



MAR 2025

## REGION OVERVIEW

In 2022, travellers in the Thompson Okanagan tourism region were hosted by 2,100 tourism businesses and 30,800 tourism employees.<sup>1</sup> Collectively, the tourism industry generated \$2.6 billion in gross spending in the region, accounting for approximately 14.6% of BC's total overnight spending.<sup>2 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BC Stats

<sup>2</sup>Destination BC Estimates, 2022—Gross Spending less Consumer Taxes

<sup>3</sup>Destination BC

# THOMPSON OKANAGAN



Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaɬ (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.

## ABOUT THIS TOURISM REGION

The Thompson Okanagan (TO) tourism region has 11.5% of the population of BC and is known for extensive lakes and valleys, sweeping grasslands, expansive mountain ranges and a deep Indigenous history. Home to 653,300 residents,<sup>4</sup> TO is named for two major geographic features: the Thompson River and Okanagan Lake. The region includes over 120 communities, including 33 First Nation communities.

### Regional Population 2024<sup>5</sup>



**653,300**

Population as % of BC 11.5%

Tourism Industry Snapshot		2023
Businesses (2022) <sup>6</sup>		2,100
% of Total Provincial Tourism Businesses <sup>7</sup>		12.6%
Indigenous Businesses Listed with ITBC <sup>8</sup>		77
HelloBC Listings with Accessibility Features <sup>9</sup>		13%
Employment (2022) <sup>10</sup>		22,900
Regional GDP (2022) <sup>11</sup>		\$1.3 billion
Regional Tourism Revenue (2022) <sup>12</sup>		\$2.6 billion
Room revenue (000s) <sup>13</sup>		541,400
Visitor Centre parties <sup>14</sup>		166,700
Resort Municipality Initiative Communities <sup>15</sup>		Osoyoos, Sun Peaks, Valemount

<sup>4</sup>BC Stats, Development Region and Municipal Population Estimates 2024, adjusted for tourism region boundaries.

<sup>5</sup>BC Stats, Development Region and Municipal Population Estimates 2024, adjusted for tourism region boundaries.

<sup>6</sup>BC Stats / Pacific Analytics

<sup>7</sup>BC Stats / Pacific Analytics (2023 Provincial Tourism-Related Businesses: 16,839)

<sup>8</sup>Indigenous Tourism BC Stakeholders

<sup>9</sup>Destination BC, as a percentage of total HelloBC listings by region. Actual number of HelloBC listings with accessibility features: 137 (September 2024)

<sup>10</sup>BC Stats / Pacific Analytics. Please note this does not include Hospitality employment.

<sup>11</sup>BC Stats / Pacific Analytics

<sup>12</sup>BC Stats—Please note that regional revenues do not sum up to provincial revenue due to \$0.8 billion in provincial tourism revenue that is not allocated to a region

<sup>13</sup>Calculated from Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT). Only those communities subject to the MRDT are included. Annual totals should be interpreted with caution since data for a community may not be available for all months within the year. Only those communities subject to the MRDT are included.

<sup>14</sup>Destination BC

<sup>15</sup>The Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) program is intended to support small, tourism-based municipalities to enhance their tourism infrastructure, visitor experiences, and sustainable tourism practices and products. Funding is provided by the Province of British Columbia.

Government investment in the tourism sector in BC was \$1.2 billion in 2022, and private investment was \$1.7 billion. As an indicator of recent tourism investment in BC, Destination BC compiles a list of destination development projects that have been provided funding each year, based on announcement date; the TO tourism region was estimated to receive \$49,396,500 in funding for 41 projects in 2022 and \$26,390,900 in funding for 46 projects in 2023. This includes multi-year funding projects into the future.<sup>16</sup>

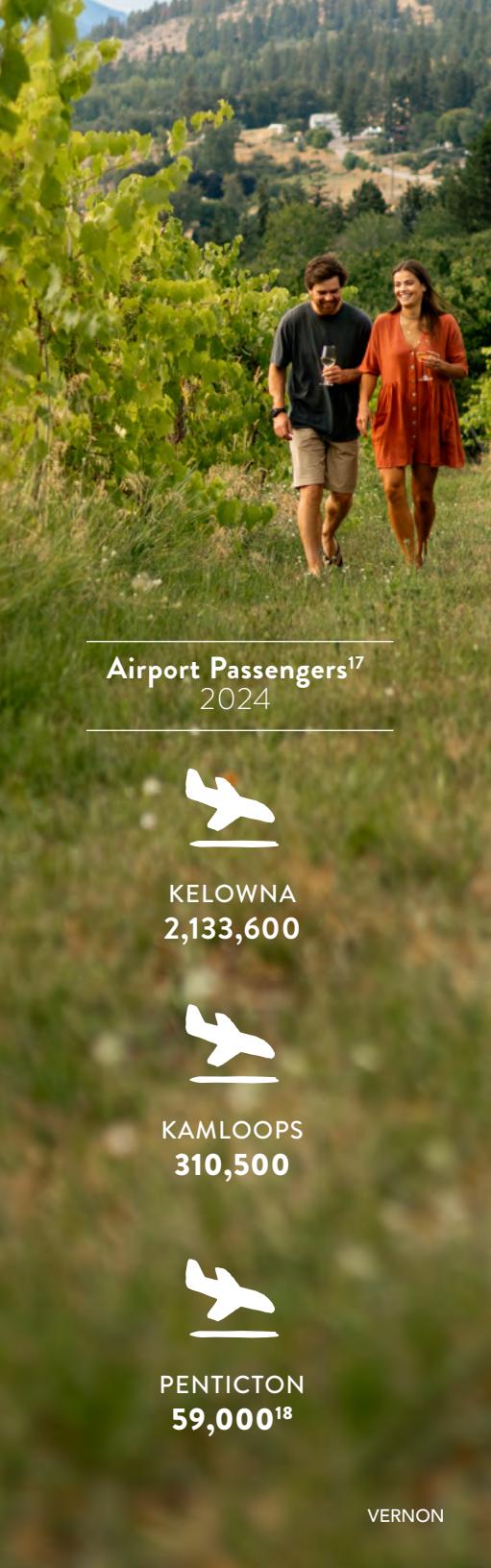
### Destination Development Projects

	2022	2023
Number of Projects	41	46
Total Investment	\$49,396,500	\$26,390,900

The TO region had thriving skies in 2024: Kelowna (YLW) welcomed over 2 million passengers, Kamloops (YKA) welcomed 310,000, and Penticton (YYF) welcomed almost 100,000 (2023).



<sup>16</sup>Destination BC. Note: these figures are underestimated as this list is not complete or exhaustive; there are likely additional projects.



## Employment



# 22.9K

people were employed  
in tourism-related businesses in the TO  
region in 2022 representing 14.8% of  
BC's total tourism employment.



# \$698MB

The TO tourism industry  
paid \$698 million in wages  
and salaries.<sup>19</sup>

**Airport Passengers<sup>17</sup>**  
2024



KELOWNA  
2,133,600



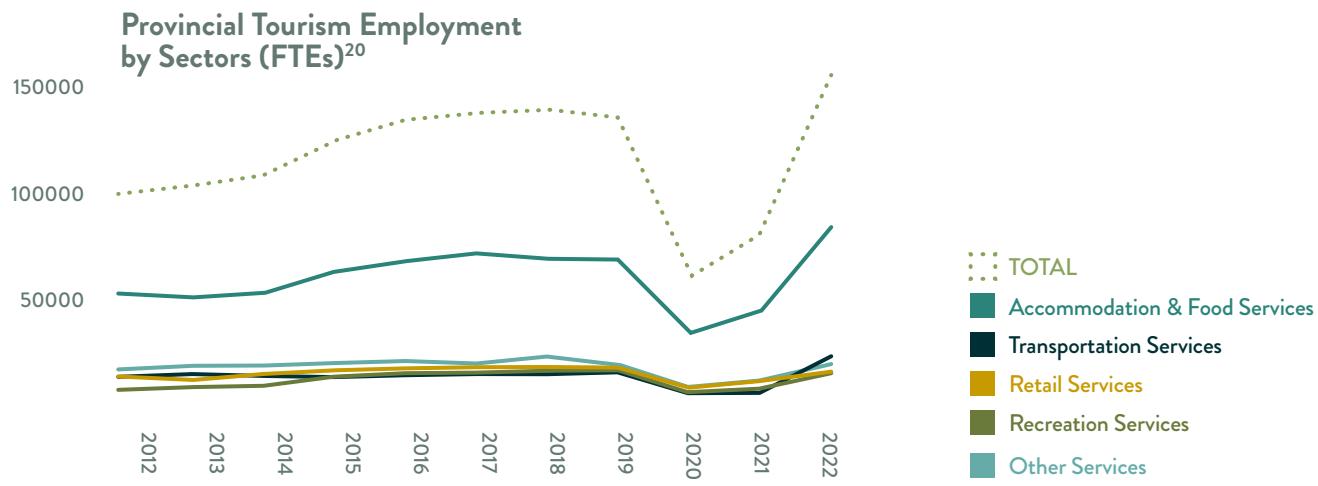
KAMLOOPS  
310,500



PENTICTON  
59,000<sup>18</sup>

VERNON

The following chart illustrates the evolution of tourism employment in BC from 2012 to 2022, broken down into five key sectors. Over this period, the tourism industry demonstrated overall growth despite a significant downturn in 2020 due to the global pandemic. Accommodation and food services consistently remained the largest employer in the tourism sector, showing remarkable recovery and growth from 33,600 FTEs in 2020 to 83,100 FTEs in 2022, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and highlighting the sector's resilience and importance to the provincial economy.



<sup>17</sup>Individual Airports

<sup>18</sup>ForwardKeys Data Tabulation, 2024, Destination BC. Note: this is an estimated value.

<sup>19</sup>BC Stats

<sup>20</sup>BC Stats. Note: numbers may not add up to the stated total as numbers have been rounded.

## Provincial Tourism Employment by Year (FTEs)



The hospitality workforce in BC—including those working in tourism—demonstrates significant diversity, with 40% of workers identifying as visible minorities and 31% as immigrants, both higher than provincial population averages of 35% and 31% respectively. The sector employs workers across accommodation, food & beverage, recreation & entertainment, and transportation services, with food & beverage being the largest employer. While Indigenous representation in the workforce matches the provincial average at 5%, the sector shows particularly strong multicultural employment in accommodation and food & beverage services, demonstrating tourism's role in providing significant employment opportunities for diverse communities.<sup>21</sup>

## Top Regional Markets

Most travellers to TO in 2023 were from BC and Alberta. BC residents contributed to 54% of the total nights spent in the region. The top international markets were Washington, the United Kingdom, and Australia.<sup>22</sup>

### Visitor Nights\* – Canada



BC



Alberta



Ontario

54%

26%

5%

### Visitor Nights\* – US



Washington



California



Florida

2%

1%

<1%

### Visitor Nights\* – International



UK



Australia



Mexico

2%

2%

1%

\* As a % share of nights spent by all visitors in the region.

<sup>21</sup>go2HR

<sup>22</sup>Envirometrics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

# How do Residents View Tourism?

TO residents value tourism's impact on their communities, especially the economic benefits: 80% say they value the contribution visitors make to their local economy. Residents who value visitors' economic contributions are most likely to feel that tourism improves their quality of life and that its benefits outweigh any drawbacks.<sup>22</sup>

## Resident Perceptions of Tourism 2024

**84%**

Tourism brings people from diverse backgrounds / cultures.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 83%

**84%**

Tourism supports local businesses in their community.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 80%

**83%**

Residents that agree their community is a desirable place to visit.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 78%

**80%**

Residents that value the contribution visitors make to their local economy.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 80%

**76%**

Residents that agree the positive impacts of tourism in their community outweigh the negative impacts.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 74%

**74%**

Residents that take pride in making visitors feel welcome.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 74%

**73%**

Residents that agree tourism contributes positively to the quality of life of their community.  
VS. BC RESIDENTS 71%

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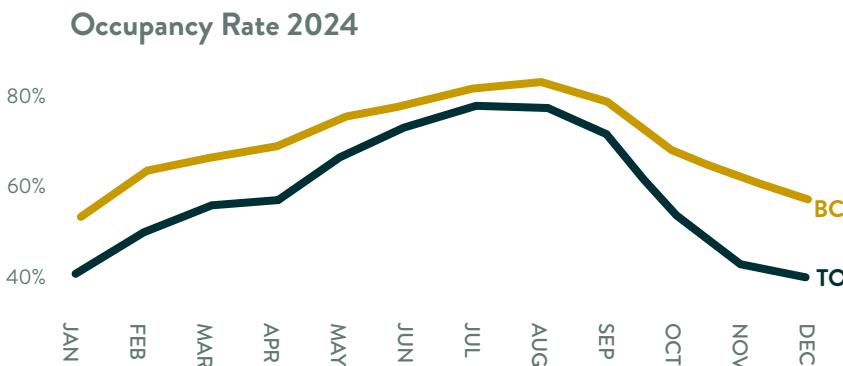
Do you think your community has too few, too many, or the right amount of tourism throughout the year?

■ TOO FEW ■ TOO MANY ■ JUST RIGHT

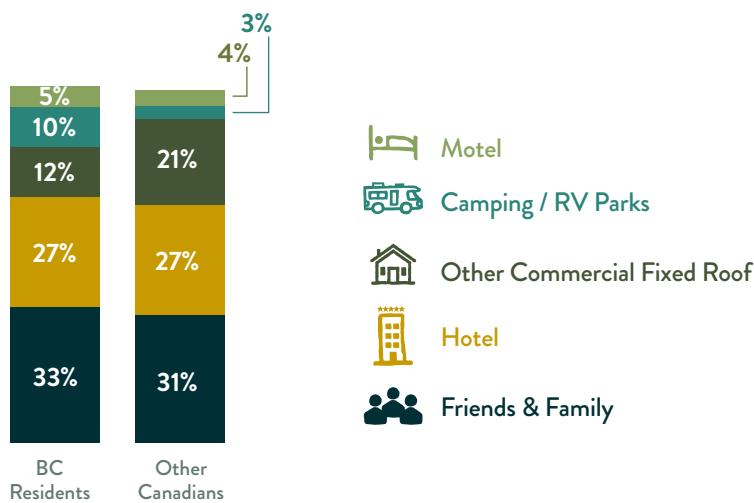
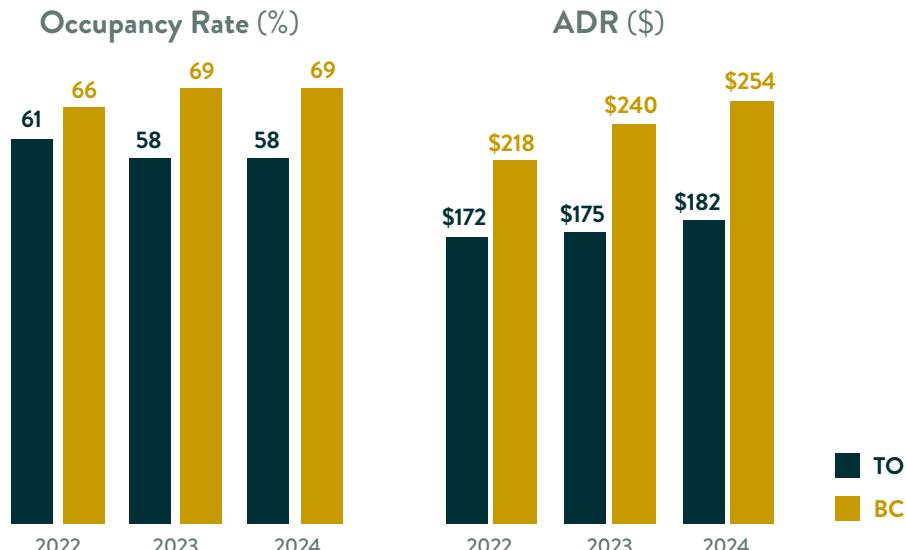


# Accommodation

Occupancy for the TO region peaks in July at 77%, compared to 81% for BC. December is the lowest month at 39%, compared to 56% for BC.<sup>24</sup>



TO's occupancy rate decreased from 61% in 2022 to 58% in 2023 and maintained that level into 2024. Average Daily Rate (ADR) grew from \$172 in 2022 to \$182 in 2024.<sup>25</sup>



In the TO region, both BC residents (33%) and other Canadians (31%) frequently stay with friends and family, making it the most common accommodation choice. Hotels are equally popular among both groups (27%), while other Canadians show a higher preference for other commercial fixed roof accommodations (21%) compared to BC residents (12%).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>CoStar Data Tabulation (2022–2024), Destination BC

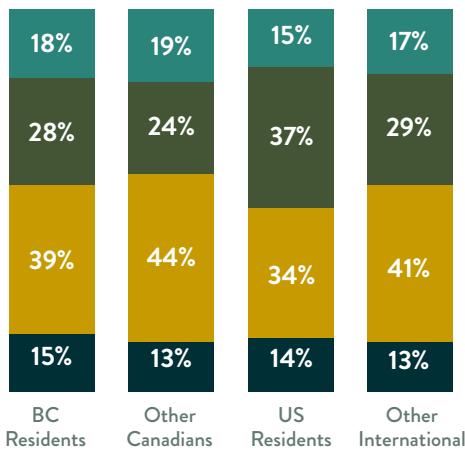
<sup>25</sup>CoStar Data Tabulation (2022–2024), Destination BC

<sup>26</sup>Statistics Canada—National Travel Survey 2022

# Seasonality

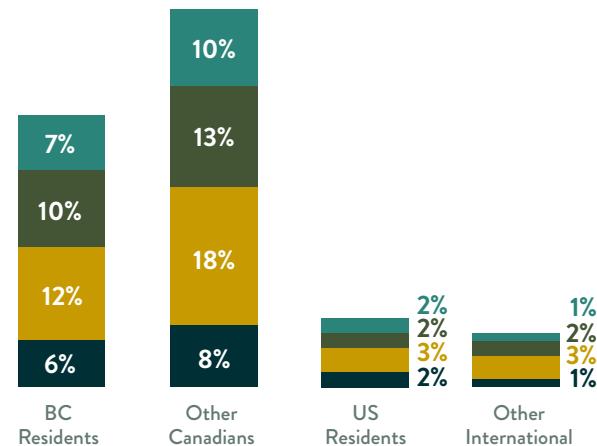
Travel trends in the TO region follow seasonal variations. The majority of travellers visit during the warmer months of July to September. However, the April to June shoulder season sees considerable visitor nights as well, and year-round travel is popular.<sup>27</sup>

## Season of Travel 2023



Tourism activity in BC peaks during the summer months of July to September with 36% of total visitor nights (18% from other Canadians, 12% from BC residents, 3% each from US, and other international travellers), while maintaining consistent visitor nights from domestic markets throughout other seasons.<sup>28</sup>

## Provincial Seasonality 2023



# Trip Characteristics by Origin

Travellers to TO have diverse origins. The average length of stay varies, with international travellers typically staying longer than domestic travellers. In 2023, the average trip length was 3.1 nights.<sup>29</sup>

## Total Average Trip Length

3.1 Nights

BC's Total Average Trip Length is 3.6 Nights

## Average Nights per Trip

	TO	Provincial Average
BC Residents	2.7	2.9
Other Canadians	3.5	4.0
US Residents	3.4	3.7
Other International	5.6	11.6

<sup>27</sup>Envirronics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

<sup>28</sup>Envirronics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

<sup>29</sup>Envirronics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

# Top Trip Activities

The most popular activities for travellers in TO include visiting friends or family, dining out, shopping, and sightseeing. This is true for both BC Residents and Other Canadians.<sup>30</sup>

## BC Residents

	Visiting friends or family
	Dine out / go to restaurant, bar or club
	Shopping
	Sightseeing
	Other activity

## Other Canadians

	Visiting friends or family
	Dine out / go to restaurant, bar or club
	Sightseeing
	Shopping
	Other activity

# Spending

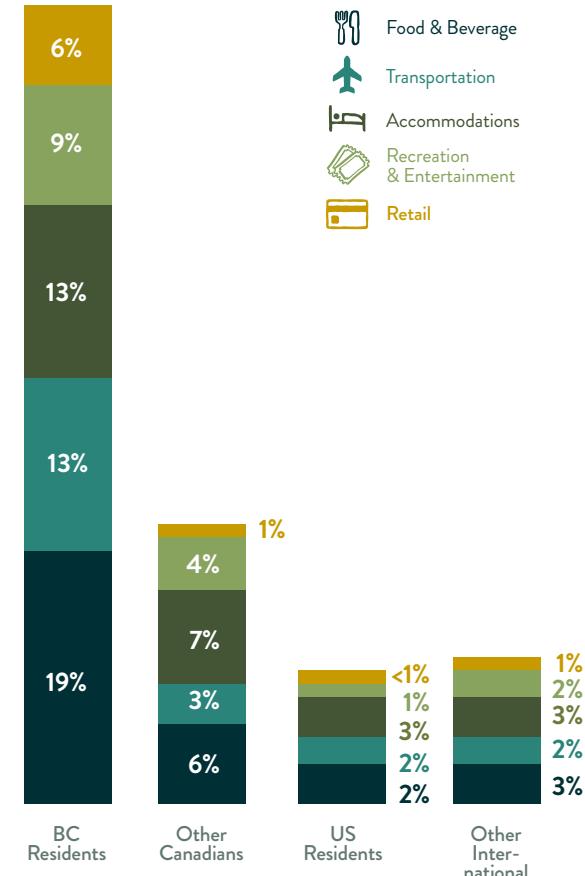
Spending in the Thompson Okanagan region varies across categories and traveller origins. Food and beverage accounts for the largest share of tourism spending at 31%, followed closely by accommodation at 25%. Transportation represents 19% of expenditures, while recreation & entertainment and retail contribute 17% and 9% respectively.

## Spending by Category 2024<sup>31</sup>

	Food & Beverage	31%
	Accommodation	25%
	Transportation	19%
	Recreation & Entertainment	17%
	Retail	9%

When looking at tourism spending by market, BC residents are the primary contributors in the Thompson Okanagan region. They lead in food and beverage spending at 19% and transportation and accommodation at 13% each. Other Canadians make notable contributions in accommodation (7%) and food and beverage (6%).

## Spending by Market 2024<sup>32</sup>



<sup>30</sup>Statistics Canada—National Travel Survey 2022

<sup>31</sup>Destination Canada—2024 Canadian Tourism Data Collective, Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting (LASR)

<sup>32</sup>Destination Canada—2024 Canadian Tourism Data Collective, Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting (LASR)

# Regional Comparisons

Travel Characteristics by Region <sup>33*</sup>	% Change 23 vs 22	Regional Share of Total (2023)
	NIGHTS	NIGHTS
All travellers in BC	2%	—
Cariboo Chilcotin Coast	-5%	2%
Kootenay Rockies	-3%	10%
Northern BC	7%	9%
Thompson Okanagan	-10%	19%
Vancouver, Coast & Mountains	8%	42%
Vancouver Island	<1%	18%

\*Please note the trips of all regions will not equal the provincial total as travellers can visit multiple regions on one trip.



<sup>33</sup>Environics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

## CONTACT

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