



# INDIGENOUS TOURISM

## ABOUT INDIGENOUS TOURISM

Indigenous tourism in BC represents a vital intersection of economic development and culture rooted in the values and traditions of 204 First Nations communities. With over 30 First Nation languages and 60 dialects, there are cultural experiences in BC that connect visitors to millennia-old knowledge systems. Indigenous tourism is an opportunity for First Nation communities and Indigenous Peoples to create economic sovereignty and present their culture if and how they choose. Tourism, guided by responsible and regenerative travel practices, connects visitors to the land, water, sky, people and place.



PRINCE RUPERT

Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliłwətat (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.

Indigenous Tourism British Columbia (ITBC) is an Indigenous-led, non-profit, Stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry. ITBC is mandated by the First Nations Leadership Council as the voice of Indigenous tourism interests in BC.

## Key Characteristics



### OWNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP

22% of Indigenous-owned businesses in Canada operate in BC, offering experiences from art galleries to wildlife tours.<sup>1</sup>



### CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Focuses on sharing ancestral knowledge, stories, and practices while creating economic opportunities for First Nation communities and Indigenous Peoples.



### RECONCILIATION IN ACTION

Aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, promoting education, language, and economic empowerment.

<sup>1</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

# Indigenous Tourism at a Glance in BC



\$1.1B

Indigenous tourism in BC annual economic impact contribution.<sup>2</sup>



\$239.7M

Direct GDP (2023).<sup>3</sup>



400+

open Indigenous tourism-related businesses in BC.<sup>4</sup>



9,962

Total jobs supported (2023).<sup>5</sup>



88%

of people in Canada are interested in Indigenous cultural activities.<sup>6</sup>



31%

of international visitors seek Indigenous experiences, with strong interest from Germany, France, and UK markets.<sup>7</sup>



Contributes to cultural practices, stewardship, sharing, learning, and creating meaningful connections between land, water, sky, nature and people.

<sup>2</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>3</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>4</sup>Indigenous Tourism BC

<sup>5</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>6</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>7</sup>Destination Canada, 2025 Global Traveller Research Program. Information for Netherlands and India is not available.



# Economic Value of the Indigenous Tourism Industry in BC

Indigenous tourism in BC is a significant economic driver, contributing substantially to the economies of First Nation communities and to the province. In 2023, the sector generated a total economic impact of \$1.1 billion and direct GDP contribution of \$239.7 million.<sup>8</sup>

This represents the economic value added directly by Indigenous tourism businesses through their operations, including accommodations, cultural experiences, and adventure tourism. Additionally, the Indigenous tourism industry generated \$180.4 million in government revenue, which supports public infrastructure, services, and jobs such as teachers and health care workers.<sup>9</sup>

The industry supported a total of 9,962 jobs across the province in 2023, with 6,708 of these being direct employment opportunities, particularly in rural and First Nation communities.<sup>10</sup> Indigenous tourism jobs contribute to economic growth and continued practice of cultural traditions and the transmission of knowledge between generations for the future growth of Indigenous tourism.

<sup>8</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>9</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>10</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025



MASSET

## Indigenous Values in Tourism

### SHARING

Beyond economic value, the growing interest in cultural tourism products has created new opportunities for Indigenous peoples in BC to develop businesses that share aspects of their traditions, histories, and cultures. Tourism provides opportunities for Elders, youth and community members to share their stories, dances, and songs.

### CONNECTING

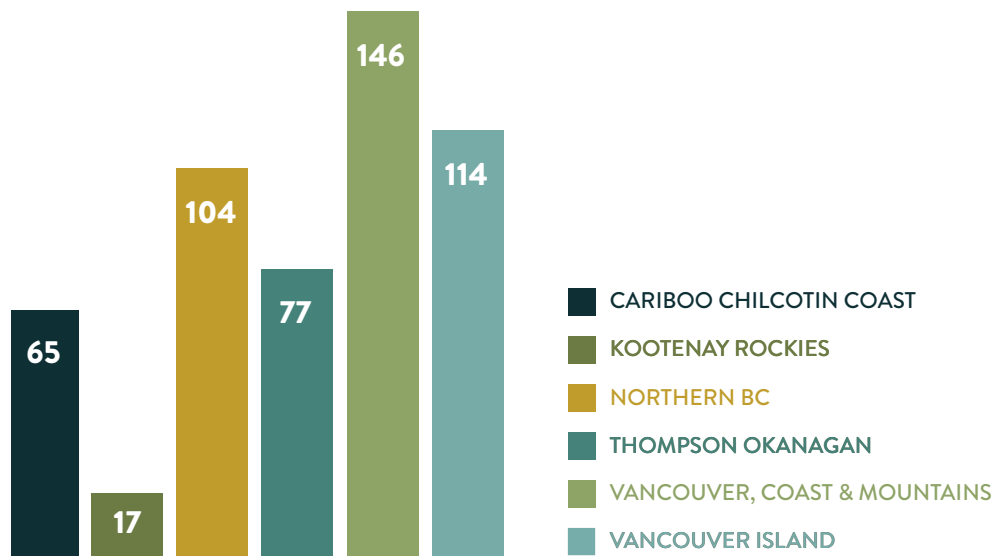
Indigenous tourism is associated with Indigenous values in culture, stewardship, sharing, learning, and creating meaningful connections between land, nature, and people. Indigenous tourism can create opportunities for meaningful interactions and space for conversation and collaboration between visitors and local communities, helping to deepen respect for Indigenous knowledge and land.



# Characteristics of the Indigenous Tourism Industry

There are 525 Indigenous Tourism BC Stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> An estimated 41% of Indigenous tourism businesses are classified as “doors-open”, with 33% offering visitor-ready experiences and 26% operating at a market-ready level.<sup>12</sup>

## Indigenous Tourism Businesses by Region



Before the pandemic, Indigenous tourism emerged as the fastest-growing segment of Canada’s tourism market, making a significant impact on both job creation and the country’s GDP. Over 50% of the workforce in Indigenous tourism identified as Indigenous.<sup>13</sup> Tourism is a significant employer of Indigenous peoples, who often find their first job in the industry. 62% of Indigenous tourism businesses are in rural and remote areas.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Indigenous Tourism BC

<sup>12</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>13</sup>Canada 365: Welcoming the World. Every Day., Government of Canada, 2023

<sup>14</sup>Canada 365: Welcoming the World. Every Day., Government of Canada, 2023













# Traveller Characteristics






Across Destination BC and ITBC’s key markets, interest in learning about Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories differs, with France showing the highest engagement at 52%.<sup>15</sup>

Based on a Destination BC study of five markets, Los Angeles and San Francisco travellers show the highest interest (66%) in Indigenous cultural and heritage tourism experiences in BC, followed by travellers from Washington state (62%). Travellers in these two

markets are also the most likely to have participated in an Indigenous cultural experience, attraction, and/or celebration at a destination outside their home state, and be motivated to take an overnight leisure trip to BC to learn about Indigenous culture and history.<sup>16</sup>

Market	Learning about Indigenous cultures, traditions, or histories	Cultural or traditional festivals	Trying local food and drink
 France	47%	23%	47%
 UK	43%	38%	71%
 Mexico	40%	38%	59%
 US	37%	39%	63%
 Germany	34%	32%	52%

Market	Learning about Indigenous cultures, traditions, or histories	Cultural or traditional festivals	Trying local food and drink
 Australia	33%	41%	62%
 China	31%	28%	41%
 Canada	26%	32%	56%
 South Korea	22%	35%	58%
 Japan	21%	27%	62%

Market	Interest in BC Indigenous Experiences	Past Participation in Indigenous Experiences (any destination)	Motivated to Take a Trip to BC to Learn About Indigenous Culture and History
 BC	53%	33%	17%
 Alberta	48%	30%	11%
 Greater Toronto Area	56%	31%	14%
 Washington	62%	50%	21%
 Los Angeles/San Francisco	66%	48%	22%

<sup>15</sup>Destination Canada, 2024 Global Traveller Research Program. Information for Netherlands and India is not available.

<sup>16</sup>Destination BC 2024 Key Performance Indicator Survey Wave IX, July 2024. Interest represents the % rating 4 or 5 out of 5. Motivated to Take a 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 BC in the next 12 months.



# 57%

of people in Canada are likely to take part in Indigenous travel experiences in the future, up to 75% for Gen Z travellers.<sup>17</sup>

**Indigenous Tourism BC target travellers for Indigenous tourism includes:**<sup>18</sup>

**CONSCIOUS TRAVELLERS**  
those couples and families that are interested in learning, connecting with each other, and giving back.

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**  
those that are interested in supporting their own community, businesses, and economies.

**CORPORATIONS / ORGANIZATIONS**  
those that are looking to implement Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and applying First Nation learning principles.

## Trends in Indigenous Tourism

Various online reports from ITBC, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Destination BC, Leger, Deloitte, and UN Tourism highlight some key trends in Indigenous tourism:<sup>19</sup>

### Youth Leadership

Indigenous youth are stepping into leadership roles and are creating new pathways for Indigenous tourism. They are innovators and change makers, weaving ancestral knowledge with modern ways of being.<sup>20</sup>

### Global Market Growth

The Indigenous tourism sector is experiencing unprecedented growth, projected to reach \$96 billion globally by 2034.<sup>21</sup> Canada is a leader in this growth at \$3.7 billion in revenues (2023)<sup>22</sup>, with BC hosting 22% of Indigenous tourism businesses in the country.<sup>23</sup>

### Cultural Focus

Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic and meaningful experiences and Indigenous tourism offers this.

### Digital Information

Some First Nation communities are focusing on secure and equitable digital information practices by prioritizing Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles to ensure data sovereignty and community benefit.<sup>24</sup>

### Sustainable Practice Integration

There's a growing emphasis on incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into tourism operations, creating experiences that balance cultural sharing with environmental stewardship.

### Culinary Tourism Growth

Indigenous culinary experiences are emerging as a distinct and popular subsector, offering visitors authentic taste experiences that connect them to traditional food practices and cultural stories.

### Capacity Development

Indigenous tourism faces a positive challenge where demand is outpacing supply capacity, creating opportunities for business expansion.<sup>25</sup>

### Community-led Innovation

First Nations are taking the lead in tourism development, ensuring authentic representation and sustainable economic benefits while innovating in areas like digital presence and experience design.

<sup>17</sup>2024 Summer Travel Outlook, Deloitte

<sup>18</sup>Indigenous Tourism BC, Strengthening Our Roots & Branches Corporate Strategy 2023-2027

<sup>19</sup>Indigenous Tourism BC, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Destination BC, UN Tourism and Culture, Destination BC Our Commitments Towards

<sup>20</sup>Destination BC, Our Commitments Towards Truth and Reconciliation

<sup>21</sup>World Travel & Tourism Council, Supporting Global Indigenous Tourism, October 2024

<sup>22</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>23</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025

<sup>24</sup>First Nations Information Governance Centre

<sup>25</sup>Indigenous Tourism Sector Impact in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, January 2025







# Indigenous Tourism Growth

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Key factors affecting First Nations communities include capacity, funding, economic conditions, access to capital, training, and climate impacts. Additional considerations include infrastructure improvements—such as roads, services, water, and connectivity—as well as the presence of extractive industries and complexities around licensing, permits, and tenures within First Nations territories. Recognizing the cultural and social importance of Indigenous tourism, strengthening self-determination, collaboration, and policy support is essential for long-term success.

## CONTACT

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