

SEP 2025



## ABOUT OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM

Visitors cite the natural environment, diversity of outdoor activities, and spectacular scenery as primary motivators for choosing to travel in British Columbia. Thanks to geographic diversity, BC offers a wide range of outdoor adventure opportunities, from popular activities like hiking and camping to specialty pursuits such as rock climbing and mountain biking.



PENDER ISLAND

Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh 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 following definitions are used to define outdoor recreation and adventure tourism:

**Outdoor recreation** Outdoor recreation encompasses a wide range of activities that allow individuals to engage with nature and the outdoors. These activities include beach outings, nature exploration, park visitations, and sightseeing, as well as hiking, climbing, caving, and equestrian pursuits. Wildlife viewing and photography are also key components, alongside motorized land-based activities, camping or RVing, swimming, and other water-related sports. Sailing or boating, fishing or hunting, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, aerial activities, and skiing or snowboarding are integral parts of outdoor recreation. Additionally, activities such as visiting non-resort-based hot springs, zip lining, bungy jumping, snowshoeing, geo-caching, horseback riding on trails or in natural settings, and orienteering are included within this category.

**Adventure tourism** Adventure tourism is defined as travel undertaken with the primary purpose of engaging in outdoor recreational activities. These experiences can be both guided and unguided, as well as paid or free, emphasizing the intention of exploration and connection with outdoor environments. Adventure tourism is a subset of outdoor recreation and commercial outdoor recreation, incorporating travel specifically for these pursuits.



**\$954B** Global adventure travel expenditures are \$954 Billion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adventure Travel Trade Association, Adventure Travel Overview & Market Sizing, 2021



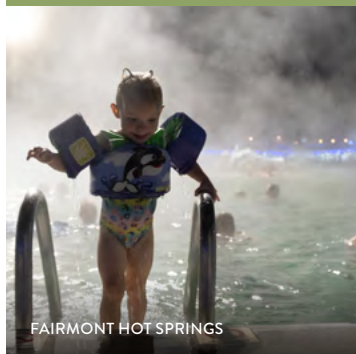
# Outdoor Recreation Data Highlights<sup>2</sup>



## Outdoor Recreation GDP

**\$4.8B**

Overall, the Outdoor Recreation industry contributed an estimated \$4.8 billion (Real GDP, 2017\$) of direct added value to the BC economy, representing 1.5% of estimated provincial Real GDP in 2023.



## Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Tourism Revenue

**\$17B**

in revenue earned by the Outdoor Recreation industry in 2023.

**\$10.7B**

In 2023, Adventure Tourism (those who travelled to participate in outdoor recreation) earned \$10.7 billion, which represents about 63% of the total Outdoor Recreation industry.



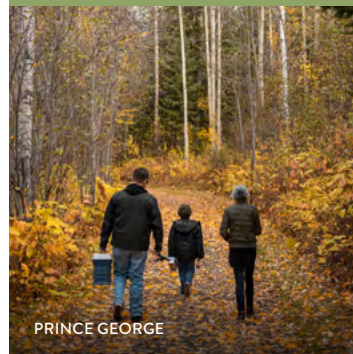
## Outdoor Recreation Employment

**83+K**

In 2023, there were 83,900 people directly employed in BC (both part-time and full-time) due to Outdoor Recreation expenditures.

**48+K**

In 2023, there were 48,700 people directly employed in BC (both part-time and full-time) due to Adventure Tourism expenditures.



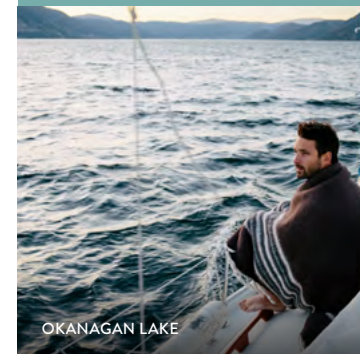
## Outdoor Recreation Provincial and Municipal Taxes

**1.8B**

In 2023, the Outdoor Recreation industry resulted in \$1.8 billion in provincial taxes and \$186.3 million in municipal taxes.

**\$1.1B**

In 2023, the Adventure Tourism industry resulted in \$1.1 billion in provincial taxes and \$113.5 million in municipal taxes.



## Outdoor Recreation Wages and Salaries

**\$3.2B**

In 2023, the Outdoor Recreation industry paid \$3.2 billion in wages and salaries.

**\$1.9B**

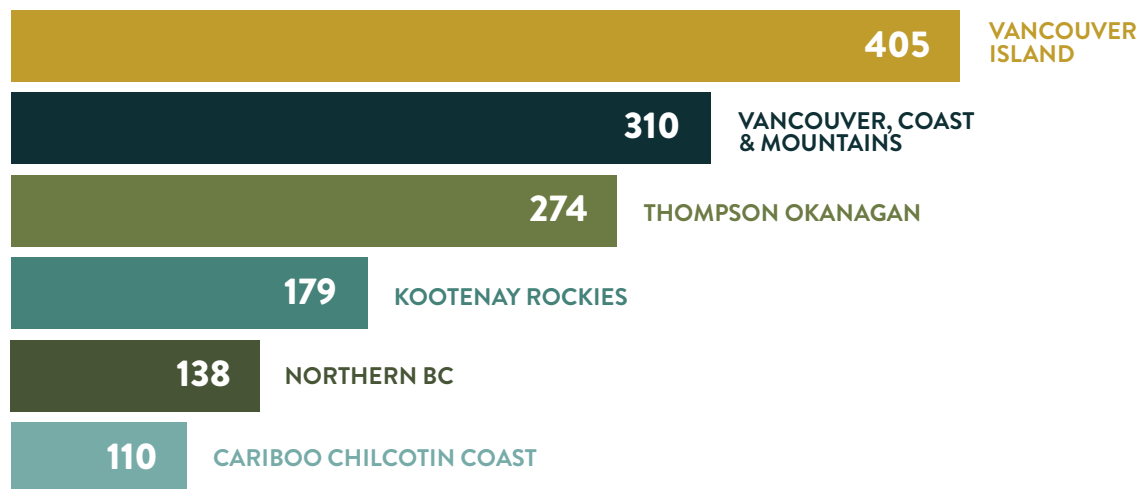
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# Characteristics of Outdoor Recreation Tourism Industry in BC

There are over 1,400 Outdoor Recreation Adventure & Outdoors tourism business listings on [HelloBC.com](https://www.hellobc.com).<sup>3</sup>

|   |                            |     |
|---|----------------------------|-----|
|    | Adrenaline                 | 117 |
|    | Biking                     | 91  |
|    | Bird watching              | 40  |
|    | Boating                    | 147 |
|    | Campgrounds & RV Parks     | 561 |
|    | Diving                     | 16  |
|    | Fishing                    | 292 |
|   | Hiking                     | 153 |
|  | Horseback riding & Ranches | 53  |
|  | Paddling                   | 191 |
|  | River rafting              | 33  |
|  | Surfing                    | 18  |
|  | Whale watching             | 77  |
|  | Wildlife tours             | 121 |

Outdoor Recreation tourism business listings can be found in all tourism regions in BC:



In addition to tourism businesses, outdoor recreation is supported through the provincial government and agencies (such as BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails), First Nations, municipalities, regional districts, and hundreds of local organizations that manage and steward places where people recreate in the outdoors. For example, it is estimated there are over 100 trail maintenance groups in BC, most managed by volunteers.

<sup>3</sup>Destination BC HelloBC.com website, March 2025

# BC PARKS AND RECREATION SITES AND TRAILS BC

Parks and public land are a crucial ingredient for outdoor adventure activities.

## 1,050

BC has 1,050 parks, recreation areas, conservancies, ecological reserves, and protected areas administered by BC Parks covering over 14 million hectares (approximately 14.7% of the province land base).<sup>4</sup>



## 248

BC Parks administers more than 248 parks with campgrounds including frontcountry, backcountry, and marine sites.

## 27M

The parks receive more than 27 million visits each year.<sup>5</sup>

## 20K

There are 10,700 campsites managed by BC Parks, and 9,299 campsites managed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC—totaling 20,000 campsites across the province.<sup>7</sup>

## 28K

There are over 28,000 kilometers of actively managed trails across BC



## 86%

The majority (86%) of provincial park visitation is attributed to day use.



## 90%

Almost 90% of BC residents have used a park managed by BC Parks at some time.<sup>8</sup>

## 6/10

About six in ten BC residents visit a park each year.<sup>9</sup>

## 366K

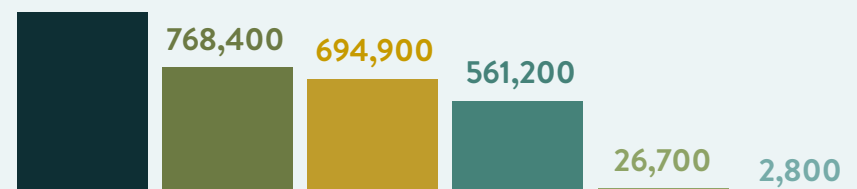
More than 366,000 camping reservations were made in 2023, a 15% increase from 2022.<sup>10</sup>

# PARKS CANADA AND INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

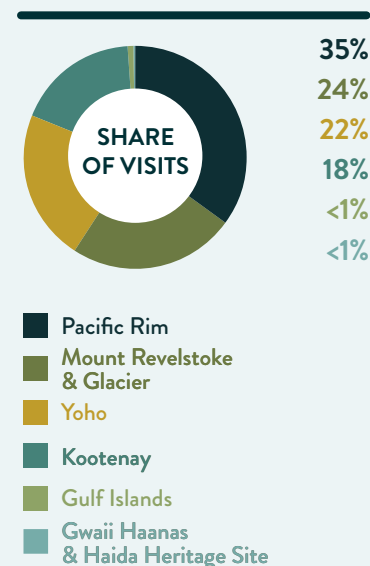
There are almost 3.2 Million visits annually to parks, reserves, and marine conservation areas within BC that are administered by Parks Canada; the most visited is Pacific Rim (35%), followed by Mount Revelstoke & Glacier (24%).<sup>11</sup>

## Park visits (2023/24 fiscal year attendance)

### 1,105,500



In addition, there are more than a dozen Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, an estimated 30,000 kilometres of formally recognized and managed trails, and BC's coastline stretches for 25,700 kilometres.<sup>12</sup> There are over 270 coastal marine protected areas in BC.<sup>13</sup> There are also seven parks in BC managed by Parks Canada and other recreation areas such as local parks and private lands.



<sup>4</sup>BC Parks webpage, November 1, 2024

<sup>5</sup>BC Parks, Visitor Use Attendance Interim Report, 2018/9-2023/24 (person days)

<sup>6</sup>BC Parks, Blogpost, December 14, 2022

<sup>7</sup>BC Parks, Frontcountry Camping webpage, March 2025

<sup>8</sup>BC Parks, Reports and surveys webpage

<sup>9</sup>BC Parks, Reports and surveys webpage

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, press release, January 12, 2024

<sup>11</sup>Government of Canada, Open Government Portal, Parks Canada attendance

<sup>12</sup>Destination BC. Trails Strategy for British Columbia; the total amount of kilometres of trails in BC is estimated at hundreds of thousands of kilometres when the many recreation trails that are not formally managed are included

<sup>13</sup>BC Parks, Blogpost, August 15, 2024



# Traveller Characteristics

The British Columbia Outdoor Recreation Participant Survey was conducted in 2022 and 2023 among BC residents and Alberta travellers to BC. The study provides insights into outdoor recreation traveller characteristics for this section.<sup>14</sup>

Outdoor recreation participation is strong in BC, with 79% of BC residents participating in summer activities and 69% in winter. 85% of Alberta residents participate in summer activities in BC and 82% in the winter.

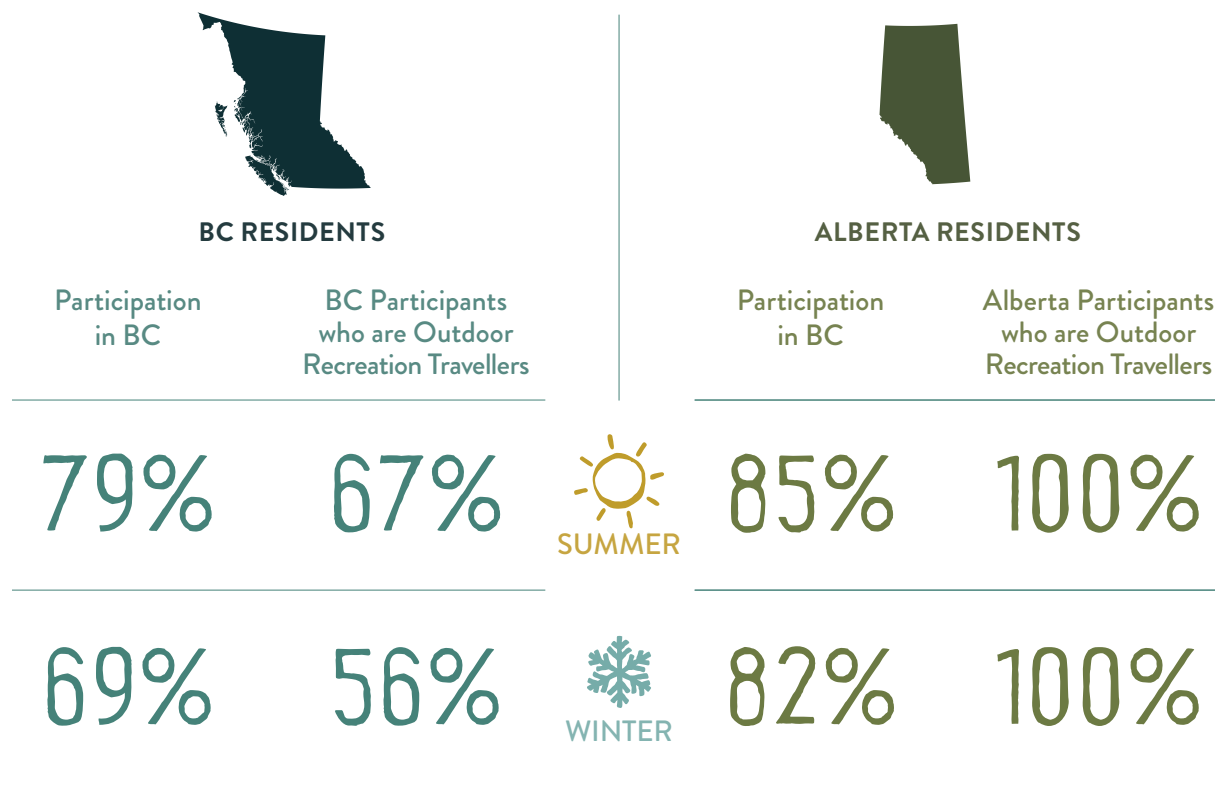
## Frequency of outdoor recreation participation for BC residents (2022)



For this profile, Outdoor Recreation Travellers include participants who travelled at least 40 km outside of their community to participate in at least one outdoor recreation activity, with more travelling in the summer (67%) than in the winter (56%).



## Outdoor recreation participation in BC (2022/23)



<sup>14</sup>Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, and Destination British Columbia, The British Columbia Outdoor Recreation Participant Survey (2022/23)

79% of BC participants travel for overnight trips during the summer and 74% for winter. 75% of Alberta participants travel for overnight trips to BC during the summer and 72% for winter.

|                               | BC     |        | AB     |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                               | SUMMER | WINTER | SUMMER | WINTER |
| Travel for Outdoor Recreation | 67%    | 55%    | 100%   | 100%   |
| Traveller—Day Trips*          | 79%    | 80%    | 57%    | 60%    |
| Avg # Day Trips               | 4.4    | 3.7    | 1.5    | 1.6    |
| Traveller—Overnight Trip*     | 79%    | 74%    | 75%    | 72%    |
| Avg # Overnight Trips         | 3.4    | 2.8    | 2.0    | 1.9    |

\*Percent of outdoor recreation participants who travel for outdoor recreation

### Importance of outdoor recreation on decision to have an overnight trip.

|                          | BC     |        | AB     |        |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                          | SUMMER | WINTER | SUMMER | WINTER |
| Large influence          | 51%    | 52%    | 47%    | 47%    |
| Medium influence         | 38%    | 28%    | 39%    | 39%    |
| None to little influence | 11%    | 9%     | 14%    | 14%    |

Destinations for overnight outdoor recreation trips differ between BC residents and Alberta visitors and appear driven, at least in part, by proximity.

### Top 3 destinations for outdoor recreation overnight trips

| BC                                   |  | AB                                   |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| SUMMER                               | WINTER                                       | SUMMER                               | WINTER                               |
| Okanagan-Similkameen/Thompson-Nicola | Metro Vancouver                              | Kootenays                            | Kootenays                            |
| Vancouver Island or Gulf Islands     | Vancouver Island or Gulf Islands             | Okanagan-Similkameen/Thompson-Nicola | Okanagan-Similkameen/Thompson-Nicola |
| Metro Vancouver                      | Whistler/Squamish/Sunshine Coast/South Coast | Metro Vancouver                      | Metro Vancouver                      |

\*Percent of outdoor recreation participants who travel for outdoor recreation



### Top 5 Activities of outdoor recreation travellers in BC

| BC                                  |  | AB                                  |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| SUMMER                              | WINTER   | SUMMER                              | WINTER                              |
| Hiking on a day trip                | Hiking on a day trip   | Hiking on a day trip                | Hiking on a day trip                |
| Beach activities at a river or lake | Park/picnic/playing in a park                                    | Park/picnic/playing in a park       | Park/picnic/playing in a park       |
| Park/picnic/playing in a park       | Beach activities at a river or lake                              | Beach activities at a river or lake | Beach activities at a river or lake |
| Swimming—lake or river              | Oceanside beach activities                                       | Swimming—lake or river              | Swimming—lake or river              |
| Oceanside beach activities          | Other nature viewing or scenic photography, painting, or drawing | Oceanside beach activities          | Oceanside beach activities          |

Outdoor Recreation Travellers who participate in adventure tourism spend more. The average total spend for a BC resident who is an overnight adventure tourism participant on a summer trip is \$1,126, compared to \$772 for a non-adventure tourism participant.<sup>15</sup>

|                | BC                     |                        | AB                   |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|                | SUMMER                 | WINTER                 | SUMMER               | WINTER                 |
| Day Trip       | \$417                  | \$556                  | \$712                | \$431                  |
| Overnight Trip | \$1,126<br>adventure   | \$1,029<br>adventure   | \$1,395<br>adventure | \$1,066<br>adventure   |
|                | \$772<br>non-adventure | \$494<br>non-adventure |                      | \$788<br>non-adventure |

### Average spend by category by outdoor recreation travellers in BC for overnight trips (non-adventure)

|  | BC     |        | AB     |        |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | SUMMER | WINTER | SUMMER | WINTER |
| All inclusive trip/ outdoor activity package | 17%    | 20%    | 13%    | 3%     |
| Transportation                               | 29%    | 21%    | 24%    | 36%    |
| Food & Beverage                              | 28%    | 19%    | 26%    | 28%    |
| Recreation                                   | 7%     | 12%    | 4%     | 3%     |
| Accommodation                                | 12%    | 18%    | 23%    | 24%    |
| Other  | 7%     | 12%    | 10%    | 7%     |

### Top 3 accommodation types of outdoor recreation travellers in BC

| BC                           |                              | AB                           |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| SUMMER                       | WINTER                       | SUMMER                       | WINTER                       |
| Hotel/Resort                 | Hotel/Resort                 | Hotel/Resort                 | Hotel/Resort                 |
| Campground/ RV Park          | Home of friends or relatives | Home of friends or relatives | Home of friends or relatives |
| Home of friends or relatives | Campground/ RV Park          | Campground/ RV Park          | Campground/ RV Park          |

<sup>15</sup>Includes participants that did not spend any money (\$0 spend)

# 90%

The top motivations for participating in outdoor recreation are to do something fun and get out of the house. These reasons remain relatively consistent across seasons and markets, with nearly 90% of respondents saying they're important for participating in outdoor recreation.

# 35%

of BC outdoor recreation participants are heavy users. These are individuals who took four or more trips in summer 2022, including at least one overnight trip and who participated in adventure tourism. Heavy users tend to be younger and more likely to have families.

# 50%

Generally, outdoor recreation participants are experienced. Experience doesn't seem to vary between season or market with over 50% being experienced.

# 66%

of out-of-town BC outdoor activity participants paid an associated cost to participate in outdoor activities, with the top activity being hiking on a day trip.



SKAHA BLUFFS PARK

# Trends in Outdoor Recreation

A variety of research and reports from the Adventure Travel Trade Association, and similar outdoor recreation industry reports, highlight key trends in outdoor recreation travel:<sup>16</sup>

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## Technology Integration

Artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality, wearable technology, and virtual reality are helping travellers plan their trips, map out routes, and personalize experiences and enhance their outdoor experience.

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## Sustainable and Eco-conscious Travel

Travellers are looking for eco-friendly options and destinations that prioritize environmental protection.

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## Nature for Well-Being

Outdoor recreation is increasingly seen as a way to increase mental and physical health.

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## Local and Authentic Experiences

Visitors immersing themselves in local cultures, learning new skills, and participating in experiences that connect them to the area.

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## Microadventures

Smaller, more localized trips closer to home that require less time commitment, such as weekend hikes, overnight camping, or short road trips.

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## Inclusive and Diversified Travel

Making outdoor recreation and adventure travel more inclusive for people of all ages, fitness levels, and physical abilities. Operators are increasing their focus on families, women, travellers aged 50 and over, regional and local travellers, and LGBTQIA+ travellers.

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## Emerging Adventure Activities

Adventure travellers are looking for new, unique experiences. Trending activities include hiking, trekking, and walking; culinary and gastronomy experiences; cultural activities; safaris and wildlife viewing; e-bike cycling; and wildlife or nature photography.

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## Direct bookings

In North America, 75% of adventure travel bookings are made directly with the service provider.

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<sup>16</sup>Adventure Travel Trade Association, Adventure Travel Snapshot Series, webpages and reports



## Considerations for Growth

Challenges to growing the outdoor recreation tourism sector sustainably include travel costs, transportation and access to locations, crowding, visitor capacity and management challenges in some parks and natural places, and environmental sustainability and climate change. Other challenges include seasonality and weather, funding for road and trail maintenance, insurance and liabilities, skilled volunteers, conflict between trail users, and limited facilities and services such as accommodations, parking and guided trips.

### CONTACT

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