

# Pokémon Go for Tourism Destinations and Businesses: How and Why to Engage

100 million and counting. That's the estimated number of downloads for the phenomenon, Pokémon Go, a free-to-play mobile game that uses augmented reality to bring to life the characters of one of Nintendo's biggest franchises. Players take to the streets with phone in hand to search for and catch cartoon creatures called Pokémon.

To give you a sense of scale, Pokémon Go has:

- been launched in more than 35 countries
- a daily average use higher than Facebook and other social networks
- been installed on more than 6% of Android devices in Canada
- more daily users than Twitter in the US (on Android devices)
- double the engagement of Snapchat
- raised Nintendo's market value by \$9 billion

It's not just the numbers that are astonishing; it's the way the app has brought online gaming into the real world. Why is this important for tourism industry? Players of varying backgrounds and ages are walking across cities and towns, through parks, past public art installations and even into local businesses. By understanding how the game is played, destinations and tourism businesses can take advantage of this trend to connect with new consumers.

Here are a few ways you can use the platform to promote your destination or business:

1. **Encourage your community to share Pokémon photos in your destination.** Ask users to recommend tips on where to catch rare Pokémon. Have them share their favourite part of the city or town discovered through playing the app. Pokémon Go are often located at historic landmarks and statues; create a gallery of photos to inspire other users to seek out these spots. Encourage people to share photos based on specific types of Pokémon, such as water-based characters. The possibilities for themed content are endless.
2. **Social listening.** Pokémon Go has breathed new life into neighbourhoods that may have had limited appeal in the past, drawing crowds that would otherwise not be there. Keep track of these newly popular locations and help players make their experience memorable. Suggest a café in the area, send a guide to greet them or answer a question around how to get there. Set up listening columns for monitoring Twitter (in Hootsuite, for example) based on keyword phrases to learn what conversations are happening.
3. **Promote the local Pokémon in your area.** Look at these virtual Pokémon as local celebs. Take screenshots of valuable or rare Pokémon in your area and share them through social media. You can even get staff to take a selfie with local Pokémon by using the in-app camera.
4. **Take advantage of PokéStops and Pokémon Gyms.** PokéStops are fixed GPS locations that give players in-game items by standing next to them. PokéStops Gyms are also fixed GPS locations where players "battle" each other to claim that spot for their team. Why are these beneficial for your business or destination? These popular locations can draw huge crowds; they are fixed locations, so any content you create around them will remain evergreen.

If you are a business near a PokéStop or Pokémon Gym, advertise this to players. If you are a destination, create a list of attractions near PokéStops; these locations are often public areas with historic buildings, monuments and murals.

## Example: Prince George

For residents of downtown Prince George, a notable increase in visitors is being attributed to the number of PokéStops in the area.

The Exploration Place in Prince George is taking advantage of the Pokémon craze by using Facebook to increase visitation and time spent at their attraction. The museum's understanding of the game is evident in how they engage with people on social media. This shared knowledge adds to the motivation of a Pokémon player to explore that location.

 **The Exploration Place** added 2 new photos.  
 July 22 at 4:38am · 🌐

We heard that Pokémon love public parks and recreation spots. We've found a few new visitors, Pokestops and gyms all over the park. We are also planning to drop a few lures today at 12pm, 2pm and 5pm. Drop a lure at the Fort George Railway Station or School House in front of our staff in the Fort George Railway Station and get a FREE train ride for you and 1 friend (valid only during our hours of operation & only for 1 free ride per day). We just ask that you PLEASE stay off the Little Prince train tracks (that's a Pokemon No Go).

Pssst...Since you're in the neighbourhood we wanted to let you know that we have snacks, pop, water AND Frozen Paddle Ice Cream to keep you going.

Our Hours of Operation:  
 The Exploration Place: 7 days a week, 9am-5pm  
 Fort George Railway Station (AKA Pokestop): Thursday to Monday from 12pm-8pm,



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/TheExplorationPlace>

5. **Create a Pokémon-themed itinerary for your destination.** Travel Portland has put together a guide of Pokémon hotspots. The itinerary was promoted through social media and links to a website with descriptions and details on each area.

Example: Prince George

The [Prince George Library](#) also tapped into this idea, creating a walking tour to encourage residents and visitors to the library to explore the city. Engagement on this social post indicated strong interest in this type of tour.

 **Prince George Public Library**  
 July 22 at 8:21pm · 🌐

This is happening! Join us at the Bob Harkins Branch next Wednesday at 8pm.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/pglibrary/>

6. **Purchase Lures.** Businesses across British Columbia are attracting foot traffic by purchasing lures through the in-app store. These lures attract virtual monsters, which are followed closely by real players.

### Example: Storm Crow Tavern, Vancouver

For the Storm Crow Tavern in Vancouver, using lures and talking all things Pokémon Go on their social channels is a natural fit for this self-confessed “nerd bar.” An established meeting place for gamers, Storm Crow now hosts regular Pokémon brunches on weekends with staff putting out lures for players. (Note, you don’t have to be a nerd bar to integrate Pokémon into your business – you just have to demonstrate that you understand the game, the market it attracts, and whether it’s a fit with your consumers.)



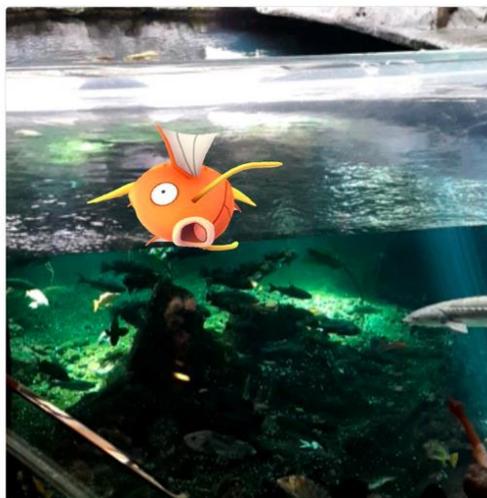
Source: <https://www.instagram.com/stormcrowtavern/>

**7. Organize Pokémon meetups.** Create an event to encourage users to explore areas in your destination together. Encourage guides and historical societies to join with players to educate them about the areas they are exploring. As an incentive for businesses, have partners launch lures at the same time and encourage them to offer special rates on goods and services. *Important note:* due to its popularity, Pokémon Go events may attract hundreds of people. Consider the practicalities and plan for size and safety. Consider holding events at various times, stagger your lures, and don’t hold events in areas with tight capacity. Keep communications flowing to ensure your event isn’t negatively impacting other local businesses.

### Example: Vancouver Aquarium

Despite a last-minute cancellation of a Pokémon meet up in Stanley Park, hundreds of players showed up, which allowed the Vancouver Aquarium to go ahead with a planned Pokémon event. The aquarium offered discounted fares, set up a charging station, and asked staff to drop lures inside.

Vancouver Aquarium @vanaqua · Jul 23  
#Pokemania is on at #vanaqua! Show us your #PokemonGo profile today & get 10% off admission: [ow.ly/nd9f302u8Gi](https://ow.ly/nd9f302u8Gi)



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/vanaqua/>

Before you jump into the Pokemon Go craze, consider these points:

- **Is Pokémon Go right for you?** If you're a destination that's giving advice to partners or a partner business yourself, put consumers and your brand first. Pokémon Go is popular right now, but it might not be a match for all businesses. Don't force Pokémon Go into marketing efforts unless you believe there's a good match with your consumers.
- **Download the app and have fun.** Becoming familiar with how it works is your first step in understanding how it can help your destination or business. Pokémon Go appeals to people of all ages so don't dismiss it as a kids' game. Do your research by playing the game, and brainstorm with other players to see if there are opportunities for your business.
- **Stay up to date with Pokémon news and trends.** Monitor how Pokémon is growing in various markets and how different businesses are using it. Do a Google search, sign up for Google Alerts to get news delivered to your inbox, or check out our list of sources below.

## Glossary of Terms

**Pokémon Go:** A free app designed specifically for smartphones, Pokémon Go is a location-based augmented-reality game that uses the GPS on your smartphone to find Pokémon in the real world. Your smartphone's touch screen is used to throw a red Poke Ball to capture the "wild" Pokémon.

**Lure:** Lures increase the number of Pokémon in any area. Lure modules are purchased from the online shop (they cost 100 gold coins each, or \$0.99 USD at most).

**PokéStop:** PokéStops are fixed GPS locations that give players in-game items by standing next to them. At PokéStops you can collect items such as eggs and more Poke Balls to catch more Pokémon.

**PokéGyms:** Pokémon Gyms are fixed GPS locations where players "battle" each other to claim that spot for their team. Each Gym can either be neutral or owned by one of the three teams (yellow, red, or blue). If a Gym is empty, a Pokémon trainer can place a Pokémon inside the Gym to take control of it as team.

## Sources:

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