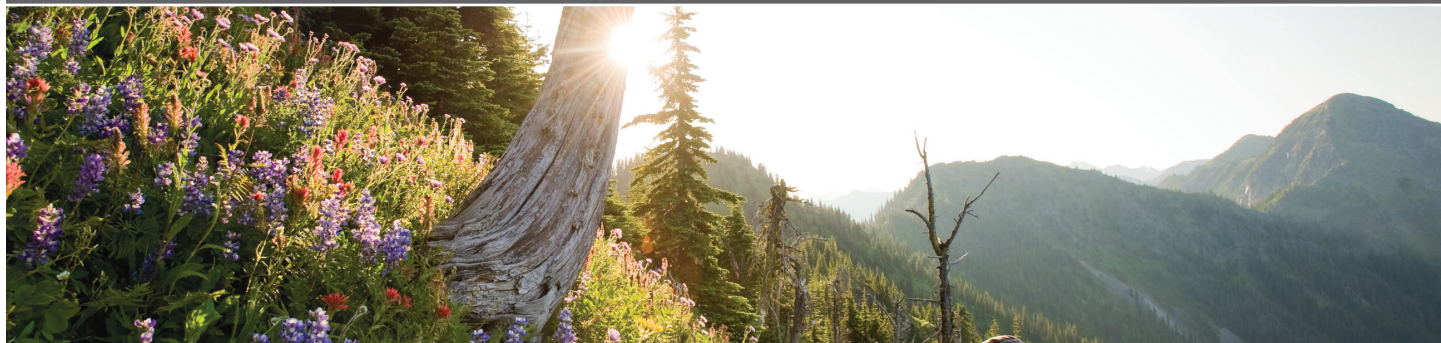




Gaining the Edge

A PROGRESS UPDATE | MARCH 2017



TOURISM INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

British Columbia's economy benefits significantly from tourism, which generates jobs, investment and growth in communities throughout the province. Tourism — one of the nine economic sectors in the [BC Jobs Plan](#) — is one of B.C.'s key strengths and is a sector with exponential growth opportunity.

Our province has many competitive advantages in tourism through its proximity to Asia, spectacular natural assets, safe and welcoming environment, and world-class visitor experiences provided by nearly 19,000 tourism businesses.

B.C. has seen tremendous growth over the last few years and remains on track to meet its 5% revenue growth target, despite fierce global competition and a sluggish world economic recovery.

In 2016, B.C. welcomed 5.5 million international visitors — that's more than the population of B.C. This year's latest international [visitor numbers](#) continue to show positive increases and when combined with the Province's over \$98 million investment in tourism, all indicators point to 2016 being another record breaking year for tourism in B.C.

SECTOR GROWTH SINCE 2015

Tourism GDP contributed
\$7.4 BILLION
to the provincial economy in 2015,
increasing 5.6% from 2014.



Tourism revenue reached
\$15.7 BILLION
in 2015, up 5.3% from 2014.

Over
\$5.5 MILLION
international visitors came
to British Columbia in 2016,
up 12.3% from 2015.



Employment was 1.2% higher in 2015
than in 2014, with over
127,700 PEOPLE
working at a tourism-related business.

Wages and salaries

GREW 4%
in 2015.



PROGRESS ON BRITISH COLUMBIA’S
TOURISM STRATEGY

In September 2015, the Province released its updated tourism strategy **Gaining the Edge: 2015–2018**.

The refreshed strategy renewed investment commitments and created new actions to address emerging opportunities in this flourishing sector.

This plan includes targeted actions to grow B.C.’s tourism market share in four key areas: leadership through partnership, alignment and coordination, focussed marketing, world-class experiences, and enhancing competitiveness and sustainability.

Since 2015, B.C. has made significant progress in advancing the key pillars of its provincial tourism strategy with a number of key accomplishments as highlighted below:



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PILLAR 1
Leadership through
Partnership, Alignment
and Coordination.

*“Facilitating
greater alignment,
investments and
efficiencies in B.C.’s
tourism system
to amplify B.C.’s
development
opportunities and
marketing messages.”*

Partnership and coordination are fundamental to accomplishing our goals in Gaining the Edge: 2015 – 2018. The Province and Destination BC have worked towards strengthening existing partnerships, as well as developing new ones — all with the goal of facilitating greater investment alignment to amplify tourism growth in BC.

IN 2016, THE PROVINCE:

- » Invested \$910,000 through the **Tourism Events Program** to support events such as the Salmon Arm Roots and Blues Festival, Americas Masters Games, Pacific Links Golf Championship, Grand Slam of Curling and World Junior Taekwondo Championships, among others.
- » Supported delivery of the enhanced Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) program, increasing the MRDT to 3% — boosting funding for community tourism marketing.
- » Invested \$10.5 million across 14 resort communities through the **Resort Municipality Initiative**, enabling these communities to enhance the quality of tourism through infrastructure enhancements, events and other activities.

IN 2016, DESTINATION BC:

- » Launched the **Destination Development Program**, designed to support industry in enhancing and developing tourism services and amenities.
- » Ran a successful **North America ski campaign** to increase visitor volume during the winter season.
- » Partnered with Destination Canada’s \$30 million Connecting America Program to capitalize on the growing U.S. market.



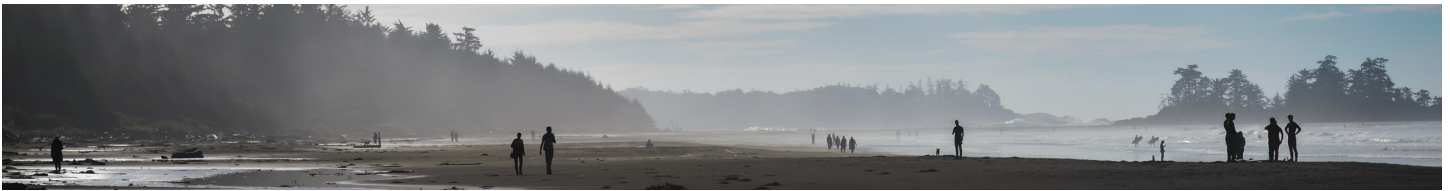
PILLAR 2

Focused Marketing

"Building on Destination BC's successful marketing initiatives to compel visitors from key markets."

Destination BC continues to inspire visits from key markets and since 2015 has successfully:

- » Launched the **Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program** to maximize B.C.'s marketing impact and return on investment for tourism businesses in participating communities.
- » In 2016, rolled out a widely successful **Explore BC** campaign to motivate residents to book a staycation and to get out and explore more of what their province has to offer.
- » Continued to inspire visits to B.C. through the province's tourism brand, **Super, Natural British Columbia®** and **"Wild Within"**.
- » Led more than 25 brand alignment workshops in 2015 with industry stakeholders.
- » In 2016, hosted 500+ travel journalists from key markets, which generated media awareness and stories that showcased British Columbia globally.
- » In 2016, unveiled **BC Explorer**, an innovative travel planning and photo tool designed to inspire travel to British Columbia.
- » In 2016, worked closely with Amazing Race Canada to feature Haida Gwaii and Prince Rupert as key stops during the show's international programming.



PILLAR 3

World-class Experiences

“Supporting industry, regions, communities and Aboriginal people to develop or enhance the tourism products and experiences that draw people to our spectacular province.”

The Provincial government in partnership with Destination BC and the tourism industry play a key role in maintaining and enhancing B.C.’s reputation as a world-class destination.

SINCE 2015, DESTINATION BC:

- » Launched the **Remarkable Experiences Program** in 2015 with four pilot programs, educating operators on digital and social media marketing, and innovative visitor experiences.
- » Invested \$200,000 in 2015 for a new **Innovation Fund** to support world-class hospitality and visitor services. In 2016, \$300,000 was invested in this program.
- » Developed new Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor Training materials.
- » Provided visitor services to more than 2.8 million visitors through traditional Visitor Centre locations along with “roaming ambassadors” and “mobile street team” community programs.

THIS PAST YEAR, THE PROVINCE:

- » Signed an agreement that ensures the protection of 85% of the Great Bear Rainforest — one of the largest tracts of intact coastal temperate rainforest remaining in the world.
- » The **BC Rural Dividend** is providing \$75 million over three years to assist rural communities with a population of 25,000 or less to reinvigorate and diversify their local economies.
- » Initiated mandatory off-road vehicle registration and safety provisions for use on Crown land effective Nov. 1, 2015.
- » Invested \$6 million in 25 municipalities to increase resident and visitor cycling opportunities in B.C.
- » Installed new cycling signage for the South Okanagan Cycling Network in Kamloops.
- » Invested over \$50,000 in upgrades at the Halfway River Hot Springs Recreation Site, increasing opportunities for recreational camping in B.C.
- » Announced the BC Parks Future Strategy which includes investments in a new BC Parks Foundation, improvements for persons with disabilities and a \$22.9 million investment in campsite expansions in BC Parks and Recreation sites.

OTHER RECENT SUCCESSES:

- » Prince George hosted the 2015 BC Winter Games, bringing nation-wide attention and increased travel to B.C.
- » Aboriginal Tourism remained one of the fastest-growing tourism areas in B.C. Since 2006, it has experienced a doubling of revenue from \$20 million to \$42 million and exceeded the BC Jobs Plan target of 300 Aboriginal owned tourism businesses by 2017.
- » B.C. played host to the 2015 Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism and Trade Conference in Vancouver, demonstrating B.C.’s leadership in Aboriginal tourism on the global stage.



PILLAR 4 Enhancing Competitiveness and Sustainability

“Adopting policies and undertaking strategic investments to remove barriers and support tourism growth.”

The Province, along with its many partners, is committed to looking for ways to enhance tourism’s resiliency and future success in B.C.

THIS PAST YEAR, THE PROVINCE:

- » Launched a new online [hosting toolkit](#) to guide communities and organizations through the various stages of event management from preparing a bid package to tracking an event’s economic impact.
- » Legislated changes to the *Tourism Accommodation (Assessment Relief) Act* to keep pace with increases in rural property values.
- » Streamlined the tenure application and replacement processes and simplified fee structures for adventure tourism operators.
- » Increased the maximum terms on specific kinds of leases and licences available to adventure tourism operators; providing more long-term business certainty.
- » Invested \$6 million across 10 B.C. airports including the Long Beach Airport in Tofino and New West Regional Airport in Terrace.
- » Invested in the multi-phase revitalization of Victoria’s Belleville Wharf Terminal, which will bring new investments and expanded services.
- » Increased air access and additional flights to Vancouver contributed to the sectors’ growth. Between March 2015 and August 2016, Vancouver International Airport (YVR) attracted 17 additional routes, including new routes to Xiamen, China; Rome, Italy; Paris, France; Brisbane, Australia; London, UK; Dublin, Ireland; New Delhi, India; Mexico City, Mexico; Osaka, Japan; and Manila, Philippines.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

With all these achievements, it is no surprise B.C.'s tourism industry continues to see success and growth. In 2016, B.C. saw a remarkable 12.3% increase in international visitors over the previous year. A total of 5.5 million international visitors came to B.C. in 2016 — 605,918 more people compared to 2015. B.C. also continues to receive world-wide recognition as an award winning destination of choice. A few of the many accolades received since 2015 include:

- » The New York Times named the Southern Gulf Islands as one of the “Top 52 Places to Go” in 2016.
- » SKI Magazine ranked Whistler Blackcomb the top ski resort in North America in 2015.
- » In 2016, YVR named “Best Airport in the World” by the CAPA Centre for Aviation and the Skytrax World Airport Awards named YVR the “Best Airport in North America” for the seventh year in a row.
- » Travel & Leisure named Victoria the ninth “Best City in Canada/US” in 2015. Condé Nast Traveler also named Victoria the 24th “Best City in the World” in 2016. Plus, B.C. was awarded Travel + Leisure’s **World’s Best Award** for 15 tourism businesses and destinations across B.C.
- » B.C. won “Best Destination for Adventure, Canada” at the TravelAge West WAVE Awards in California in 2015.
- » Rough Guides placed Vancouver on its Top 10 cities to visit in 2016.
- » Victoria labelled a “cool hip city” by Vogue Magazine and recognized as one of the best cities to visit in Canada and the US.
- » Vacay.ca gave B.C.’s Sea to Sky corridor the number one spot in its “20 Best Places to Visit in Canada in 2016.”
- » Tofino won the 2016 Sunset Travel Award for “Best Beach Town in The West.”
- » Victoria rated 7th best city in the world by Condé Nast Traveler 2016 Readers’ Choice Awards survey.



LOOKING AHEAD

While B.C. has made significant progress in Year 1 of the updated Gaining the Edge, there is still more to do to ensure the sustainable growth of the industry. Working in partnership with Destination BC, other governments, and the tourism industry, the Province will continue to implement the actions outlined in Gaining the Edge 2015–2018.

Looking ahead, B.C. is poised to achieve even greater success through programs and activities like the Destination Development and Remarkable Experience programs that will yield tangible results for the industry and further the development of a strong and diverse visitor economy. B.C. will continue to attract and host more international events through the new Tourism Events Program and further invest in traveller rest areas and tourism infrastructure throughout the province. Government will continue to support industry efforts to attract and retain highly skilled tourism professionals allowing us to deliver on the remarkable experiences today's travellers are looking for.

Photos in this Status Update Courtesy of Destination BC.