

MAR 2025



## ABOUT SKI/ SNOWBOARDING

The downhill ski and snowboard tourism sector in British Columbia is internationally renowned, anchored by 13 destination mountain resorts, including the iconic Whistler Blackcomb.

While this profile includes both skiing and snowboarding, industry visitation is measured in skier visits—defined as one person visiting a ski area for the purpose of skiing or snowboarding. Visits can include full-day, half-day, night skiing, seasons pass holders, and complimentary tickets.



CYPRESS MOUNTAIN

Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the x̣ʷməθkʷəỵəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḳẉx̣ wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) on whose shared territories we operate our main office.

We further recognize with gratitude that we carry out our work on the lands of First Nations throughout the province. We honour our ongoing relationships with Indigenous Peoples and First Nation communities around BC, and we commit to continuing to work together.

The umbrella term downhill skiing, which also includes downhill snowboarding, will be used in this profile to encompass both. Ski areas generate a substantial economic impact to BC.<sup>1</sup>

## Ski Tourism at a Glance in BC



<sup>1</sup>Destination BC. Although included, please note that the proportion of other ski experiences (e.g., Nordic, heli-skiing, backcountry skiing, etc) is estimated as less than 10% of all skier visits in BC.

<sup>2</sup>CWSAA British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact, 2023-2024

<sup>3</sup>CWSAA British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact, 2022-2023

<sup>4</sup>CWSAA (BC skier visits), Canadian Ski Council (Canada skier visits, excluding Nordic and heli-skiing)

<sup>5</sup>CWSAA (BC skier visits), 2024 International Report on Snow & Mountain Tourism (global skier visits, excluding Nordic and heli-skiing)

<sup>6</sup>CWSAA British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact, 2022-2023

<sup>7</sup>CWSAA British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact, 2022-2023

<sup>8</sup>CWSAA British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact, 2022-2023

<sup>9</sup>Destination BC

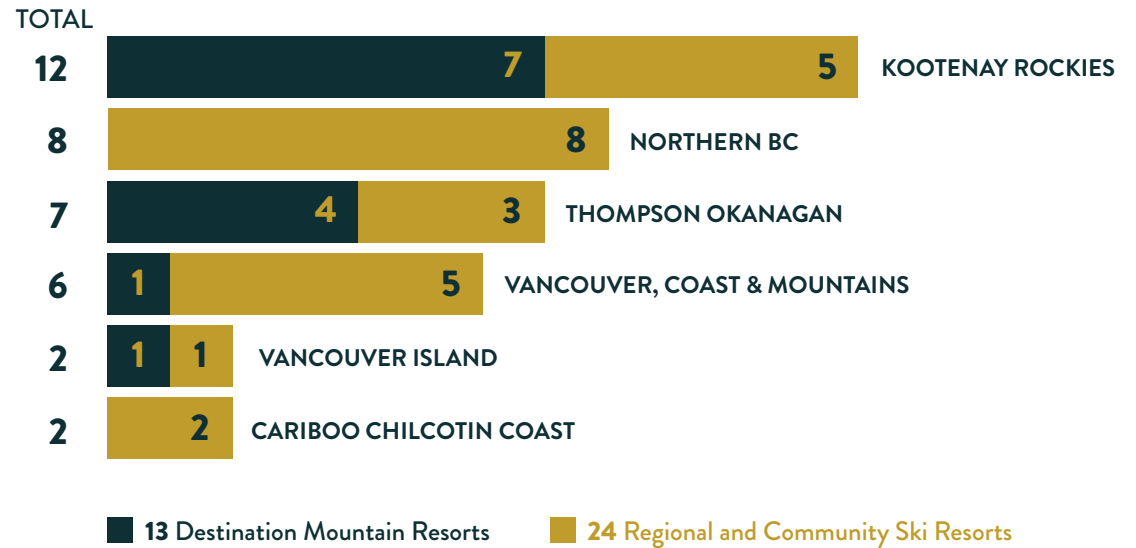
# Characteristics of Ski in BC

BC offers two types of downhill ski areas—Destination Mountain Resorts, which are larger, market ready resorts that attract international travellers, and are the focus of this profile, and Community Ski Resorts, which are smaller and tend to draw from the local community.

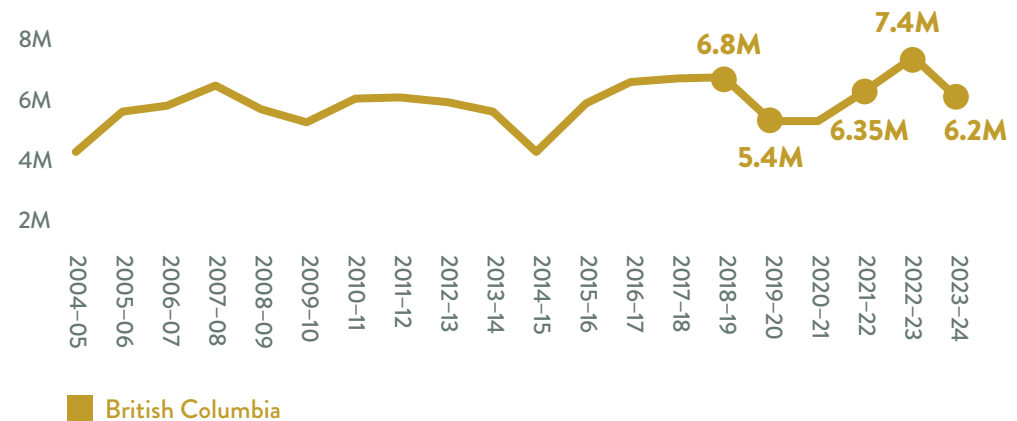
There are 37 downhill ski areas in BC. Ski areas are represented in all six tourism regions throughout BC. Destination Mountain Resorts, which account for 78% of skier visits in BC, have ski areas concentrated in four tourism regions: Kootenay Rockies, Thompson Okanagan, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains, and Vancouver Island.<sup>11</sup> Of the 37 operating resorts, 32 are located on provincial land, including three operating in BC Parks.<sup>12</sup>

There were 6.2 million skier visits in BC in the 2023-24 ski season, slightly higher than the five-year average of skier visits of 6.1 million (2019–20 to 2023–24).<sup>13</sup>

## BC's Downhill Ski Areas by Tourism Region



## Skiers Visits



<sup>10</sup>Province of British Columbia Mountain Resorts Branch, 2021/22

<sup>11</sup>Destination BC, HelloBC Ski Map, September 2024

<sup>12</sup>Province of British Columbia Mountain Resorts Branch

<sup>13</sup>CWSAA 2022–23 British Columbia Value of Ski Areas Economic Impact

# Value of Ski in BC

IN 2022-2023, SKI AREAS IN BC<sup>14</sup>

**\$2.15B**

## DIRECT REVENUES

Contributed to community and provincial economies. Of this contribution, 37% (\$797 million) is generated by BC residents and 63% (\$1,356 million) is incremental revenue generated by out-of-province visitors.

**\$1.53B**

## GDP

Contributed to the provincial GDP from ski area operations and incremental visitor spending.

**\$343M**

## TAXES

Contributed in taxes to all three levels of government; 8% to local government (\$27.4 million), 44% to the Province (\$150.9 million), and 48% Federally (\$164.6 million).

**16K**

## EMPLOYMENT

Provided 16,100 jobs (12,980 full-time equivalent) and paid \$912 million in wages and salaries. Careers with ski areas include technical and specialized trades, culinary, hospitality, and business professions.

**17**

## SKI AREAS

Contributed to year-round benefits in the summer months.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>14</sup>CWSAA 2022-2023 British Columbia Value of Ski Areas

<sup>15</sup>Province of British Columbia Mountain Resorts Branch, 2021/22

The Whistler Resident Perception of Tourism Snapshot shows that, overall, there is strong support for the value of the contribution visitors make to the local economy, and that tourism contributes positively to the quality of life in Whistler. Similarly, residents within the Kootenay Rockies, which has 12 ski resorts, also show positive results.<sup>16</sup>



## Resident Perceptions of Tourism: Whistler

“ I value the contribution visitors make to my local economy.

British Columbia  
80.4%

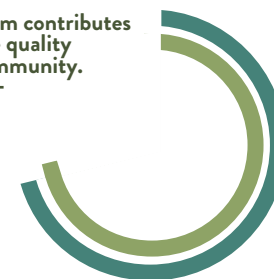
Whistler  
76.7%



“ Overview tourism contributes positively to the quality of life in my community.

British Columbia  
71.5%

Whistler  
73.6%



## Resident Perceptions of Tourism: Kootenay Rockies

“ I value the contribution visitors make to my local economy.

British Columbia  
80.0%

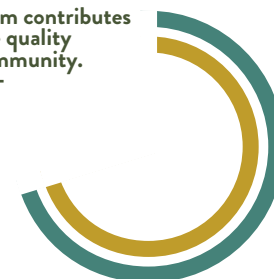
Kootenay Rockies  
83.3%



“ Overview tourism contributes positively to the quality of life in my community.

British Columbia  
70.5%

Kootenay Rockies  
70.4%



## About Helicat Skiing

### IN 2022-23, HELICAT ACTIVITIES IN BC<sup>17</sup>

- Generated \$292 million in revenues.
- Contributed \$287 million to the provincial GDP.
- Contributed \$30 million in tax revenues distributed 21% municipal, 29% provincial, and 62% Federal.
- Provided 4,870 jobs (3,060 full-time equivalent) and paid \$176 million in income.
- Within the helicat industry, there are 42 helicat industry operators, 40 helicopter operators, and 18 snowcat operators that combined generate 123,600 skier days.

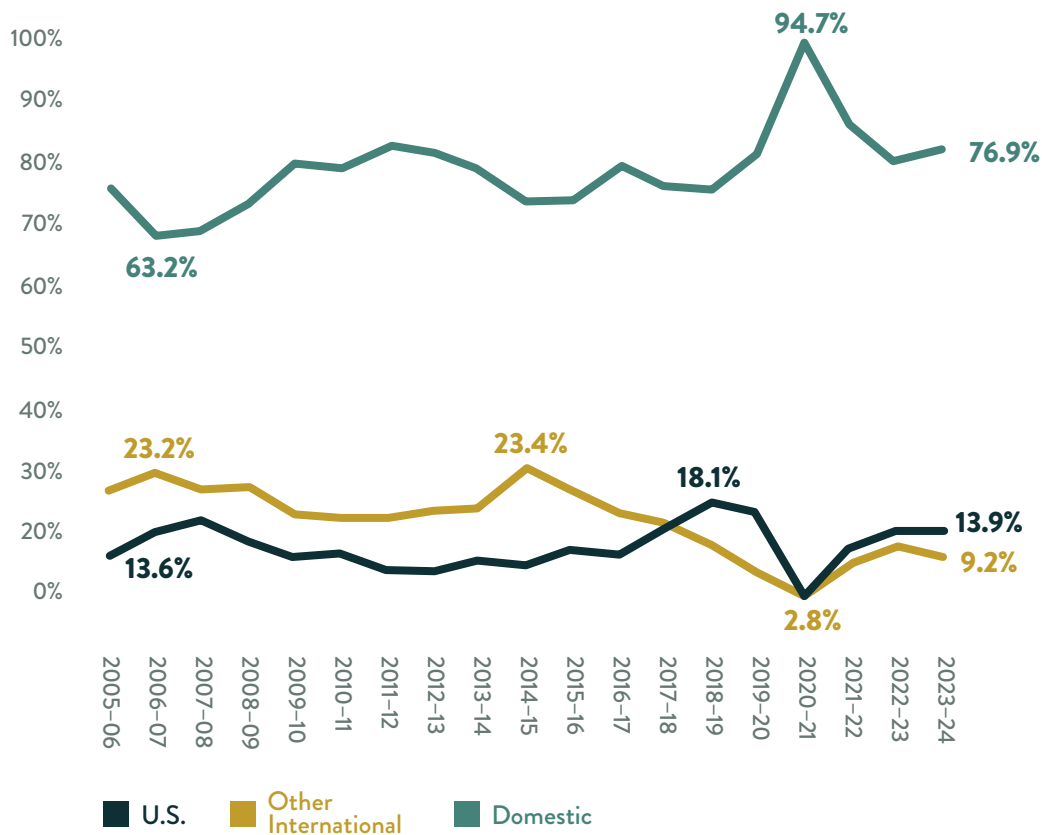
<sup>16</sup>Destination BC, Resident Perceptions of Tourism Snapshot Series 2023-24

<sup>17</sup>Helicat Canada, Elevating Adventure, March 2024

# Traveller Characteristics

Canadians accounted for the majority of skier visits to BC (77%), followed by the US (14%), and Other International travellers.<sup>18</sup>

Share of Skiers Visits



Based on a Destination BC study of five markets, Los Angeles and San Francisco travellers show the strongest motivation to take an overnight leisure trip to BC for skiing (20%), followed by travellers from BC (18%).<sup>19</sup>

## MOTIVATED TO TAKE A TRIP TO BC FOR SKIING/SNOWBOARDING



BC

18%



Alberta

14%



Greater Toronto Area

15%



Washington

14%



LA/  
San Francisco

20%

<sup>18</sup>Canadian Ski Council, 2022/23 Canada Ski Season Overview.

<sup>19</sup>Destination BC 2024 Key Performance Indicator Survey Wave IX, July 2024. Motivated to Take Trip represents travellers with at least some degree of familiarity with BC that ranked experiences based on how much these experiences would motivate them to take an overnight leisure trip to British Columbia in the next 12 months.

According to a 2022–2023 BC Outdoor Recreation Survey, 11% of people living in BC participated in skiing or snowboarding with lift access in 2022/23.<sup>20</sup>

Ski areas are an important part of the outdoor recreation options for people living in BC, providing year-round access to trails for snowshoeing, hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. They also provide community amenities such as ice rinks, bike parks, and cycling paths.

According to the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC<sup>21</sup>:

**13%** people living in BC have spent recreation time at resort areas (e.g., ski) in the last year.



According to the Canadian Ski Council<sup>22</sup>

**520K**

active BC skiers and snowboarders in the 2023/24 season, above the 10-season average for BC.

**21%**

of the Canadian population—around 8 million people—have participated in snow sports.

**2.4M**

active Canadian skiers and snowboarders in the 2023/24 season, representing 5.8% of the population and a decrease from 2.8 million in 2022/23.

**5.9**

average skier days per Canadian skier.

**42.9 YEARS**

Demographic trends indicate that the Canadian ski market is aging, with the average consumer age rising to 42.9 years in the 2022/23 season. This shift is attributed to declines in the 17 and under and 18–34 age groups.

<sup>20</sup>Leger, on behalf of a number of Government of BC partners, including Destination BC, 2022/2023.

<sup>21</sup>Ipsos, on behalf of Outdoor Recreation Council of BC, May 2024 survey of 800 British Columbians.

<sup>22</sup>Canadian Ski Council, 2022/23 Canada Ski Season Overview, 2023/24 Canada Ski Season Overview.

The Canadian Ski Council segmented Canadian skiers into six profiles

The Purist  
11%

Passionate skiers who prioritize high-quality experiences, performance, and challenging terrains.

The Unattached  
26%

Independent skiers who enjoy the sport solo without deep engagement in group activities.

The Socializer  
19%

Skiers who value the social aspects, seeking vibrant après-ski activities and group events.

The All-inclusive  
17%

Skiers who prefer convenient packages that include lift tickets, accommodations, meals, and rentals.

The Bargain Seeker  
13%

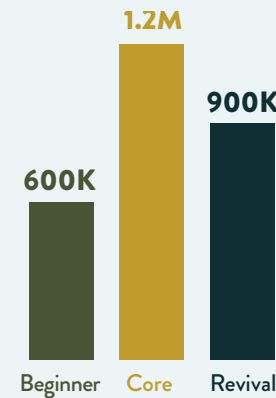
Budget-conscious skiers looking for discounts and value, often choosing off-peak times.

The Newbie  
13%

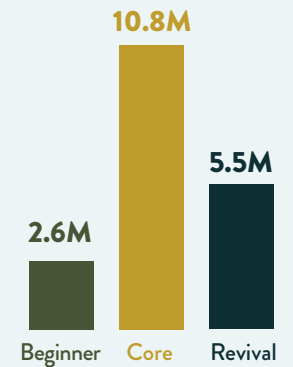
Beginners focused on learning the basics, seeking easy slopes, lessons, and rentals.

The Canadian Ski Council has developed the “Canadian Model for Growth” segmentation model, which shows that 43% of skiers (approximately 8.4 million visits) now fall into more volatile market segments of beginner skiers and revival skiers who have not skied in the last five years.<sup>23</sup>

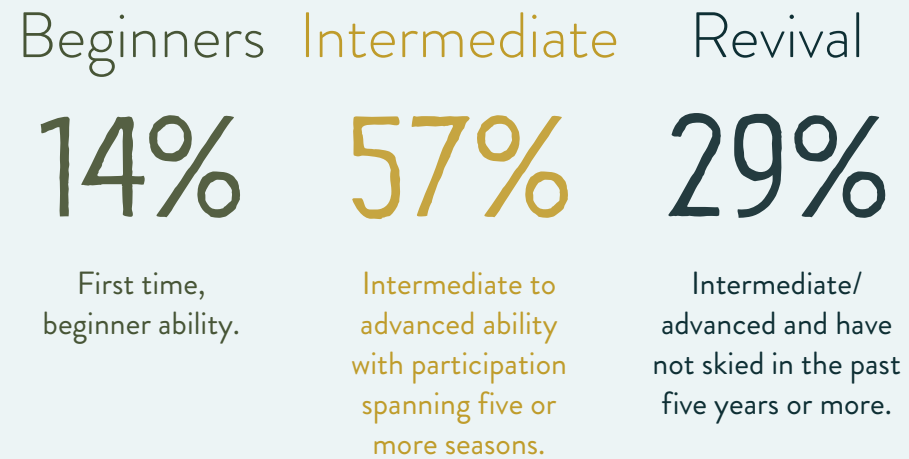
Number of Participants



Number of Skier Visits (2022/23)



Percentage of Total Skier Visits



<sup>23</sup>Canadian Ski Council



According to the Canadian Ski Council, there are five criteria that skiers look for when choosing a ski resort.<sup>24</sup>



**Out of the ordinary ski experience** A resort that goes the extra mile to offer a diverse and exciting ski experience, including a variety of terrain, night skiing, dynamic events and entertainment, social aspect, self-service experiences, and sustainable development practices.



**Ski value for money** The basic ingredients of participating in skiing, such as quality of snow, slope grooming, wide choice of slopes, proximity, and safety.



**Feeling right at home** A resort with familiarity, a sense of belonging, reputation, welcoming vibe, and friendly staff.



**A good place to rejuvenate** A resort with state-of-the-art facilities and a variety of quality food options to enjoy during breaks.



**Newbie friendly** Offers easy slopes, a dedicated learning area, and quality lessons.

## Ski Trends

The [Canada West Ski Areas Association](#) has identified the following trends that show how mountain resorts are evolving to enhance the skiing and snowboarding experience: sustainability initiatives; use of technology in operations and guest experience; inclusivity and accessibility; event programming; family-friendly activities; year-round (summer) activities and infrastructure; and new experiences beyond skiing, such as bike parks, culinary offerings, and wellness.

According to the [Canadian Ski Council](#), the introduction of multi-resort passes, primarily the Ikon Pass and Epic Pass, is expected to stimulate growth in visitors from the United States and other international markets to Canada and BC in the coming years.<sup>25</sup>

Mountain resorts are committed to environmental stewardship and climate preparedness, and have integrated many progressive practices into their daily operations. Examples include:

- **Whistler Blackcomb:** The Fitzsimmons Renewable Energy Project generates enough power annually for Whistler Blackcomb's summer and winter operations, equivalent to 3,000–4,000 homes. Whistler Blackcomb also donated the land for the micro-hydroelectric plant required for this project. All food and beverage outlets are registered in the TRUE Zero Waste Certification program, which diverts waste from landfills and promotes upcycling.
- **Sun Peaks Resort:** Ski lifts run on hydroelectric power, reducing the resort's carbon footprint. The resort uses a gravity-fed snowmaking system that draws water from on-mountain storage, resulting in energy savings and leading to climate change resiliency.
- **Fire-smarting:** The Government of BC has invested funds in fire-smarting efforts at ski areas/mountain resorts on provincial land to adapt to climate change and minimize impacts from wildfires.

<sup>24</sup>Canadian Ski Council

<sup>25</sup>Canadian Ski Council, Facts and Stats – Updated December 2023, webpage



# Considerations for Growth

## 1. Environmental

- Weather variability
- Climate change

## 2. Economic

- Rising operating costs
- Air access (cost and routes)
- Policies impacting business certainty and investments
- Border/visa restrictions for international travellers
- Workforce availability
- Ski resort development

## 3. Social

- Shifting demographics
- Addressing long-term engagement and growth of younger skiers and snowboarders

## CONTACT

Destination BC Research & Insights



[TourismResearch@DestinationBC.ca](mailto:TourismResearch@DestinationBC.ca)



[destinationbc.ca/research-insights](https://destinationbc.ca/research-insights)