

Provincial Tourism Management

By facilitating a thriving tourism industry, the Government of BC can support the economy and also help preserve and highlight the history, cultures, and natural beauty in British Columbia. This is accomplished by setting strategic direction, overseeing government policies, funding tourism organizations and programs, and regulating the accommodation and hospitality industry.

In BC, there are key entities at the provincial level that drive these initiatives, including the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport (TACS), other Ministries (such as those responsible for government revenues, transportation, land stewardship, and parks), Destination BC, and Indigenous Tourism BC. Together, they play an active role in managing the province's tourism industry and work to ensure that the tourism benefits are widespread, reaching throughout the province and everyone within BC's tourism ecosystem, as well as all people living in British Columbia.

- The Government of BC is responsible for formulating and implementing strategic tourism policies that guide the development and operation of the industry. This involves setting guidelines for businesses, ensuring the preservation of natural and cultural resources, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and planning for potential crises or emergencies.
- Working in collaboration with partners, Destination BC helps with the promotion of tourism both within Canada and globally. They coordinate marketing campaigns, organize and participate in tourism trade shows and exhibitions, and develop initiatives to attract visitors from various demographic and geographic markets.

Mill Bay

- Through destination development, Destination BC and the Government of BC partners strive to create and improve BC experiences that support BC's reputation as an authentic, world-class tourism destination. A critical aspect of the Government of BC oversight is the regulation of the accommodation and hospitality sectors. This regulation ensures quality, safety, and fair business practices. It encompasses everything from licensing hotels, regulating short-term rental platforms, and overseeing food and beverage safety in restaurants, to implementing policies that help manage the supply of available workers.
- The provincial level builds collaboration with other partners in BC's tourism ecosystem, such as national tourism organizations, local government entities, Indigenous councils, and tourism businesses. These collaborations can range from coordinating with local governments on tourism development plans, to working with Indigenous communities on cultural tourism initiatives, or partnering with tourism businesses on marketing campaigns.
- go2HR is the tourism and hospitality human resource association in BC. They support strong workforces and safe workplaces by being the one stop for human resources, health & safety, industry training, research, strategy, jobs, as well as education programs, and recruitment initiatives. They also work to address labour market challenges, establish provincial competency standards, and develop strategies to attract and retain talent across tourism and hospitality businesses in BC.
- Provincial level organizations also take action to shape meaningful change within their organizations and across the tourism industry, such as championing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

> Destination BC's purpose is to improve the quality of life for all people living in British Columbia and visitors, through tourism, and share the transformative power of BC's experiences with the world, in a socially, culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable way.

Tourism Industry Association of BC

The Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) advocates for the interests of British Columbia's visitor economy. As a not-for-profit tourism industry association, TIABC works collaboratively with its members—private sector tourism businesses, industry associations and destination management organizations—to ensure the best working environment for a competitive tourism industry.

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First Nations Communities & Indigenous Peoples in Tourism Management

Indigenous tourism in BC represents a vital intersection of economic development and culture rooted in the values and traditions of 204 First Nations communities. With over 30 First Nation languages and 60 dialects, there are cultural experiences in BC that connect visitors to millennia-old knowledge systems. Indigenous tourism is an opportunity for First Nation communities and Indigenous Peoples to create economic sovereignty and present their culture if and how they choose.

Tourism, guided by responsible and regenerative travel practices, connects visitors to the land, water, sky, people and place. Indigenous Peoples are sharing their knowledge, incorporating it in what they present as part of their business. This helps to advance a competitive and socially conscious Indigenous tourism industry while contributing to cultural understanding and economic prosperity.

Within BC's tourism ecosystem there are both provincial and national organizations that support Indigenous tourism.

The Indigenous Tourism Association of British Columbia

The Indigenous Tourism Association of British Columbia (ITBC) has a mandate from the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), and the First Nations Summit (FNS) to advance a competitive and socially conscious Indigenous tourism industry in BC while contributing to cultural understanding and economic prosperity.

Founded in 1996, ITBC has grown into a powerful force for Indigenous tourism. They exist to empower Indigenous futures in tourism and inspire global visitors by living the brilliance of their ancestors' teachings today. This is their purpose. They are building a future where travellers don't just see BC but understand it through the eyes of its original peoples.

ITBC is a non-profit, stakeholder-based organization committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry. Through training, information resources, networking opportunities, and cooperative marketing programs, ITBC is a vital resource for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities in British Columbia who are operating or looking to start a tourism business. ITBC works closely with industry, business, education, and government organizations to support the development and promotion of quality tourism experiences for Indigenous tourism businesses and First Nations communities in BC.

ITBC works with, listens to, and represents the interests of First Nations communities and Indigenous Peoples to develop and market Indigenous-owned tourism experiences. Through training, product development, and marketing initiatives, they help elevate offerings, broaden the reach of Indigenous tourism, and amplify Indigenous voices to gain international recognition and appreciation.

Osoyoos

Merritt

ITBC serves Indigenous tourism businesses and First Nations communities to create meaningful tourism experiences that share First Nations and Indigenous histories, diverse cultures, and connections to the lands, waters, and skies—on their terms and for their benefit. For travellers, this means experiences that nourish the mind, body, and spirit. For Indigenous businesses and First Nations communities, it means opportunities, growth, and pride.

ITBC is an example of an Indigenous-led organization that plays an influential role in BC's tourism ecosystem, working closely with local, provincial, and national partners to build a thriving industry that supports Indigenous sovereignty, prosperity, and community well-being, while reframing perceptions of BC.

Everything is connected. This belief is woven into the very fabric of ITBC's work. Always guided by respect and reciprocity, their values promote mutual well-being and deeper connections, and support a thriving, interconnected community. They are more than just tourism advocates; they are storytellers, culture keepers, and land stewards, driven by purpose and an unwavering dedication to the communities they serve. Interconnection shapes how tourism serves Indigenous tourism businesses, First Nations communities, and global travellers.

Email: info@indigenousBC.com

Boston Bar

Indigenous Tourism Sector Profile

An Indigenous Tourism Sector Profile was produced in partnership with Indigenous Tourism BC and highlights the strength and significance of Indigenous tourism.

This profile provides valuable insights for planning, marketing, and development by showcasing visitor trends, traveller interests, and sector-wide opportunities.

Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park

National Tourism Management

In Canada, the Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) oversees the national tourism portfolio, while Destination Canada serves as the national DMO. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) helps to develop a thriving Indigenous tourism economy sharing authentic, memorable and enriching experiences. Moreover, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) acts as the industry's national advocacy organization, representing sector interests at the national level.

Together, these national entities, along with others, help shape a conducive environment for visitors and the tourism industry alike. They ensure the country's tourism offering is competitive, sustainable, and contributes to the national economy and the well-being of residents. This role extends from policy formation and marketing to human resource development, all guided by a high-profile federal tourism strategy.

- A federal tourism strategy sets the long-term direction for the industry, aligning diverse parts of the tourism ecosystem towards common objectives. This strategy takes into account the country's tourism potential, market trends, competitive positioning, and sustainability imperatives, setting the path for the industry's growth and development.
- National policies on air travel and visas are critical determinants of tourism flows. For example, the government regulates air transport agreements, which can influence the number and affordability of flights from various countries around the world. Visa policies determine how easy or difficult it is for international visitors to visit Canada.
- Canada's national DMO, Destination Canada, along with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, undertakes extensive marketing campaigns to promote the country as a destination for business, leisure travel and events. These efforts attract international visitors and domestic visitors from within Canada. They can also undertake large-scale destination development efforts, such as improving the sustainability of hosting business conferences and the development of touring routes.
- The tourism industry relies heavily on its workforce. Therefore, at the national level, the government and Tourism HR Canada focus on human resource development for the tourism sector. This can involve supporting education and training programs, establishing industry standards, and initiating policies that attract and retain talent in the industry such as setting foreign worker policies.

Tofino

Tweedsmuir Glacier Lake

Pemberton

International Tourism Management

International organizations play an instrumental role in fostering a comprehensive, globally-harmonized vision for tourism. These organizations facilitate international cooperation, knowledge sharing, and standard setting. Understanding this international role gives context to our local, provincial, and national Tourism Ecosystems as part of a global phenomenon that connects people and places across borders.

Key international tourism organizations include the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). Through their efforts, these organizations help shape a global environment that is conducive to the growth, sustainability, and inclusiveness of tourism.

- International organizations contribute to policy development by establishing global standards and guidelines. They provide frameworks that help countries design their own national and local tourism policies. For example, the United Nations World Tourism Organization has developed a Global Code of Ethics for Tourism to guide the development of tourism in a way that maximizes socio-economic benefits while minimizing negative impacts.
- With the growing recognition of the impact of tourism on societies and the environment, international organizations play a crucial role in promoting sustainability. They advocate for responsible tourism practices, encourage the adoption of sustainable tourism metrics and indicators, and work towards mitigating tourism's impact on climate change.

- International organizations serve as a hub for research and knowledge sharing. They collect data, conduct studies, and publish reports that provide valuable insights into global tourism trends and best practices. This information helps countries benchmark their performance and learn from each other's experiences.
- In times of crises, such as pandemics or global natural disasters, international organizations play a key role in coordinating global responses, providing guidance for emergency management, and assisting with recovery efforts.
- International organizations also advocate for the importance of tourism at the global level, highlighting its contributions to economic development, job creation, and cultural exchange. They lobby for supportive policies and funding at international forums, such as the United Nations or World Trade Organization.

Kelowna

How the OECD Defines Governments' Shared Priorities

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization with a purpose to promote economic growth and stability, improve living standards, and contribute to global development. Canada is a member of OECD.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), governments' shared priorities in tourism include fostering competitiveness, promoting sustainability, and improving tourism policy monitoring and measurement:

- Competitiveness: Governments should foster an environment that promotes competition, innovation, and investment in tourism.
- Sustainability: Governments should promote sustainable tourism practices that respect the environment and local communities.
- Policy Monitoring: Governments should improve the monitoring and measurement of tourism policies to ensure their effectiveness.

CASE STUDY

FINDING THE RIGHT ANGLE

HOW THE FRESHWATER FISHING SOCIETY OF BC ENHANCES BC'S TOURISM ECOSYSTEM THROUGH REGENERATIVE PRACTICES

In 2020, the number of adult kokanee salmon reached an all-time low in Kootenay Lake. The long-standing issue of this at-risk population raised concerns for the sustainability of the lake's ecosystem. Fortunately, the Province had a partner who was ready to take action: the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, also known as GoFishBC.

Both inside and outside of BC's tourism ecosystem, the Society stands out as an organization with a depth of partners. Working in the experience sector of sport fishing, they work to conserve, promote and improve the angling experience. The not-for-profit organization significantly contributes to BC's tourism industry: in 2019, the sport fishery sector generated an impressive $500 million in angler expenditures, $300 million in GDP, and 3,500 jobs.

> GoFishBC is fully funded by the province's freshwater recreational angling licence revenue.

The Society's success stems from its collaborative efforts. Partnering with government, industry, and academia, it licences anglers, stocks lakes with fish, and creates educational opportunities.

The Society has a mandate of enhancing and conserving BC's freshwater fisheries for public benefit. This makes conservation work central to the organization, such as efforts to protect the endangered white sturgeon. As part of their conservation work, they operate six major fish hatcheries and nine egg collection stations across the province, and annually release over six million trout, char, and kokanee salmon into 800 lakes across BC. (This is a major contributor to fishing–about half of all provincial angling activity takes place on stocked lakes.)

Most of these hatcheries also act as tourism experiences, welcoming visitors and offering self-guided tours. Through these hatcheries, the Society's "Learn to Fish" programs and educational field trips play a pivotal role in engaging both youth and adults in sustainable fishing practices. The organization also improves angler access to fishing spots and performs compliance monitoring and enforcement, ensuring sport fishing remains a sustainable tourism activity for future generations.

The Freshwater Fishing Society of BC is a member of the Fishing BC co-operative marketing partnership along with the BC Fishing Tourism Association and Sport Fishing Institute. This contributes to a bigger marketing reach for their tourism efforts.

Back at Kootenay Lake, where the kokanee salmon were at risk, the Society jumped into action and partnered with the Province to launch the Kootenay Lake Angler Incentive Program. This program creatively addresses the critical decline in kokanee populations by encouraging anglers to balance the lake's ecosystem. Anglers were incentivized with events, monthly draws, and grand prizes to target rainbow and bull trout, two prime predators of the young kokanee salmon.

Angling Outreach

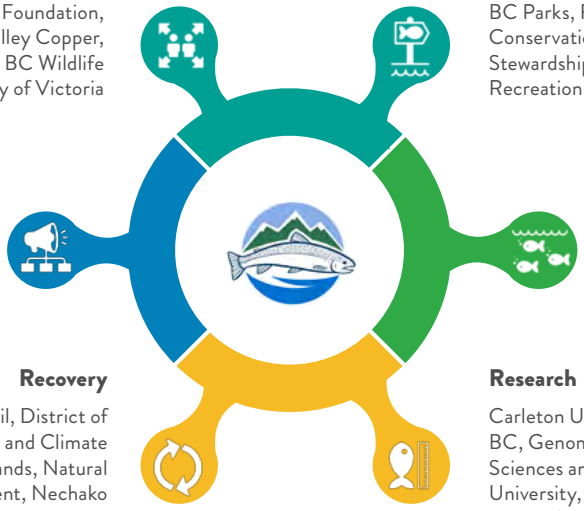
Columbia Basin Trust, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, BC Ram Dealers, Luhr Jensen, Teck Highland Valley Copper, Yamaha Motor Canada Ltd., Backroad Mapbooks, BC Wildlife Federation, Province of BC, City of Victoria

Angler Access

BC Parks, Fishing Highway 24 Tourist Association, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), Ministry of Transportation and Transit, Recreation Sites and Trails BC

Marketing

Destination Canada, Destination BC, BC Fishing Tourism Association, Sport Fishing Institute of BC



Fish Culture

Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations, Ministry of Environment, University of Northern BC

Recovery

BC Hydro, Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council, District of Vanderhoof, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund, Rio Tinto

Research

Carleton University, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Genome BC, Genome Canada, Mitacs Accelerate Program, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Simon Fraser University, Thompson Rivers University, University of British Columbia, University of British Columbia Okanagan, Universities of Calgary, Ottawa, Victoria and Windsor

According to Molly Teather, Fish Biologist at Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), "This program reduced rainbow trout and bull trout abundance faster than any other recovery action implemented to date... this last year has made significant steps towards the goal of recovering kokanee." This initiative is managed locally, and involves a network of partners including the local West Arm Outdoors Club, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), and several local merchants. It illustrates the Society's commitment to both conservation and community engagement, and shows how sustainable fishing can contribute positively to natural ecosystems.

Yoho National Park

By protecting and improving angling experiences across the province, the Society positively contributes to BC's tourism ecosystem through the mechanisms of conservation, experience enhancement, and promotion. They holistically protect and improve angling experiences province-wide through strategic partnerships with:

- Academic and environmental institutions for fish science, recovery and protection programs.
- Government agencies, the private sector and the angling community on stocking, outreach and access initiatives.
- DMOs and sport fishing guides and operators on promoting and marketing angling opportunities domestically and abroad.

By balancing conservation efforts with experience development and tourism promotion, the Society contributes significantly to BC's reputation as a premier destination for sport fishing and eco-tourism, boosting the provincial economy and spreading the benefits of tourism to all.

CASE STUDY

HUU-AY-AHT

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ANACLA AND BAMFIELD, VANCOUVER ISLAND

For the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, even a bumpy road can be turned into a pathway to prosperity. A self-governing, modern treaty Nation, they exemplify sustainable tourism development in BC. Located in the Barkley Sound region on the west side of Vancouver Island, the Nation plays a pivotal role in shaping BC's tourism ecosystem of their traditional territory.

The heart of the Huu-ay-aht's tourism initiatives lies in Anacla, their principal community, and the nearby town of Bamfield. In the principles of their local tourism ecosystem, the host community's wellbeing and cultural heritage are paramount. Tourism experiences reflect a deep connection to their land and culture, including the Pachena Bay Campground, Kl̓iḵɪn village tours, Awis Guesthouse and Marina, Malsit Pub, Upnit Lodge and Hačas Inn.

Kl̓iḵɪn is the traditional capital village of the Huu-ay-aht and is the only known traditional First Nation village remaining on the west coast of southern B.C., with significant standing house remains. The area is commemorated as a National Historic Site and has many trails with exceptional access to Vancouver Island's pristine rainforest and beautiful protected beaches. Tours are offered where guests will learn about the Huu-ay-aht's knowledge and history, as well as Indigenous culture in the region.

The influence of these principles extend beyond the local community. In partnership with Parks Canada and other agencies, the Huu-ay-aht have been instrumental in managing the West Coast Trail and local natural resources with collaborations on visitor services, park land management through the First Nation Guardians and Beach Keepers program, and participation in conservation programs such as Parks Canada's Species at Risk teams and providing oversight for the parks research permitting process. Theirs is a model of effective partnership within BC's tourism ecosystem.

A cornerstone of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation's tourism development strategy has been the improvement of the Bamfield Main Road. Initiated in 2020, this project represents a shared vision between the Huu-ay-aht and the Province of British Columbia to transform the route between Bamfield and Port Alberni into a safer and more reliable passage. This vision has now been brought to fruition through mutual commitment and significant financial support, with the Province allocating over $35 million across different phases of the project.

The Bamfield Main Road, historically an industrial and gravel road, is a vital artery for various users, including the local industry, residents of Bamfield and Ditidaht areas, and an increasing number of visitors. Historically, the road's condition presented safety challenges, resulting in various risks to its users and limiting the potential of the local tourism economy. The transformation of this road into a safer route marks a significant achievement in community safety and wellbeing and creates new opportunities for economic and socio-cultural benefits, such as encouraging members living off-reserve to move back to the community. A growing and relatively young membership means local employment opportunities will be needed to keep the local economy thriving. Tourism will play a key role in that regard.

Huu-ay-aht First Nation is a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and one of the five First Nation signatories to the Maa-nulth Final Agreement, the first modern-day treaty to be concluded on Vancouver Island. The treaty, which came into effect on April 1, 2011, gives Huu-ay-aht First Nation full ownership and authority over more than 8,200 hectares of land within their traditional territory.

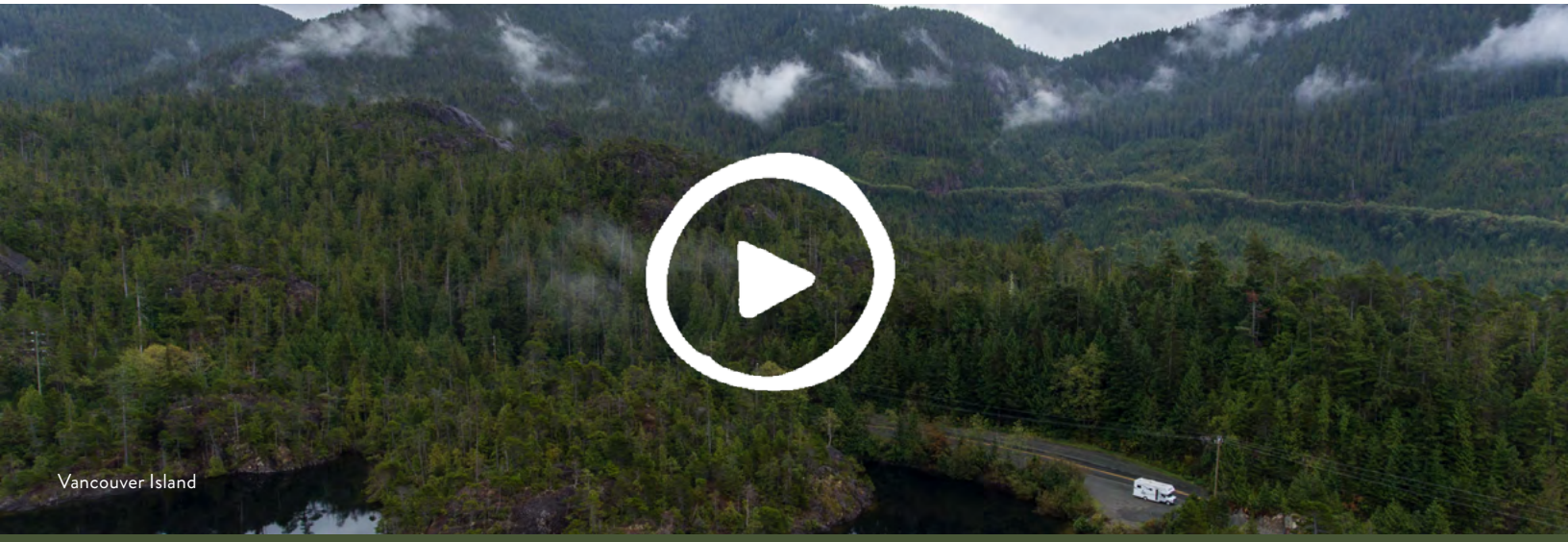
Recognizing the significance of transportation access for tourism development, the Huu-ay-aht embarked on a major project with the BC Ministry of Transportation to pave the road between Port Alberni, their nearest population centre, and Anacla and Bamfield. This infrastructure improvement is a strategic move to enhance visitor access and stimulate local tourism, while balancing environmental and socio-economic sustainability.

With the infrastructure in place, the Huu-ay-aht are now turning their focus towards preparing for the expected economic growth that improved access will bring. The Nation, in collaboration with its partners, is committed to taking strategic steps to build on this investment. Ensuring that this economic development aligns with the community's vision and values is a priority as they seek to create a sustainable and prosperous future for their people.

Tourism is expected to be a major economic force for the Huu-ay-aht in the years ahead, but that growth is also accompanied by some trepidation. There are concerns about future high-impact use due to the enhanced road conditions, though it is also believed this can be managed by aligning the Huu-ay-aht sacred principle of Hišuk ma ćawak ("Everything is one", the notion of an interconnected, interdependent and reciprocal relationship between the people, the land and the wider world) with provincial, federal and Parks Canada management guidelines and practices. For tourism specifically, an expansion of joint ventures and partnerships, as indicated in the Nation's 2021 Economic Development Plan, is being pursued with key partners like Parks Canada, the Bamfield Chamber of Commerce, local accommodators and tour operators, Indigenous Tourism BC and Alberni Valley Tourism.

> The Huu-ay-aht have nurtured numerous partnerships and alliances to create a tourism ecosystem in their community that is multi-dimensional, resilient and capable of helping the community achieve their aspirations.

The Huu-ay-aht First Nation's approach to tourism development serves as an exemplar within BC's tourism ecosystem. By creating strong partnerships and focusing on sustainable, community-led tourism, they are setting a path–newly chip-sealed–for a thriving visitor economy that respects their cultural heritage and natural environment. Their commitment to balancing growth with sustainability will guide their tourism endeavours forward into the future.



Vancouver Island

Summary

BC's tourism ecosystem is complex and interconnected. When managed correctly, it represents the voices of all people affected by tourism, starting with the resident host community and ending with the visitor discovering the destination. Between these two groups are layers of partners at the national, provincial, and local levels who strive to create social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits for all people living in British Columbia while providing memorable experiences to respectful guests. This wouldn't be possible without the efforts of international organizations, all levels of government, the experience sectors, Indigenous Peoples and communities, and DMOs like Destination BC, along with the businesses, employees, and residents who offer their services, products, and voices to our industry. Understanding this ecosystem is vital to anyone involved in tourism and shows that any contribution can help the tourism industry benefit everyone in communities throughout the province.

NEXT: The Visitor Economy

To learn more about the Visitor Economy, please click here.

Tahsish-Kwois Park

For additional information and comments, please contact the Destination and Industry Development team at Destination BC by email at destinationandindustrydevelopment@destinationbc.ca

Haida Gwaii

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