

AUG 2026

REGION OVERVIEW

In 2024, travellers in the Kootenay Rockies tourism region were hosted by 748 tourism businesses and 8,800 tourism employees.¹ Collectively, the tourism industry generated \$1.5 billion in gross spending in the region, accounting for approximately 6.7% of BC's total spending.^{2, 3}

¹BC Stats²BC Stats—Gross Spending Including Taxes³BC Stats

Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the x̱məθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliwətał (Tseil-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 Kootenay Rockies (KR) tourism region has 3.3% of the population of BC and is known for natural activities and experiences. Home to over 205,000 residents⁴, KR features many ski and mountain resorts and includes the communities of Nelson, Fernie, Revelstoke, Golden, and many idyllic towns within the system of valleys and mountain ranges.

Regional Population 2024⁵



190,200

Population as % of BC 3.3%

Tourism Industry Snapshot	2024
Businesses (2024) ⁶	748
% of Total Provincial Tourism Businesses ⁷	4.4%
Indigenous Businesses Listed with ITBC ⁸	17
HelloBC Listings with Accessibility Features (2023) ⁹	20%
Employment ¹⁰	8,800
Regional GDP ¹¹	\$621 million
Regional Tourism Revenue ¹²	\$1.5 billion
Room revenue (000s) ¹³	\$351,400
Visitor Centre parties (2023) ¹⁴	137,500
Resort Municipality Initiative Communities ¹⁵	Fernie, Golden, Invermere, Kimberley, Radium Hot Springs, Revelstoke, Rossland

⁴BC Stats, Development Region and Municipal Population Estimates 2024, adjusted for tourism region boundaries

⁵BC Stats, Development Region and Municipal Population Estimates 2024, adjusted for tourism region boundaries

⁶BC Stats

⁷BC Stats

⁸Indigenous Tourism BC Stakeholders

⁹Destination BC, as a percentage of total HelloBC listings by region. Actual number of HelloBC listings with accessibility features: 111 (September 2024)

¹⁰BC Stats. Please note this includes Hospitality employment.

¹¹BC Stats

¹²BC Stats. Please note that regional revenues do not sum up to provincial revenue due to rounding.

¹³Calculated 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.

¹⁴Destination BC

¹⁵The 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 KR tourism region was estimated to receive \$75,452,200 in funding for 72 projects in 2022 and \$ 76,203,500 in funding for 79 projects in 2023. This includes multi-year funding projects into the future.¹⁶

Destination Development Projects

	2022	2023
Number of Projects	72	79
Total Investment	\$75,452,200	\$76,203,500

The KR region hosts several airports, the largest being Cranbrook (YXC) welcoming 152,100 passengers in 2024. The second largest, Castlegar (YCG), welcomed 28,800 passengers in 2024.

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



Airport Passengers¹⁷
2024



CANADIAN ROCKIES
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT
(CRANBROOK)
152,100



WEST KOOTENAY
REGIONAL AIRPORT
(CASTLEGAR)
28,800

Employment



8.8K

people were employed in
tourism-related businesses
in the KR region in 2024.¹⁸



\$331M

The KR tourism industry
paid \$331 million in wages
and salaries.¹⁸

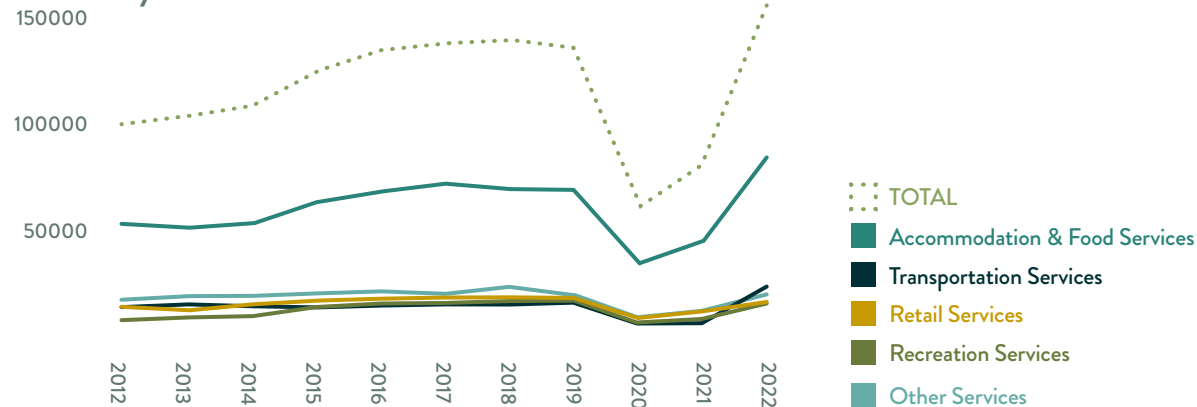


5.6K

full-time equivalent (FTE)
positions supported
by tourism in the KR region
in 2024.¹⁸

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.

Provincial Tourism Employment
by Sectors (FTEs)¹⁹

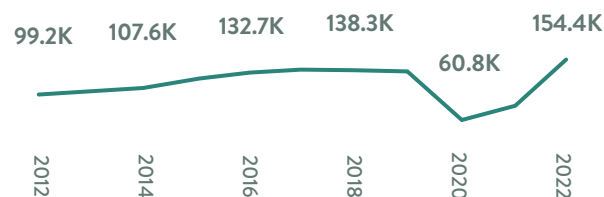


¹⁷Individual Airports. Figures include both enplaned and deplaned passengers.

¹⁸BC Stats

¹⁹BC 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.²⁰

Top Regional Markets

Most travellers to KR in 2023 were from Alberta and BC. Alberta residents contributed to 48% of the total nights spent in the region. The top international markets were Washington and the United Kingdom.²¹

Visitor Nights* — Canada



Alberta

48%



BC

34%



Ontario

6%

Visitor Nights* — US



Washington

2%



Idaho

1%



Oregon

<1%

Visitor Nights* — International



UK

2%



Australia

2%



Germany

2%

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

²⁰go2HR

²¹EnviroNics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

How do Residents View Tourism?

KR residents value tourism’s impact on their communities, especially the economic benefits: 82% 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. 82% of residents agree their community is a desirable place to visit.²²

Resident Perceptions of Tourism 2024

82%

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

82%

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

80%

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

79%

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

74%

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

71%

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

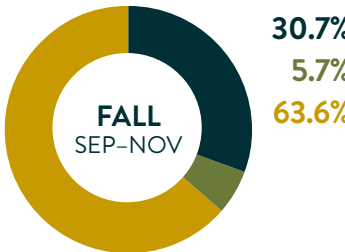
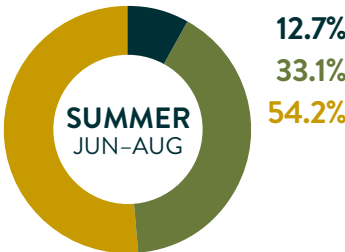
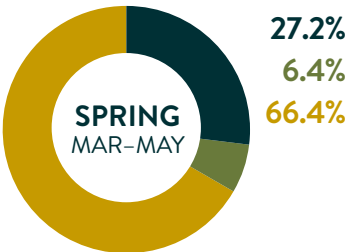
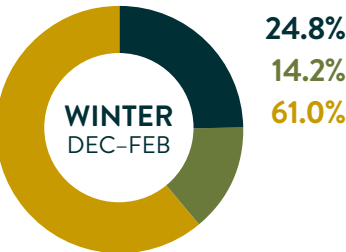
68%

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

“

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

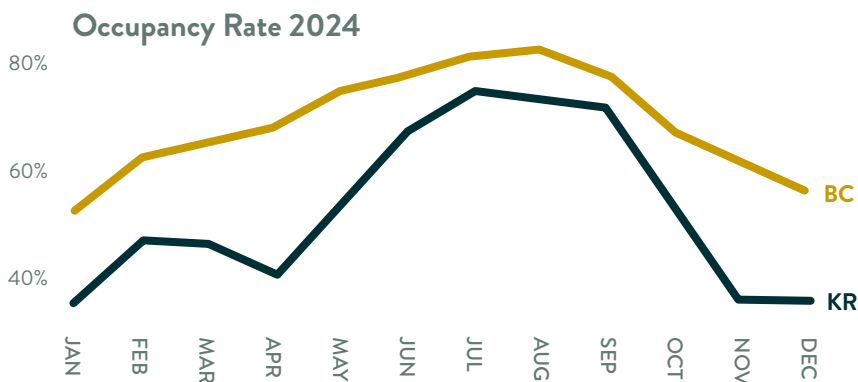
TOO FEW TOO MANY JUST RIGHT



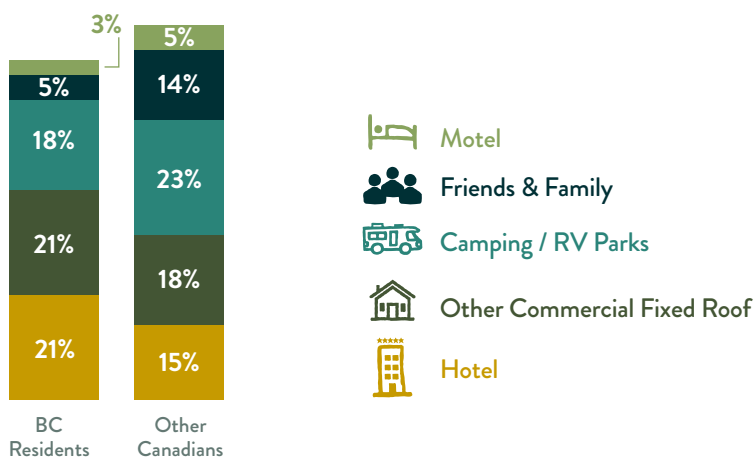
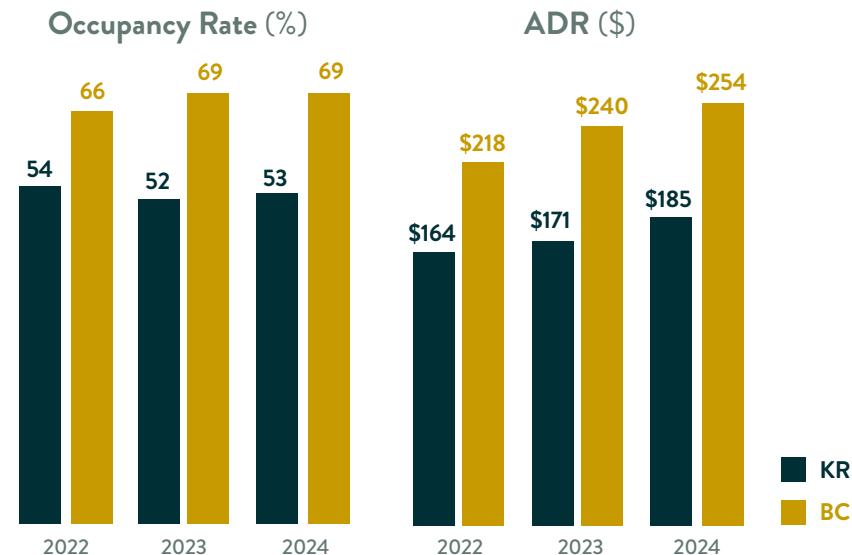
²²Destination BC

Accommodation

Occupancy for the KR region peaks in July at 74%, compared to 81% for BC. January is the lowest month at 36%, compared to 52% for BC.²³



KR's occupancy rate stayed fairly consistent, from 54% in 2022 to 52% in 2023, then increased to 53% in 2024. Average Daily Rate (ADR) shows steady growth from \$164 in 2022 to \$185 in 2024.²⁴



In the KR region, BC residents and other Canadians display a balanced preference between hotels and other commercial fixed roof accommodations, with BC residents showing equal preference (21%) for both. However, camping/RV parks are more popular among other Canadians (23%) than BC residents (18%), while staying with friends and family is significantly less common for BC residents (5%) compared to other Canadians (14%).²⁵

²³CoStar Data Tabulation (2022–2024), Destination BC

²⁴CoStar Data Tabulation (2022–2024), Destination BC

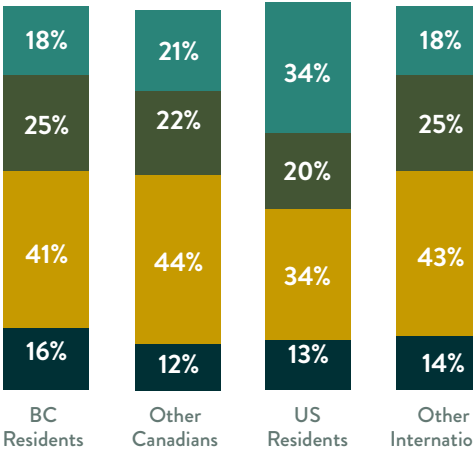
²⁵Statistics Canada—National Travel Survey 2022

Seasonality

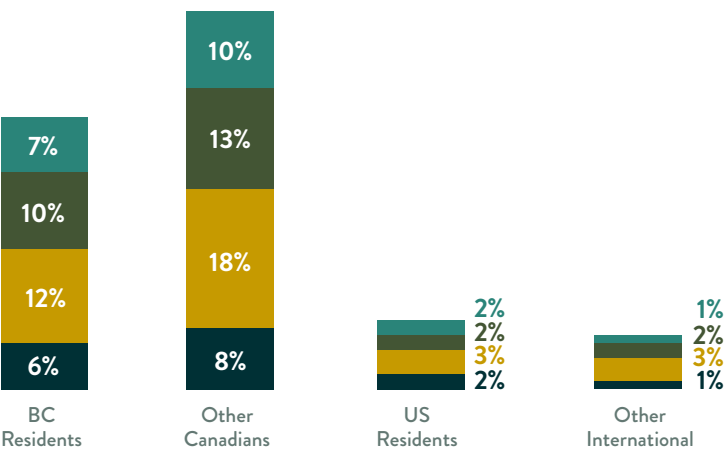
Travel trends in the KR region follow seasonal variations. The majority of travellers visit during the warmer months of July to September, driven by favourable weather conditions and numerous outdoor activities. Many travellers also arrive in the shoulder seasons, indicating a year-round tourism industry bolstered by ski and mountain resorts. January to March is popular with US Residents.²⁶

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.²⁷

Season of Travel 2023



Provincial Seasonality 2023



Trip Characteristics by Origin

Travellers to KR 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 2.9 nights.²⁸

Total Average Trip Length



BC's Total Average Trip Length is 3.6 Nights

Average Nights per Trip

	KR	Provincial Average
BC Residents	2.6	2.9
Other Canadians	2.9	4.0
US Residents	2.8	3.7
Other International	5.0	11.6

²⁶Environics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC
²⁷Environics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC
²⁸Environics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC

Top Trip Activities

The most popular activities for travellers in KR include visiting friends or family, dining out, and sightseeing. For BC residents, shopping and travelling for health treatments are also popular activities, while other Canadians frequently hike or backpack and visit nature parks.²⁹

BC Residents

	Visiting friends or family
	Dine out/go to restaurant, bar, or club
	Shopping
	Go for a medical or other health treatment
	Sightseeing

Other Canadians

	Visiting friends or family
	Dine out/go to restaurant, bar, or club
	Sightseeing
	Hiking or backpacking
	National, provincial, or nature park

Spending

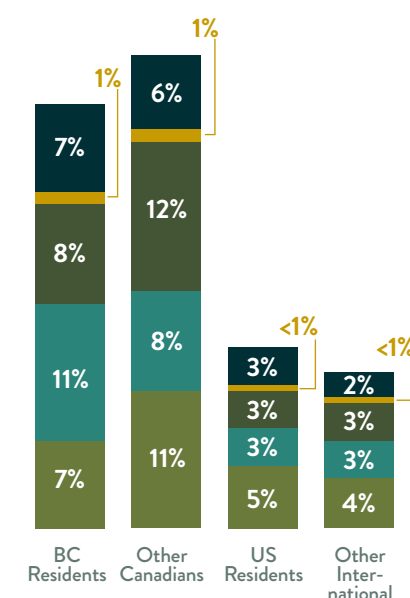
Spending in the KR region varies across categories and traveller origins. Accommodation accounts for the largest share of tourism spending at 27%, followed closely by recreation & entertainment and food & beverage at 26% and 25% respectively. Transportation represents 18% of expenditures, while retail contributes 4%.

Spending by Category 2024³⁰

	Accommodation	27%
	Recreation & Entertainment	26%
	Food and Beverage	25%
	Transportation	18%
	Retail	4%

When it comes to tourism spending by market, other Canadians are the primary contributors in the KR region. They lead in recreation and entertainment spending at 12% and accommodation at 11%. BC residents make contributions in food and beverage (11%) and recreation and entertainment (8%).

Spending by Market 2024³¹



²⁹Statistics Canada—National Travel Survey 2022

³⁰Destination Canada—2024 Canadian Tourism Data Collective, Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting (LASR)

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

Regional Comparisons

Travel Characteristics by Region ^{32*}	% 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.

³²Enviroics Analytics Data Tabulation (2022 to 2023), Destination BC



CONTACT

Destination BC Research & Insights



TourismResearch@DestinationBC.ca



destinationbc.ca/research-insights