


Central Alberta

Destination  
Management  
Plan



REALIZING OUR POTENTIAL

December 2015

A black and white photograph of a hiker with a large backpack, wearing a cap and a t-shirt, looking out over a scenic mountain landscape. The hiker is in the foreground, facing right. In the background, there is a large lake, a dense forest of evergreen trees, and rugged mountains under a clear sky. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

A tourism product is what you buy;  
a tourism experience is what you remember.

— Canadian Tourism Commission, 2011

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Destinations that develop the right mix of experiences and successfully appeal to their target markets will experience greater visitation and greater benefits from tourism.

Sylvan Lake

# Acknowledgements

Realizing our Potential is the result of collaborative efforts by the Central Alberta Tourism Steering Committee, tourism industry and the project team from Stantec Consulting Ltd., Royal Roads University and the Tartan Group. We would like to thank everyone for their vision, excitement and commitment towards realizing our region's true tourism potential.

## Tourism Committee

- Liz Taylor—Tourism Red Deer
- Michelle Zeggil—City of Red Deer
- Dean Schweder—Town of Rocky Mountain House
- Vicki Kurz—Town of Sylvan Lake
- Helen Dietz—Town of Innisfail
- Andrew Cohrs—Town of Innisfail
- Marie Péron—Lacombe Regional Tourism
- Lantry Vaughan—Lacombe County
- Jennifer Hartigh—Town of Blackfalds
- Stephen Novak—Town of Ponoka
- Mitch Thomson—Olds Institute
- Sandra Badry—Red Deer County
- Jerry Pratt—Clearwater County

The committee would like to acknowledge the gracious financial and advisory support provided by:



Royal Roads  
UNIVERSITY



## Interviewees

- Red Deer Airport
- Discovery Wildlife Park
- Travel Alberta
- Taste of Markerville
- Rider's Rush
- Polar Creek
- Centre for Outdoor Education
- Rocky Mountain House Historic Site (Parks Canada)
- Aurum Lodge
- Fort Ostell Museum
- Ellis Bird Farm
- Kraay Family Farm
- Olds College
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
- Alberta Environment and Parks

The committee would also like to thank the hundreds of individuals who took time to share their thoughts and insights via the project MindMixer site and the various workshops held throughout the planning process.

# Invitation to Participate

In 2015, eleven Central Alberta communities (Lacombe, Olds, Ponoka, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, Blackfalds, Red Deer and the Counties of Red Deer, Clearwater and Lacombe) came together to examine our tourism industry focusing on coordination, planning, development, marketing and investment at the regional level.

This Destination Management Plan is the product of a comprehensive and collaborative process that begins with the creation and sharing of this plan. This document provides, among other things, an up-to-date identification of our key target markets and a comprehensive summary of our competitive advantages for tourism. It proposes and makes the case for how we can enhance the capacity of our destination by creating a desired future and a road map to reaching it.

Our hope is that over time, this plan will be shared and discussed with all of our Strategic Alliances within the study area and beyond, with each and every community, organization or individual business being able to pull value from the report and enhance the tourism experiences we collectively offer to our residents and visitors.

The Steering Committee views the plan as a guide and point of reference as we continue discussions around a shared vision and goals for our destination's future. We invite all communities to access the plan, digest the research, and ultimately use the valuable information to assist and shape their own community or business growth. Additionally, we encourage them to examine ways that they can contribute to the regional experiences and determine how a shared vision for our destination's future can support their own community or business.

If you would like to become more involved in the ongoing discussions please contact:

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# Executive Summary

Realizing our Potential is a plan that provides direction to tourism development, marketing, and management in Central Alberta for the next 10 years. It is a framework in which tourism industry partners can work collaboratively towards achieving a shared vision. Development of the plan was facilitated by an inter-municipal committee of partners who are dedicated to realizing the true tourism potential of our region. Over 100 tourism stakeholders were involved in the preparation of this plan either through online public engagement, stakeholder interviews, and workshop participation. Combined, this plan represents the hard work of the Central Alberta Steering Committee, tourism industry interviewees, and other provincial and local governments, tourism operators and land managers working together to chart a shared path forward for tourism in Central Alberta.

## Central Alberta DMP Steering Committee:

- Tourism Red Deer
- City of Red Deer
- Red Deer County
- Town of Rocky Mountain House
- Town of Sylvan Lake
- Town of Innisfail
- Lacombe Regional Tourism
- City/County of Lacombe
- Town of Blackfalds
- Town of Ponoka
- Olds Institute
- Clearwater County
- Alberta Culture and Tourism (advisory member)

The following organizations were interviewed in the development of the plan:

- Red Deer Airport
- Discovery Wildlife Park
- Travel Alberta
- Taste of Markerville
- Rider's Rush
- Polar Creek
- Centre for Outdoor Education
- Rocky Mountain House Historic Site (Parks Canada)
- Aurum Lodge
- Fort Ostell Museum
- Ellis Bird Farm
- Kraay Family Farm
- Olds College
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
- Alberta Environment and Parks

## WHAT IS DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING?

Planning for tourism is no easy task—there are many people involved and many tourism features to think about. We need to consider how to market our greatest assets; how to create a brand that reflects the diversity of our region; and how we can attract the level of investment required to enhance our industry. Destination management planning is a collaborative process in which tourism, industry, government and community leaders plan for the future of and manage a destination. As a comprehensive framework, it identifies the competitive advantages of the destination, the target markets potentially interested in visiting; how the unique tourism resources will be managed; how the destination will be enhanced; how effects on the destination will be understood; and how the destination will reach out to and compel its target markets to visit.



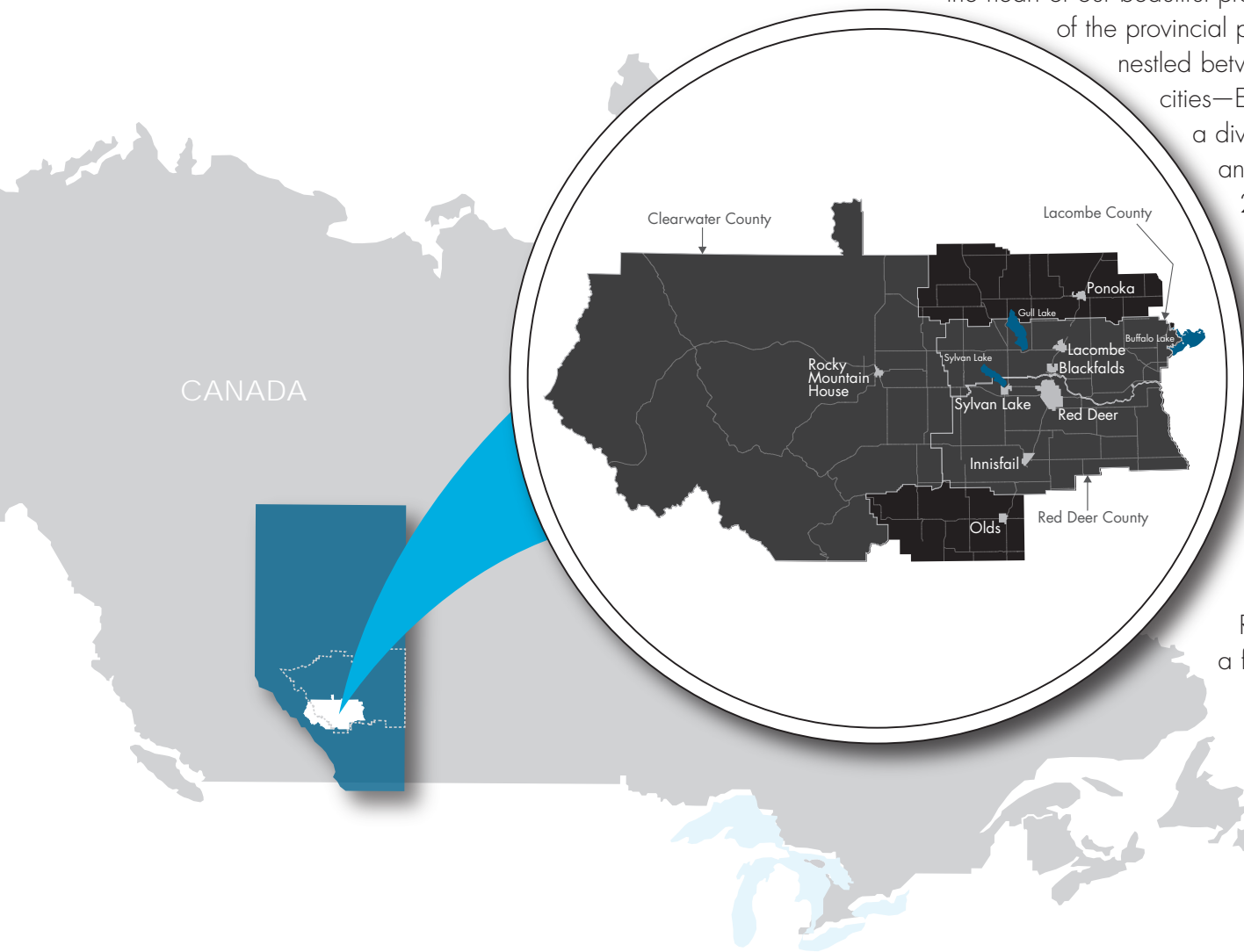
Destination Management Planning Tool  
Source: World Tourism Organization, 2007

Destination management planning is a collaborative process in which tourism, industry, government and community leaders plan for the future and manage a destination.



## OUR REGION

Bordered by Banff National Park in the west, Southern Alberta and the Calgary region to the south, the Red Deer River and Buffalo Lake to the east and the Lacombe and Clearwater County borders to the north, our region spans over 31,000 square kilometres and lies in the heart of our beautiful province. Our region contains about 6% of the provincial population (222,217 as of 2011) and is nestled between two of Alberta's fastest growing cities—Edmonton and Calgary. Our region has a diverse economy and tourism is becoming an increasingly important industry. As of 2006, the service sector, within which the tourism industry fits, accounted for 63% of employment in the region. In 2011, our region saw 11 major tourism/recreation related construction projects worth about \$118.5 million when completed. These projects ranged in type including hotel construction in Blackfalds and Olds, a multi-use trail in Clearwater County, modernization/additions to the Red Deer Curling Centre, and the Fieldhouse Recreation Facility in Blackfalds to name a few.



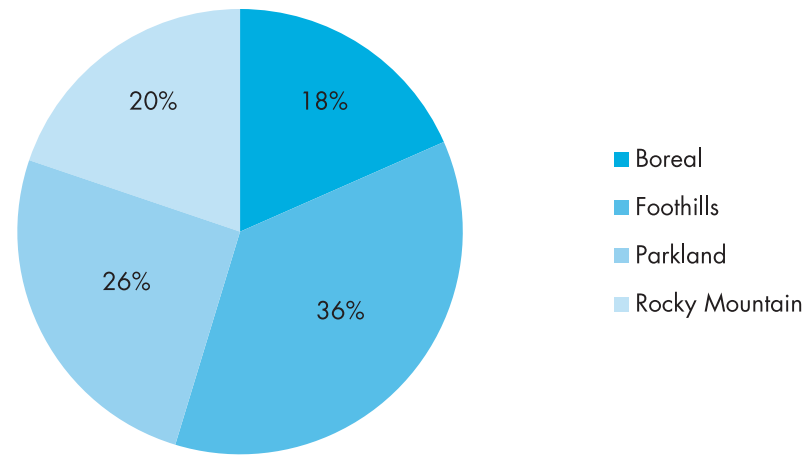
Central Alberta Region Study Area

## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO OFFER?

Our geography speaks for itself—we are located in one of Alberta’s most beautiful and diverse landscapes with biodiversity and world-class scenery. Our landscapes, ecosystems, parks and protected areas, and incredible biodiversity serve as both attractions and settings for memorable experiences. However, these also serve as potential constraints to tourism development and are important to consider when planning and managing our region as a destination.

Unlike any other region of Alberta, Central Alberta is staged at the convergence of four of the province’s six natural regions. The diversity of our landscapes and natural settings makes our region appealing to any visitor. Our natural diversity has shaped our heritage, our settlement patterns and our way of life. It is only fitting that our natural diversity is also featured as a foundation of our region’s tourism industry, providing visitors with opportunities to hike, climb, kayak, cycle, and ATV across the landscape. Our region also provides authentic historic and cultural experiences found on our national and provincial historic sites, museums and special places.

According to the Government of Alberta’s Recreation and Tourism Opportunities Spectrum (RTOS), our region contains a variety of settings, from the front-country areas in the east to the rugged backcountry of the Bighorn. These settings provide a backdrop to support a large array of visitor experiences.



Distribution of Natural Regions

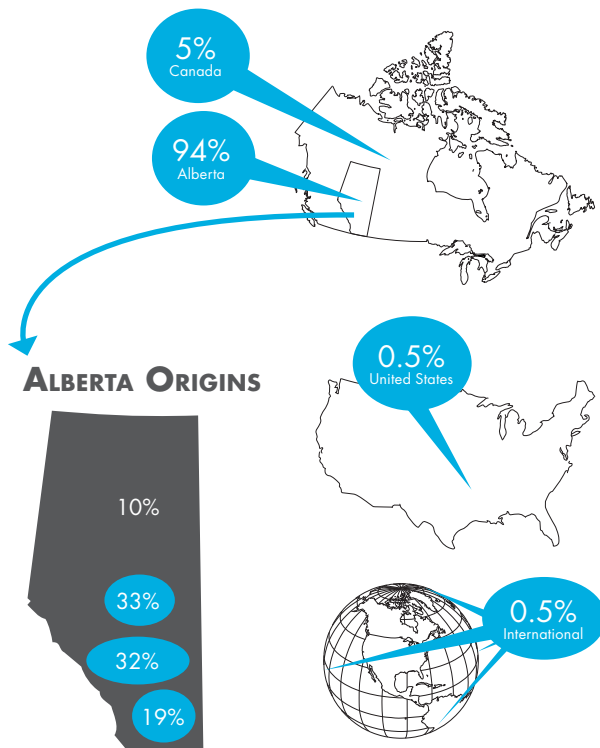
## WHO IS CURRENTLY VISITING OUR REGION?

Tourism is big business in Alberta. As a \$7.4 billion industry that supports 19,000 businesses, tourism employs about 114,000 people and as of 2012, attracted 33 million total visits annually. In 2012, tourism contributed \$2.6 billion in GDP to Alberta and approximately \$3.4 billion in total tax revenue to all levels of government. The following graphics illustrate visitation patterns and spending in our region. Note that the data presented in these graphics are for the Alberta Central Tourism Region, which is larger than the study area.

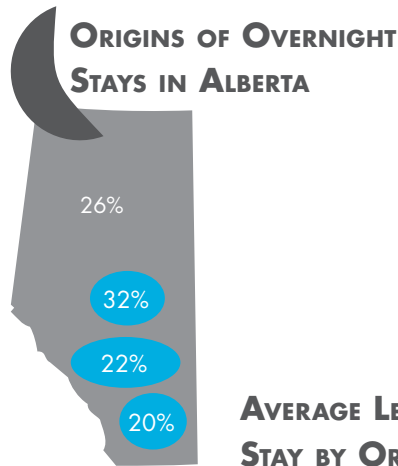
# Understanding Alberta Central's Visitation

**8 million** = **24%**  
 person visits to Central Alberta of total visits to Alberta

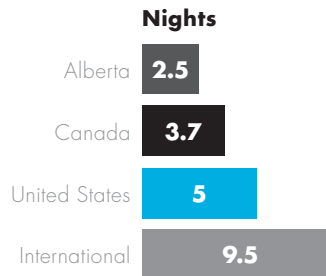
## WHERE DO VISITORS COME FROM?



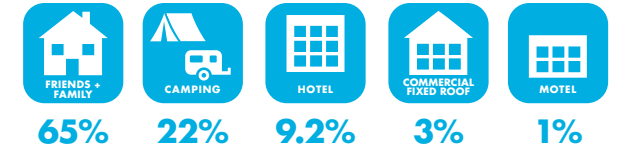
**35%** of visits had at least **1** overnight visit  
 = **2.7 million** overnight visits



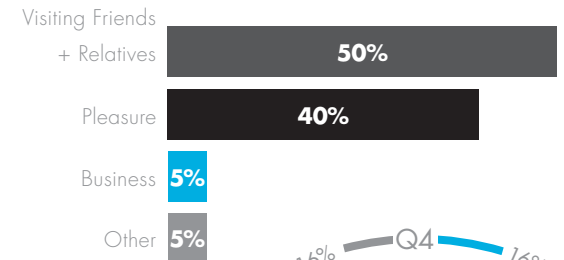
## AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY BY ORIGIN



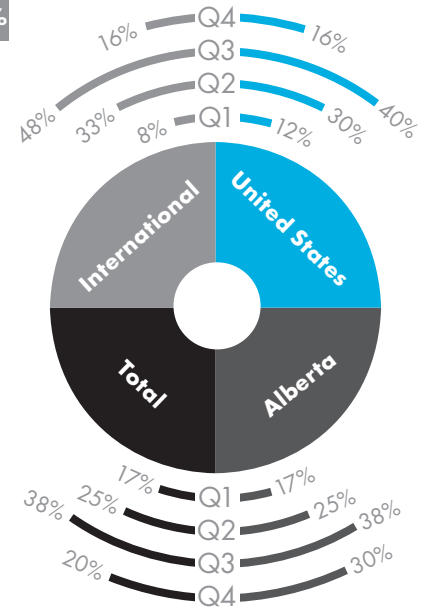
## WHERE DO THEY STAY?



## WHY DO THEY VISIT?



## WHEN DO THEY VISIT?



Note: The Alberta Central Tourism Region, on which this data is based, is a much larger region than the Central Alberta study area.

Source: Alberta Central Tourism Region: A Summary of 2012 Numbers and Characteristics. Government of Alberta 2012

# Economic Impact of Tourism in Alberta Central

## HOW MUCH IS SPENT IN ALBERTA CENTRAL?

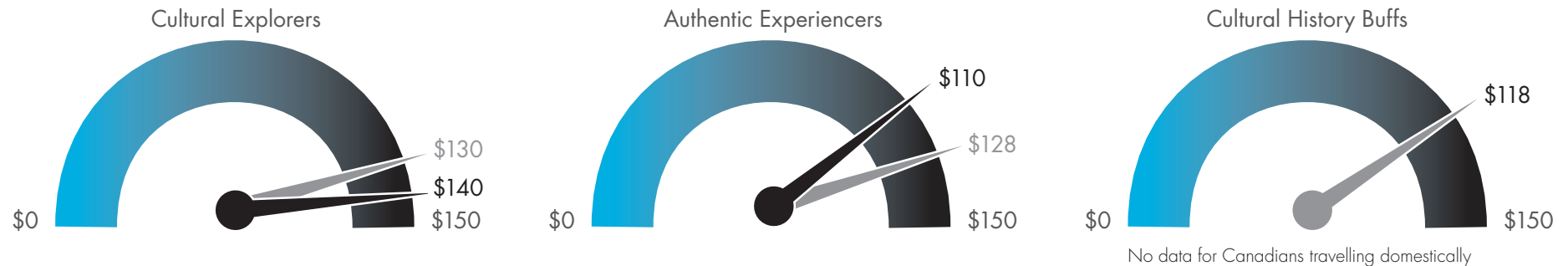
**\$1.2 billion** = 16% of provincial visitor spending in Alberta

## HOW MANY JOBS ARE CREATED?

**16,785** full-time equivalent jobs generated in tourism sector

## DAILY SPENDING BY TRAVELLER TYPE

- Canadians travelling domestically
- Global markets coming to Canada



**\$476 million** = total tax revenue accrued to all three levels of government in 2012 as a result of tourism activity in Alberta Central Tourism Region

Note: The Alberta Central Tourism Region, on which this data is based, is a much larger region than the Central Alberta study area.

Source: Tourism Works for Alberta. The Economic Impact of Tourism in Alberta Central Tourism Region, 2012. Government of Alberta 2013.

## WHAT DO OUR VISITORS SAY ABOUT OUR REGION?

We were keen to understand visitor perceptions of our region and what assets, attractions, and experiences were the most popular and most talked about. So we took to “Big Data” and monitored social media traffic during the winter and summer of 2015. In total, 8 social media platforms were observed including: Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, WordPress, News Source, YouTube, Instagram, and Google+.

There were a number of tourism related posts in the winter and spring/summer monitoring periods. In the winter, people posted most about ice fishing and hiking activities. In the spring/summer, activities including climbing, hiking, fly fishing, and quadding were featured most frequently.

“Today we really explored Alberta. We hiked and jumped and climbed the falls near Nordegg, Alberta. We climbed to the top of the highest point on the mountain there and back. We climbed through deep snow and mud. We saw hail and rain and sunshine today. It was a great day for an adventure! #alberta #cresentfalls #snow #outdoors #falls #nordegg #hike #hiking”.  
—Sample post from Instagram

## Results from Visitors’ Voice Social Media Analysis

**55,462** total number of spring/summer posts—  
all social media platforms

**21,619** total number of winter posts—  
all social media platforms

**5–7%** of all winter posts were tourism related  
which included posts about hiking, ice  
fishing, climbing, and more

**80%** of winter tourism social media  
posts featured

**Nordegg & Sylvan Lake**

**99%** of spring/summer tourism social media  
posts featured

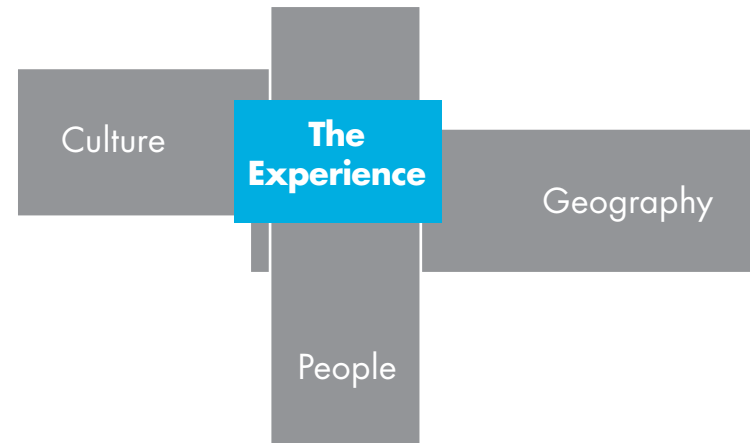
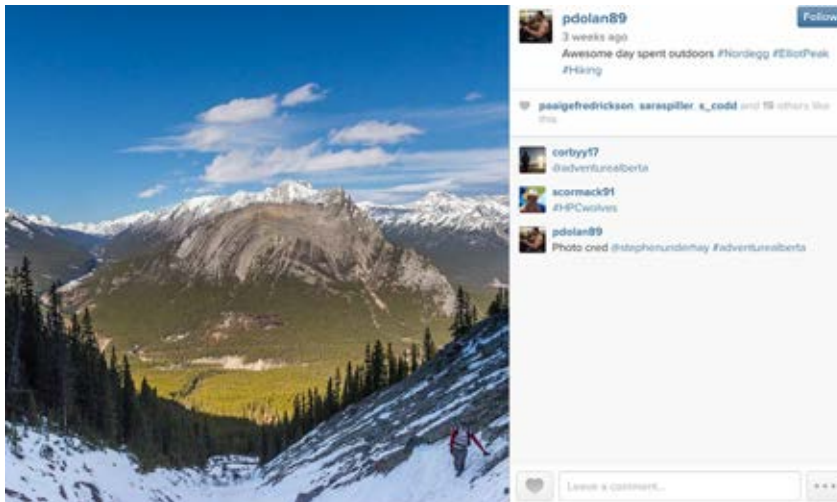
**Nordegg**



## OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Central Alberta is staged at the convergence of four of the province's six natural regions. The diversity of our landscapes and natural settings along with our central location—between the province's two largest urban centres—make our region truly unique, and easily accessible for local and international visitors.

Our region offers many tourism activities from fishing to skiing and shopping, to going to the rodeo, taking in Red Deer's urban experiences or visiting an art gallery—we offer an experience for everyone. Our long summer days offer numerous opportunities for camping, cycling, mountain biking, white water rafting, fishing, boating, kayaking, and visiting beaches on Sylvan and Gull lakes. The West Country is the province's most accessible mountain-based recreation area that provides numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation activities including world-class ice climbing, fishing, climbing and hiking. The David Thompson Highway is Central Alberta's gateway to the Rocky Mountains. As a less crowded and less traveled route to the Banff and Jasper National Parks, visitors have opportunities for backcountry camping, wildlife viewing, adventures in unspoiled wilderness, and some of the best scenery in the province.



For tourists more interested in learning about the region’s culture and history, they can experience one of many provincial historic sites, take in a stampede or head west to experience the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site, and learn about the great fur trader and explorer, David Thompson, and the paths of voyageurs on the North Saskatchewan River. Our region also boasts a rich agricultural history and currently offers agri-tourism experiences including opportunities to visit farmers markets, family farms and events such as the Taste of Markerville.

A tourism experience happens at the intersection of local people, local culture and local geography. As such, it was appropriate that we began our planning for the future of tourism by taking stock of our current visitor experience offering and the resources on which they are founded.

### Visitor Experience Themes in our Region

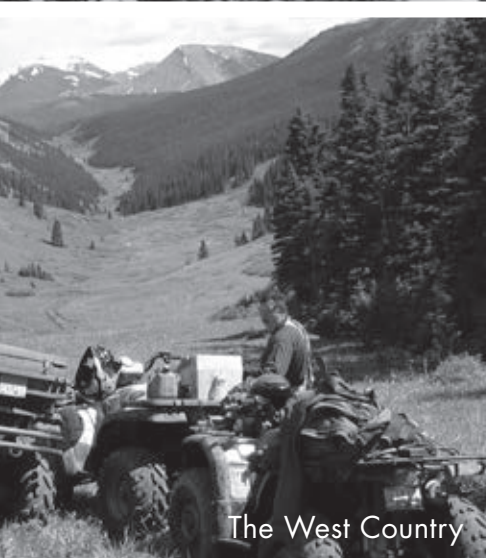
Given that our region has many visitor experiences—from the adventure and outdoor recreation opportunities in the West Country, to its agricultural flare, water-based experiences on our prime recreational lakes, the urban, business travel, sports and events of Red Deer or the region’s incredible heritage and cultures—Central Alberta brings more diversity than any other region in the province. The range of experiences currently offered can be organized into the following visitor experience themes:

- Nature, Adventure & Ecotourism
- Agri-tourism & Culinary Tourism
- Cultural, Heritage & Arts Tourism
- Aboriginal Tourism
- Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism
- Business Events

[Activity + Setting] × Natural Region = Experience

Retaining the integrity and quality of our region’s tourism resources is essential to delivering on our brand promise and our ability to provide authentic and memorable visitor experiences.





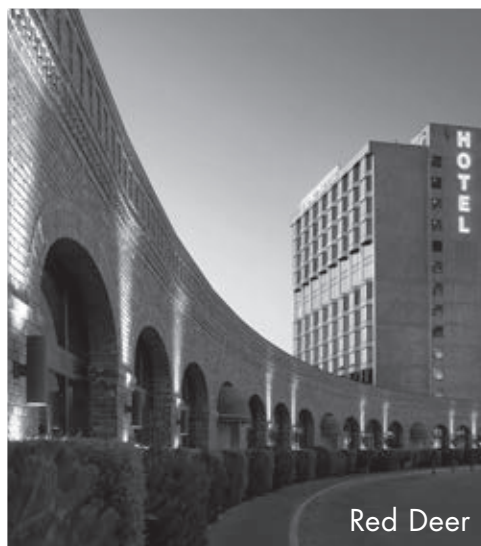
The West Country



Ponoka



Rocky Mountain House



Red Deer

### **Nature, Adventure & Ecotourism**

- Hiking, Camping, Wilderness Travel & Climbing
- Swimming & Beaches
- Skiing—Cross-country, Downhill and Alpine Touring
- Lake & River Fishing, Fly-Fishing & Ice Fishing
- Flat Water & Whitewater Canoeing, kayaking, rafting

### **Agri-Tourism, Culinary Tourism**

- Farmers Markets and Food Festivals
- Family Farms, Corn Mazes & Guest Ranches

### **Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism**

- Rodeos
- Races—Cycling, Triathlons
- Summer & Winter Festivals, Comedy & Music Festivals

### **Aboriginal Tourism**

- O'Chiese First Nation Pow Wow
- Self-Guided History Tours in the Kootenay Plains

### **Cultural, Heritage & Arts Tourism**

- Rocky Mountain House & Brazeau Collieries Minesite Industrial Museum National Historic Sites
- David Thompson Corridor
- Cowboy Trail, Scandinavian Trail
- Performing Arts

### **Business Events**

- Conferences & Research Symposiums
- Exhibitions, Expos & Sports Shows



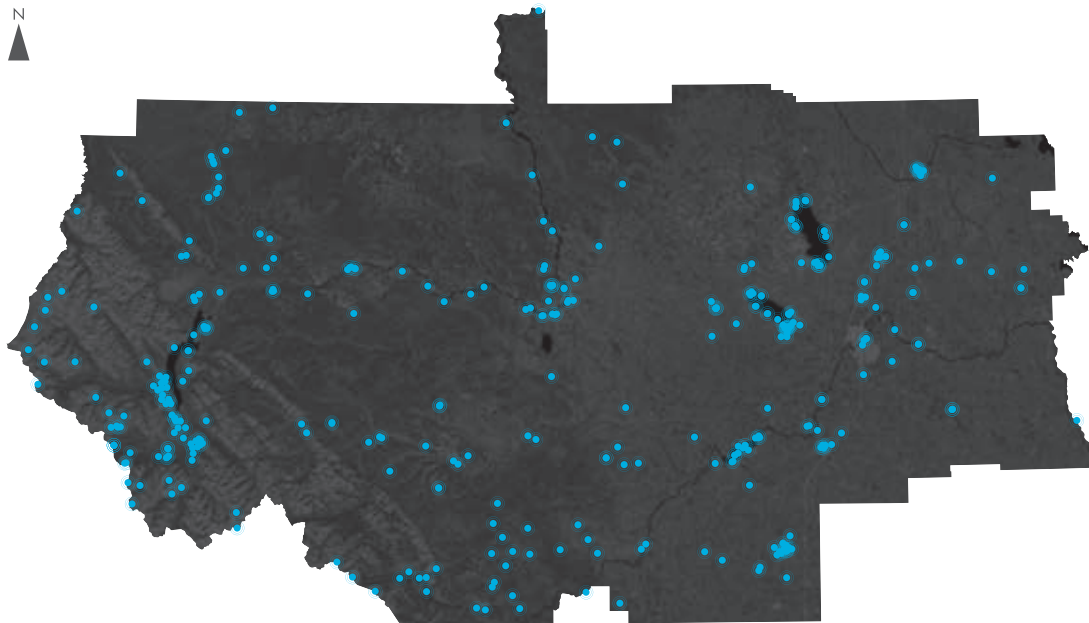
## TOURISM RESOURCES

To understand the supply and distribution of our tourism resources, we undertook an inventory of tourism attractions, features, amenities and services.

### Nature, Adventure and Ecotourism

With approximately 390 different features, our region is blessed with a mix of assets on which to support and enhance nature-based, adventure, and eco-tourism experiences. As shown in the map below, the West Country and our larger recreational lakes are the focus of many of our nature-based, adventure, and ecotourism features.

Tourism resources are the built and natural assets and infrastructure that facilitate visitor experiences and the settings and visual landscapes in which they occur. Collectively, tourism resources are our competitive advantages—they are the basis on which we sustain our current industry and have the potential to grow it into the future.



Distribution of Nature-Based, Adventure and Ecotourism Features

2,980 km of trail

459 km of water route

### **Agri-tourism and Culinary Tourism**

Reflecting the region's agricultural roots, there are many agri-tourism and culinary tourism assets in the region—from farmers markets to family farms, guest ranches, livestock auctions, botanical gardens, honey meaderys, craft breweries, farm gate to plate, wild horses, and equine events.

### **Cultural, Heritage and Arts Tourism**

Our region is rich in Aboriginal and European history. We have 82 different Cultural, Heritage and Arts assets, including historic main streets to art galleries, museums and murals in places like Lacombe, to features such as the Bergen Rocks International Sculpture Park near Sundre, and Stephansson House in Red Deer County. Our region's operators continue to work hard to ensure a vibrant cultural, heritage, and arts sector.

### **Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism**

Our region knows that festivals, events and sport tourism can bring many benefits to our local communities. From small local festivals and events such as art in the park days or Canada day celebrations to larger community events such as our rodeos, Centrefest, Oldstoberfest, Mud Runs, and the Ponoka Stampede, our region

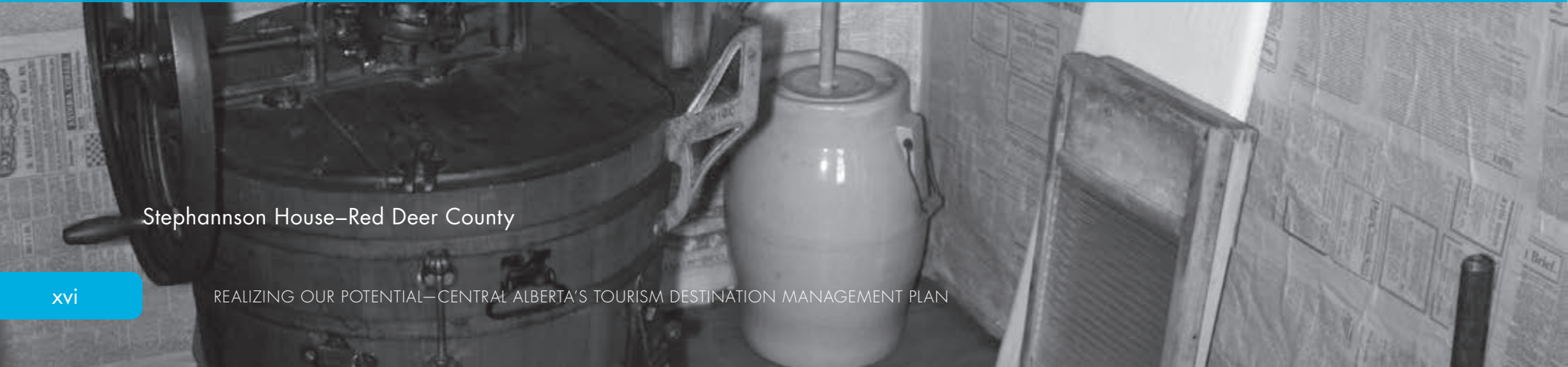
plays host to the full range of festivals, events and sport tourism experiences for visitors near and far. With 194 sports facilities, the region has and continues to be a destination for sports tournaments; it's no surprise that Red Deer has been selected to host the 2019 Canada Winter Games.

### **Aboriginal Tourism**

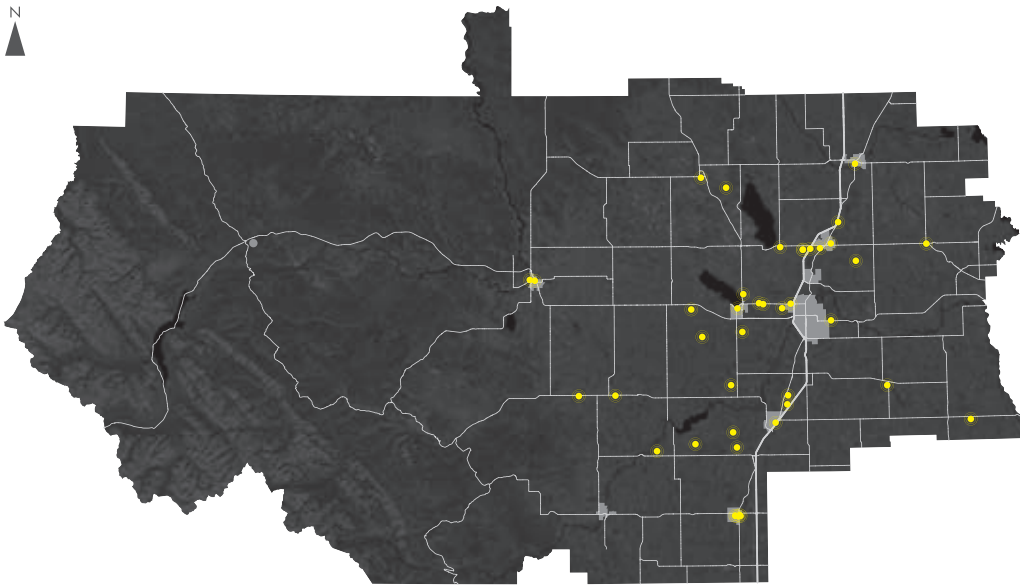
Aboriginal culture is an integral part of our region's history; however, our region's Aboriginal history and culture has not translated into tourism products at this time. Aboriginal tourism presents an opportunity to diversify and enhance the visitor offering, especially for our international visitors.

### **Business Events**

Central Alberta's tourism experiences are not limited to leisure travellers. We also offer opportunities for business travel. Our region is home to seven conference and meeting centres that allow business meetings and conferences to take place. Whether it is the Sheraton Hotel, Red Deer College, the Westerner Park or Olds College, we have facilities that can accommodate business meetings, trade shows, and large events.

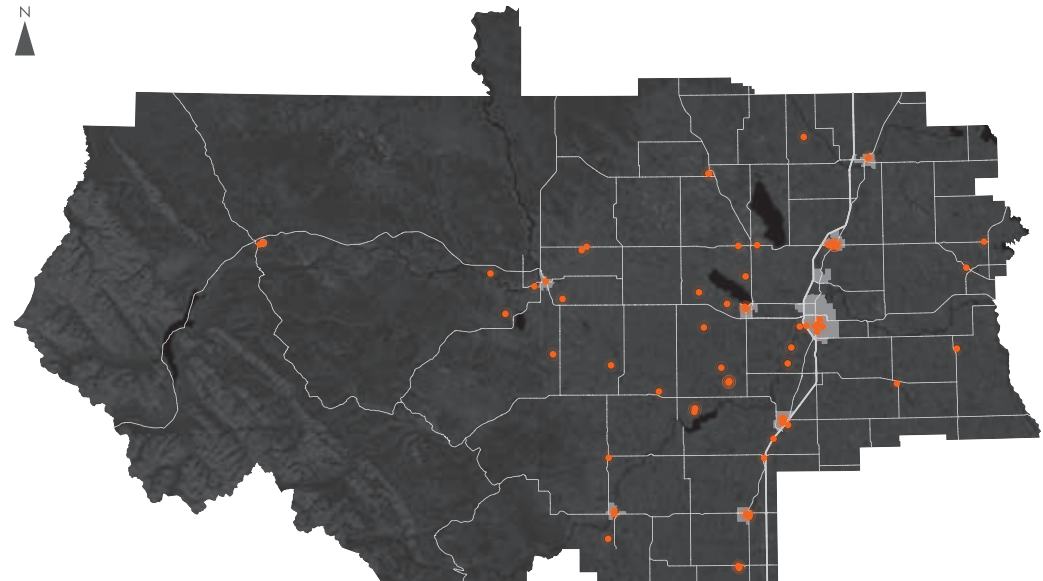


Stephansson House—Red Deer County



Our agri-tourism and culinary tourism features include 27 agri-tourism operators, 9,100 farms, 9 fair/rodeo ground and Olds College.

Distribution of Agri-Tourism and Culinary Tourism Features



Some of the most well-known cultural, heritage and arts attractions in our region include the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site and the Nordegg National Historic Site in the west and the Fort Ostell Museum in the east.

Distribution of Cultural, Heritage, and Arts Tourism Features

## Accommodations

Visitors in Central Alberta are looking for a diverse range of accommodation features. As such, it is important for our region to meet these demands by providing the right mix of accommodation in the right places.

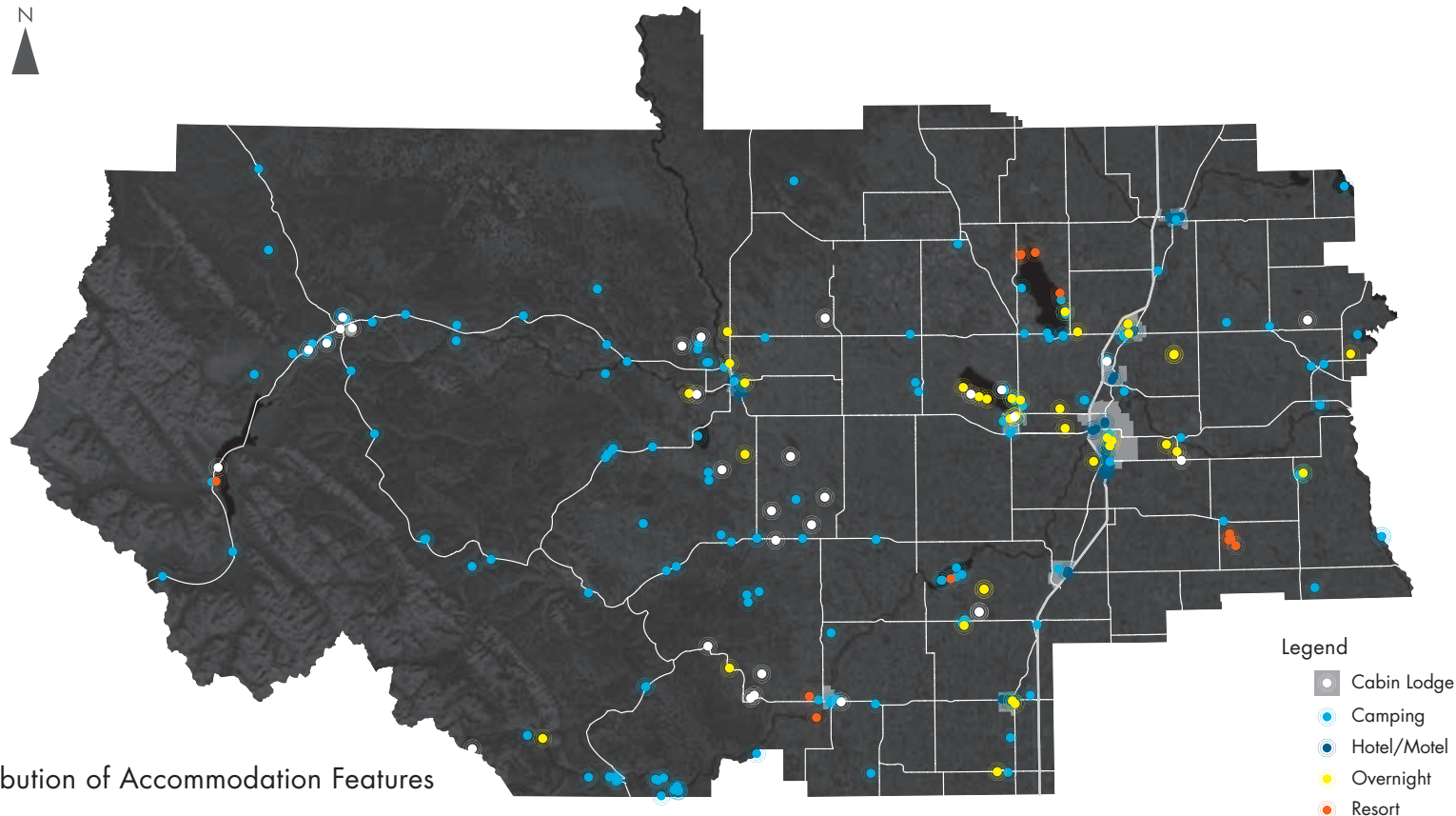
The study area has a total of 281 accommodation features which can be organized into six categories:

Camping → 140	Hotels and Motels → 60
Cabins/Lodges → 30	Bed & Breakfasts → 27
Four Season Resorts → 13	Other → 11

Despite the high number of campgrounds in the study area, Alberta Parks suggests that most of the region's campgrounds are at or approaching capacity during the peak season summer months, and many are not open in the winter season to meet known demands in places such as the West Country.

In addition, the region offers visitors 27 B&B's which are mostly concentrated in the eastern portions of the region.

Despite the significant supply of accommodations, stakeholders suggest that the region needs to expand and diversify its supply of accommodations to meet market expectations.



## DO WE HAVE A CURRENT BRAND?

As a region, our current brand is disparate. With a regional approach to destination planning comes the immediate opportunity to develop a common, synergistic and effective regional brand. With Alberta marketing itself as a premier outdoor and mountain living destination in the “new” west, Central Alberta has the opportunity to leverage the “remember to breathe” branding of Travel Alberta with wide open space, incredible scenery, a relaxed atmosphere and laid back towns. Currently, for the visitor, there is little that promotes the collective experiences available in Central Alberta. We are missing the opportunity to market ourselves as destination of our own. Given the current and potential visitor experiences that we have to offer, there is great opportunity to position our region in the consumer’s mind as a fully integrated destination of its own, with a collection of authentic and memorable itineraries and iconic experiences to explore.

It is important to encourage travellers to think of Central Alberta as a destination first; the goal is to make it easy for them to explore online and through collateral material and compelling stories, all the options that are available to them, working inwards to the various regional, rural, and urban experiences, which helps extend stays and create visits as they discover there is as much to “site do” as there is to site see.

## WHO ARE OUR TARGET MARKETS AND WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM?

We know what visitor experience themes and tourism assets we have to offer, but do we know who our region’s markets of greatest potential are? Understanding and focusing on the visitor is one of the most important aspects of planning and delivering desirable tourism experiences. Visitors to Central Alberta are diverse and so too are their expectations, attitudes, motivations, behaviours, and willingness to pay for a tourism experience. Similarly, not all visitors bring the same degree of benefits to host communities.

One way to understand the markets of greatest potential and their expectations is through the application of Destination Canada’s Explorer Quotient (EQ) traveller types. The EQ enables a deeper understanding of our target visitors. Considering the current and potential visitor experience mix and the characteristics of our region, our primary target traveller types are Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers.

### Central Alberta Target Traveller Types

#### Primary:

Cultural Explorers  
Authentic Experiencers

#### Secondary:

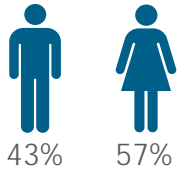
Cultural History Buffs



## Cultural Explorer

The Cultural Explorer tends to value spontaneity, cultural sampling, and is open to trying and accepting new experiences. They are defined by their desire for constant travel and continuous opportunities to discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit.

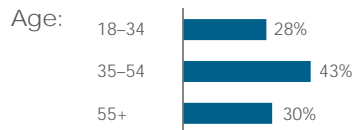
### Demographics



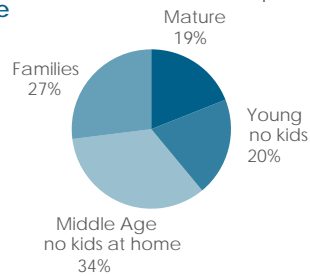
Education: Higher than average

Employment: FT – lower than avg. % are retirees

Household Income: Average



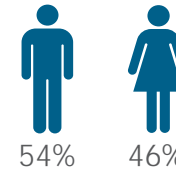
### Lifestage



## Authentic Experienter

The Authentic Experienter is rational, spontaneous, ethical, eco-conscious, and curious. This person desires personal control, self-direction and is confident. They are looking for authentic, tangible engagement with the destinations they seek, and are interested in understanding the history of the places they visit.

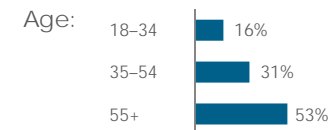
### Demographics



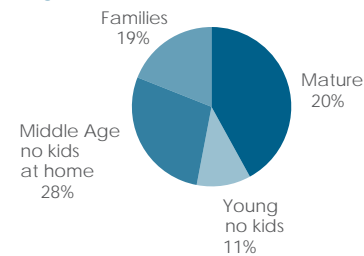
Education: Higher than average

Employment: FT – more likely than avg. to be retired

Household Income: Average



### Lifestage



# 85%

of Alberta's population  
is within a 3 hour drive  
of the study area

Our region is attractive to local, regional, long haul domestic and, to some extent, international markets. Moving forward, there is opportunity to drive even more visitation from these market origins, but the share is not distributed equally. With close to 85% of Alberta's population, or nearly 3.1 million people, within a three hour drive of our region, the local market has incredible opportunity to draw more visitors to our region.

International demands for our visitor experiences are, in general, emerging or of limited interest. However, the long haul international markets of Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States represent the most attractive markets with the largest proportion of Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers. Though the international market represents a very small portion of our region's visitation, and repeat visits are infrequent, this market stays longer and spends more making them a higher yield target market.



## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### SWOT

As a destination, our region has many strengths and opportunities but does face a number of key weaknesses and threats. Though the following is not an exhaustive list, the greatest strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats include:

**Strength** → Our location—nestled between Alberta’s largest and busiest urban centres, our region has, and will continue to, attract visitors from Northern, Central Alberta, and Southern Alberta.

**Weakness** → A fragmented brand with limited unity of voice, constrained funding for regional tourism initiatives, and minimal regional coordination and collaboration in the region.

**Opportunity** → Purposefully pursuing the tourism development of the region’s most competitive advantages—the West Country, major rivers and heritage and culture.

**Threat** → There is general lack of awareness and understanding about the tourism opportunities in our region. This will continue to be a threat unless our brand, marketing, and promotion efforts become more robust and unified.



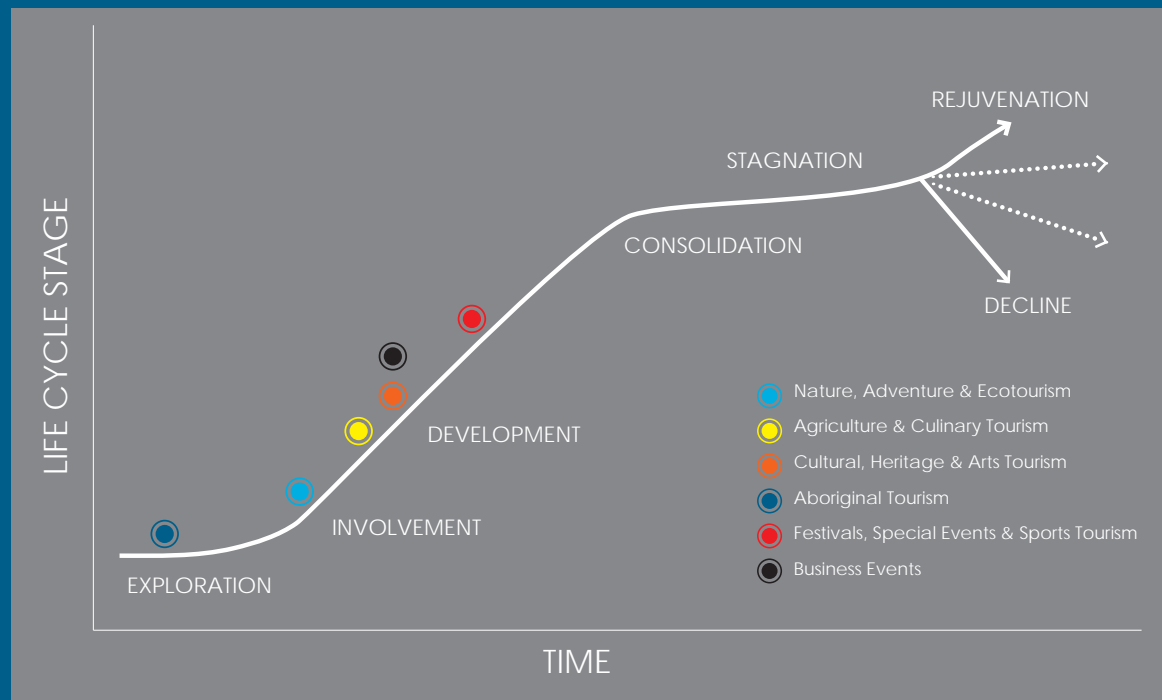
## Destination Life Cycle Analysis

Destinations are in a state of continuous change. It is commonly accepted that destinations, and the visitor experience themes offered within them, have a life cycle. According to Butler's (1980) life cycle model, a destination and its visitor experience themes will evolve through a series of distinct stages.

1. Exploration
2. Involvement
3. Development
4. Consolidation
5. Stagnation
6. Decline or Rejuvenation

Each stage is different. There are changes to the types and origins of tourists, visitor experiences offered, amenities, access and host community attitudes toward tourists. However, not all destinations will evolve through each stage and decline is not a foregone conclusion.

To inform our priorities, it was important that we understood where each of the visitor experience themes in our region were at in its life cycle. As shown in the graphic below, our region is in the early stages of destination development with much opportunity for growth.



Central Alberta Destination Life Cycle Assessment

## THE WAY FORWARD

To guide us into the future, we have worked collaboratively to develop a shared vision.

By 2025, Central Alberta will be:

*A unique, diverse, destination offering visitors authentic, affordable and sustainable experiences—year round. From nature and adventure to agricultural, urban and sport, we will be recognized by local and international visitors alike as a destination to “experience Alberta” in an uncomplicated, uncrowded and unspoiled way. Tourism is positively embraced by our local residents and is a major driver of our economy as visitors stay longer, spend more and return more often. Champions of our industry are unified, innovative and working collaboratively to grow visitation and private and public sector investments.*

Realizing our Potential is a ten-year plan that is focused on:

- Enhancing Experiences
- Growth and Diversification of Tourism Benefits
- Well-being of the Environment & Host Communities

With a salient focus on experiential travel, we have identified 10 major strategies that will be pursued over the next 10 years. Each strategy has a number of priority initiatives complete with a prioritized action plan.

### **Destination Development:**

- Define the municipal roles in the tourism system
- Grow and diversify memorable visitor experiences
- Provide the right mix of places to stay in the right locations

### **Destination Management:**

- Formalize destination leadership
- Ensure easy travel to and within the region
- Strengthen capacity of the industry
- Improve access to capital and investment
- Enhance sustainability and maintain destination competitiveness

### **Destination Marketing:**

- Build community and stakeholder support and awareness
- Build market awareness and inspire visitation

Experiential travel engages visitors in a series of memorable travel activities that are inherently personal. It involves all senses, and makes connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, social or intellectual level. It is travel designed to engage visitors with the locals, set the stage for conversations, tap the senses and celebrate what is unique.

# The Way Forward

A unique, must-experience, destination offering visitors authentic, affordable and sustainable experiences—year round.

## Vision

## Unique Selling Proposition

Experience Central Alberta—unspoiled, uncrowded, uncomplicated, welcoming and ready to be explored.

## Outcomes

By 2025 we will have...



### Experiences

- Transformed Central Alberta into a must-experience destination that is authentic, memorable and sustainable.



### Growth & Diversification

- Increased year-round visitation from both short haul and long-haul target markets.
- Increased the direct and indirect economic contributions of tourism to our regional and local economies by 25%.
- Attracted increased private and public sector investment in tourism experiences, services and infrastructure.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the benefits tourism brings to our communities, the region and the province.



### Environment & Host Communities

- Established a positive and inclusive relationship between the region's tourism industry, community leaders, visitors and residents to ensure our communities are engaged and active stakeholders.
- Maintained the integrity and quality of tourism resources in the region and the destination's competitiveness.
- Enhanced the positive benefits of tourism to the environment and host communities while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment, local cultures and host communities.

## Strategies & Priority Initiatives

To achieve these outcomes we will...

### Destination Development

#### Define Municipal Roles in Tourism System

- Articulate the roles

#### Grow & Diversify Authentic Memorable Experiences

- Activate the West Country
- North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers
- Themed Touring Routes
- Major Farm-Market Attraction
- Performance Artists Events
- Strengthen Festivals, Events and Sports
- Strengthen Business Events Appeal

#### Provide Right Mix of Places to Stay in Right Locations

- Diversify accommodations

### Destination Management

#### Formalize Destination Leadership

- Leadership Model
- Leverage Partnerships and Complementary Packaging

#### Ensure Easy Travel to and Within the Region

- Enhance access

#### Strengthen Capacity

- Position to Provide Exemplary Experiences
- Enable timely and informed decision making

#### Improve Access to Capital and Investment

- Regional approach to private and public sector investment

#### Enhance Sustainability & Maintain Competitiveness

- Consider Tourism in Provincial, Regional and Local Land Use Planning
- Visitor Codes of Conduct and Education
- Encourage Sustainability in Planning, Construction and Operations

### Destination Marketing

#### Build Community & Stakeholder Support & Awareness

- Strengthen buy-in
- Collaboration with Travel Alberta

#### Build Market Awareness & Inspire Growth in Visitation

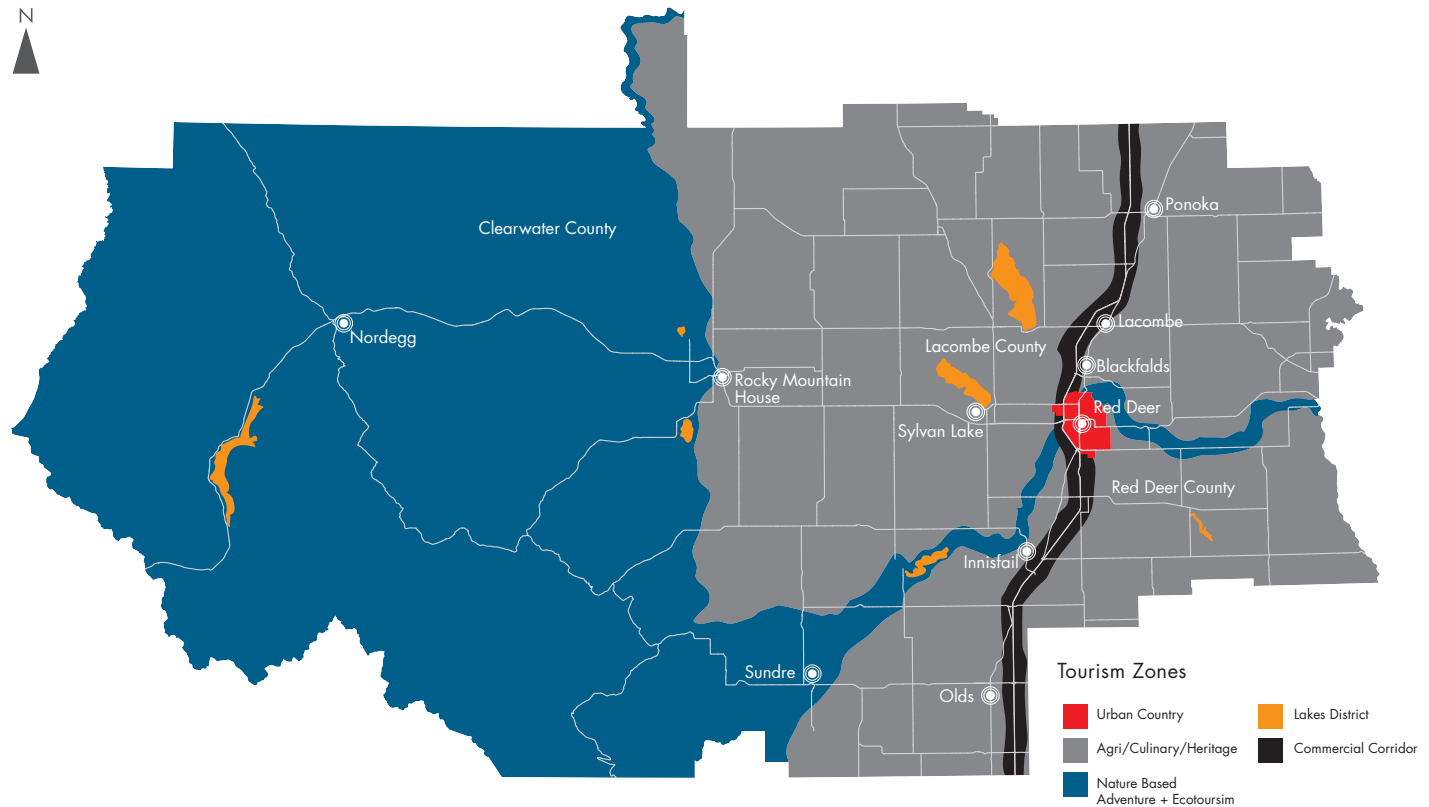
- Develop Brand and Story Telling Framework
- Framework for Marketing & Communications

## TOURISM ZONES

Tourism experiences can be clustered into distinct zones based on geography and the potential to meet specific target market motivations. Tourism zones signal the primary visitor experience objectives for an area. Zones are established to reflect the target markets' primary travel motivations and our region's unique selling

propositions. Depending on the supply of tourism assets, tourism zones often contain one or more secondary visitor experience objectives. The secondary objectives serve to supplement visitors' primary travel motivations. Zones are intended to stimulate the creation of itineraries which enable travellers to experience as much of the region with the least amount of effort. As shown in the figure below, 5 tourism zones have been identified for our region.

A tourism zone is a geographic area consisting of a concentration of complementary tourism activities, attractions, amenities, accommodations and settings that are closely linked in terms of the experience they facilitate and the markets they attract.

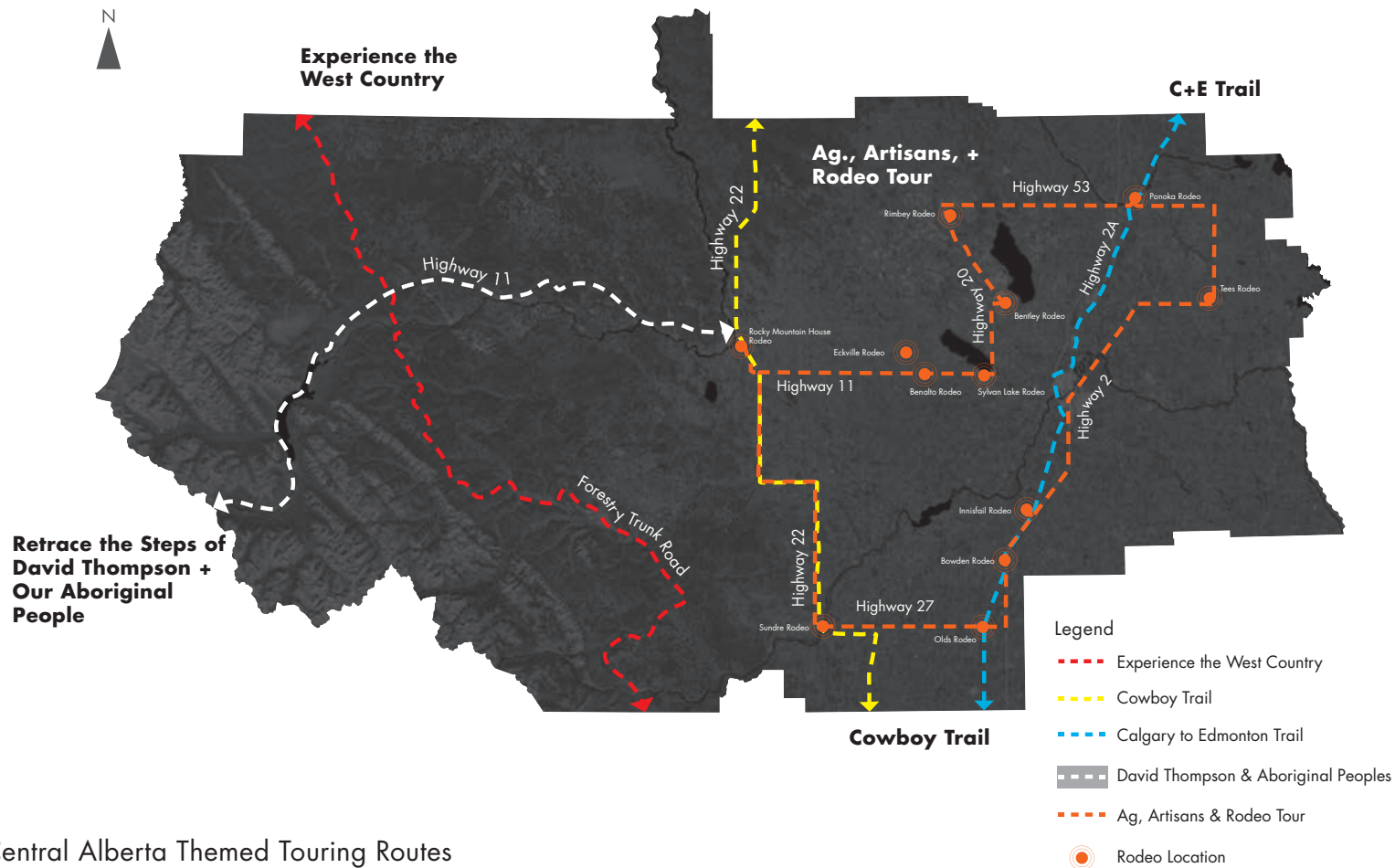


Central Alberta Tourism Zones

## THEMED TOURING ROUTES

Our region has many stories to share that are of interest to our target markets. The preparation of themed touring routes is an effective way to share our stories in a consistent, appealing and connected way that resonates with our target markets. Themed touring routes provide an opportunity to connect gateway and hub communities with our

most prominent travel motivators, attractions, accommodations and amenities providing a continuous visitor experience along the way. As our potential themed touring routes often begin and end beyond the boundaries of our region, collaboration and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions will be essential. The themed touring routes we envision developing are shown in the figure below.

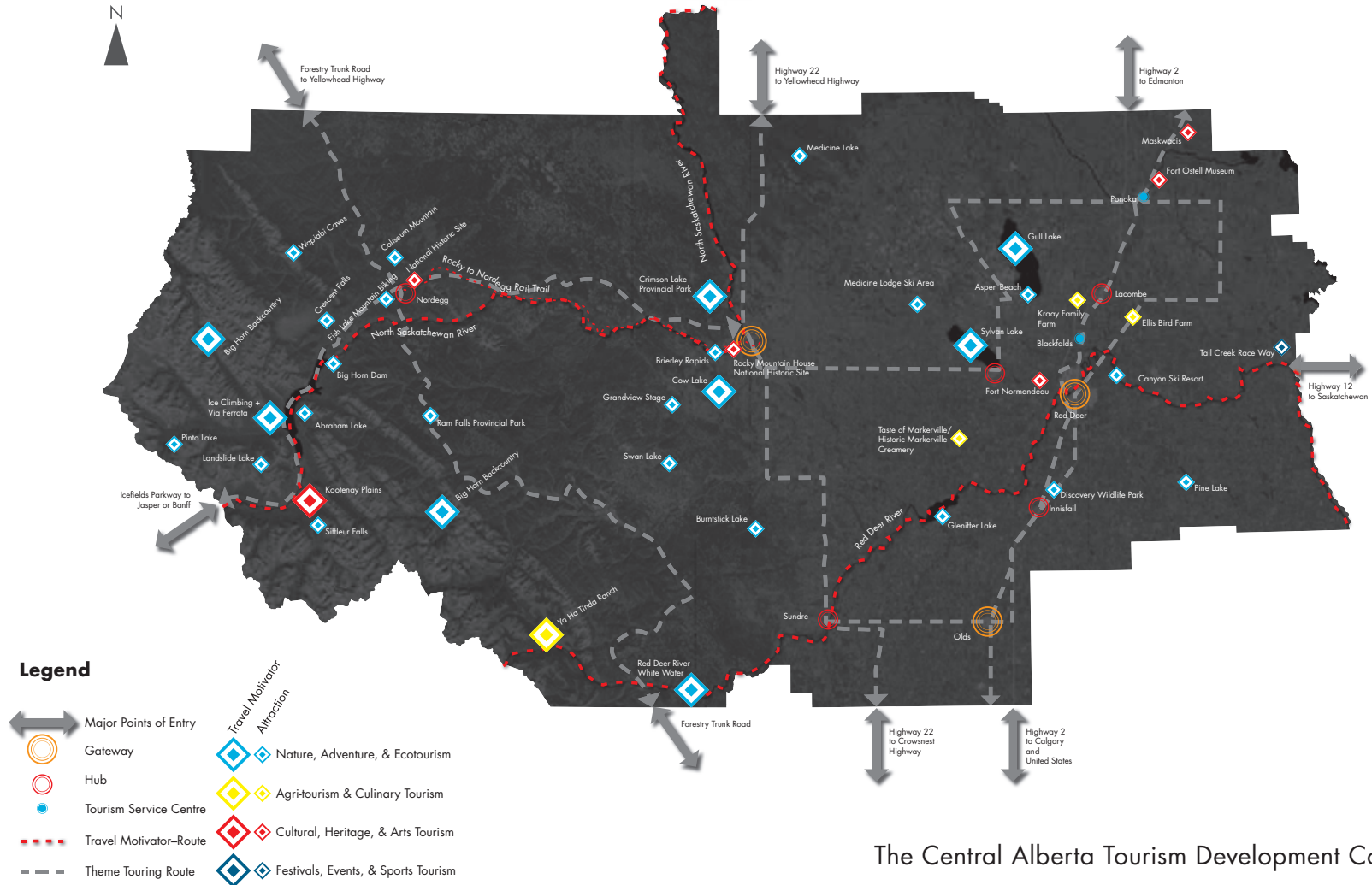


Central Alberta Themed Touring Routes

# TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The Central Alberta Tourism Concept (see figure below) illustrates our tourism future and how we envision our tourism system interacting. The concept illustrates our travel motivators, our attractions, the role

each community is envisioned to play in the system and how visitors can move throughout our region while taking part in authentic and memorable experiences.



The Central Alberta Tourism Development Concept

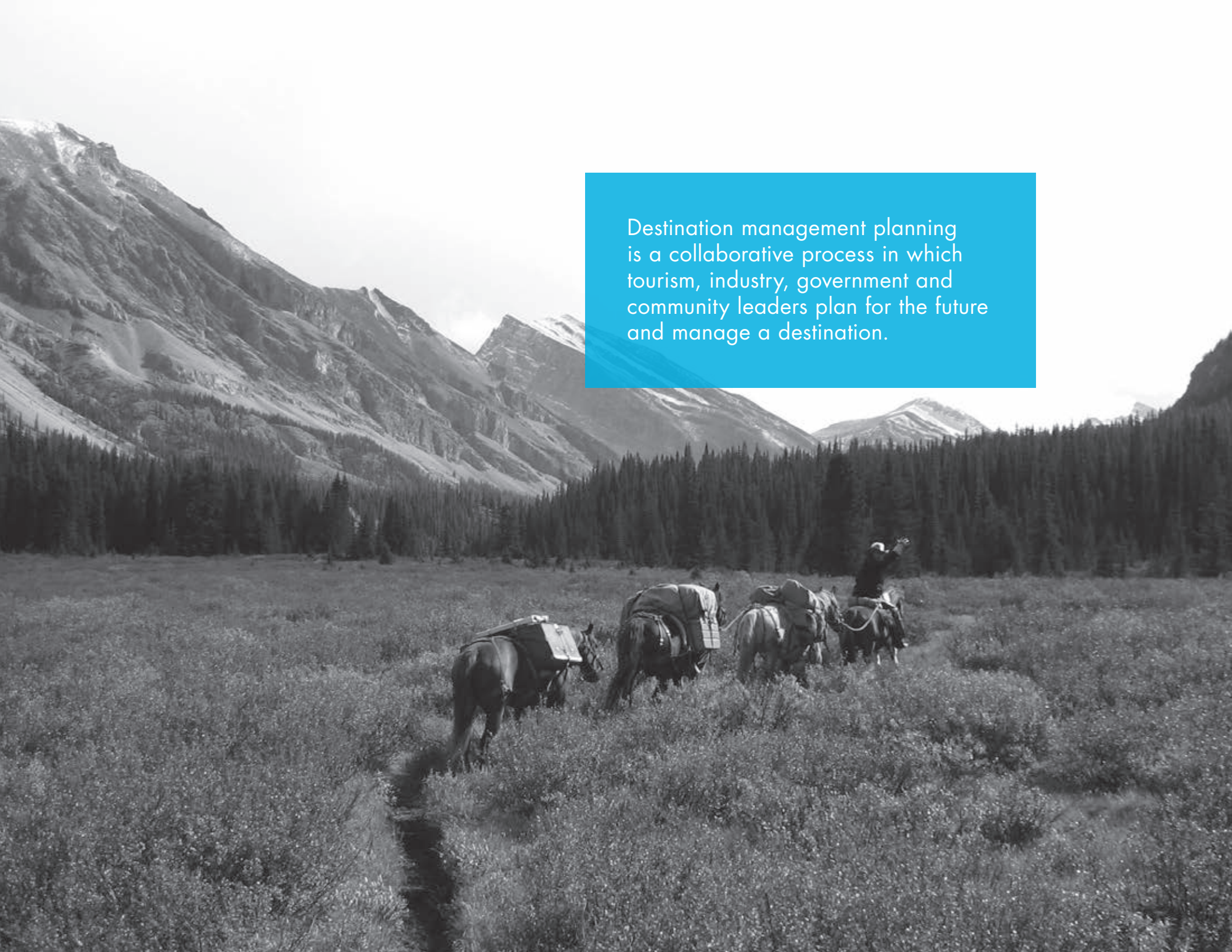


## CONCLUSION

Realizing our Potential: A Destination Management Plan for Central Alberta imagines the true tourism potential of Central Alberta and creates a deliberate path toward realizing the region's opportunity to become one of Alberta's top tourism destinations. Home to some of the Province's most intriguing experiences, our region can appeal to any visitor. The preparation of the DMP has demonstrated what strong inter-municipal and partner collaboration looks like. If we continue to work collaboratively to implement the plan, we will be well on our way to realizing our potential and achieving our shared vision and outcomes in 2025.

Realizing our Potential is an invitation to all tourism industry, government, Aboriginal communities, industry and other partners interested in bringing the vision to life and providing visitors the opportunity to Experience Central Alberta—unspoiled, uncrowded, uncomplicated, welcoming and ready to be explored.

For more details on the research and analysis used to support the plan or the plan's strategies and actions, you are encouraged to review the full edition of the report.



Destination management planning is a collaborative process in which tourism, industry, government and community leaders plan for the future and manage a destination.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is Destination Management Planning?

Planning for tourism is no easy task—there are many people involved and many tourism features to think about. We need to consider how to market our greatest assets; how to create a brand that reflects the diversity of our region; and how we can attract the level of investment required to enhance our industry. Destination management planning is a collaborative process in which tourism, industry, government and community leaders plan for the future of and manage a destination. As a comprehensive framework, it identifies the competitive advantages of the destination, the target markets potentially interested in visiting; how the unique tourism resources will be managed; how the destination will be enhanced; how effects on the destination will be understood; and how the destination will reach out to and compel its target markets to visit.



Figure 1. Destination Management Planning Tool  
Source: World Tourism Organization<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 Planning Process

*Realizing our Potential* is a plan that provides direction to tourism development, marketing and management in Central Alberta for the next 10 years. It is a framework in which tourism industry partners can work collaboratively towards achieving a shared vision.

The development of the plan has been facilitated by an inter-municipal stakeholder committee who are interested in supporting the growth of tourism in the region. The partnership worked collaboratively with provincial, regional and local tourism industry, destination marketing organizations, partners and land managers to co-create the plan. The process involved:

### 1 DISCOVER

In the discover stage, we worked collaboratively with tourism partners to uncover essential information about the destination's history, tourism assets, destination organization, current visitation, target markets, market demands, marketing strategies, destination life cycle and relevant policies. Interviews and workshops with key catalyst stakeholders, thorough document review and desktop analysis were combined with a rigorous asset inventory and cutting edge social media analysis to generate robust insights into the destination and its opportunities and constraints. A product market match approach was applied to identify "gaps" between the current service offering and market expectations. Opportunities to address the service gaps and elevate the region's competitive advantages were identified.

### 2 IMAGINE

The Imagine stage began by clearly articulating the opportunities to make Central Alberta a must-experience destination. A draft vision, goals and priority initiatives were prepared. Tourism themes were delineated, and existing, new and refreshed tourism experiences and supporting activities, attractions, amenities, accommodations and access were identified and assembled into a preliminary destination management plan.

### 3 DELIVER

In the final stage, the draft plan was reviewed with the steering committee and stakeholders through a workshop called the Central Alberta Tourism Conversation. Following the workshop, the final Destination Management Plan (DMP) was prepared.

#### Central Alberta DMP Steering Committee:

- Tourism Red Deer
- City of Red Deer
- Red Deer County
- Town of Rocky Mountain House
- Town of Sylvan Lake
- Town of Innisfail
- Lacombe Regional Tourism
- City/County of Lacombe
- Town of Blackfalds
- Town of Ponoka
- Olds Institute
- Clearwater County
- Alberta Culture and Tourism (advisory member)

## 1.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Determining the future of tourism in Central Alberta is best charted by those who work and live in the region. Meaningful engagement of the tourism industry and tourism partners was essential to the development of this plan. Through our background research and discussions, we identified and reached out to over 122 local tourism industry members and stakeholders. Interviews, online engagement platforms and workshops were held throughout the planning process.

## 1.2.2 Expert Interviews

Twenty-one stakeholders were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews. Seventeen telephone interviews were conducted. The interviews focused on generating an understanding of the region's:

- Greatest competitive advantages,
- Under-utilized and developed tourism assets,
- Visitors to the region (origins, motivations),
- Untapped target markets, and
- Greatest opportunities and challenges to realizing the destination's tourism potential.

The following organizations were interviewed in the development of the plan:

- Red Deer Airport
- Discovery Wildlife Park
- Travel Alberta
- Taste of Markerville
- Rider's Rush
- Polar Creek
- Centre for Outdoor Education
- Rocky Mountain House Historic Site (Parks Canada)
- Aurum Lodge
- Fort Ostell Museum
- Ellis Bird Farm
- Kraay Family Farm
- Olds College
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
- Alberta Environment and Parks

**17** the number of stakeholder interviews

**122** the number of local tourism partners invited to participate in MindMixer

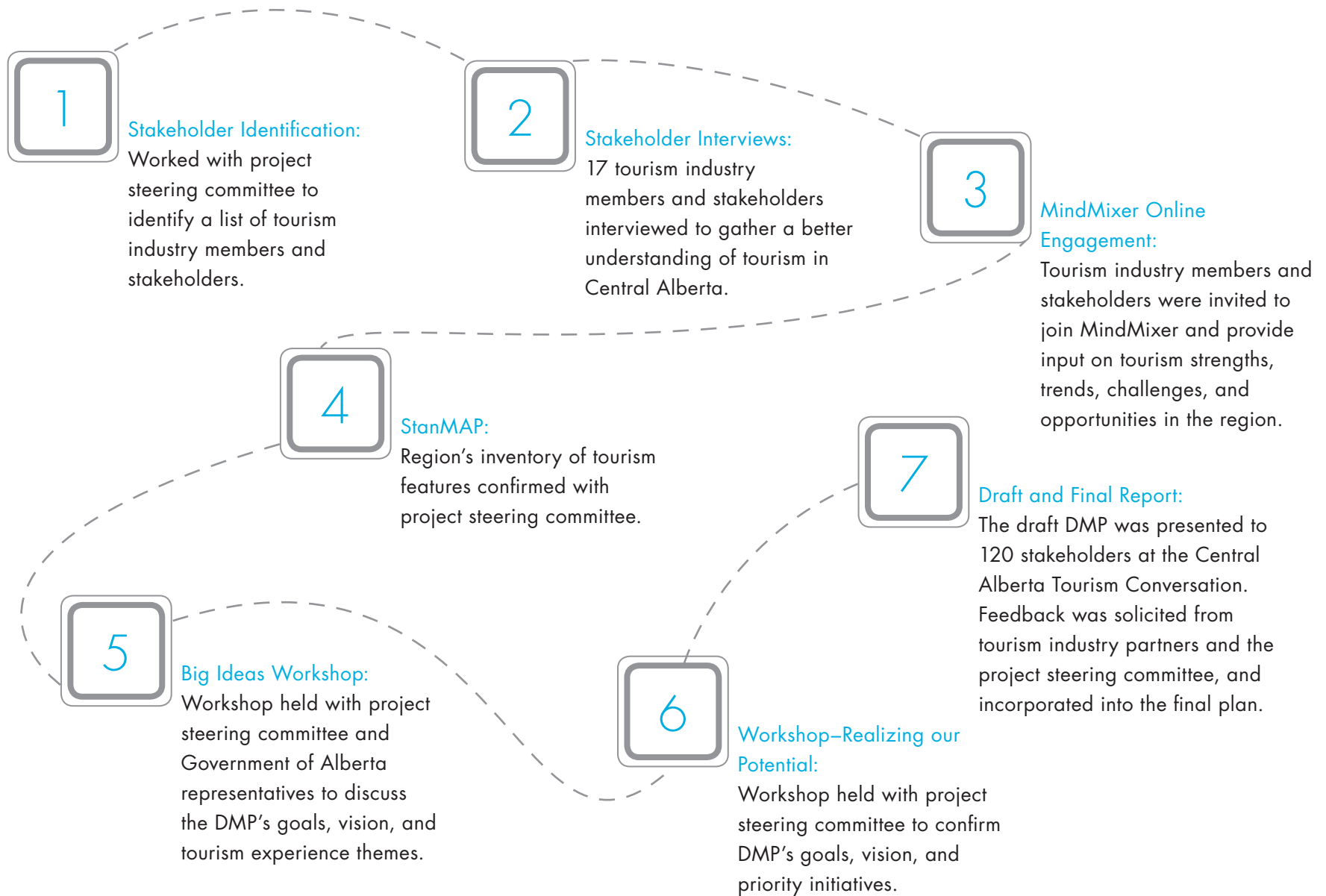


Figure 2. Engagement Process

### 1.2.3 Online Engagement

Recognizing tourism stakeholders are busy, we employed convenient online engagement technologies to make participating in the process easy. MindMixer, an online engagement interactive engagement platform, allowed the project team to work closely with local tourism experts and stakeholders to identify challenges, priorities, and ideas about the future of tourism in our region. The MindMixer site was viewed 5,864 times by 3,453 unique participants.

In addition, StanMAP, an interactive online mapping tool, was used to confirm the region's inventory of tourism resources.

### 1.2.4 Workshops

Three workshops were hosted over the planning process:

- May 21, 2015—Big Ideas Workshop with the project Steering Committee and Government of Alberta representatives
- July 23, 2015—Workshop with project Steering Committee to discuss the Destination Management Plan's goals, vision, strategies and priority initiatives
- October 1, 2015—Tourism Conversation was held with a focus group of industry stakeholders and the Steering Committee to review the draft plan

In total, approximately 165 participants attended the workshops to share their expertise.

## Summary of Engagement Participation

### MindMixer

122 stakeholders invited

165 workshop participants

Unique Visitors—MindMixer web page



3,453

17 interviews

Page Views—MindMixer web page



5,864



## 2. The Benefits of Tourism

Tourism has the potential to bring diverse benefits to host destinations.

Destinations that develop the right mix of experiences, services and amenities and are successful in appealing to target markets will experience greater visitation. As visitation increases, destinations become more competitive and can continue to enhance and develop new opportunities for tourism activities for both locals and visitors. As this development cycle continues, host communities begin to experience the real economic, social and environmental benefits that tourism has to offer.

Destinations that remain equally focused on meeting or exceeding traveller expectations while managing visitation to maintain the integrity of the host community and its environment will be the most successful into the future.

Sylvan Lake

# Tourism Can...

## ECONOMIC

- Diversify the economic base as visitor spending leads to the creation of new and expanded enterprises.
- Create employment opportunities for both skilled and less-skilled employees who are young or older.
- Encourage new businesses as tourism operations depend on the services of other sectors such as construction, transportation, and agriculture.
- Stimulate increased commercial and residential development as enhanced tax revenues flow to local governments.<sup>5</sup>

## COMMUNITY, SOCIAL, CULTURAL

- Enhance quality of life in our communities by stimulating investment in transportation, recreational facilities, entertainment and other services that benefit both locals and visitors.
- Help to preserve our region's cultural heritage—including our places, spaces and stories—as they become the assets on which experiences are based.
- Elevate local community awareness and pride as we begin to share our communities with visitors and take ownership for their experiences.
- Contribute to population retention or even re-population of our rural areas as tourism provides employment opportunities or amenity development attracts "would be residents" from the urban centers.<sup>6</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL

- Raise the profile of natural assets and issues surrounding them as effective visitor information services, interpretive signing, guided tours, etc. allow visitors and locals to learn.
- Enhance the rationale for conservation, preservation and restoration of natural and built resources on the basis of their revenue generation and importance to local economies.
- Inspire a culture of conservation as our local residents and visitors learn more about our region's wildlife, ecosystems and ecosystem processes.<sup>7</sup>

We know that the most successful destinations are those that remain equally focused on realizing the benefits of tourism by meeting or exceeding traveller expectations while simultaneously managing visitation to maintain social and cultural integrity, address amenity migration and protect the environment.



### 3. Policy and Planning Framework

Tourism in our region is guided and influenced by many different policies, strategies and plans that exist at varying scales (see Figure 3). Some are focused on tourism, while in others, tourism is but one of a range of topics addressed. Efforts have been made to ensure our plan is aligned, to the extent possible, with the relevant planning and policy framework.

“Canada has a tourism deficit—Canadians spend more abroad than visitors spend here”  
(Government of Canada)<sup>8</sup>



INTERNATIONAL	World Tourism Organization		World Bank	
NATIONAL	Government of Canada		Destination Canada	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming the World</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada's Tourism Brand</li> </ul>	
PROVINCIAL	Government of Alberta Policies		Travel Alberta	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta's Tourism Framework—A Pathway to Growth</li> <li>• Land Use Framework</li> <li>• Plan for Parks</li> <li>• Active Alberta</li> <li>• Building on Alberta's Strengths: Alberta's Economic Development Framework</li> <li>• Rural Economic Development Action Plan</li> <li>• Alberta Tourism and Recreational Leasing Process</li> <li>• Commercial Trail Ride Policy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2015-2017 Business and Marketing Plans</li> <li>• remember to breathe Campaign</li> </ul>	
REGIONAL	Regional Plans and Policies			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Saskatchewan Regional Plan (in development)</li> <li>• Red Deer Regional Plan (in process of being initiated)</li> <li>• Eastern Slopes Policy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Resource Plans</li> <li>• Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan</li> </ul>	
LOCAL	Municipal Development Plans	Community Strategic Plans	Economic Development Strategies	Tourism Strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innisfail</li> <li>• Lacombe (in development)</li> <li>• Olds</li> <li>• Ponoka</li> <li>• Red Deer</li> <li>• Red Deer County</li> <li>• Rocky Mountain House</li> <li>• Sylvan Lake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ponoka</li> <li>• Red Deer</li> <li>• Sylvan Lake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackfalds</li> <li>• Ponoka</li> <li>• Red Deer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackfalds</li> <li>• Clearwater County</li> <li>• Olds</li> <li>• Red Deer County</li> <li>• Rocky Mountain House</li> <li>• Sylvan Lake</li> <li>• Tourism Red Deer</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Tourism Planning Framework

## 3.1 National

At the national scale, Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy— Welcoming the World recognizes the need to increase awareness of Canada as a destination, facilitate ease of access and movement for travellers and their safety, encourage product development and investment in tourism assets, and facilitate an adequate supply of skills and labour to deliver visitor experiences. Specifically, the federal government encourages the tourism industry to develop authentic experiences, whether in large or small cities, focused on Aboriginal culture, in Canada's North, or based on food, wine or sports.<sup>10</sup> "Canada has a tourism deficit—Canadians spend more abroad than visitors spend here" (p. 14). The strategy recognizes that destination competition is growing rapidly and, to be successful, Canada must better position itself to capitalize on the opportunities that lie in attracting more international visitors from more source markets such as China, Brazil and India while reinforcing domestic demand.

"Travellers around the world are telling us they want to explore and live a life that's less ordinary"  
—Destination Canada<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the federal government, Destination Canada (formerly called the Canadian Tourism Commission), Canada's national tourism marketing organization, leads the industry's efforts to market Canada as a premier four-season tourism destination. Working to strengthen visitation by high yield visitors, Destination Canada undertakes many marketing, communications, travel-trade, media and public relations campaigns and activities that our region needs to be aware of, and where it makes sense, align with. Destination Canada also provides valuable market research, such as the Explorer Quotient, and programs that can be used by our local operators to strengthen our industry.

One program of particular interest is Destination Canada's Canadian Signature Experiences collection (CSE), which helps eligible tourism businesses promote their product internationally. The CSE is valuable because it makes it easier for the travel trade to sell more of Canada, and to make more money doing so.<sup>11</sup> Though our region may currently not have an export ready product that meet the program's criteria, this program gives our region a clear set of parameters in which to strive towards.

## 3.2 Provincial

### 3.2.1 Tourism & Economic Development

#### 3.2.1.1 Alberta's Tourism Framework

Alberta's Tourism Framework is the province's strategy for strengthening and aligning the tourism industry. The framework lays a path forward for creating and marketing authentic Alberta tourism experiences that cannot be found anywhere else. It sets an ambitious goal of making tourism a \$10.3 billion industry in the province by 2020 and recognizes the importance of all regions working to provide new and enhanced experiences in order to achieve the goal.

There are many key priorities in the framework including priority 1 "Innovation and Development" that states "Alberta actively encourages entrepreneurial investment in traveller focused development of innovative tourism experiences, destination renewal, and new destination areas" (p.16)<sup>13</sup>. The framework encourages the government to improve access to public land for tourism and identifies the need to address tourism experience gaps through the provision of new and enhanced tourism experiences.

#### 3.2.1.2 Rural Economic Development Action Plan

Focused on areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton (communities with populations less than 25,000 people), the plan is focused on how to grow and develop rural regions of Alberta. Though the plan identifies a number of priority areas of focus, the development of tourism and culture-based business opportunities is recognized as essential. It states that "[m]any rural communities see the potential to grow tourism to help diversify their local economy. Festivals and events, agri-tourism, and nature-based tourism offer great potential to not only attract visitors, but also to bring new residents to rural regions" (p. 8).<sup>14</sup>

#### 3.2.1.3 Active Alberta

The "Active Alberta" strategy reinforces the importance of active lifestyles and outdoor recreation for the physical, social and emotional health and well-being of Albertans. The plan aims to inspire people to be regularly active outdoors. Specifically, the strategy identifies the need to develop new recreational land and trails that link communities to the province's parks, outdoor spaces and recreation facilities. It also encourages local governments to develop local parks and outdoor spaces by connecting them to regional parks, outdoor spaces and trails while intending to promote tourism based recreation, active living and other sport opportunities.

Alberta's Tourism Vision:

"Innovative leadership, a flourishing unified industry, traveller-focused authentic experiences, creating prosperity in Alberta" <sup>15</sup>

### 3.2.1.4 Sector Specific Policies

In addition to the above, broad natured policies, the province has developed a number of tourism sector specific policies, processes, and regulations including the Alberta Tourism and Recreation Leasing (ATRL) process, the Commercial Trail Riding regulations (included with the *Public Lands Administration Regulation*) and the Alberta Outfitter-Guide Policy. Each have implications on tourism development in our region. For example, the ATRL process, in line with the David Thompson Corridor Local Integrated Resource Plan and Clearwater County's Municipal Development Plan, recognizes the establishment of 5 tourism development nodes—Saunders/Alexo, Shunda/Goldeye, Bighorn Canyon and Whitegoat Lakes—into which tourism development along the corridor will be encouraged.

#### Vision for Parks:

Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy the natural world and the benefits it provides for current and future generations.

## 3.2.2 Land Management

### 3.2.2.1 Alberta's Land-Use Framework

The Land Use Framework (LUF) sets out the province's approach to managing land and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social aspirations.<sup>16</sup> The LUF sets three provincial outcomes for land:

- Healthy economy supported by land and natural resources
- Healthy ecosystems and environment
- People-friendly communities with ample recreation and cultural opportunities

As a land use, tourism can impact and be impacted by other industries and land users. It can also have impacts on our ecosystems. As such, direction from the LUF has been incorporated into this plan.

### 3.2.2.2 Plan for Parks (2009–2019)

The Plan for Parks provides a 10-year blueprint for managing Alberta's park system. The plan confirms the need to offer modern facilities and recreation opportunities while conserving the province's landscapes.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the plan recognizes the need to fill the recreation and tourism gaps in the parks system. It also identifies the importance of upgrading, restoring and expanding parks facilities including campgrounds to accommodate the changing needs of visitors and to encourage innovative private sector interest and opportunity in parks.



In the Agricultural and Rural Development Business Plan 2014–2017<sup>18</sup>, a priority initiative incorporating tourism states: “Develop a rural economic development action plan addressing strategic agriculture infrastructure, leadership and entrepreneurial capacity, rural tourism and agricultural diversification, to help create the conditions for ongoing economic success in rural Alberta (p.15).”

Lacombe  
Photo credit: Government of Alberta



Sundre  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Roth and Ramberg

## 3.3 Regional

### 3.3.1 Eastern Slopes Policy & Integrated Resource Plans

In addition to the provincial policies above, regional scale policies and plans such as the Eastern Slopes Policy and Integrated Resource Plans (IRP) provide direction regarding tourism development in certain portions of our region. These include:

- Nordegg—Red Deer River Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan (1986)
- Rocky—North Saskatchewan Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan (1986)
- David Thompson Corridor Local Integrated Resource Plan (1992)

Tourism, and further tourism development, has been identified as an objective in each of the above plans. In the case of the David Thompson Corridor Local IRP, recreation and tourism is the primary management objective. However, these plans recognize that many environmental and resource values exist within their respective planning boundaries and that tourism and recreation must be developed and managed in a way that maintains the integrity of the natural environment. Common to each of the above plans is their focus on encouraging increased visitor use through nature-based, adventure and ecotourism. Though priorities such as enhancing both public and private sector investments in new and appropriately sited tourism services, accommodations and infrastructure are identified, the plans place a strong emphasis on guide-outfitting, backcountry opportunities, adventure activities, motorized and non-motorized trails, and historic/cultural experiences.

## 3.4 Local

The Central Alberta DMP is a collaborative effort of 11 partner municipalities. Each of our communities are guided by their respective Municipal Development Plans (MDP), municipal strategic plans, economic development strategies and other plans, policies and bylaws. Some of these speak to tourism aspirations while others do not. It was important to take some time to review the policy and planning context in each of the 11 partner communities. Here is what we discovered:

- MDPs generally provide policies and guidelines for preserving historic and ecological resources and recreational opportunities, not all promote tourism opportunities within the region. The MDPs of Innisfail, Olds, Ponoka, Red Deer, Clearwater County and Rocky Mountain House contain objectives and policies to support tourism development.
- Economic Development Strategies in Blackfalds and Ponoka identify goals related to tourism while, for the most part, the remaining partner municipalities either did not identify tourism or the municipality did not have an economic development strategy.
- In most cases, communities who signaled an interest in tourism through their MDP or other plans and policies, did not provide a roadmap as to how the municipality intends to achieve their tourism goals.

Through our review of local policy and planning context, it is clear that a collaborative regional destination management plan will benefit all partner municipalities. Appendix A provides the full list of relevant plans and policies from the partner municipalities.

# 4. Discover Central Alberta

## 4.1 Destination Overview

Bordered by Banff National Park in the west, Southern Alberta and the Calgary region to the south, the Red Deer River and Buffalo Lake to the east and the Lacombe and Clearwater County borders to the north, the Central Alberta region is the heart of the province. The study area (see Figure 4 below) covers 31,207 square kilometers accounting for 4.7% of Alberta's land mass.

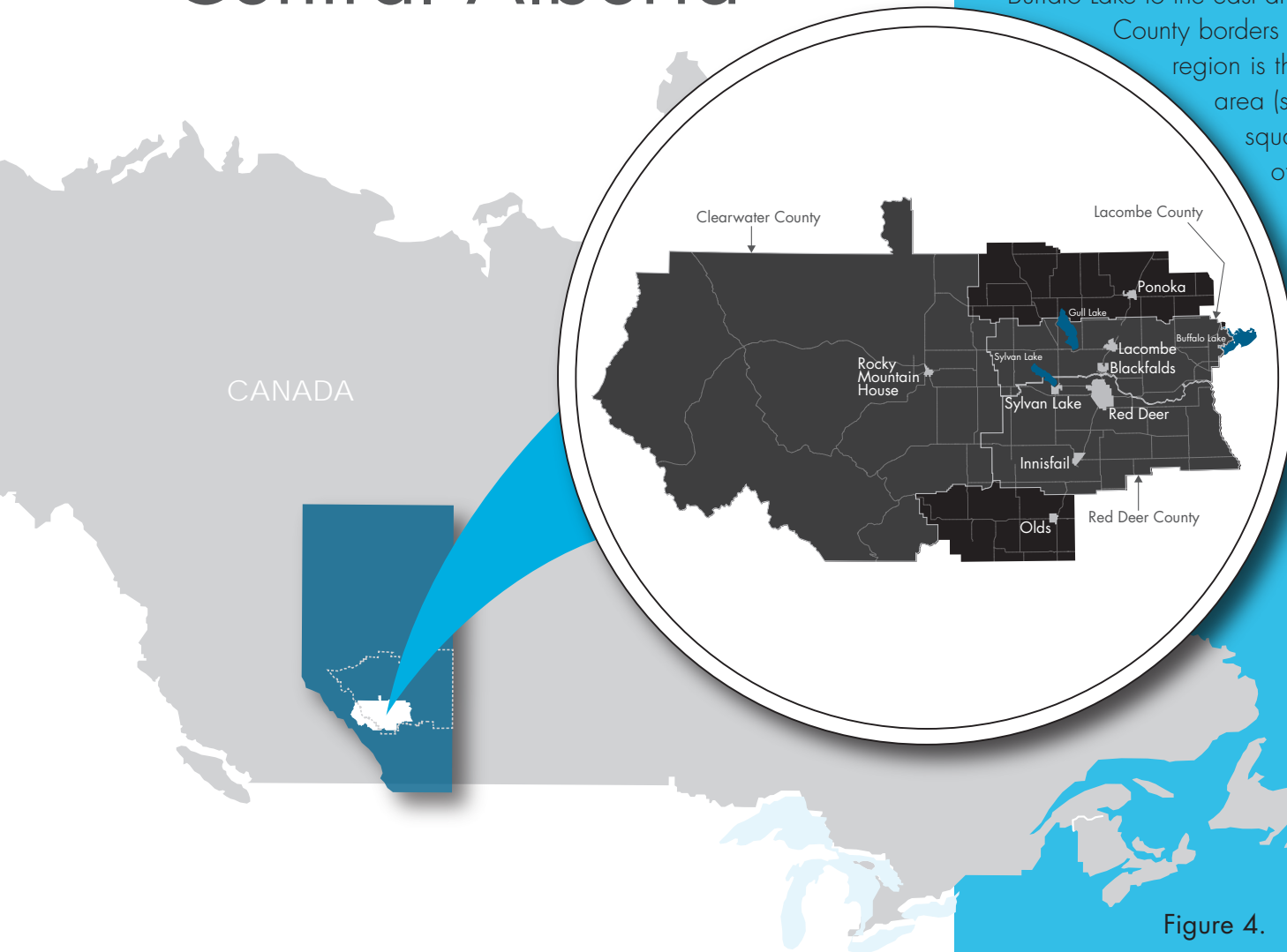


Figure 4. Central Alberta Region Study Area

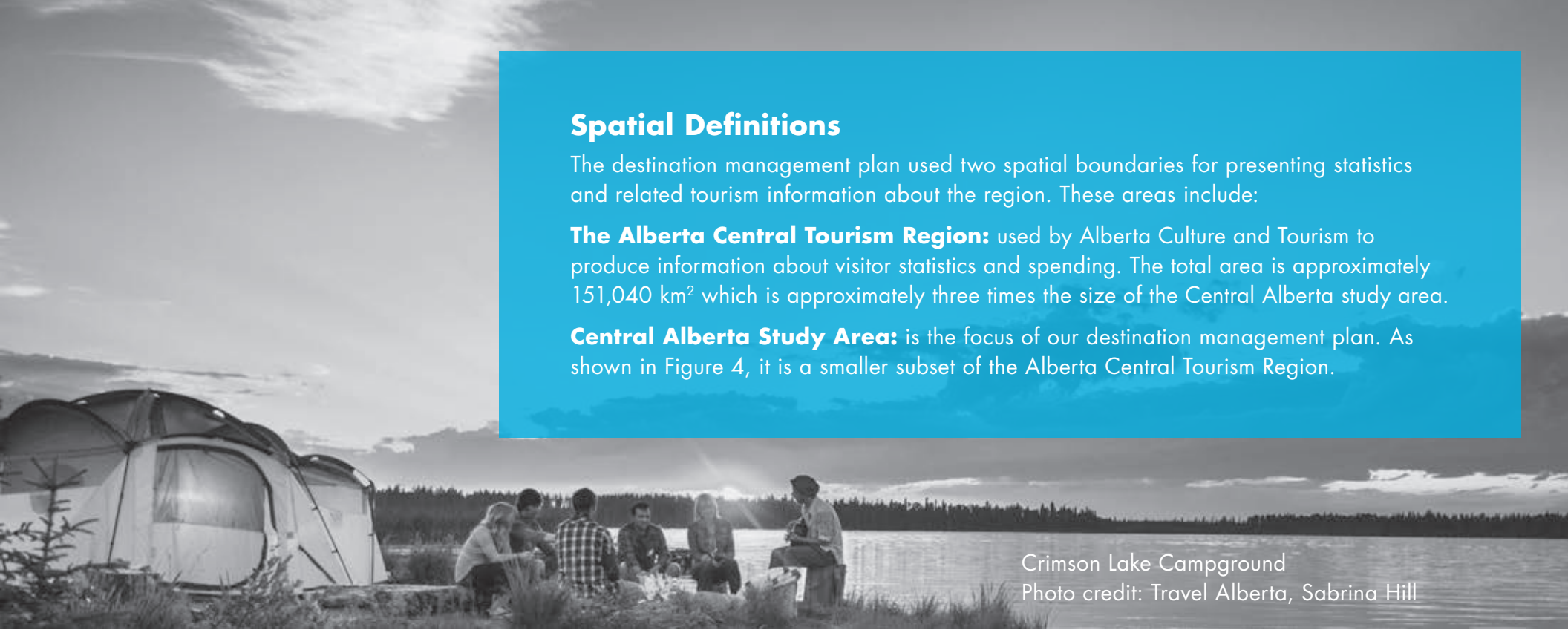


## Spatial Definitions

The destination management plan used two spatial boundaries for presenting statistics and related tourism information about the region. These areas include:

**The Alberta Central Tourism Region:** used by Alberta Culture and Tourism to produce information about visitor statistics and spending. The total area is approximately 151,040 km<sup>2</sup> which is approximately three times the size of the Central Alberta study area.

**Central Alberta Study Area:** is the focus of our destination management plan. As shown in Figure 4, it is a smaller subset of the Alberta Central Tourism Region.



Crimson Lake Campground  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Sabrina Hill



Town of Blackfalds



Public Market—Red Deer

### 4.1.1 Population & Demographics

Representing 6% of the provincial population, our region is home to approximately 222, 217 people.<sup>21</sup> With 4% growth from 2006 to 2011, Central Alberta is ideally positioned between the province’s two most densely populated cities—Edmonton with a population of 1,159,829 and Calgary with a population of 1,214,839. Both Edmonton and Calgary experienced some of the fastest population growth in Canada between 2006 and 2011. Though projections may be tempered by the slow down in the energy sector, the province was projecting that Edmonton and Calgary will grow at over 1.5% per annum until 2041.<sup>22</sup> Over the next 28 years, over three quarters of the net interprovincial migrants within Alberta are expected to move to Calgary and Edmonton for employment and educational opportunities.<sup>23</sup> Dissected by highways 2 and 22, the major travel corridors between Edmonton and Calgary, over 2 million residents, or 56% of the provincial population, can access Central Alberta within a 1.5 hour drive from the north or the south.

Most of our partner communities have experienced strong population growth. Blackfalds (36.4%), Sylvan Lake (19.2%) and Olds (13.5%) experienced double digit population growth between 2006 and 2011 and our region’s study area grew by nearly 16,000 residents or 9.5% growth between census periods.

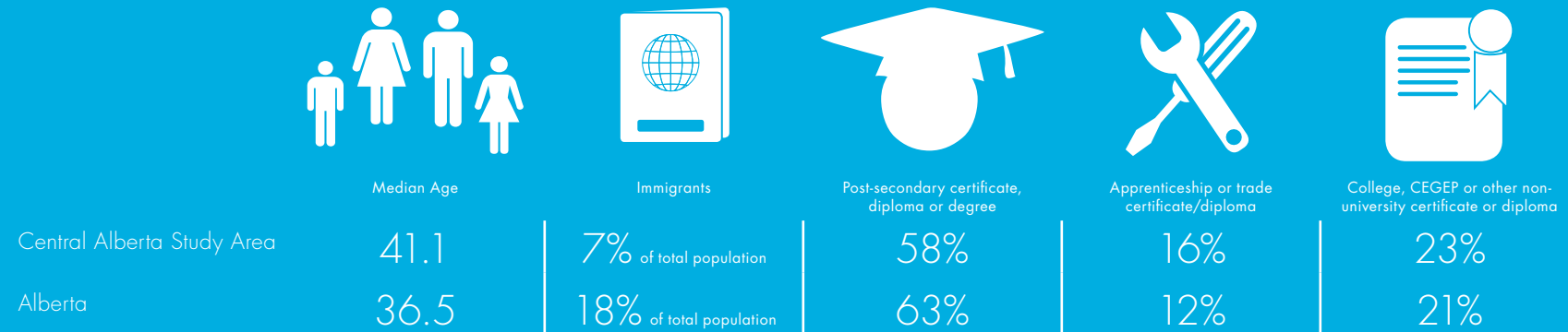
Table 1. Population and Population Change in Partner Communities

Partner*	2006	2011	Change%
Clearwater County	11,826	12,278	3.9
Red Deer County	19,108	18,351	-1.6
Blackfalds	4,618	6,300	36.4
Innisfail	7,331	7,876	7.4
Lacombe	10,752	11,707	8.9
Olds	7,253	8,235	13.5
Ponoka	6,576	6,773	3
Red Deer	83,154	90,564	8.9
Rocky Mountain House	6,874	6,933	0.9
Sylvan Lake	10,250	12,327	20
<b>Central Alberta Study Area</b>	<b>165,582</b>	<b>181,344</b>	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Alberta</b>	<b>3,290,350</b>	<b>3,645,257</b>	
<b>Calgary Edmonton Corridor</b>	<b>2,412,376</b>	<b>2,703,380</b>	<b>1.9</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011

\*The table above does not include populations for the other sub-divisions in the study area.

# Demographic Make-up



Source: Census & National Household Survey, 2011

Our region is demographically diverse and using data from the 2011 Census and National Household Survey, can be summarized as follows:

- With a median age of 41.1, our population is somewhat older than the province as a whole where the median age is 36.5.
- Immigrants make up 7% of our population, which is smaller than the provincial number where immigrants comprise 18% of the population.
- Of the working-age population (25 to 64 years), 58% has a post secondary certificate, diploma or degree which is lower than the provincial average of 63%.
- With 16% and 12% respectively, the region has a slightly larger share of apprenticeship and trade certificate/diploma holders than the provincial average.
- The region has a slightly larger share of college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diplomas than province with 23% and 21%, respectively.



#### 4.1.1.1 Aboriginal Peoples

Our region is home to 7 First Nations, which include the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineksin Cree Nation, Sunchild First Nation, Montana, O’Chiese First Nation, Bearspaw, and Wesley Band. First Nations in our region are descendants of the Cree, Nakota, and Saulteaux-Ojibway people who have lived, travelled and stewarded the North Saskatchewan and Central Alberta regions for centuries. As of 2015, the total on-reserve population was 14,358 whereas the off-reserve population was 2,704.

**Table 2. First Nations within Central Alberta Study Area**

First Nation	On Reserve Pop	Off Reserve Pop
Samson Cree Nation	5,740	484
Ermineskin Cree Nation	3,128	900
Montana	678	230
Sunchild First Nation	786	411
O’Chiese First Nation	799	360
Wesley Band*	1,533	179
Bearspaw First Nation*	1,694	140

**Source:** AANDC, 2015

**Note:** Totals do not include members living on provincial Crown Land.

\*The Wesley Band and Bearspaw First Nation have populations living in the Big Horn Indian Reserve 144. Therefore, these First Nation groups have been included in the table.



Figure 5. Indian Reserves in Study Area

## 4.1.2 Economic Profile

To understand how tourism interacts with our region's economy, we undertook an analysis of available Regional Economic Profile Indicators provided by the province.<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, these data are for the Alberta Central Tourism Region (see Figure 4 to see the extent of Alberta Central):

- The services sector, within which the tourism industry fits, accounted for 63% of employment in the region in 2006, which was less than the provincial average of 72%.
- There were a total of 154,500 jobs in the region in 2006. At 16,700, the retail trade industry employed the largest number of people, followed by mining and oil and gas at 16,100 in 2006.
- Other industries providing substantial employment in the region included health care and social assistance, agriculture and forestry, construction and manufacturing all of which had employment levels higher than the provincial average.
- The accommodations and food industry employed 9,200 people while the information, culture and recreation industry employed 1,600 in 2006.
- In 2007, the average individual annual income was \$34,470 which is 19% less than the provincial average. The average couple income was \$104,250 which 16.9% less than the provincial average.
- According to the National Household Survey, in 2010, the unemployment rate for the Central Alberta study area was 6.1% compared to 5.8% for the province as a whole.
- Between 2005 and 2010, the total number of businesses grew by 4.9%, over double the provincial average (2.3%). The number of small businesses increased by 5.8%, over the same period, which was nearly double the average provincial growth (3.4%).
- The accommodations and food services sector experienced a small decline of 4 businesses, or—0.6%, between 2005 and 2010.
- In 2011, the region saw 11 major tourism/recreation related construction projects worth approximately \$118.5 million when completed. These projects ranged in type including hotel construction in Blackfalds and Olds, a multi-use trail in Clearwater County, modernization/additions to the Red Deer Curling Centre (under construction as of 2012), and the Fieldhouse Recreation Facility in Blackfalds, among others.<sup>26</sup>

Though tourism is not itemized as an industry in the economic indicator reports, the region's above provincial average employment performance in the retail, accommodations and food and information, culture and recreation industries together with its past and expected future population growth serve as a signal of the importance of tourism to the regional economy.



Figure 6. Economic and Demographic Profile of Central Alberta

## 4.2 History and Cultures

Our region has a rich history based on an immense array of cultures. We have summarized some of the most prominent elements that will be of interest to our current and future visitors.

### 4.2.1 The Kootenay Plains

The history of Central Alberta starts with an understanding of the early Aboriginal settlement. In particular, the Kootenay Plains is an integral part of the First Nations history in the region. The Kootenay Plains was known for its pleasant temperatures and abundant wildlife, which made it an attractive destination for First Nations. The Ktunaxa (Kootenay) First Nations settled in the region as early as 12,000 BC. The Ktunaxa had a history of inter-tribal trade with the interior tribes of British Columbia, the Shoshone to the south, and the Blackfoot and Plains Cree tribes on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. They were one of the last tribes in Canada reached by the early European explorers.<sup>28, 29</sup>

With the Rocky Mountains perceived as ‘an impassable barrier even to the eagle’ according to David Thompson, and with many tribes living on the coast and along the Columbia River, the Ktunaxa peoples had relative seclusion from European settlers after contact with other tribes. However, when fur traders David Thompson and Alexander Henry were recording their presence on the Plains, the Ktunaxa people were already nearly gone. The Ktunaxa people were being pushed west by the better-armed Peigan of the Blackfoot Nation.

Shortly thereafter, the Stoney, also called the Assiniboine, began to fill the Kootenay Plains. Originally part of the Sioux nation, they split sometime in the late 17th century and began migrating westward from the Lake of the Wood-Lake Nipigon region. During this migration, the Stoney split into different groups; one group, today called the Wesley Band, also migrated to the Kootenay Plains. The migration period witnessed a man named Abraham who sometime around 1820 went up the mountains to the Kootenay Plains and settled there. Abraham was present at the Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 for the signing of Treaty Number Seven. It was under Treaty Number Seven that the Stoney bands were gathered together on a number of reserves near Morley. It was reported that no reserve land was set aside along the North Saskatchewan; however, the Wesley Band, who was present at the Treaty signing, received verbal assurances that this would be done.



Lacombe



### 4.2.2 The 1700s and the Start of the Fur Trade

The story of the region's European settlement is one explained by trading, commerce, and exploration. Anthony Henday was the first European explorer to reach present day Alberta. An employee of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), Henday was accompanied by the Cree and Blackfoot First Nations on his Hudson Bay fur trading expedition. While Henday was occupied with establishing fur trading for the HBC, a man named Peter Pond of the North West Company was travelling down the Athabasca River and in 1790, he marked a fur trading post site in Rocky Mountain House. Around 1799, a group of North West Company employees led by John McDonald of Garth travelled upstream of Fort Augustus by canoe and horseback to officially establish Rocky Mountain House as a fur trading post. Shortly thereafter, James Bird of the HBC built Acton House, which would serve as another important fur trading post for the company. The HBC, threatened by the emerging dominance of the North West Company in northern Alberta, sent Peter Fidler and David Thompson to explore and map the Athabasca and North Saskatchewan rivers in the 1790s and early 1800s.

Later in the 1800s around 1860, a buffalo hunting settlement called Tail Creek was established which brought together Métis hunters from Lac Saint Anne and the Edmonton area to participate in buffalo hunts. Tail Creek, located in area today known as Trenville Park, existed from the late 1860s through to its demise by prairie fire in 1894. Around 1875, Sergeant-Major Sam Steele of the North West Mounted Police established a fur trading post in Tail Creek to "thwart the whisky traders who preyed on the Aboriginal hunters"<sup>30</sup> (p. 4). At times, over 1000 people were involved in the hunt and the processing of buffalo

meat. The dried meat and pemmican (a mixed of dried and pounded meat, berries, and rendered buffalo fat) were transported from this site to all across the north west of Canada to support the fur trade. Tail Creek not only contributed to the region's larger fur trade, but has become an important part of the region's agricultural history.

### 4.2.3 David Thompson and the 1800s

The David Thompson Corridor is named after the great fur trader, explorer, surveyor, and businessman, David Thompson. In 1784, at the age of 14, David Thompson arrived in Canada and was soon employed by the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice in fur trading. It was not his fur trading skills but his ability to survey and create maps that led to his recognition. In 1766, at the age of 26, Thompson created a map of a new route to Lake Athabasca for the HBC, travelling from York Factory by way of the Nelson, Burntwood, and Churchill Rivers and Reindeer Lake to Fond du Lac.<sup>31</sup>

Thompson eventually left the HBC and joined the North West Company in 1797, where he spent several years in Rocky Mountain House searching for a passage west to the Pacific Ocean. It was this search that led to extensive surveying and mapping of the west. In 1807, Thompson, now with the North West Company, travelled up the North Saskatchewan River and found Howse Pass and built Kootenay House on the Columbia River. The establishment of these posts made the Rocky Mountain House post unnecessary and led to its closure as a result. However, the Rocky Mountain House re-opened and Alexander Henry of the North West Company and David Thompson set out to explore new areas around the Athabasca River.<sup>32</sup>

Over 28 years of surveying the fur trading in what is today known as the David Thompson Corridor, David Thompson mapped almost two million miles of terrain by extensive travel and observation.



Stephansson House—Red Deer County

#### 4.2.4 The Arrival of the Scandinavians

The history of Central Alberta is not limited to stories of fur trading. The region received a number of immigrants in the 1850s from Denmark and Iceland in places such as Innisfail, Markerville, and Rocky Mountain House. Icelandic settlers C.P. Marker and Stephan G. Stephansson provided tremendous cultural contributions to the region. The Town of Markerville, named after C.P. Marker, became a sheep and dairy farming hub for Icelandic immigrants. In 1895, the first creameries were established in the Markerville area; independently operated and in competition with one another, the Icelandic immigrants were proving themselves to be very capable dairy farmers<sup>33</sup>.

In 1902, the Markerville Creamery was founded by C.P. Marker with the help of funding from the federal government to help develop a dairy industry in the west. Another Icelandic immigrant named Stephan G. Stephansson settled in the region around this time. Known as a farmer and prolific poet, he was instrumental in helping establish the sheep and dairy farming industry. His home would eventually become a culturally important site for the Icelandic community and to Central Alberta, becoming the Stephansson House Provincial Historic Site. The house represents the Icelandic settlement experience. The Scandinavian history helps explain the many cultural features found across the region today.

## 4.2.5 A Short History of Commerce: The Role of Coal

Alberta's coal industry is an important part of the province's history. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the coal industry was part of a larger program of national economic development launched by the federal government.<sup>34</sup> One of the key elements of this program was to stimulate immigration and agricultural settlement. Communities in Central Alberta such as Nordegg, for example, benefitted enormously from the large scale immigration that would follow. In fact, Nordegg was founded by a German entrepreneur named Martin Nordegg. In 1907, Nordegg arrived in the Rocky Mountains and quickly adapted his business acumen to the development of coal energy resources. In 1908, just one year after arriving, Nordegg discovered coalfields near the South Brazeau and Bighorn Rivers. Gaining the support of German investors and forming a partnership with the president of the Canadian Northern Railway Company, William Mackenzie, Nordegg played an important role in the establishment of Brazeau Collieries Ltd. in 1910, which was a highly successful coal mining company at the time.<sup>35</sup>

The company established the Brazeau Collieries Minesite around this time, which contributed greatly to Nordegg's reputation of being one of the finest mining towns in the province.<sup>36</sup> The Brazeau Collieries Minesite produced over 10 million tonnes of coal between 1911 and 1955.<sup>37</sup> Due to the success of Nordegg's coal industry, it continued to attract more people. By 1948, the community had 3,000 citizens including 500-600 mine workers. Annual coal production was approximately 300,000 tonnes and with on-going railway development, the coal industry was able to rapidly expand. The success of this

mining site and its ongoing contribution to the region's economy and development over the 20th century, led to it receiving a National Historic Site status in 2002. The site today offers visitors and tourists an opportunity to experience the thrills and tragedies of working in a coal mine.



Nordegg Mine Site

## 4.3 Landscapes and Ecology

Our region's landscapes, ecosystems and biodiversity serve as robust attractions for visitors. They are also a critical consideration for destination managers and their sensitivities need to be accommodated in destination development and management decisions.

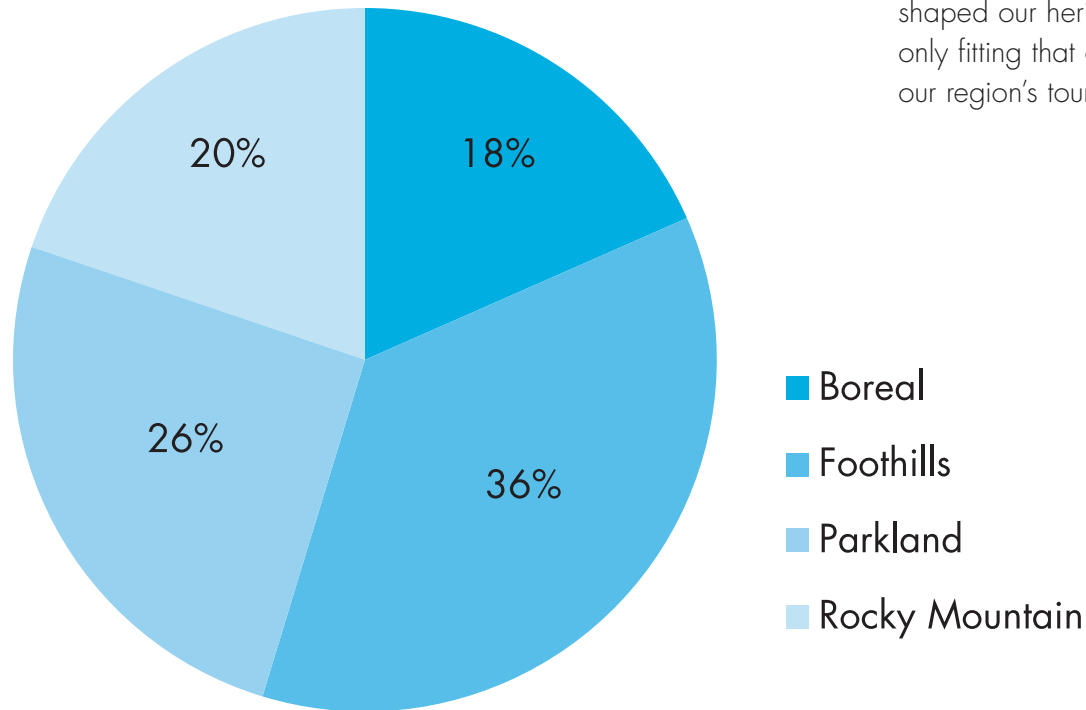


Figure 7. Distribution of Natural Regions

### 4.3.1 Natural Regions and Subregions

Our region offers some of the province's most diverse landscapes, biodiversity and scenery. From the towering peaks of the Rocky Mountains in the West Country to the undulating forests of the foothills, the boreal forest and the gentle aspen parkland, our region is at the heart of Alberta's natural diversity. In fact, Central Alberta, unlike any other region of Alberta, is staged at the convergence of four of the province's six natural regions (see Figure 7). It is safe to say that no other region boasts the inherent beauty and natural diversity of the Province like Central Alberta. Our natural diversity has shaped our heritage, our settlement patterns and our way of life. It is only fitting that our natural diversity is also a featured foundation of our region's tourism industry.

### 4.3.2 Parks and Protected Areas

There are 88 Provincial Parks and Protected Areas in our region protecting 1,069.4 km<sup>2</sup> of land and water or 3.4% of the region. Not only do our parks and protected areas preserve important habitats, ecosystems and ecosystem functions they are also essential tourism assets with the potential to provide authentic and memorable experiences as visitors explore our region’s natural and cultural heritage. In fact, Aspen Beach Provincial Park, established in 1932 for community recreation and gathering, is one of Alberta’s oldest parks. Though provincial parks and protected areas are important tourism assets, we must be mindful that they are managed in accordance with their classification. Not all parks are appropriate for tourism or all types of tourism (see Figure 9 for park classification).

With the exception of Wilderness Areas, which constitute the largest protected land base in the region, the land base within the region’s parks and protected areas is evenly distributed across the classifications (see Figure 9). There are 32 Natural Areas, 44 Provincial Recreation Areas, 6 Provincial Parks, and 1 Wildland Provincial Park. Though there are many provincial parks and protected areas in our region, they are not equally distributed

throughout the region. The David Thompson Corridor alone has 27 parks and protected areas including two large Wilderness Areas (Siffleur and White Goat), one Provincial Park (Crimson Lake), one Ecological Reserve (Kootenay Plains), one large (Wapiabi) and 14 smaller Provincial Recreation Areas and three Natural Areas.

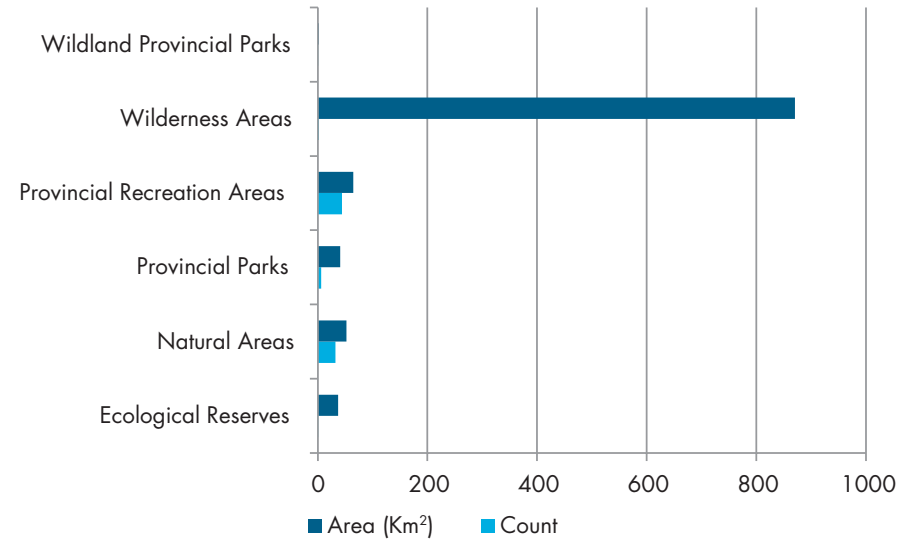


Figure 8. Distribution of Park Classifications

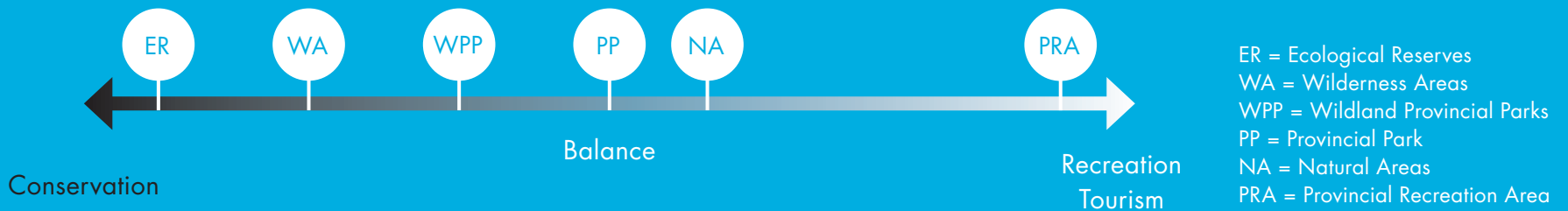


Figure 9. Parks and Protected Area Classification & Management Objectives. Adapted from Alberta Environment and Parks

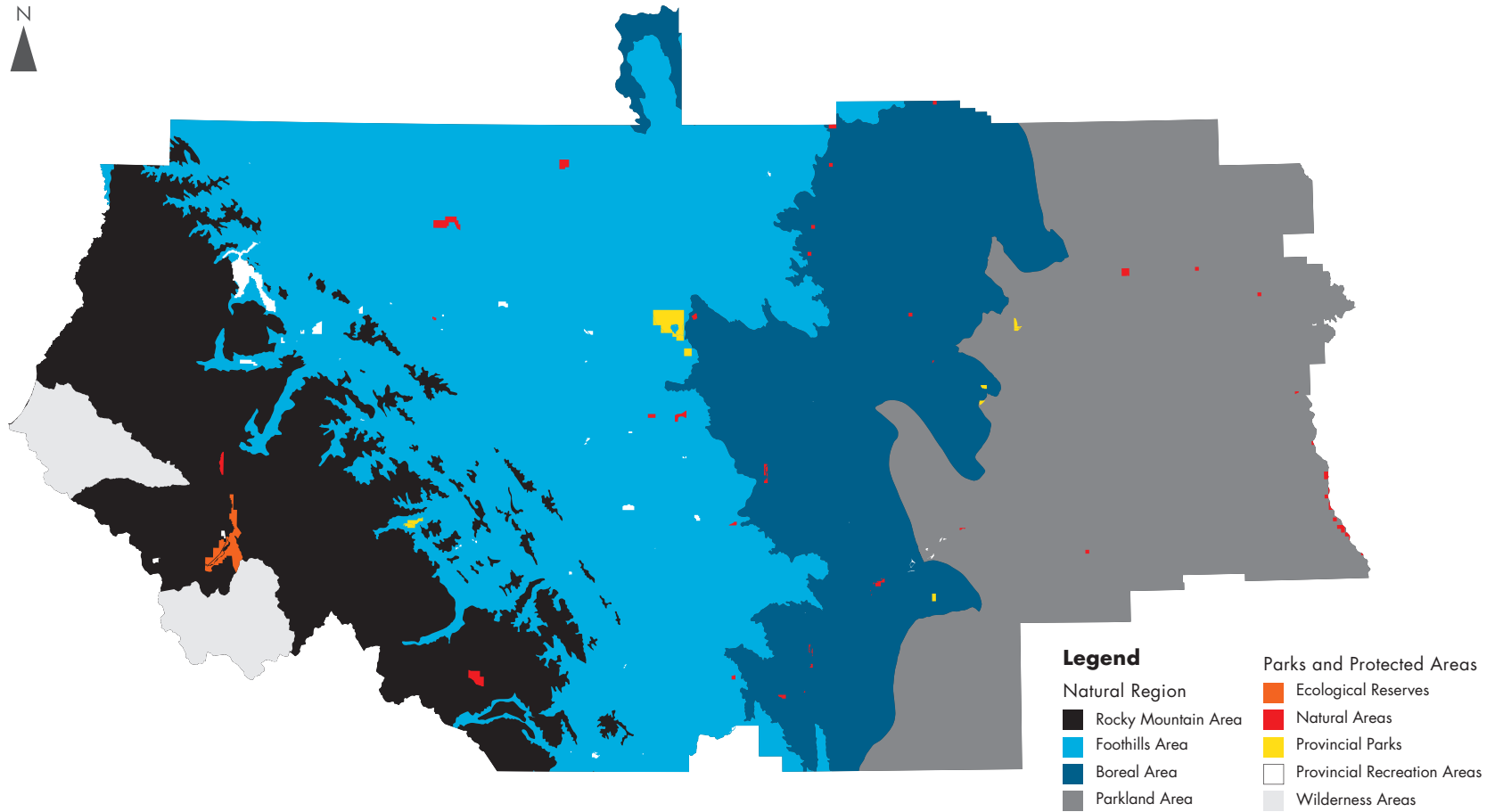


Figure 10. Natural Regions & Parks and Protected Areas


### 4.3.3 Biodiversity & Environmentally Significant Areas

Our region contributes significantly to the biodiversity of the province. The region is home to a wide range of habitats and fish, wildlife, and plant species. These serve as a strong attraction for many travellers interested in viewing, photographing, hunting or fishing wildlife. The region boasts many sport fish including cut-throat, bull and rainbow trout, lake whitefish, pike and walleye as well as charismatic species such as trumpeter swans, elk, bighorn sheep, cougar wolverine and black and grizzly bear. Other species of interest include the “Wild Horses” which are technically a feral domestic livestock specie. The region is also home to the provincially unique plant species including the oldest white bark pine tree in the Province located along the David Thompson Corridor. Some of our region’s species are considered to be at risk, and have been designated as endangered, threatened, special concern, or sensitive.<sup>38</sup> Tourism involving these species demands special care and management attention that puts the species recovery as the first priority.

With 55 Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) covering 29.7% of the region (see Figure 11), we have an environmental and conservation story to share with our visitors. ESAs contain important and/or unique environmental values, which are vital to the long-term maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes and services.

As shown in Figure 11, 9.8% of our region (3,054.9 km<sup>2</sup>) is designated as a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity Zone. Key Wildlife and Biodiversity Zones serve as important habitat, areas of greater biodiversity and wintering range for ungulates.

As tourism development progresses in our region, it is important to recognize that maintaining the ongoing quality and function of wildlife and biodiversity zones, environmentally significant areas and our parks and protected areas is actually about maintaining the competitiveness and future of our nature-based, adventure and ecotourism sectors. Careful development, active management and a commitment to protecting our tourism resources will be essential if this sector is to reach its potential.



**29.7%**  
of the region is  
environmentally significant

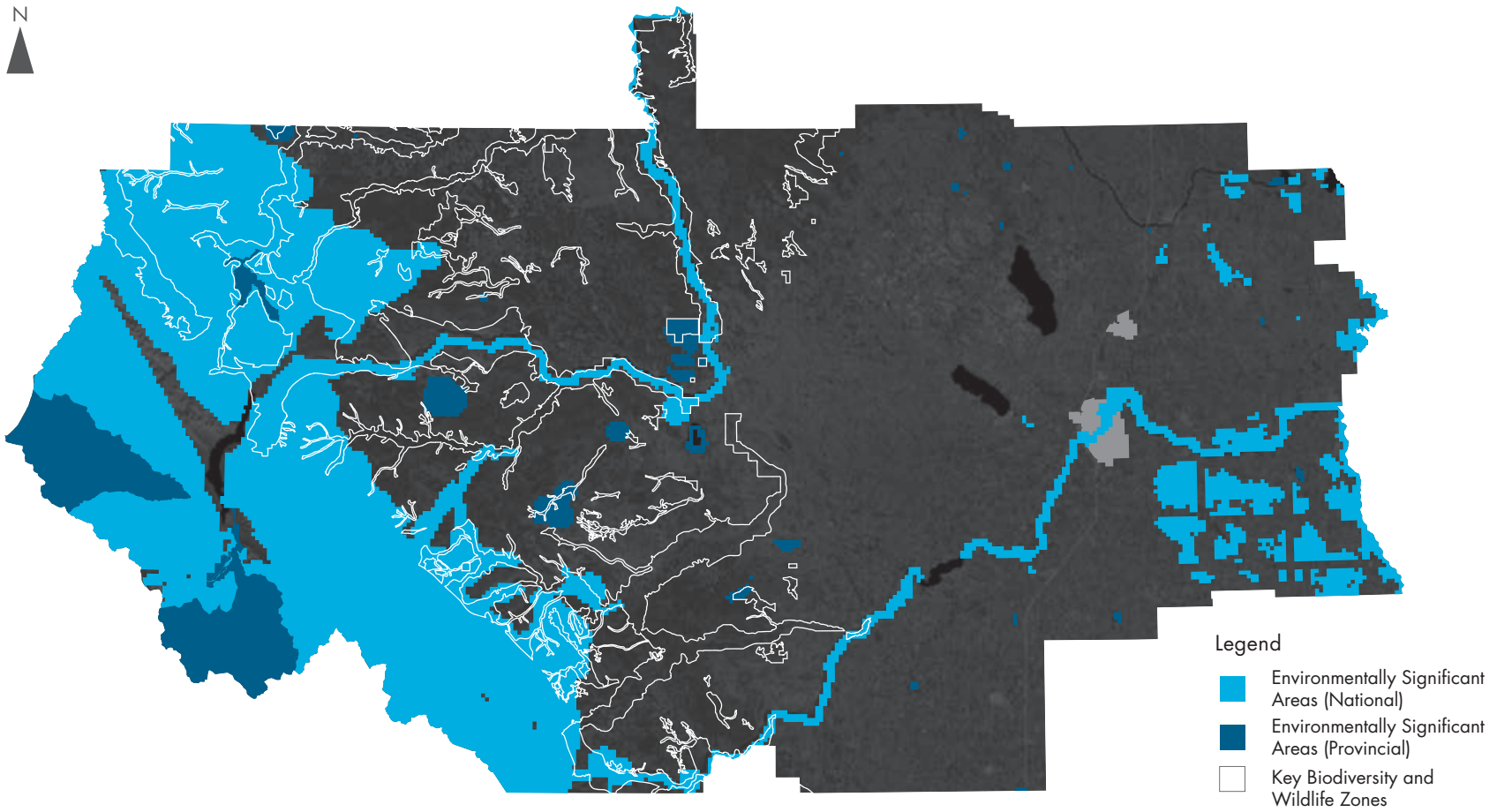


Figure 11. Environmentally Significant Areas & Key Biodiversity and Wildlife Zones



# Tourism is Big Business !

## 5. Tourism in Central Alberta Today

### 5.1 Tourism in Alberta

Tourism is big business in Alberta. As a \$7.4 billion industry that supports 19,000 businesses, tourism employs approximately 114,000 people and attracts 33 million total visits annually.<sup>41</sup> In 2012, tourism contributed \$2.6 billion in GDP to Alberta and approximately \$3.4 billion in total tax revenue to all levels of government.<sup>42</sup>

Tourism spending in Alberta ripples throughout the whole economy supporting job creation, infrastructure development, and community development which results in a direct, indirect, and induced economic benefits. For example, direct impacts from tourism results in spending on recreation activities, food and beverage, accommodations, and transportation.<sup>43</sup> Figure 12 illustrates how spending on our tourism affects our economy.

As of 2012, residents of Alberta accounted for 62% of direct visitor spending in Alberta while the rest of Canada comprised 20%, the United States accounted for 8%, and international visitors accounted for 10%. Of the 33.10 million total visits made to Alberta in 2012, direct tourism expenditures were \$7.41 billion <sup>44 45</sup>.

# TOURISM WORKS

## Alberta's Visitor Economy

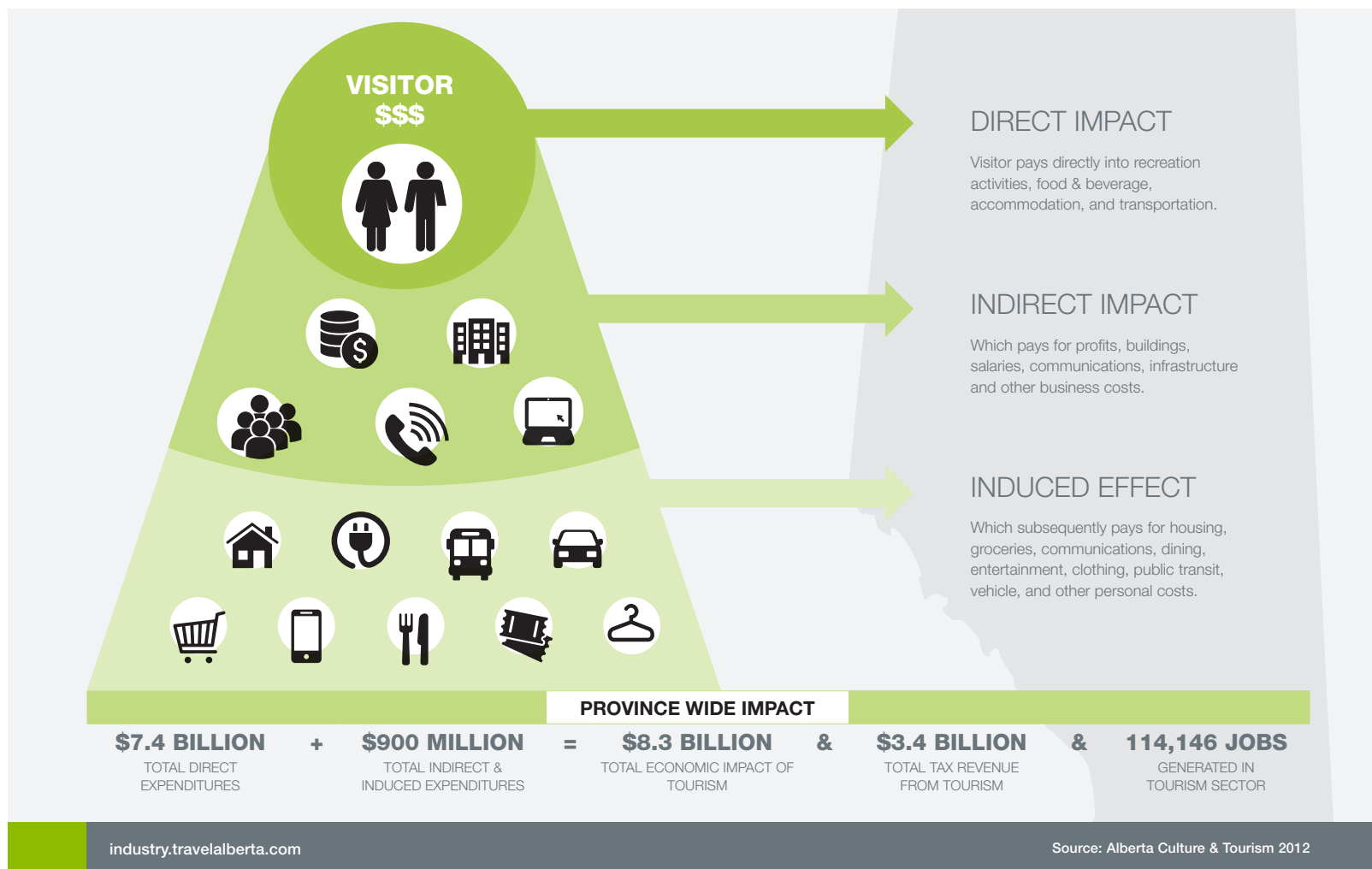


Figure 12. Alberta's Visitor Economy

## 5.2 Visitors to Central Alberta

The Alberta Central Tourism Region represents 24% (8 million) of total visits to Alberta. The majority of visitation to our region originates in the Edmonton to Calgary corridor. Residents from Alberta accounted for 94% of the visitation, while 5% were from other parts of Canada and 1% of the visitors came from the United States or from overseas. Compared to visitation at the provincial level, Central Alberta receives a higher percentage of its visitors locally but has a slightly lower percentage of visitors from the rest of Canada. As previously indicated, these data are for the Alberta Central Tourism Region, which is larger than the study area we are using (refer to Figure 4).<sup>48</sup>

Industrial crews and business travellers place the highest demand on the region's accommodations.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.2.1 Overnight Stays

Approximately 35% of all visits to the Alberta Central Tourism Region included at least one overnight stop, resulting in 2.77 million overnight visits in 2012. Residents from the Edmonton area made up the bulk of these visits, accounting for 32% of all overnight travel to the region, while residents of Central Alberta accounted for 22% of the overnight visits, followed by 20% from the Calgary area. Of the 2.77 million overnight visits in 2012, about 50% visited friends and relatives, while 40% of the visitors came for pleasure. Other overnight trip purposes to Central Alberta accounted for a much smaller percentage, including 5% for business and 5% for other reasons.<sup>49</sup>

In 2009, the Alberta Central Tourism Region had 84 accommodation properties with a total of 4,529 rooms; representing 7.1% of rooms available in the province. At 32.5% of room demand, the largest market segment was industrial crews followed by business travellers at 27.7%. The average occupancy rate in the region was 46.9%, compared to the provincial average of 58.6%. The average room rate was \$89.60, which was 20.1% lower than the provincial average of \$112.19.<sup>50</sup>

### 5.2.2 Average Length of Stay

In 2012, visitors spent 46.10 million nights in Alberta, of which 17% (7.69 million) were spent in the Alberta Central Tourism Region. Of the 7.69 million nights in the region, 65% were spent in the homes of friends and family, 22% occurred in campgrounds and trailer parks, 9% in hotels, 3% in other commercial fixed-roof properties, and 1% in motels.<sup>50</sup> In 2012, the average length of stay in the region ranged from a high of 9.5 nights for international visitors to a low of 2.5 nights for Albertans. On average, Canadian visitors to Central Alberta in 2012 spent 3.7 nights while Americans spent 5 nights.

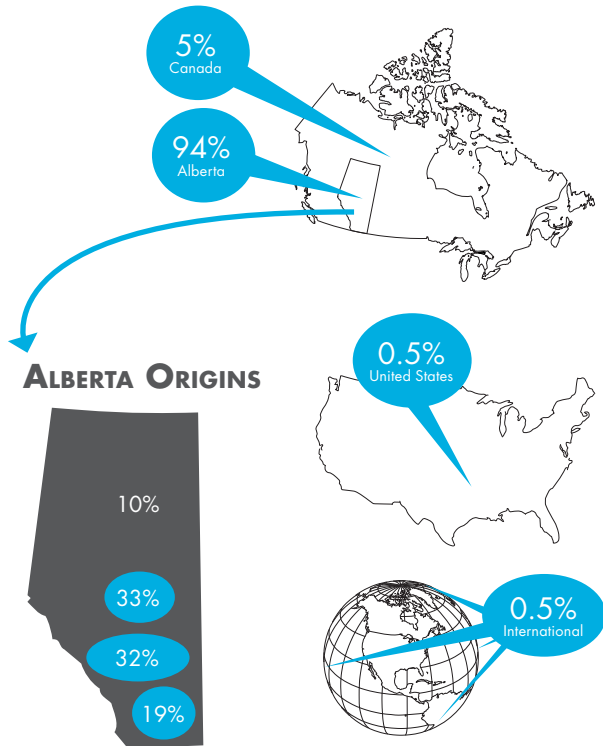
### 5.2.3 Seasonality

Over the course of 2012, the highest percentage of overnight visits to the Alberta Central Tourism Region was during the third quarter of the year (July, August, and September) with 38% of the total overnight visits. About 25% of travellers visited during the second quarter (April, May, and June), 20% during the fourth quarter (October, November, and December), and only 17% during the first quarter (January, February, and March).

# Understanding Alberta Central's Visitation

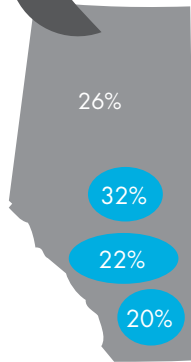
**8 million** = **24%**  
 person visits to Central Alberta of total visits to Alberta

## WHERE DO VISITORS COME FROM?

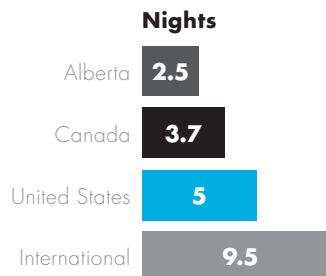


**35%** of visits had at least **1** overnight visit  
 = **2.7 million** overnight visits

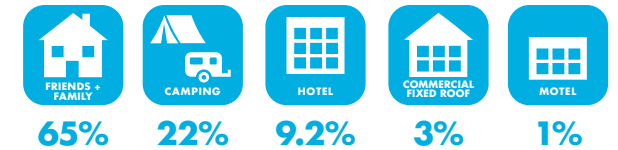
## ORIGINS OF OVERNIGHT STAYS IN ALBERTA



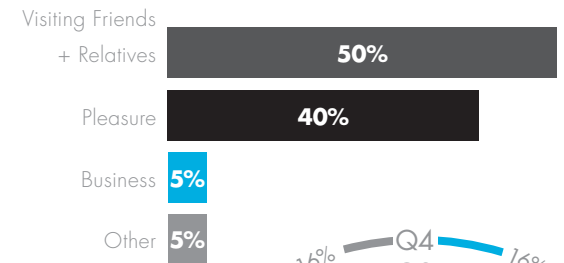
## AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY BY ORIGIN



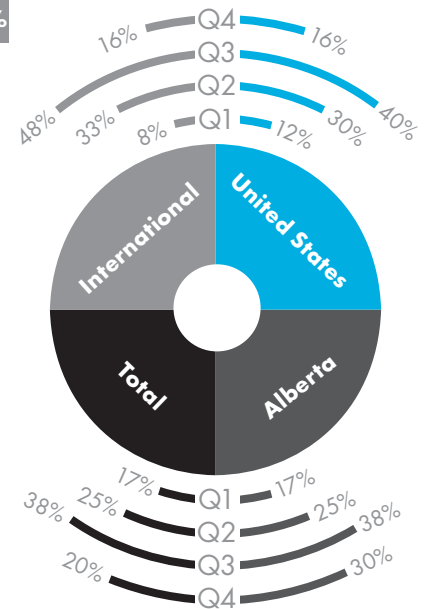
## WHERE DO THEY STAY?



## WHY DO THEY VISIT?



## WHEN DO THEY VISIT?



Note: The Alberta Central Tourism Region, on which this data is based, is a much larger region than the Central Alberta study area.

Source: Alberta Central Tourism Region: A Summary of 2012 Numbers and Characteristics. Government of Alberta 2012

## 5.2.4 Visitor Spending

In 2012, the Alberta Central Tourism Region accounted for 16% of the total visitor spending in Alberta; direct spending by all tourists in Central Alberta was approximately \$1.09 billion.<sup>53</sup> As a result of visitor expenditures in Central Alberta, about 16,785 full-time equivalent jobs were generated in the tourism sector province-wide. Approximately \$502 million in total tax revenue were accrued to all three levels of government as a result of tourism activity in Central Alberta.<sup>54</sup> According to Alberta Culture and Tourism, in 2012, spending in a number of industries contributed to Central Alberta's tourism sector. Below is a breakdown of the expenditures in the various industries in the Alberta Central Tourism Region:

- Private/Rental Auto = \$380 million
- Public/Local Transit = \$13 million
- Recreation & Entertainment = \$75 million
- Accommodation, Food & Beverage = \$415 million
- Retail/Other = \$207 million

According to Statistics Canada, in 2012, Albertans spent on average, \$87 per person per trip when visiting Central Alberta during a day trip, which was slightly higher than Calgary and Area and Alberta South where visitors spent \$85 per person per trip. For overnight trips, Albertan residents spent \$158 per person per trip, compared to \$256 from rest of Canada visitors, \$595 from visitors from the United States, and \$691 from overseas visitors.<sup>55</sup>



Kraay Family Farm—Lacombe

# Economic Impact of Tourism in Alberta Central

## HOW MUCH IS SPENT IN ALBERTA CENTRAL?

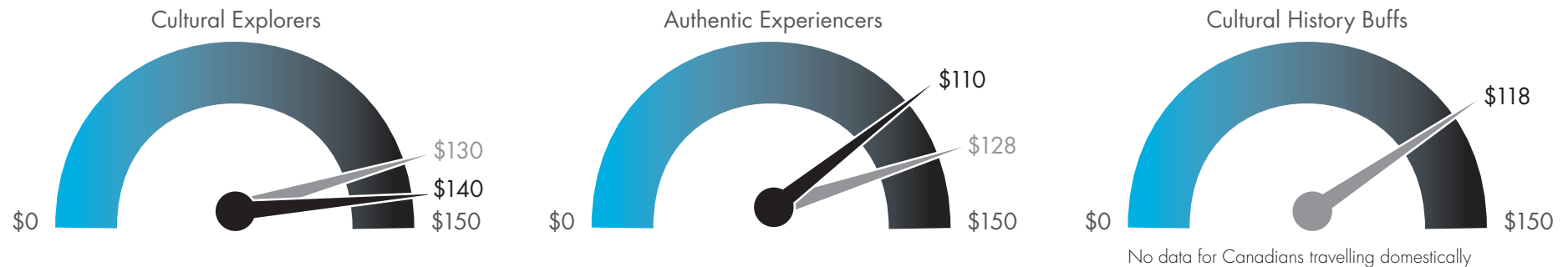
**\$1.2 billion** = 16% of provincial visitor spending in Alberta

## HOW MANY JOBS ARE CREATED?

**16,785** full-time equivalent jobs generated in tourism sector

## DAILY SPENDING BY TRAVELLER TYPE

- Canadians travelling domestically
- Global markets coming to Canada



**\$476 million** = total tax revenue accrued to all three levels of government in 2012 as a result of tourism activity in Alberta Central Tourism Region

Note: The Alberta Central Tourism Region, on which this data is based, is a much larger region than the Central Alberta study area.

Source: Tourism Works for Alberta. The Economic Impact of Tourism in Alberta Central Tourism Region, 2012. Government of Alberta 2013.

## 5.3 Tourism Experiences and Resources

We know that visitors from near and far want to explore the unique, the exotic and the unexpected<sup>56</sup> and we believe that our region has the potential to fulfill this dream. “Travellers want more out of life and their time away. They do not want to simply see things; they want to be engaged and they want to immerse themselves while travelling. Simply put, visitors are seeking “Experiential Travel” (p. 4)<sup>56</sup>. “Experiential travel engages visitors in a series of memorable travel activities that are inherently personal. It involves all senses, and makes connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, social or intellectual level. It is travel designed to engage visitors with the locals, set the stage for conversations, tap the senses and celebrate what is unique” (p. 8)<sup>56</sup>. Focusing on why people travel versus simply selling products is essential to competing in the tourism industry’s fierce market place.

A tourism experience happens at the intersection of local people, local culture and local geography. As such, we need to begin our planning for the future of tourism by taking stock of our current visitor experience offering and the resources on which they are founded.

Tourism resources are the built and natural assets and infrastructure that facilitate visitor experiences and the settings and visual landscapes in which they occur. Collectively, tourism resources are our competitive advantage. They are the basis on which we sustain our current industry and have the potential to grow it into the future. Retaining the integrity and quality of the region’s tourism resources is essential to delivering on our ability to provide authentic and memorable visitor experiences.

“A tourism product is what you buy, an experience is what you remember”.

—Canadian Tourism Commission<sup>56</sup>



Red Deer River, Sundre  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta

### 5.3.1 Experiences

Central Alberta offers an abundance of activities from fishing to skiing and shopping, to going to the rodeo or visiting an art gallery; our region offers an experience for everyone. Our long summer days offer numerous opportunities for camping, cycling, mountain biking, white water rafting, fishing, boating, kayaking, and visiting beaches on Sylvan and Gull lakes. While our cold winters with ample snow provides opportunities for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and ice climbing.

For tourists more interested in learning about the region’s culture and history, they can experience one of our region’s many provincial historic sites, take in a stampede or head west to experience the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site, and learn about the great fur trader and explorer, David Thompson, and the paths of voyageurs on the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>57</sup> Connecting with the region’s agricultural history, our agri-tourism industry offers many farmers markets, family farms and events such as the Taste of Markerville. Other visitors may be intrigued to learn

about and experience our region’s Icelandic settlement history by visiting the Stephansson House Provincial Historic Site.

The visitor experiences in our region are as diverse as the region’s landscape. From the adventure and outdoor recreation opportunities in the west country, to the region’s agricultural flare, its water-based experiences on our prime recreational lakes; the urban, business travel, sports and events of Red Deer or the region’s incredible heritage and cultures, Central Alberta brings more diversity than any other region in the province. The range of experiences currently offered can be conveniently organized as follows:

- Nature, Adventure & Ecotourism
- Agri-tourism & Culinary Tourism
- Cultural, Heritage & Arts Tourism
- Aboriginal Tourism
- Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism
- Business Events

**[Activity + Setting] × Natural Region = Experience**





## Nature, Adventure & Ecotourism

- Provincial & Municipal Parks and Protected Areas
- Hiking, Camping, Wilderness Travel & Climbing
- Swimming & Beaches
- Trails & Rail Trails
- Mountain Biking and Road Riding
- Mountaineering
- Rock Climbing & Via Ferratta
- Ice Climbing
- Skiing—Cross-country, Downhill and Alpine Touring
- Flat Water & Whitewater Canoeing, kayaking, rafting (day & extended tours)
- Helicopter Tours
- Driving Tours—Cowboy Trail
- Off-highway Vehicles—ATV, Utility Terrain Vehicle, Off-Road Motorcycle, Trials, 4x4, Snowmobile
- Equestrian Riding & Pack-Trips
- Wildlife Viewing, Zoos and Nature Centers
- Hunting
- Lake & River Fishing, Fly-Fishing & Ice Fishing
- Eco-lodges

Via Ferratta: “Iron Way”. Originally developed as a way to move soldiers through the Swiss Alps during wartime, it has since evolved into a popular rock climbing sport.



The West Country

## Agri-tourism, Culinary Tourism

- Farm Tours
- Farmers Markets
- Food Festivals
- U-Picks
- Family Farms & Corn Mazes
- Farm Gate Sales
- Farm Museums
- Agriculture Festivals
- Farm Stays
- Taste of Markerville
- Guest Ranches

## Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism

- Canada Winter Games
- Rodeos
- Alberta Sports Hall of Fame
- Tournaments
- Races—Cycling, Triathlons
- Summer & Winter Festivals
- Fairs
- Comedy & Music Festivals
- Concerts
- Shopping



Ponoka

## Aboriginal Tourism

- O'Chiese First Nation Pow Wow
- Self-Guided History Tours in the Kootenay Plains

## Cultural, Heritage & Arts Tourism

- Rocky Mountain House & Brazeau Collieries Minesite Industrial Museum National Historic Sites
- Provincial Historic Resources
- Brazeau Collieries
- David Thompson Corridor
- Kootenay Plains
- Cowboy Trail, Scandinavian Trail
- Mural Walks
- Museums
- Churches
- Art Galleries
- Performing Arts Theaters

## Business Events

- Conferences & Research Symposiums
- Exhibitions & Expos
- Sports Shows

Red Deer

## 5.3.2 Tourism Resources

The region's tourism experiences are founded on its tourism resources—our assets and infrastructure. Here's a quick snapshot of the tourism assets and infrastructure in our region:

### 5.3.2.1 Assets

#### **Nature-based, Adventure, and Ecotourism**

With approximately 390 different features, Central Alberta is blessed with a mix of assets on which to support and enhance nature-based, adventure, and ecotourism experiences. Features include significant geological and vegetation features, Sylvan lake and Gull lake, the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers, high mountain peaks, waterfalls, whitewater, sport fisheries, wildlife, motorized and non-motorized trails, via-feratta, viewpoints, wildlife park, bird farms, down-hill and cross-country skiing, ice climbs, and many provincial and municipal parks. Figure 13 illustrates the distribution of the region's nature-based, adventure and ecotourism features.

It is clear; the West Country is the focus of many of our nature-based, adventure and ecotourism features though assets are also clustered along the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers and Sylvan and Gull lakes.

## Key Highlights

### **Nature-Base, Adventure, and Ecotourism Assets:**

- 2,980 km of trail
- 459 km of water route
- 32 mountains
- 9 beaches
- 2 caves
- 8 water falls
- 7 white water rapids
- 26 boat launches
- 36 river put in/take outs
- 27 stocked water bodies
- 15 staging areas
- 40 day use areas
- 25 ice climbing areas
- 2 downhill skiing areas

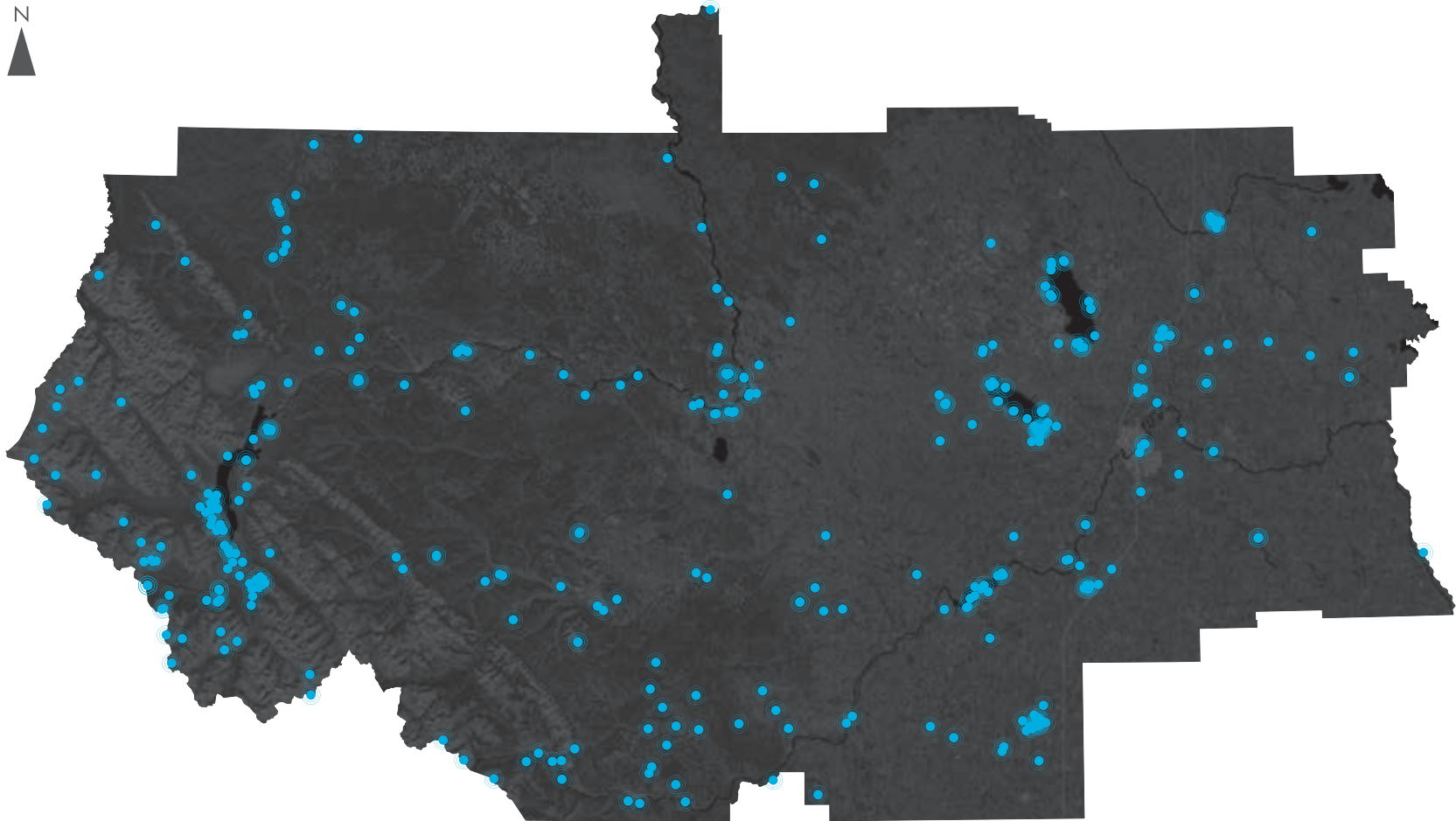



Figure 13. Distribution of Nature-Based, Adventure and Ecotourism Features

As illustrated in Figure 14, our region boasts nearly 2,980 kilometers of trails. Visitors have the opportunity to walk, hike, run, quad, and mountain bike across the landscape. With 459 kilometers of water routes, river based opportunities are abundant. Jet boating, tubing, canoeing as well as white water rafting and kayaking on the North Saskatchewan and upper Red Deer are popular activities. In addition, our warm water lakes located in the northeast portion of the region are provincially scarce and some of the busiest in the province. They provide lake based boating, fishing, ice fishing, swimming and cottage opportunities. Access to our trails, water routes and lakes are supported by 15 staging areas and 36 river put-ins/take outs and 26 boat launches.

Despite our substantive supply of trails and water routes, many tourism industry stakeholders told us that our trail and water route opportunities can be improved and that connectivity, access and staging, accommodations, visitor management and enforcement are essential to providing an improved visitor experience. Two recent examples include the desire to complete the Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail and enhancement of the Bighorn Dam as a motorized campground and staging area.



Adventure tourism, valued at \$263 billion is one of the fastest growing categories of tourism that attracts high value customers, supports local economies, and encourages sustainable practices

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)<sup>58</sup>

Sundre

Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Roth and Ramberg

2,980 km of trail

1,389 km of non-motorized trails

1,590 km of mixed use trails

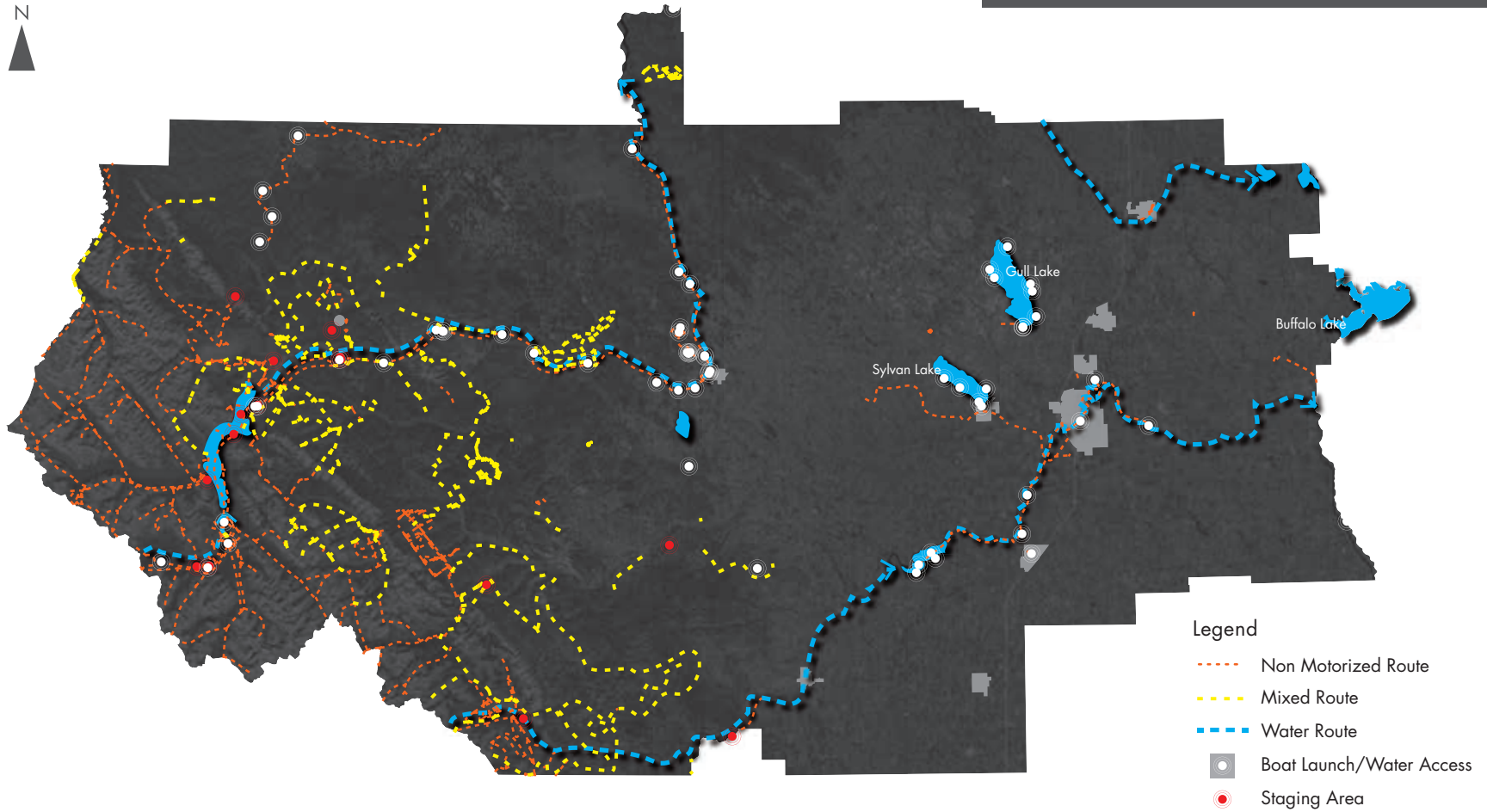


Figure 14. Distribution of Trails and Water Routes

## Agri-tourism and Culinary Tourism

Reflecting the region's agricultural roots, there are many agri-tourism and cultural tourism assets in the region. From farmers markets, to family farms, guest ranches, livestock auctions, riding arenas, rodeos and rodeo grounds, green houses, orchards and botanical gardens, there is great opportunity to support and enhance our local agri-tourism and culinary tourism sector. As illustrated in Figure 15, and in line with our region's landscape, our agri-tourism and culinary tourism opportunities are concentrated in the central portions of the region.

As Alberta's second largest agricultural region, we boast 9,100 farms with a total acreage of 7.1 million acres, or 14.2% of the province's total farm acreage.<sup>59</sup> With 27 agri-tourism operators in the region already delivering visitor experiences—including Edgar Farms, Heartland Orchards, Howell James and Krista Bee Farm, and Brown Eggs and Lamb to name a few—we have an opportunity to celebrate and share our agricultural history with visitors. The Olds Regional Exhibition is another prominent agri-tourism feature providing a venue for our community, youth, and agriculture industry to learn more about the importance agriculture plays in our lives.<sup>60</sup>

Farmers markets have become an agri-tourism attraction for short-haul markets. Initiatives such as the Innisfail Growers have highlighted the importance of farmers markets as a regional food source and have shown the growing interest of residents and tourists in connecting with local farmers. Visitors have also been attracted to events such as the Asparagus Festival, Country Drive, and Alberta Open Farm Days looking for opportunities to learn about, and taste, authentic local food from farmers around the region. Tourists with young children are entertained at the Kraay Family Farm with over 40 attractions and amenities in addition to its corn maze.

## Key Highlights

### Agri-tourism and Culinary Tourism Assets:

- 27 agri-tourism operations
- 9,100 farms
- 1 horseracing track
- 9 fair/rodeo grounds
- Olds College

The Red Deer Market has been going strong for 40 years. The farming community that keeps the market alive has diverse offerings allowing the market to reach over \$2 million in sales each year in the 100 hours that it is annually open.



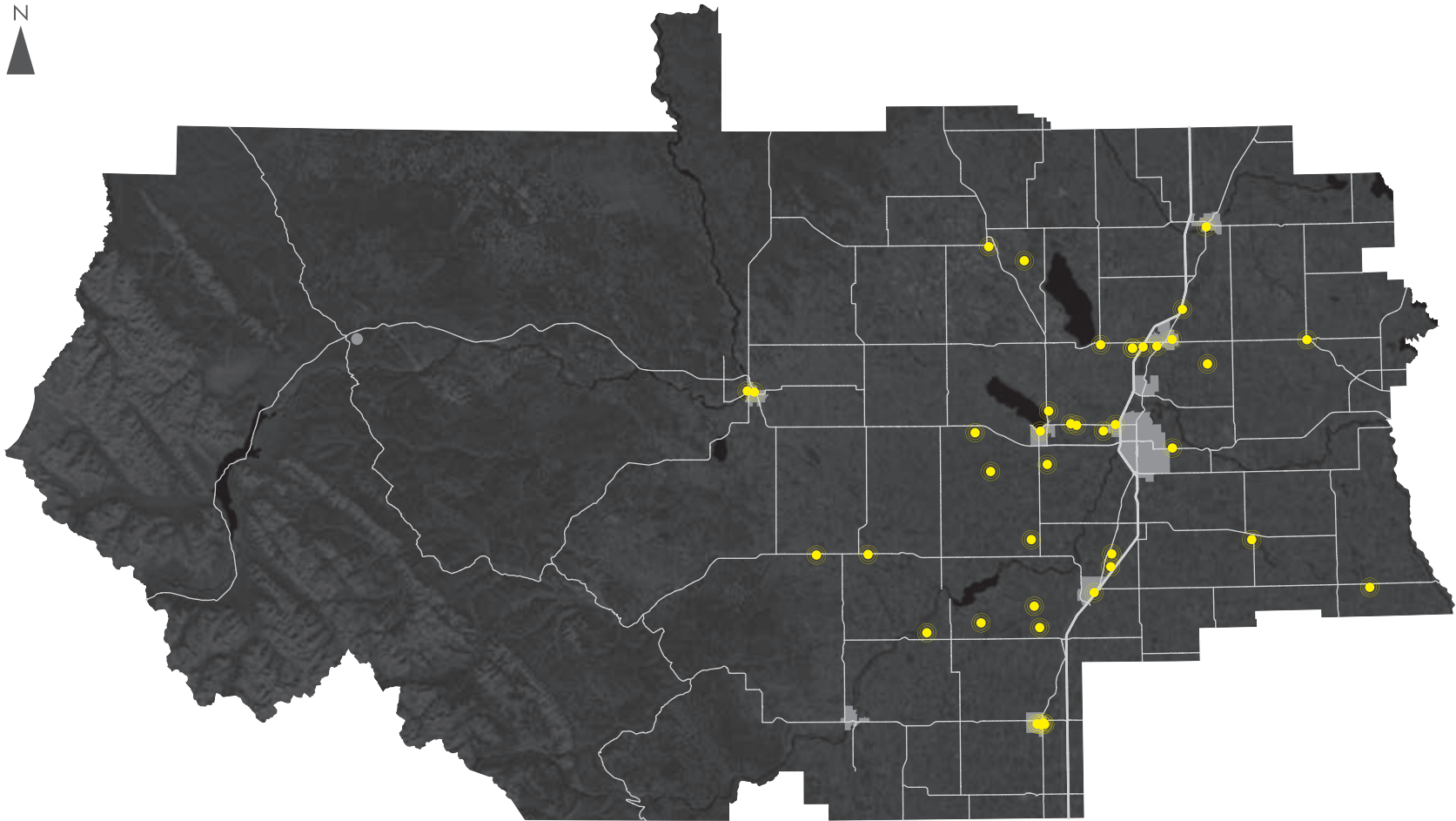


Figure 15. Distribution of Agri-Tourism and Culinary Tourism Features

## Key Highlights

### Cultural, Heritage, and Arts Assets:

- 2 National Historic Sites
- Provincial Historic Sites
- Fur Trade history of David Thompson
- 25 museums
- 12 different cultural art studios or galleries
- Lacombe murals

## Cultural, Heritage, and Arts Tourism

Our region is rich in Aboriginal and European history. We have many stories to share and, with an inventory of 82 different Cultural, Heritage and Arts attractions (see Figure 16), the region's operators are working hard to ensure a vibrant cultural, heritage and arts sector. From national and provincial historic sites to museums, interpretive centers, performing art theatres, dinner theatres, murals, artisan studios and iconic historic features we are well positioned to support and further strengthen our Cultural, Heritage and Arts sector. Our region even includes the third oldest known archaeological site in Alberta—the James Pass Meadow Site (10,000 years old)—which is in the western reaches of Clearwater County.

Some of the most well-known cultural, heritage and arts attractions in the region include the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site and the Nordegg National Historic Site in the west and the Fort Ostell Museum in the east. Visitors have the opportunity to experience the region's European settlement by visiting the Norwegian Laft Hus Society and Museum, the Danish Canadian National Museum, or the Stephansson House Provincial Historic Site. Each feature is unique and allows visitors to experience some of the many stories we have to share. In addition, our visitors can learn about some of our region's historic main streets, such as those found in Lacombe and Olds.

Lacombe Interpretive Centre

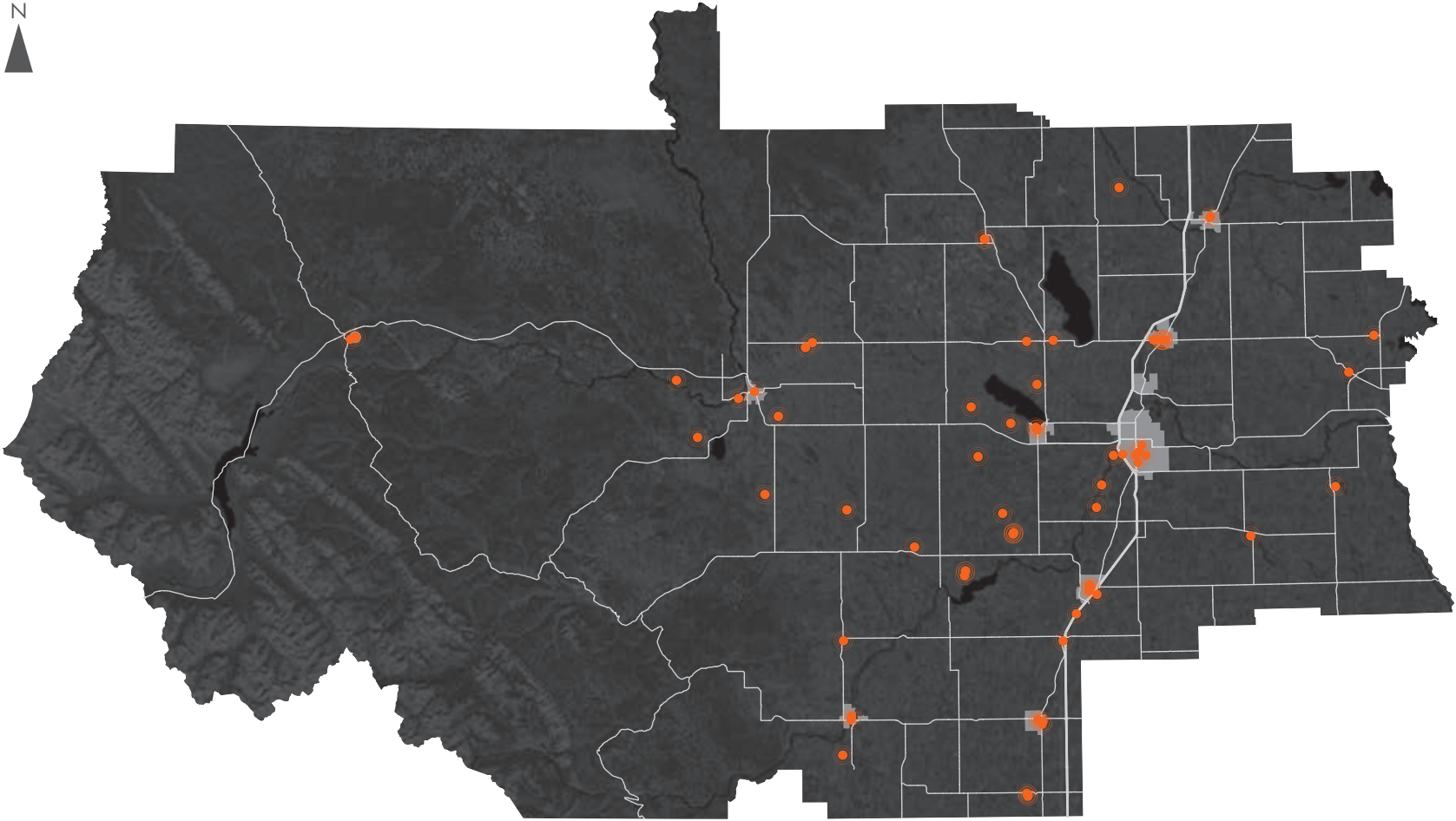


Figure 16. Distribution of Cultural, Heritage, and Arts Tourism Features



## Aboriginal Tourism

As described in Section 4.2, Aboriginal culture is an integral part of our region's history. However, our region's Aboriginal history and culture have not translated into a significant supply of tourism experiences at this time. Despite a strong Aboriginal presence and rich history in the region, Aboriginal tourism presents an opportunity to diversify and enhance the visitor offering. Due to the undeveloped nature of Aboriginal tourism in our study area, very little data are available about what currently exists. However, a 2013 study found the following facts about urban Albertans' participation in rural vacation experiences in Alberta:<sup>61</sup>

A 2013 study found the following facts about urban Albertans' participation in rural vacation experiences in Alberta:

- On the last trip, about 3% of urban Albertans participated in Aboriginal tourism which included Aboriginal culture and shopping for authentic arts and crafts
- For trip experiences, study participants indicated that Aboriginal tourism would be an ideal activity on a same-day (18%) or overnight trip (17%)
- About 13% of urban Albertans preferred experiencing Aboriginal culture compared to shopping for authentic Aboriginal arts and crafts (11%)
- Some participants explained that improvement in Aboriginal tourism would encourage visitation to rural Alberta including more immersive participatory experiences and information and publicity about what to expect

Cline River

Photo credit: Travel Alberta, George Simhoni

## Festivals, Events, and Sport Tourism

Our region knows that festivals, events and sport tourism can bring many benefits to our local communities. From small local festivals and events such as art in the park days or Canada day celebrations to larger community events such as our rodeos and stampedes and, now with the recent award of the 2019 Canada Winter Games to Red Deer, our region plays host to the full range of festivals, events and sport tourism experiences for visitors near and far.

With 194 sport facilities, the region has and continues to be a top destination for sports tournaments. It is no surprise that Red Deer has been selected to host the 2019 Canada Winter Games. Similar to the festivals and events features, most of the sport tourism features are east of Rocky Mountain House. The Red Deer region is a popular golf destination with over 19 golf courses to choose from.

## Business Events

Our region is home to seven conference and meeting centres that support business meetings and conferences. The Sheraton Hotel is Central Alberta's largest full-service hotel/conference and trade centre spanning 55,000 square feet. Its main special events centre is 33,000 square feet and accommodates a number of events year round. Red Deer College is another popular business meeting and conference destination where its meeting facilities can accommodate groups up to 550 people. As Central Alberta's largest trade show, agriculture, entertainment and convention facility, Westerner Park's 200,000 square foot facility, full service catering and substantial parking is a favorite location for large events. Outside of Red Deer, the Olds College Alumni Centre also hosts business events and conferences.



Innisfail Golf Course



Sylvan Lake—Century Dance

### 5.3.2.2 Tourism Infrastructure

#### Accommodations

Visitors in Central Alberta are looking for a diverse range of accommodation features. As such, it is important for our region to provide a mix of options to cater to these demands.

The study area has a total of 281 accommodation features (see Figure 17), which can be broken up into five categories including: camping, four season resorts, cabins/lodges, traditional accommodation (e.g., hotels, motels), and non-traditional accommodations (e.g., hostels and bed & breakfasts). There are 124 camping options across the region, which include backcountry opportunities, serviced campgrounds, and RV parks, among others. In 2009, the Alberta Central Tourism Region had the greatest number of campgrounds and campsites in the province with 220 and 12,275, respectively.<sup>62</sup> Despite the high number of campgrounds in the study area and the Alberta Central Tourism

Region, most of the region's campgrounds are at or approaching capacity during the peak season summer months (Alberta Parks, personal communication, February, 2015). In addition, many of the province's campgrounds have deteriorated in quality through lack of re-investment; "campsites developed several years ago have not kept pace with the changing needs of today's RV campers" (p.5).<sup>63</sup>

There are 30 cabins/lodges distributed across the region with some located off Highway 11, and others located south of Rocky Mountain House. This differs from the 60 traditional accommodation options (hotels, motels), which are mostly concentrated around the Red Deer area, off Highway 2. While the study area has 27 B&Bs, which are mostly concentrated in the eastern portions of the region, stakeholder interviewees confirmed that the region requires more of them to keep up with increasing tourism demands.

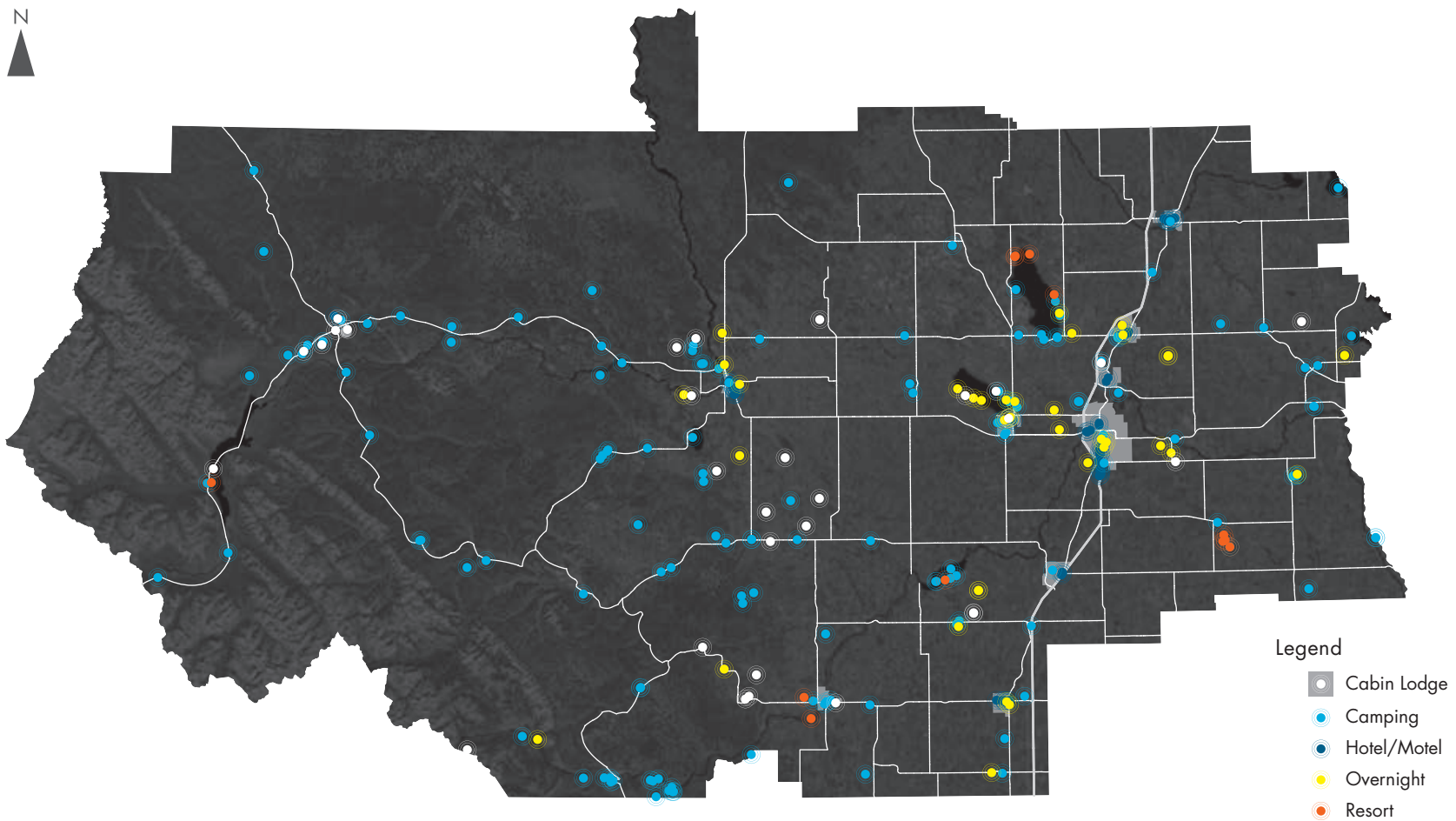


Figure 17. Distribution of Accommodation Features

## Amenities

There are 93 amenities in the study area including food services, entertainment, and information services for visitors and residents alike. Our region offers a range of restaurants from higher end options such as La Case Pergola in Red Deer, to fast food chains including Dairy Queen, Dominos, and Tim Horton's. Amenities in our study area also include visitor information centres such as the Rocky Mountain House Visitor Centre, tourism services such as banks, service stations, and car rental locations. These amenities are diverse but collectively provide tourists and visitors with opportunities to experience the tourism offerings of the region.

## Access

As shown in Figure 18, Central Alberta is easily accessible by major highways, rail and several international, regional and local airports. Central Alberta is accessed by the Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) Highway (or Highway 2), which is the busiest stretch of highway in Alberta. The QE2 is the central spine of the Calgary–Edmonton Corridor. Alberta Provincial Highway No. 11 is a second major highway in Central Alberta and is known as the David Thompson Highway. This highway route runs from the Saskatchewan River Crossing in Banff National Park east through Nordegg, Rocky Mountain House and Red Deer until it connects with Highway 12, 20 km west of Stettler. Highway No. 11 also intersects with Highway 734 (known as the Forestry Trunk Road), which provides access to the western part of our region. Highway 22, also known as the Cowboy Trail, is another significant route travelled through Central Alberta.

## Airports

A proportionately high number of airports can be found and utilized within the Central Alberta study area. Our airports, most of which are local and found in the central and eastern portion of our region, include the following:

- Sundre Airport
- Olds/Didsbury Airport
- Innisfail Airport
- Lacombe Airport
- Ponoka Industrial Airport
- Rocky Mountain House Airport

Red Deer Regional Airport is our region's only regional airport but has access to 191 international destinations. Our region is also within 150 kilometres of two international airports: Calgary International Airport and Edmonton International Airport.



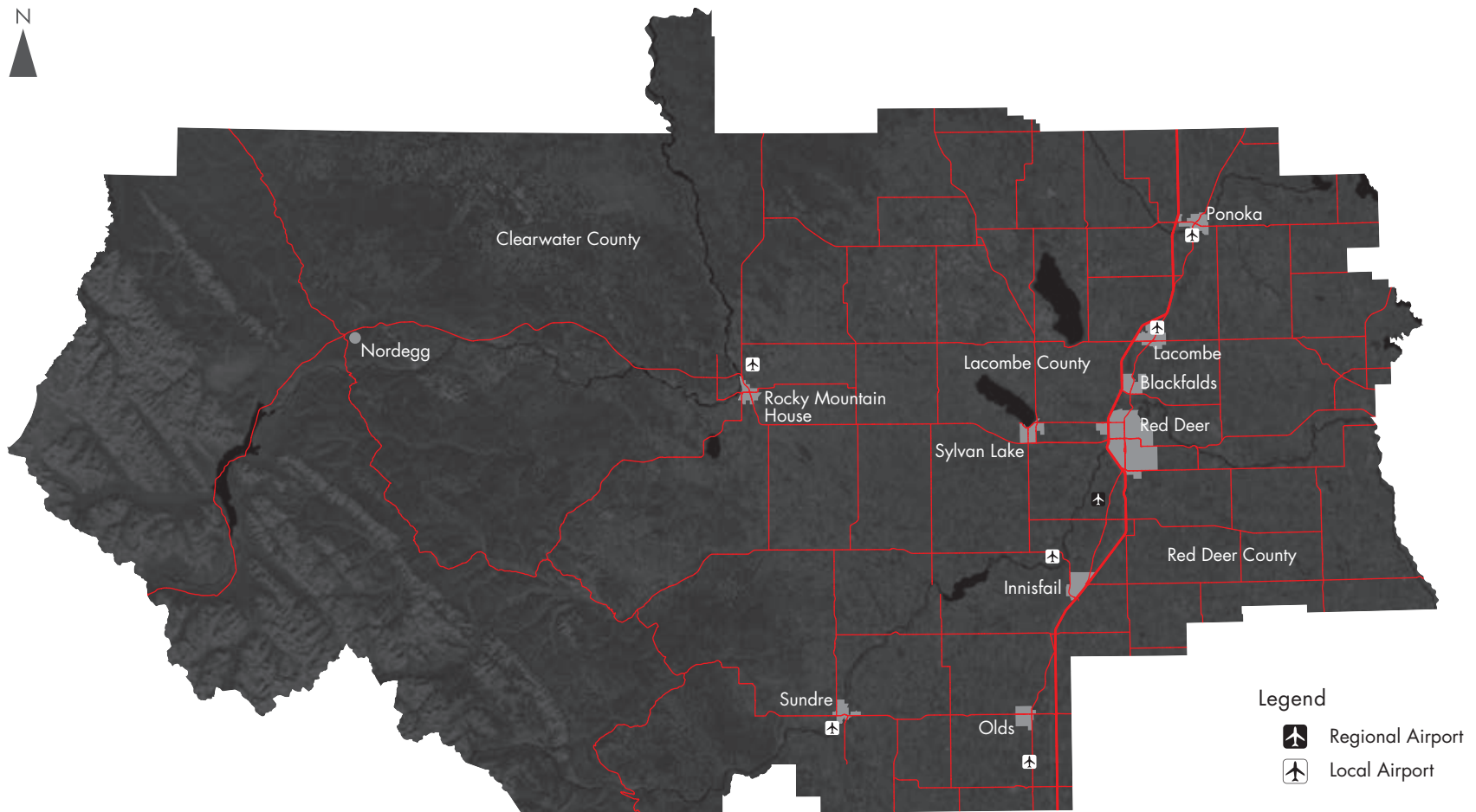


Figure 18. Access and Visitor Travel Routes

### 5.3.3 Tourism Settings

As illustrated in Figure 19, our region offers the full range of tourism settings. From the front-country areas of the east that offer visitors all the comforts of home and frequent interactions with others to the remote backcountry areas of the West Country that offer

opportunities for true isolation and a freedom from human comforts, we offer a little something for everyone. At 66%, front-country settings dominate much of the region, while 22.3% is classified as backcountry with the remaining 11.7% classified as mid-country.

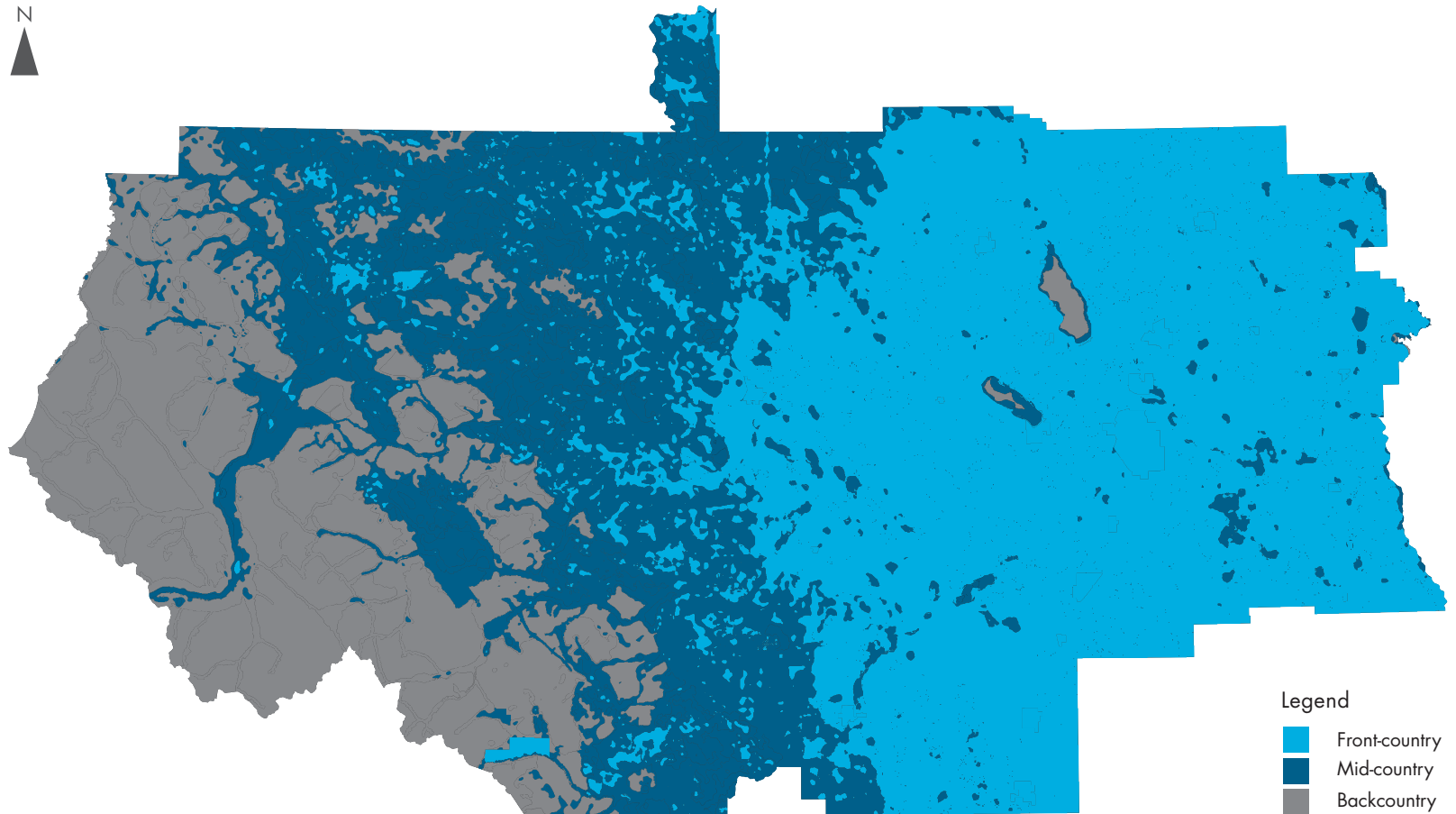


Figure 19. Distribution of Tourism Settings

### 5.3.4 Scenic Resources

When it comes to scenery, our region has it all. But, as shown in Figure 20, the most spectacular scenery is, undoubtedly, along the David Thompson Corridor. With 4.5% of our region identified as "very high" or "high" visual

value using the GoA's Scenic Resource Assessment, we recognize that our scenery is an important tourism resource that needs to be actively managed. Note, data were not available for the black portion of Figure 20.

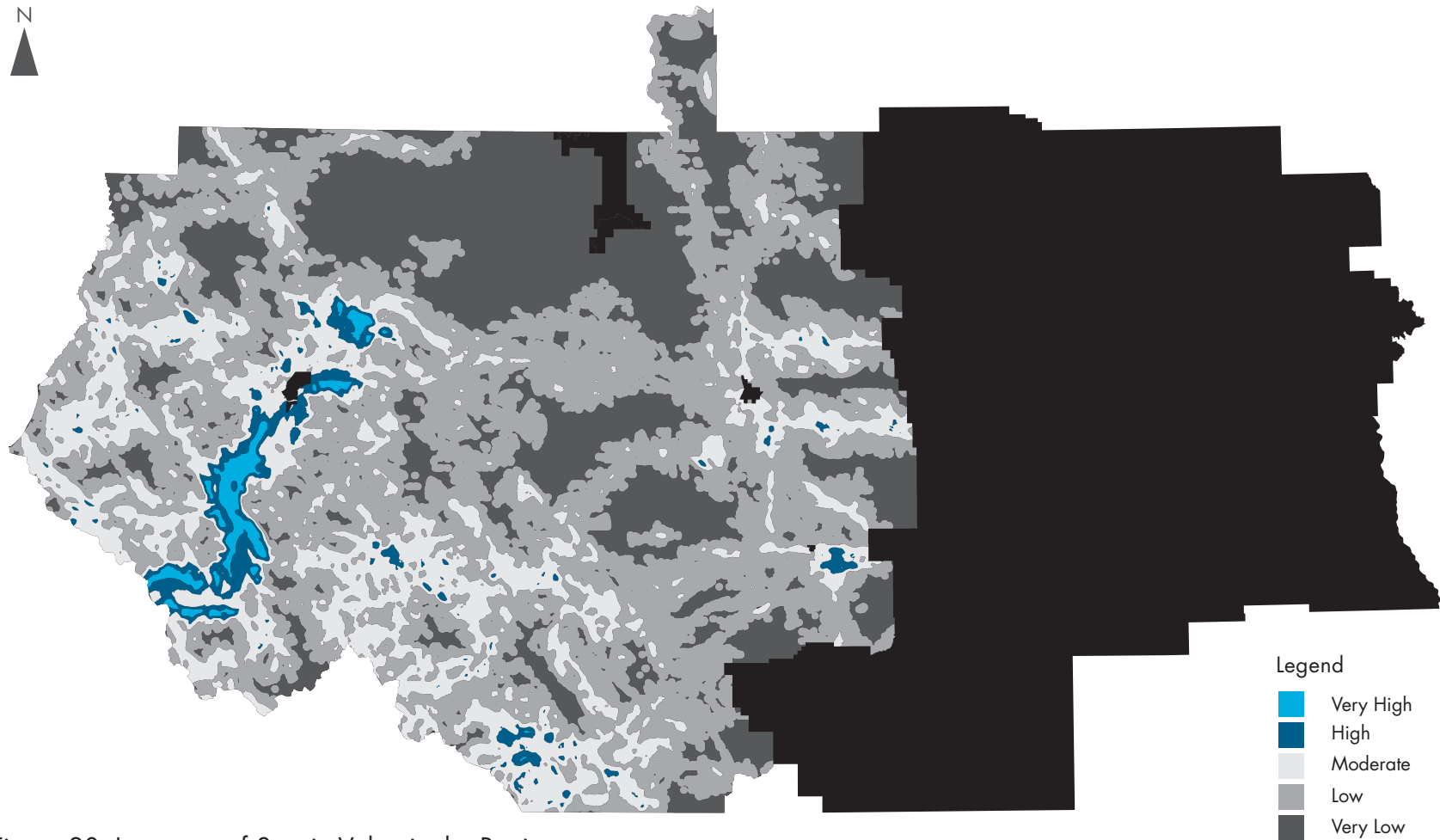


Figure 20. Inventory of Scenic Value in the Region

There are nearly 532 kilometres of scenic driving routes in our region. About 16 kilometres of the total 523 kilometres of scenic drives in the study area are in areas of “very high” scenic quality and 53 kilometres are found in areas identified as being “high”

visual value. Many of the scenic drives along the David Thompson Corridor, forestry truck road, and Highway 22, provide current and future visitors with the opportunity to view a beautiful and relatively undisturbed landscape.



Figure 21. Scenic Routes in the Region

## 5.4 Brands, Marketing and Media

With Alberta marketing itself as a premiere outdoor and mountain living destination in the 'new' West, Central Alberta has the opportunity to leverage the "remember to breathe" branding of Travel Alberta with wide open spaces, spectacular scenery, a relaxed atmosphere and laid back towns. Central Alberta offers experiences, stories and potential for product development which match Travel Alberta's strategy to lead with Alberta's authentic experiences and drive visitation throughout the province. Currently, for the visitor, however, marketing and a brand that promotes it is limited. The opportunity to market the region as a destination unto itself has largely been missed. Larger, high visitation centres such as Edmonton, Calgary, Banff and Jasper have created more dynamic and enticing calls to action for visitors yet make minimal reference to the experiences available in other parts of the province or any suggestion of regional collaboration for engaging visitors in combined tourism experiences.

Currently, Travel Alberta sells Central Alberta as a shopping list of things to see and do. Their 'insider Central Alberta checklist' consists of plains, trains, festivals and fur traders with a roundup of experiences, but there is limited information and itineraries that help visitors combine the various activities and attractions into a coherent experience. The current approach also misses the opportunity to really emphasize the memory making experiences offered by the West County, our region's rivers and our recreational lakes. The online map lists regions, festivals/events and businesses together with icons to be clicked for more information. At this time, there is no tool that assists the visitor in planning what a 7 to 10 day vacation or a 3-day getaway could be like in Central Alberta.

Recognizing where we currently stand with marketing our region and a regional brand, our opportunity is to position Central Alberta in the consumer's mind as a destination of its own, with a collection of itineraries and iconic experiences to explore, versus a disparate collection of experiences found with the small towns, urban centres and wilderness areas. By encouraging travellers to think of Central Alberta as destination first, as they begin their path to purchase, the goal is to make it easy for them to explore online and through collateral material and compelling stories, all the options available to them, working inwards to the various regional, rural and city experiences, which helps extend stays and create visits as they discover there is as much to 'site do' as there is to site see.

To be successful in the marketplace, destinations can no longer be marketed as a collection of hotels, restaurants, attractions, and retail. Destinations are now as much an emotional and intellectual experience as they are a physical one. Destinations need to not only deliver remarkable physical experiences, but to create and deliver a uniquely compelling brand essence that manifests at each visitor engagement point.

—DestinationNEXT<sup>65</sup>

Initiatives like the “Central Alberta Country Drive” is an example which follows best tourism practices globally—a diverse group of regional tourism operators and experiences working together to drive visitation. It was recently awarded a Travel Alberta Alto Award.

## Promising Examples of Working Regionally

### Central Alberta Country Drive

“Visitors were drawn to the Country Drive experience that brought together local artisans, specialty and antique shops, food and garden and nature and wildlife operators, accommodations, museums and meat and livestock producers. Partners include rural tourism operators from Red Deer, Lacombe and Mountain View Counties and the group also received marketing support from Travel Alberta”.<sup>66</sup> This is an excellent example of “out helping the competition”, making it fun and easy for visitors to plan out a multi-day experience. Country Drive offers driving tips, maps and tours and highlights best times to come, with its showcase weekends.

### Alberta Sweet 16

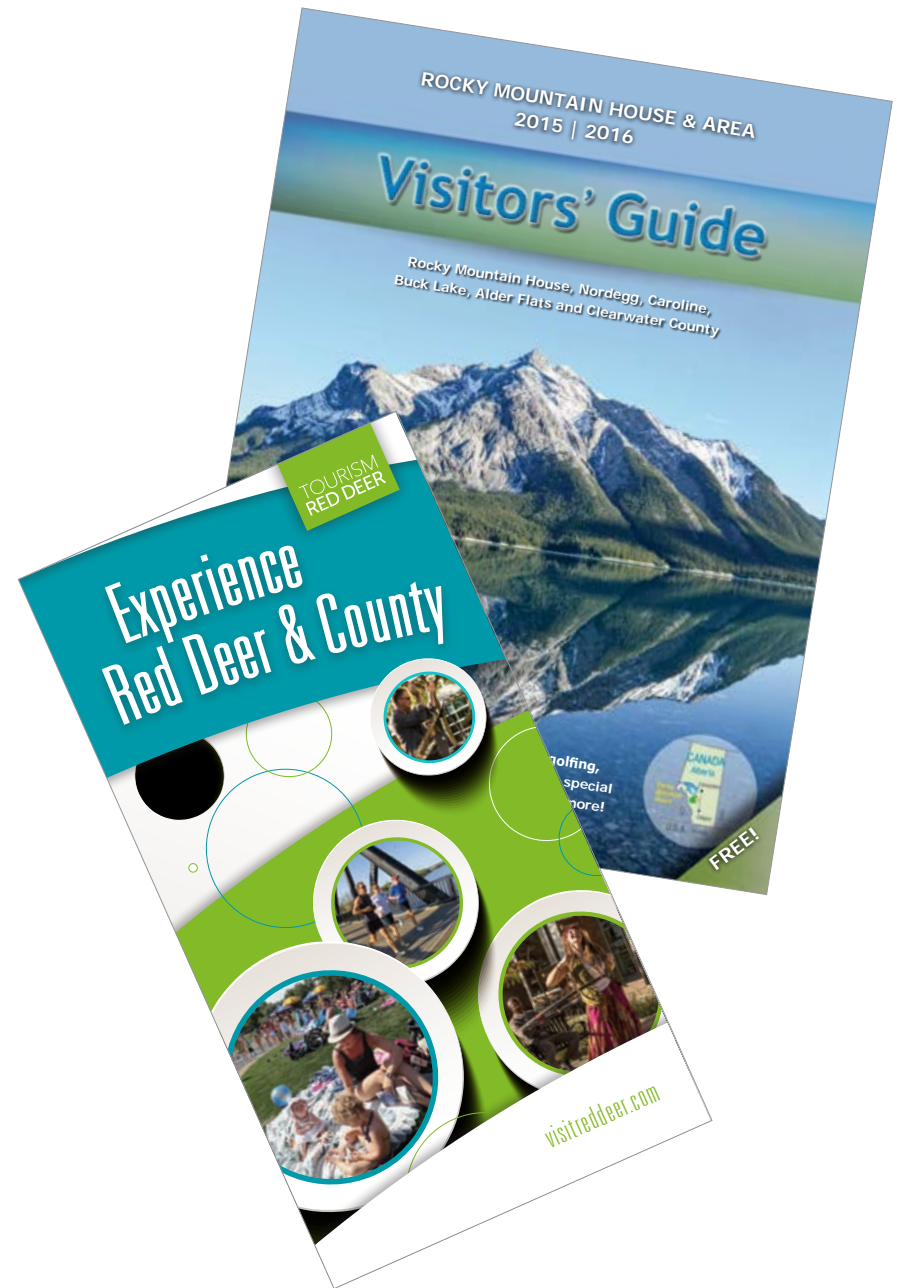
The similar “Alberta Sweet 16” initiative seems to have stopped in 2012. This initiative was marketed as follows: “the Alberta Sweet 16 includes summer fun in Central Alberta—sixteen events, family activities, festivals, rodeos and more—all happening in Central Alberta”. This type of aggregation of events also helps with building awareness and visitation.



International access points like Edmonton and Calgary provide little information about our region. The “Explore Edmonton” website does mention Central Alberta within some of its activity pages; however, it misses an opportunity to position itself as the gateway to further exploration of what Alberta has to offer. Lacombe and Red Deer do a strong job of positioning themselves as tourism gateways in our region. Red Deer’s media relation’s efforts clearly position Red Deer as the stepping-stone to Central Alberta experiences through its story ideas for media.

To support the building of our Central Alberta destination brand recognition, our Town partners will benefit from identifying that they are within Central Alberta. Building our destination’s brand recognition can be further enhanced with the addition of visitor friendly information and dynamic maps that link tourism experiences together. For example, when doing a Google search for Blackfalds, the first hit that comes up is “Places to visit in Alberta”—but once on the site there is no easily accessible information for the visitor.

Travel Nordegg and Sylvan Lake are also working to attract visitation. However, the materials that are most readily available may be outdated and visitors are not oriented to how experiences available in these communities fit with and contribute to the other experiences in our region. Rocky Mountain House is positioning itself for visitors (*Where adventure begins!*) but provides limited information on location with respect to the rest of Central Alberta. Its rich history, connection to David Thompson as well as to the North Saskatchewan River, and its role as a gateway to the West Country could be enhanced.



Efforts to enhance the readability of visitor guides and brochures, their sustainability as well as their appeal to baby boomers, millennials and younger travellers will further enhance the benefit of these marketing tools. All tourism collateral would benefit from easier to read maps and activities (i.e., word games and colouring for kids) to make them more useful as keepsakes and reference tools. Larger magazine formats from Travel Alberta provide inspiration through stories and tourism regions within Central Alberta could provide compelling content on our incredible wilderness, outdoor adventure, wildlife, agri-tourism, culinary tourism initiatives, festivals and events, and fascinating cowboy traditions that live through to today. Further efforts to link traditional marketing materials to online information directs visitors to websites and social media where information will be more up to date.



Siffleur Falls Trail Pedestrian  
Suspension Bridge



# 6. Destination Analysis

## 6.1 Visitor Voice

Analyzing a destination's social media traffic can provide meaningful insights into the visitor perceptions of our region and the tourism experiences we provide. We identified and analyzed the top social media networks used within the region. This yielded insights into our region's visitor segments, destination assets, destination markets, market origins, and marketing effectiveness. In alignment with the destination's summer peak season and winter season, the monitoring period took place from February 15th to March 31st, 2015 and from April 1st to July 15th, 2015.

In total, 8 social media platforms were observed during both the winter and summer seasons; these included Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, WordPress, News Source, YouTube, Instagram, and Google+.

Analyzing the "Big Data" can provide important insights into both the opinion of some of our visitors as well as the effectiveness of some of our marketing campaigns.

## Top 3 Platforms



Twitter—8,553 winter & 21,493 spring/summer tweets



Facebook—7,195 winter & 12,789 spring/summer posts



WordPress—2,922 & 9,493 spring/summer posts

of **76,000** posts...

**5-7%**  
were tourism related

80% of winter tourism social media posts featured

# Nordegg & Sylvan Lake

99% of spring/summer tourism social media posts featured

# Nordegg

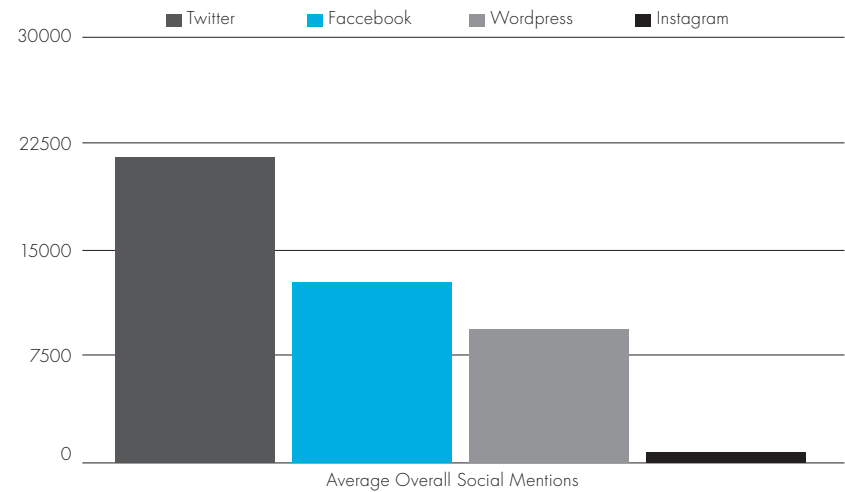


Figure 23. Average Social Media Mentions per Social Media Platform—Spring and Summer Season

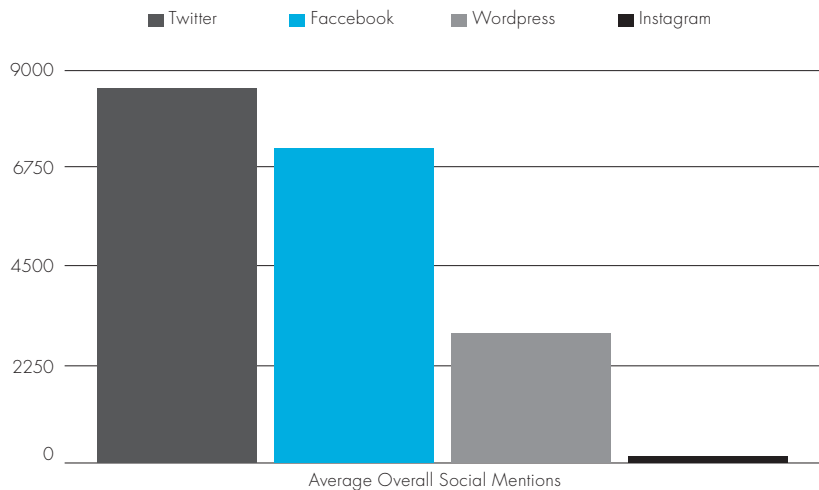


Figure 22. Average Social Media Mentions per Social Media Platform—Winter Season

## 6.1.1 Activities and Attractions

Overall, the majority of visitor pictures originated in the West Country near Nordegg and featured:

- Scenic views
- Frozen lakes
- Nature-based and adventure activities in the Nordegg area including the area’s major attractions such as the Siffleur Falls, North Saskatchewan River, Abraham Lake, the Via Ferrata, and Nordegg summit hike.

### Most Popular Summer Activity Posts

- Nature-based & adventure activities
- Hiking
- Camping
- Fishing
- Climbing
- Off-Highway Vehicle Use (ATV, UTV, Off-road motorcycle)

### Most Popular Winter Activity Posts

- Ice Fishing
- Hiking
- Trails

## 6.1.2 Sentiment

Visitors expressed positive and negative sentiments about their experiences in the region. The data showed that in both the winter and spring/summer seasons, people would commonly use the following words in describing their experiences: love, adventure, awesome, best, enjoy, extra care, great, inspired, best, awesome and secure. Negative sentiments about the region ranged; the more common phrases were associated with bad weather or melancholy about a tragic event. Common words that were associated with negative experiences included the following: lost, exposed, missing, disgusted, saddened, uncomfortable, and affected. There were some minor differences observed in the spring and summer season where the more common negative words included fire, severe thunderstorms, and lost. This slight difference may be a reflection of the different weather events occurring in

these seasons. Many of the “negative” terms found in the social media analysis did not relate to a tourism experience.

While negative experiences were observed on social media, the overall sentiment about our region in the winter season was positive with 47% of the observed posts being positive, 39% being neutral, and a mere 15% being negative. In the spring and summer seasons, the average overall sentiment was 43% for positive, 36% for neutral, and 22% for negative. Places in the region including Lacombe, Olds, and the West Country received very positive sentiment responses in the winter season. Areas such as Innisfail received more negative responses; however, the negative words/terms found included: missing, severe weather, and avoid driving—none of which were directly related to a tourism-related experience. In the spring and summer season, positive sentiment responses were expressed for similar places; however, places such as Red Deer and Innisfail received much higher positive sentiment, largely due to the larger volume of tourism during this time of the year.

“Today we really explored Alberta. We hiked and jumped and climbed the falls near Nordegg, Alberta. We climbed to the top of the highest point on the mountain there and back. We climbed through deep snow and mud. We saw hail and rain and sunshine today. It was a great day for an adventure! #alberta #cresentfalls #snow #outdoors #falls #nordegg #hike #hiking”.

— Sample Post from Instagram



**morgandobek** FOLLOW

37 likes 18h

morgandobek the family that climbs together! @lrvdobek @gdobek #viaferrata #nordegg #happybirthdaymom  
 jeffcorrazy Yah nut  
 lenabadham Wow so cool

Log in to like or comment.



**mhenkelman92** FOLLOW

2 weeks ago  
 Trails were decent! #training #dirtbike #beautiful #nature #nordegg

beejazy dailymotomedia chiooffrod and 5 others like this.

netfreakwst  
 @goPhan

Leave a comment.



**wedge\_xo** FOLLOW

25 likes 2w

wedge\_xo My fav!!! RZR time!!  
 #drivebadass #Nordegg #BigHornDemin #Canada #Camping #RockieMountains #momma #Rockstar  
 mariol\_m\_g #badass 🍌🍌🍌🍌

Log in to like or comment.



**pdolan89** FOLLOW

3 weeks ago  
 Awesome day spent outdoors #Nordegg #ElliotPeak #Hiking

paalgefredrickson saraspiller\_s\_codd and 19 others like this.

corbyy17  
 @adventurealberta

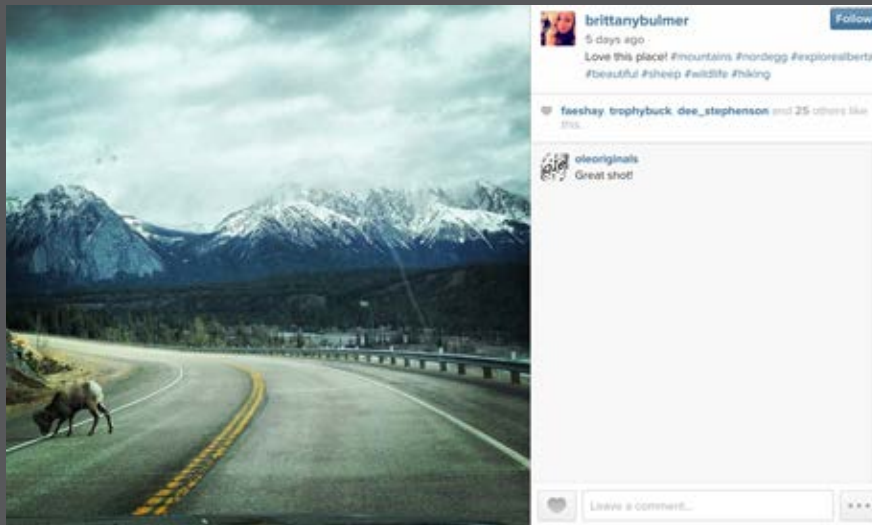
scormack91  
 #HPCxolves

pdolan89  
 Photo cred @stephenunderhay #adventurealberta

Leave a comment.



Tumblr post that was reposted 27 times



### 6.1.3 Mentions by Country

A majority of social media traffic about our region was generated within Canada. The United States was the second most popular, followed by the United Kingdom. As shown in Figure 24 and Figure 25, the number of posts from the United States increased significantly (18%) from the winter to the spring/summer season with a minor increase from the UK over this time period as well. A number of the posts from foreign countries were re-posts of trending feeds on social media. For example, the picture on the next page, which shows a frozen methane bubble in Abraham Lake, had a very high re-post rate around the world.

## Top 3 Countries for Social Media Traffic

- Canada
- United States
- United Kingdom

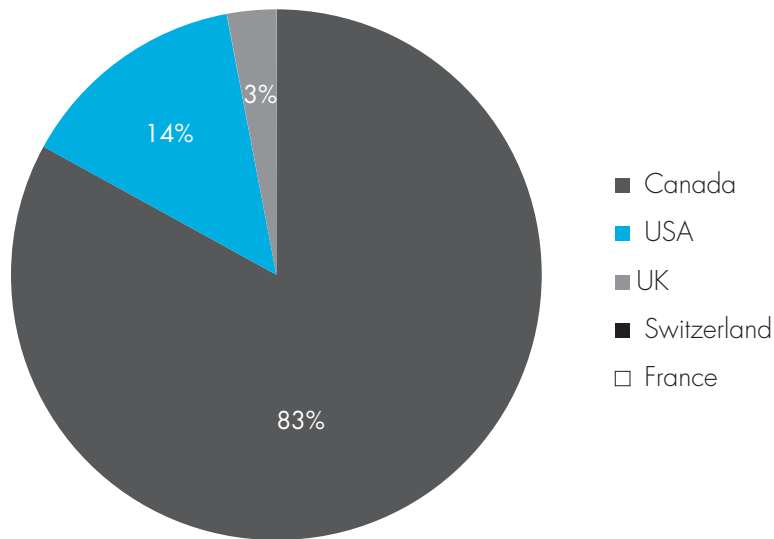


Figure 24. Mentions by Country in the Winter

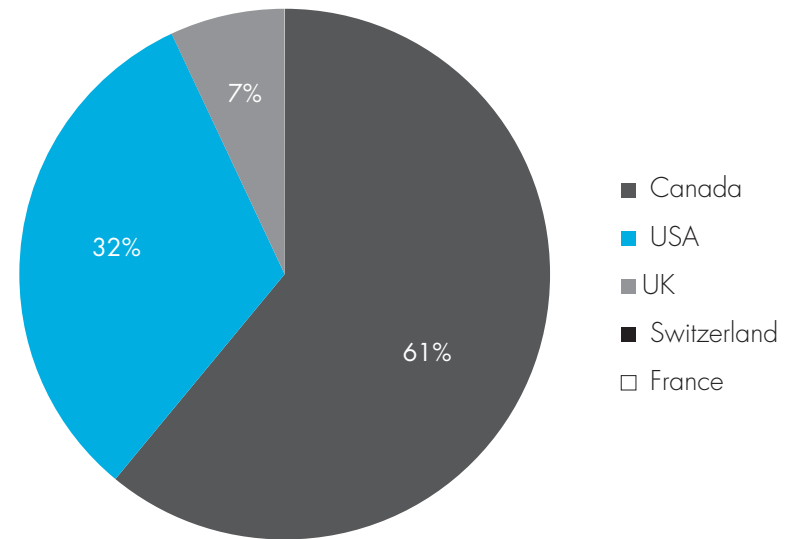


Figure 25. Mentions by Country in the Summer

New on 500px : LAYERED METHANE BUBBLES by chrisbabidaacaso

Leave a reply



ABRAHAM LAKE

NORDEGG ALBERTA CANADA

via 500px <http://ft.it/19QWQ3Q>

Wordpress post that went international

## 6.2 SWOT Analysis

Using the findings from the background secondary research and the primary research (e.g., stakeholder interviews, tourism asset inventory, and social media analysis) we were able to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for tourism in our region. This analysis constitutes the current and predicted drivers that will influence tourism in our region.

**Strengths** and **weaknesses** refer to matters inside the destination, ones we can act on.

**Opportunities** and **threats** are typically matters outside of the destination that we may not be able to act on or control.

# Strengths

## Policy & Planning

- Motivated Key-Stakeholders; collaborative efforts.
- Tourism identified in some of the partner communities' MDPs (e.g., Clearwater County, Innisfail, Olds, Ponoka, Rocky Mountain House, and Red Deer).

## Visitation

- Laid-back and uncrowded (compared to Banff & Jasper).
- Significant numbers of visitors are already spending 2 to 4 nights in the region.
- Size of visiting parties varies considerably (supports a diversity of experiences & accommodations).
- Interest in small towns, museums, festivals, events (e.g., Asparagus Festival, Taste of Markerville, Ponoka Stampede, Rodeos etc.).
- Positioned between the province's largest population centres—Edmonton and Calgary.

## Visitor Experiences, Resources, and Tourism Infrastructure

- Broad range of cultural/heritage attractions.
- Abundant natural and wilderness opportunities.
- Diversity of landscapes and tourism features. Unique biophysical characteristics and full range of tourism settings.
- As of 2009, the Alberta Central Tourism Region had the greatest number of campgrounds and campsites in the province.
- Rich cultural and historical potential to be developed.
- Many mature, well-established businesses (particularly in the east).
- Diverse and well known outdoor recreation activities and attractions.

## Stakeholder Interview Findings

- Hiking, mountain biking, boating, and kayaking—especially in the western portions of the region and its major lakes.
- Quiet, remote, non-commercialized experiences.
- Red Deer's ability to host sport tourism because of its centralized location.
- The region has successfully drawn tourists from neighbouring provinces along with attracting tourists from the United States and overseas.



# Weaknesses

## Policy & Planning

- Fragmented brand with limited unity of voice, coordination and collaboration in region.
- Lack of sufficient resources for conducting market research.
- DMOs funding not high enough to accomplish all of the desired activities.
- Lack of sustainable tourism development or orientation.
- EDOs do not have a tourism focus.
- Lack of clear policy direction and consistency in MDPs regarding tourism. Little to no tourism information (i.e., goals and strategies) found in partner communities' municipal strategic plans, economic development strategies, and other plan.
- Currently, the land tenuring system is 'first-in-line, first-in-right', subject to various environmental and other conditions.
- With the exception of the David Thompson corridor, there is a lack of land use planning and policy direction regarding the protection of tourism resources and provision of a competitive land base for tourism development.
- Ability to attract investors with long-term tenures.
- Workforce training and capacity—competition with other industry.

## Visitation

- Lack of sufficient way-finding information for travellers.
- Local and regional (RV & camping) travellers often come to the west region self-supported though there are currently limited amenities and services in the West Country.
- Potential user conflicts between disparate activities in west regions (i.e., motorized and non-motorized recreationists).

## Visitor Experiences, Resources, and Tourism Infrastructure

- Limited range and availability of accommodations and competition with industrial workers from the oil and gas sector.
- Perception of Red Deer as primarily a Gasoline Alley (not showcasing the variety of inherent activities-attractions).

- Some less compatible land uses and resource development are in proximity to valuable tourism resources.
- Inconsistent quality and customer service (market-readiness not in alignment with increasing traveller expectations).
- Lack of awareness of region and of existing attractions/activities.
- Despite the high number of campgrounds in Alberta Central Tourism Region most of the region's campgrounds are at or approaching capacity during the peak season summer months.
- Minimal brand differentiation for Central Alberta, compared to Banff & Jasper.

## Stakeholder Interview Findings

- Reasonable trail network but some trails are not maintained, some are not well connected or marked with trail heads, and many are simply not well known to visitors.
- Scenic drives are largely under promoted and not well known.
- Lack of signage, way finding and information about tourism attractions in the area has been a common complaint that has hampered tourism growth.
- Common perception among visitors that nothing exists in Central Alberta.
- Lack of choice in accommodations outside of Red Deer including cabins, B&B, and camping options. Existing motels and hotels are not adequate options for tourists who are looking for something more unique.
- Lack of coordination and collaboration among tourism operators and municipalities in the region.
- Scenic drives and viewpoints are largely non-existent along the David Thompson corridor and Highway 11.
- Abundance of natural features that are not well known or well marketed.
- Concerns with the Bighorn backcountry region not being protected which is resulting in random camping, off-roading, damage to the natural environment.
- Wild west attitude has intimidated some people from visiting the region (particularly the western region).

# Opportunities

## Policy & Planning

- Europeans moving away from travel intermediaries towards more independent travel with increasing access to information through the Internet.
- Potential to strongly integrate tourism into the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Regional Plans and subsequent plan/policy updates.

## Visitation

- Ready, available market of free independent traveller (FIT)/Intrepid travellers.
- Sizable and growing provincial & regional market.
- It can cost more for an Albertan to travel to the US; therefore, some travellers might feel inclined to travel locally or regionally.
- Growth in travel among Millennials.
- Growing interest in Aboriginal tourism.
- Established and proven market interest from European countries.
- Local, regional and International tourists represent unique segments for targeting and satisfying.
- US visitor interest starting to rebound (broader economic recovery and weaker Canadian dollar).
- Growth in participatory travel, festivals, events.

## Visitor Experiences, Resources, and Tourism Infrastructure

- International travellers are looking for unique, authentic experiences to connect with nature and learn about local history-culture.
- Consumers seeking accurate and understandable information about logistics and experiences.
- Trails—in region and adjacent regions (developed and undeveloped).
- Scenic drives—in region and adjacent regions.
- Lakes, rivers—in region and adjacent regions.
- Farm markets, agricultural tourism, culinary tourism.

- Cultural-Heritage and Nature-Outdoor recreation activities may be packaged to correlate with complementary market segment interests.
- Packaging tourism events and activities may extend the average length of stay for tourists.
- Redevelop accommodations which are attractive to tourists (rather than industrial clients).

## Stakeholder Interview Findings

- Many visitors are local coming from within a 1.5 hour drive and typically visit for a half to full day.
- Natural areas such as Sylvan Lake are popular tourism attractions which bring in visitors from Edmonton and Calgary.
- The historical significance of agriculture is now translating into opportunities to connect locals and visitors with farmers to learn about where their food comes from.
- Tremendous potential to develop a regional trail network.
- Rest-stops could have small tourist information centres or more engaging signage that advise of tourism attractions in the immediate area.
- Newcomers to Edmonton and Calgary might be unaware of the different tourism opportunities that exist within a 1.5 hour drive.

# Threats

---

## Policy & Planning

- Broader economic recovery is still subject to macro-economic shocks and factors such as fuel prices, currency exchange, and travel visas, all of which can influence travel decisions.
- Lack of land management and enforcement in the western regions resulting in conflicts between recreational users and potential loss or degradation of tourism resources.
- Research and reporting is provided for broader Central Region, therefore future evaluation and monitoring will be hampered until regional data is secured.

## Visitation

- Economic impacts due to down-turn in provincial energy sector.
- Shortened consumer booking cycles makes demand potentially more variable.

## Visitor Experiences, Resources, and Tourism Infrastructure

- Reliance on oil/gas as priority. Perceptions that there is no real need to diversify.
- Consumers expecting high levels of service and sophisticated products.
- Competitive destinations (e.g., Banff and Jasper) are well funded and organized.
- Lack of awareness about tourism opportunities in the region.

## Stakeholder Interview Findings

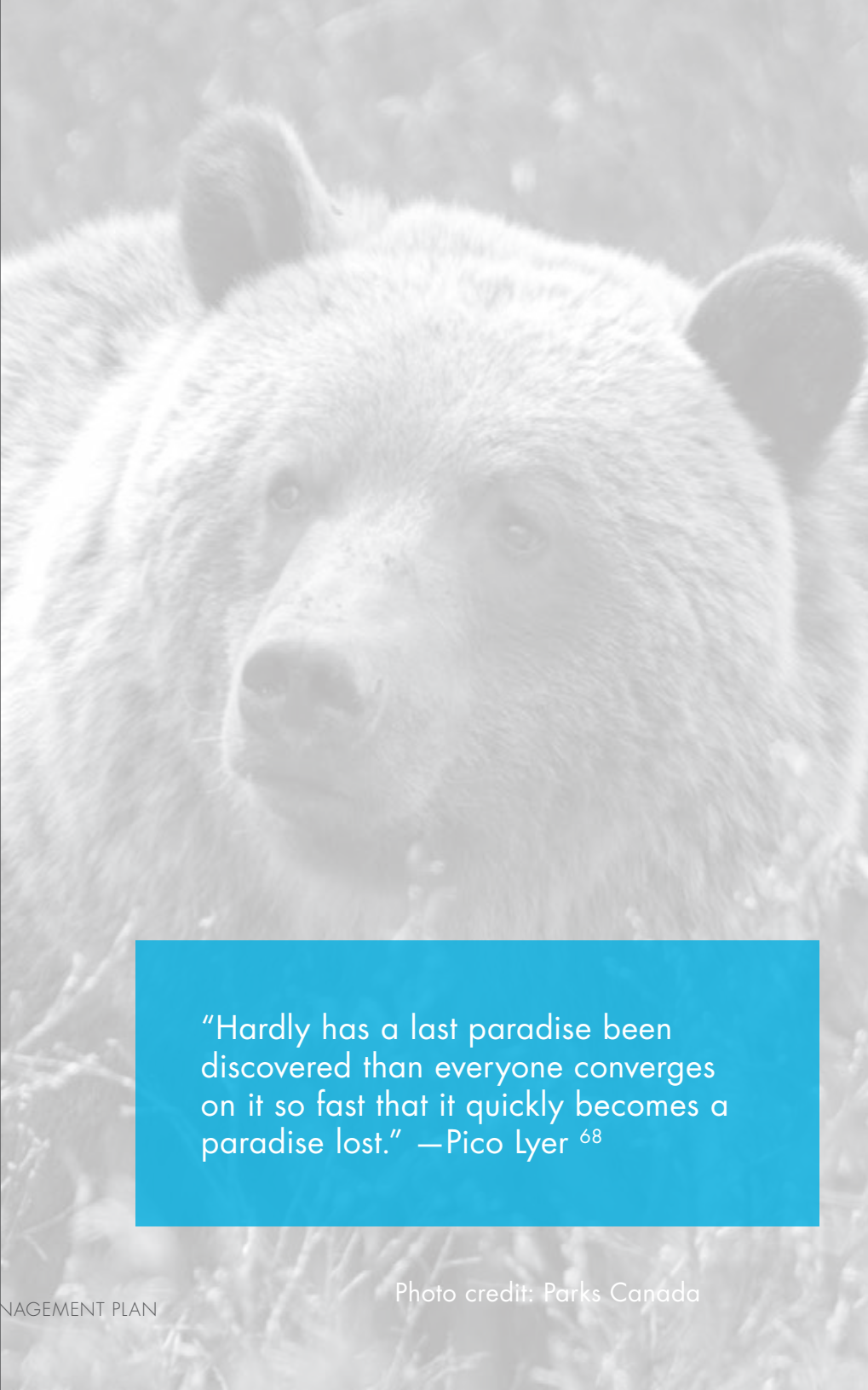
- No significant (external) threats noted through key stakeholder interviews.

## 6.3 Destination Life Cycle Analysis

Destinations are in a state of continuous change. It is commonly accepted that destinations, and the visitor experience themes offered within them, have a life cycle. According to Butler's life cycle model, a destination and its visitor experience themes will evolve through a series of distinct stages.<sup>67</sup>

Each stage is different. There are changes to the types and origins of tourists, visitor experiences offered, amenities, access and host community attitudes toward tourists. However, not all destinations will evolve through each stage and decline is not a foregone conclusion. Destinations can undertake strategies to rejuvenate the destination into a new future—resetting the cycle.

To inform our priorities, it was important that we understood where each of the visitor experience themes in our region were at in its life cycle. In alignment with the destination characteristics (see Table 3), professional opinion was used to determine the approximate life cycle stage for each visitor experience theme (see Figure 26).



“Hardly has a last paradise been discovered than everyone converges on it so fast that it quickly becomes a paradise lost.” —Pico Lyer <sup>68</sup>

Table 3. Destination Life Cycle Stage Characteristics

Life Cycle Stage	Destination Characteristics				
	Market Share	Visitation	Activities & Attractions	Employment	Access
<b>Exploration</b>	Unknown	Low	Few—Owned & Operated Locally	Little to no local employment in tourism.	Limited
<b>Involvement</b>	Unknown	Low	Lacking Critical Mass—Owned & Operated Locally	Limited local employment in tourism.	Improved
<b>Development</b>	Known—Short & Long Haul	Moderate—High	Diversifying	Growth in local employment in tourism.	Good
<b>Consolidation</b>	Well Known	High—Reaches Carrying Capacity	Critical Mass—External Investment	Strong local employment in tourism.	Optimum
<b>Stagnation</b>	No Growth	Plateaus—Exceeding Carrying Capacity	Aging—Declining Appeal	Levelling off of local employment in tourism.	Maximized—Too much access
<b>Decline (unless efforts made toward rejuvenation)</b>	Decline	Decline	Decline in Quality	Declining employment in tourism.	Maximized—Too Much

Table 4. Destination Life Cycle Stage Characteristics by Visitor Experience Theme

Visitor Experience	Destination Characteristics				
	Market Share	Visitation	Activities & Attractions	Employment	Access
<b>Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism</b>	Some awareness with short haul markets	Low—Moderate	Lacking Critical Mass—Owned & Operated Locally	Little to no local employment in tourism.	Good
<b>Agriculture &amp; Culinary Tourism</b>	Known—Short & Long Haul	Moderate	Diversifying	Limited local employment in tourism.	Good
<b>Aboriginal Tourism</b>	Unknown	Low	Few—Owned & Operated Locally	Little to no local employment in tourism.	Limited
<b>Cultural, Heritage &amp; Arts</b>	Known—Short	Moderate	Diversifying	Limited local employment in tourism.	Good
<b>Festivals, Events &amp; Sport Tourism</b>	Known—Short & Mid Haul	Moderate	Diversifying	Growth in local employment in tourism.	Good
<b>Business Events</b>	Known—Short & Mid Haul	Moderate	Critical Mass—External Investment	Growth in local employment in tourism.	Good



Figure 26. Central Alberta Destination Life Cycle Assessment



Cline River  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, George Simhoni



Photo credit: Parks Canada



## Future Media Headlines...

As envisioned by members of the tourism committee:

- “Central Alberta... experiences of a lifetime”
- “Blend of urban and rural tours: relaxation and learning components”
- “Healthy outdoor recreation that attracts people to live in the region”
- “Tourism spending in Central Alberta is up 35%”
- “Central Alberta is the place to invest in tourism”

# 7. Imagine... the Way Forward

## 7.1 Vision

We invite you to share our vision! By 2025, Central Alberta will be...

*A unique, diverse, destination offering visitors authentic, affordable and sustainable experiences—year round. From nature and adventure to agricultural, urban and sport, we will be recognized by local and international visitors alike as a destination to “experience Alberta” in an uncomplicated, uncrowded and unspoiled way. Tourism is positively embraced by our local residents and is a major driver of our economy as visitors stay longer, spend more and return more often. Champions of our industry are unified, innovative and working collaboratively to grow visitation and private and public sector investments.*

Sundre

Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Roth and Ramberg

## 7.2 Outcomes

In working to achieve our ambitious vision by 2025, we will have:



### EXPERIENCES

- Transformed Central Alberta into a must-experience destination that is authentic, memorable and sustainable.



### GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION

- Increased year-round visitation from both short-haul and long-haul target markets.
- Increased the direct and indirect economic contributions of tourism to our regional and local economies by 25%.
- Attracted increased private and public sector investment in tourism experiences, services and infrastructure.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the benefits tourism brings to our communities, the region and the province.



### ENVIRONMENT & HOST COMMUNITIES

- Established a positive and inclusive relationship between the region's tourism industry, community leaders, visitors and residents to ensure our communities are engaged and active stakeholders.
- Maintained the integrity and quality of tourism resources in the region and the destination's competitiveness.
- Enhanced the positive benefits of tourism to the environment and host communities while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment, local cultures and host communities.

## 7.3 Shifting Focus—The Visitor Experience

Simply put, “a tourism product is what you buy; a tourism experience is what you remember”<sup>69</sup>. Our industry is undergoing a shift in focus. The industry is turning its attention away from selling commodities, products and services and focusing much more acutely on the design and sale of engaging, authentic and memorable experiences. As our tourism products move up the experience spectrum (see Figure 27), our competitive position is increased allowing our destination to seek increased prices for our experiences.

As a destination, we are committing to embracing this shift and focusing our attention on experiential travel. “Experiential travel engages visitors in a series of memorable travel activities that are inherently personal. It involves all senses, and makes connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, social or intellectual level. It is travel designed to engage visitors with the locals, set the stage for conversations, tap the senses and celebrate what is unique”<sup>70</sup> in our region. Experiential travel represents an opportunity for the tourism industry to inspire visitation by creating authentic experiences designed to connect travellers to the special places, people and cultures within communities across our region.

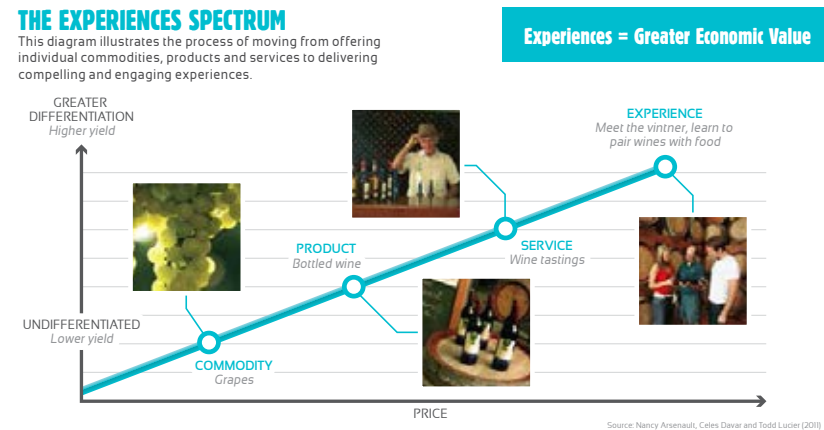


Figure 27. Experience Spectrum (Tourism Queensland adapted from Pine and Gilmore, 1998)

"What persuades a potential visitor to holiday in a particular destination is that destination's ability to engage in unforgettable and truly inspiring experiences that touch visitors in an emotional way and connect them with special places, people and cultures."  
(Hero Experiences, Queensland Tourism)<sup>71</sup>

## 7.4 Markets Of Greatest Potential

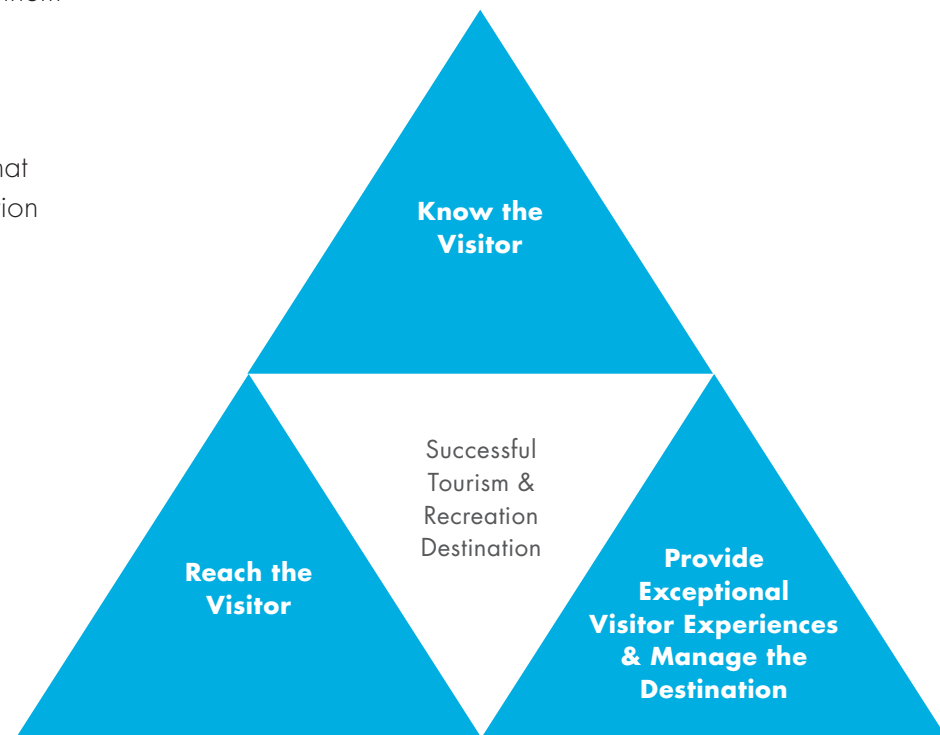
Understanding and focusing on the visitor is one of the most important aspects of planning and delivering desirable tourism experiences. Visitors to Central Alberta are diverse and so too are their expectations, attitudes, motivations, behaviours, and willingness to pay for a tourism experience. Similarly, not all visitors bring the same degree of benefits to host communities. The most successful destinations focus detailed attention on understanding who their best visitors are, where they come from, what these visitors want to experience and how best to communicate with them to compel them to visit.

Time, costs, accessibility, quality of the experience, opinions of trusted friends and perceptions influence whether a potential visitor chooses to travel to the specific destination. We know that visitors are more likely to travel a longer distance if the destination provides authentic and memorable experiences<sup>72</sup>.

Developing the right experiences starts with knowing the right visitors<sup>73</sup>.

### 7.4.1 Who are Our Target Market Traveller Types

One way to understand the markets of greatest potential is through the application of Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient (EQ). The EQ enables a deeper understanding of our target visitors. The EQ moves beyond simple insights such as demographics, preferred activities and length of stay and helps us understand a visitor's psychographics such as social values, travel values, experience appeal and travel behaviours. These deeper insights help us understand what motivates target markets to travel.



Travel Alberta targets two EQ segments:

- Free Spirits
- Cultural Explorers<sup>74</sup>

Considering the current and potential visitor experience mix and the characteristics of our Central Alberta region, our primary target traveller types are:

- Cultural Explorers
- Authentic Experiencers

Cultural History Buffs (CHB) are considered to be a secondary target traveller type. CHB's share many of the same interests as Authentic Experiencers, and Cultural Explorers, however; CHBs only make up about 6% of the global traveller market. Therefore, it may not make sense to expend resources directly marketing to this EQ profile type. Fortunately, CHBs are more independent, intrepid travellers than Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, while sharing some similar key interests. By providing readily available information regarding attractions, amenities, and trip logistics, CHBs will take the initiative to plan their own trips with less direct support than Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers. This may be achieved through efforts designed to attract Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, without significant additional efforts.

## Central Alberta Target Traveller Types

### **Primary:**

Cultural Explorers  
Authentic Experiencers

### **Secondary:**

Cultural History Buffs



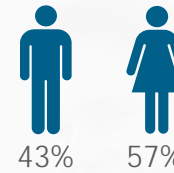
Cliné River,  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, George Simhoni

## Cultural Explorer

The Cultural Explorer tends to value spontaneity, cultural sampling, and is open to trying and accepting new experiences. They are defined by their desire for constant travel and continuous opportunities to discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit. They enjoy pursuing values such as novelty and tend to value personal control and personal escape. They are known for being creative, enthusiastic, open-minded, flexible, risk-taking, and tend to be interested in the following attractions: heritage sites, cultural events, museums, festivals, B&B's, and hostels.

The Cultural Explorer makes up approximately 12% of the global market. There are more females than there are males (57% compared to 43%) and they have higher than average levels of education and income. About 28% of this group is 18-34 years of age, compared to 43% in the 35-54 age group and 30% being 55 years of age and older. With respect to life stage, about 34% are middle aged with no kids at home, compared to 27% living with their families and 19% being mature.

### Demographics



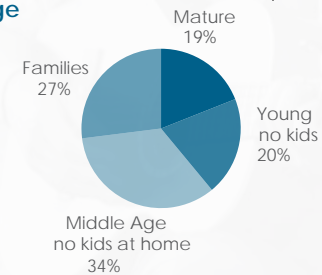
Education: Higher than average

Employment: FT – lower than avg. % are retirees

Household Income: Average



### Lifestage



Crimson Lake Campground  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Sabrina Hill

## Expectations & Travel Characteristics

### Vacation Trend?

Take the most vacations of any EQ type, trips of all durations but focused more often on weekend escapes.

### Travel Motivations?

- **Constant Travellers:** Always excited about the next trip.
- **Living History/Culture:** Fascinated by the ancient history as well as the modern cultures of the places they visit.
- **Fun, Shared Experiences:** Travel is a journey, not the destination, and is best experienced with like-minded companions who like to have fun while learning.
- Feeling **relaxed and free** while traveling.
- **New Destinations**

### Most Interested in?

- Learning, exploring something new, sampling local flavours, local lifestyles, Aboriginal culture, **beautiful landscapes, rivers/waterfalls, hiking/trekking, cultural attractions,** festivals, relaxing, self-touring.
- Aside from walking and hiking, have little interest in outdoor activities.

### Most Avoid?

- **Luxury/Comfort Seekers:** This segment seeks an authentic experience and does not want to stay in sterile, commercial hotels.
- **Check-list/Security:** While cautious, these travellers are not afraid to venture into the unknown in pursuit of discovery. They will not be constrained to “tourist” schedules or destinations but will chart their own courses.

### Most Desired Accommodations?

- Small inns, B&B's, camping, hostels and other accommodations that allows them to connect to other people.

### Most Desired Natural Region(s)

- Rocky Mountains
- Foothills

### Desired Tourism Settings

- Mid-Country

### Seek Travel Information From:

- Internet (website, regional tourism sites)

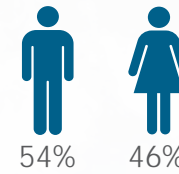
Source: CTC Explorer Quotient Worksheets and Government of Alberta 2015 <sup>75</sup>

## Authentic Experiencers

The Authentic Experiencer is rational, spontaneous, ethical, eco-conscious, and curious. This person desires personal control, self-direction and is confident. They are looking for authentic, tangible engagement with the destinations they seek, and are interested in understanding the history of the places they visit. Similar to the Cultural Explorer, the Authentic Experiencer values cultural sampling and tend to devalue the joy of consumption, living virtually, and the importance of brands. Valuing nature, cultural immersion and personal development, the Authentic Experiencer is interested in the following attractions: nature reserves, world heritage sites, hiking trails, museums, home-stays, and campsites.

The Authentic Experiencer is about 9% of the global market with a greater number of males than females (54% compared to 46%). They have higher than average education, average income, and just over half (55%) are 55 years of age or older. About 42% are mature, while 28% are empty nesters and close to 20% live with their families. Unlike the Cultural Explorer who is less inclined to participate in more rustic outdoors experiences, the Authentic Experiencer is interested in adventure and is seeking less comfort amenities and more immersive experiences.

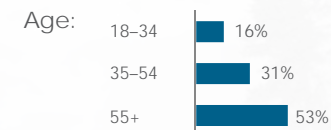
### Demographics



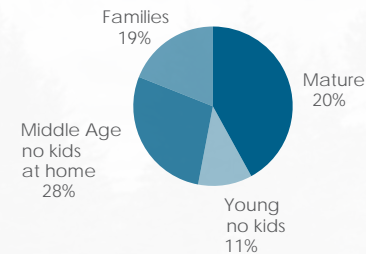
Education: Higher than average

Employment: FT – more likely than avg. to be retired

Household Income: Average



### Lifestage



Sundre

Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Roth and Ramberg



## Expectations & Travel Characteristics

### Vacation Trend?

- Long vacations—prefer a week or more.

### Travel Motivations?

- **Nature:** Wants to see vast natural settings and wonders around the globe, but also takes in local park scenery.
- **Cultural Immersion:** These travellers like to integrate themselves into the local culture, eating authentic foods, learning the language to converse with locals, and exploring areas ignored by tourists.
- **Historic Travel:** This segment seeks to learn all that it can about the cultures they visit in advance of their trips.

### Most Interested in?

- **Outdoor adventures**, local lifestyles and flavours, quality cuisine, **beautiful landscapes**, **wildlife**, **historical/cultural attractions & landmarks**, **learning/exploring**, **self-touring**, performing arts. Willing to **fly to distant destinations**. Less interest in strenuous outdoor activities.

### Most Avoid?

- Commercial comforts of western hotels as they are seeking to live as authentically as the locals do.

### Desired Accommodations?

- Authentic accommodations tied to their interests—resorts, camping

### Desired Natural Region(s)

- Foothills
- Rocky Mountains

### Desired Tourism Settings

- Mid-Country

### Seek Travel Information From?

- Internet (website, regional tourism sites), travel guides, magazines & books

*Source: CTC Explorer Quotient Worksheets and Government of Alberta 2015*

## Cultural History Buffs

Cultural History Buffs are defined by their interest in the history, culture, and natural surroundings of the places they visit. Driven to learn everything about a culture, they tend to value the company of other like-minded people. They tend to travel in pursuit of a special interest that they have (e.g., historical re-enactment). Cultural History Buffs contain a number of social values including spontaneity, intuition and impulse, vitality and personal control. Regarding their travel values, they will seek nature, cultural immersion, constant travel and group travel. Cultural History Buffs are not defined by personal challenge, that is, they are less likely than their global counterparts to want to push themselves to their limits. They also tend to avoid extravagant consumption, as they do not enjoy shopping. They also tend to be the expert who is out to experience what they have just read about.

## Demographics



48%

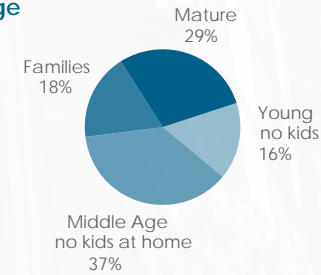
52%

Education: Higher than average

Employment: FT – higher than avg. %  
are retirees

Household Income: Average

## Lifestage



## Expectations & Travel Characteristics

### Vacation Trend?

- Frequent vacations.

### Travel Motivations?

- **Historical Travel:** Travel is the final stage of learning all one can about a place, time or history.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Deep desire to see history in its modern context, engaging with locals and learning their customs and languages. Willing to visit “must see” destinations as well as more obscure ones.
- **Hobbies/Escape:** Pursuing personal interests while traveling makes the whole experience more intrinsically rewarding.
- **Unstructured Travel**

### Most Interested in?

- Active Adventure, award-winning cuisine, connecting with locals, personal journeys by land, water, air, Vibrant cities on the edge of nature

### Most Avoid?

- **Beyond own Roots:** Little interest in learning about one’s own roots or heritage—focused on the cultures of others.
- **Comfort/Luxury:** Detract from authentic experiences
- **Group/Security:** Reject standard “tourist” fare, these travellers are not afraid to chart their own courses.
- **Checklist Travel**

### Desired Accommodations?

- Small inns, B&B’s, camping, hostels and other accommodations that allows them to connect to other people.

### Seek Travel Information From:

- Internet (website, regional tourism sites), media relations/unpaid media, traditional travel advertising

Source: *Composite of core market origins—US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Australia—CTC Explorer Quotient Worksheets*

Table 5. Target Market Preferred Package Components

Component	Cultural Explorers	Authentic Experiencers
Accommodations	Country inns, B&Bs, eco-lodges and other accommodations that reflect the area's culture/personality such as farm stays, guest ranches	Country inns, B&Bs, eco-lodges and other accommodations that help them connect with the local history and culture
Food and drink	Unique dining experiences featuring local ingredients, tastings at wineries	Unique dining experiences featuring local ingredients, wineries for tours and tastings
Activity or program	Interactive, hands-on and immersive learning experiences Active adventure, nature and beautiful scenery Voluntourism Farmer's markets and small towns Wildlife/marine-life viewing Cultural festivals and outdoor street performances Food-related factory tours	Historical travel, low-impact activities, learning "Behind-the-scenes" experiences not available to mass tourist markets Opportunities for interacting with new cultures Parks for wildlife/marine-life viewing, adventure and interpretive centres Visiting small towns, historic sites, well-known wonders
Itinerary	Unstructured—they like to chart their own course Allow time for spontaneity	Unstructured, avoiding touristy situations and with time to do their own thing
Transportation	Self-touring Small group shuttles	Self-touring Small group shuttles
Special	Love a surprise! Access to WIFI for sharing on social media or email	Love a surprise! Emphasize recycling and other sustainability options
Avoid	Multi-day guided bus tours, golfing, hunting	Nightclubs, lounges, motorcycling, group travel

## 7.4.2 Where do our Target Markets Originate

Our region is attractive to local, regional, long haul domestic and, to some extent, international markets. Moving forward, there is opportunity to drive even more visitation from these market origins, but the share is not distributed equally.

With close to 85% of Alberta's population, or nearly 3.1 million people, within a three hour drive of our region, the local market has and will continue to provide the majority of visitation. A 2013 study conducted by Infact Research and Consulting Inc. found that place of residence was the most important determinant of the rural locations visited from 2011 to 2013. According to the report, the rural communities in the Alberta Central region received the bulk of its visitors from the Edmonton region and Central Alberta.<sup>74</sup> The local visitor's market typically spends less and stays for shorter periods of time but is likely to visit more frequently. Expected to reach 6.2 million in 2041, the above average growth of the Calgary-Edmonton corridor will continue to increase the potential of this short-haul market.<sup>77</sup>

As indicated in Alberta's Tourism Framework (2013), the demand for our region's visitors experience clusters by short haul markets (Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and border states) are, for the most part, moderate to high. The one notable exception is urban experiences. Demand for our urban experiences by this market is considered to be emerging.

# 85%

of Alberta's population  
is within a 3 hour drive  
of the study area



The rest of Canada market (domestic) is also a strong focus moving forward. This market is known to contain a strong composition of Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers. Unlike the local and regional markets, this market typically spends more, stays longer and is more likely to return often to the destination than international markets. As domestic demand for our region’s visitor experience clusters are emerging to moderate, the Tourism Framework indicates that we have work to do to better attract this market to the region.

International demands for our visitor experiences are, in general, emerging or of limited interest. This said, our region’s potential to deliver authentic Aboriginal tourism experiences and experiences associated with our arts and crafts scene have been identified as being in moderate demand by international travellers.<sup>78</sup> In addition, a 2010 study found that Canadians and Americans that participated in Aboriginal tourism were most likely to do so in rural settings, were mature and well-educated, were likely to participate in other cultural activities while travelling, and are very interested in soft outdoor activities.<sup>79</sup> Research has also found that long-haul Aboriginal cultural travellers in North America were likely to have

sought out vacations that are associated with exploration, visiting historical sites, and sports and learning and sightseeing activities.<sup>80</sup>

The long haul international markets of Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States represent the most attractive markets with the largest proportion of Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers.<sup>81</sup> Though the international market represents a very small portion of our region’s visitation, and repeat visits are infrequent, this market stays longer and spends more making them a higher yield target market.

**Table 6. EQ Profiles by Market Origin**

Origin	Authentic Experiencer	Cultural Explorer
Australia	—	15%
Canada	12%	9%
France	—	14%
Germany	13%	17%
UK	16%	10%
United States	11%	9%
Mexico	12%	—
China	—	—
Japan	—	—
South Korea	—	—

**Market Origins:**

**Primary Markets:** Alberta South, Calgary, Central Alberta (staycations), Edmonton, Alberta North, Western Canada

**Secondary Markets:** Rest of Canada, Western USA/ Border States

**Emerging Markets:** USA, Germany, Australia & UK



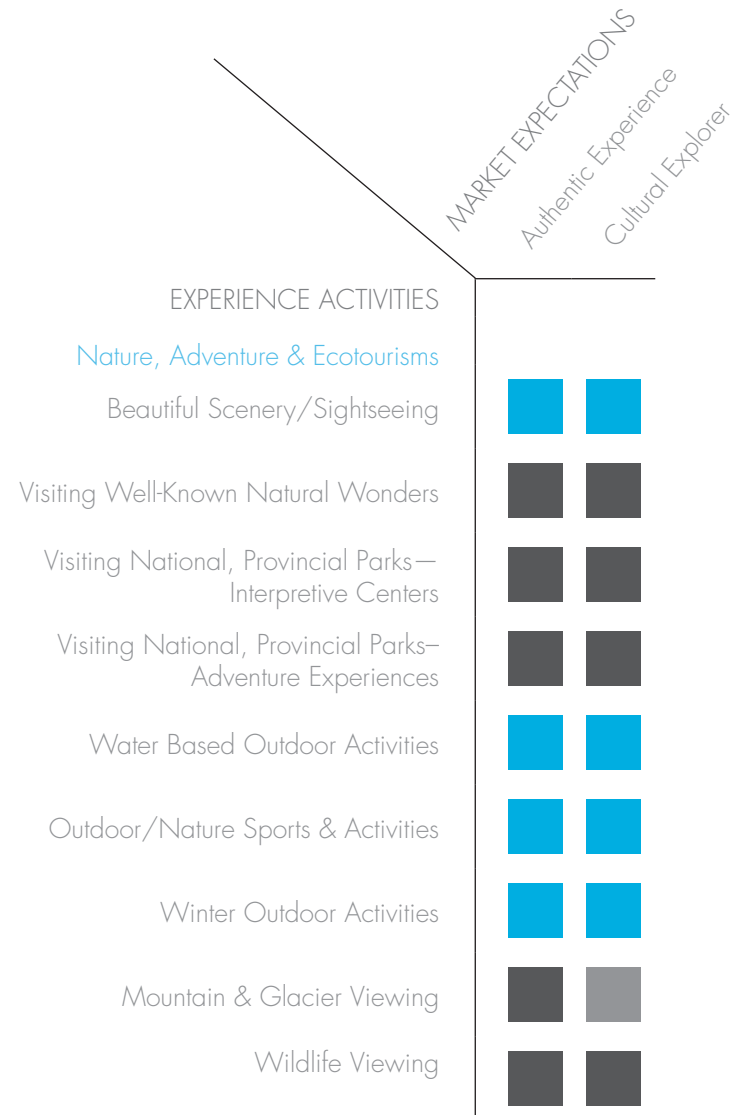
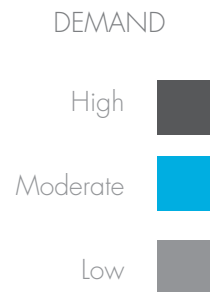
Our region is attractive to local, regional, long haul domestic and, to some extent, international markets. Moving forward, there is opportunity to drive even more visitation from these market origins, but the share is not distributed equally.

### 7.4.3 Market Assessment

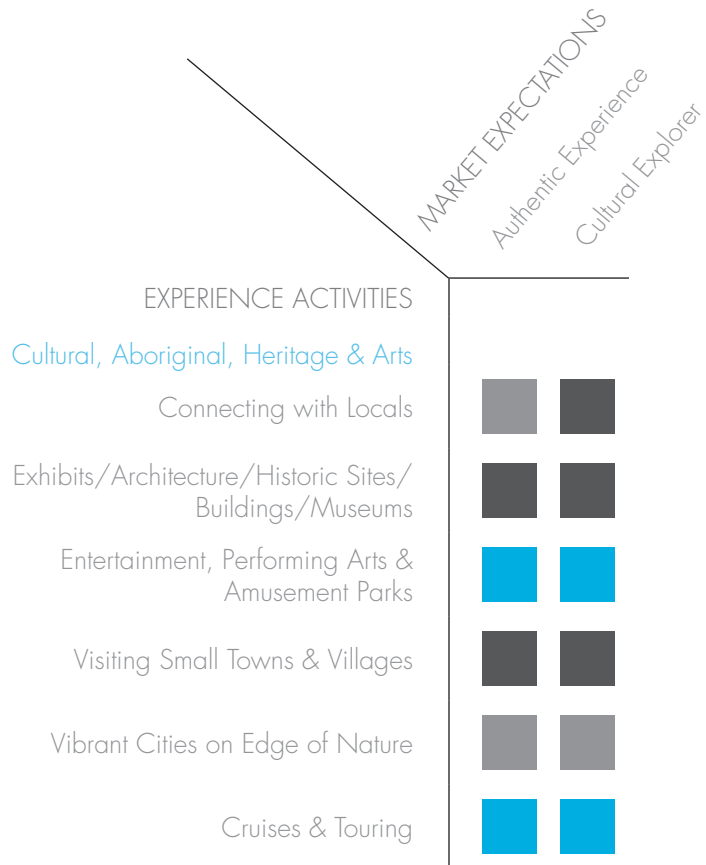
With the target markets identified, it is essential to understand the expectations of our primary visitors in detail. The preferred activities, tourism settings, natural regions, travel motivations, accommodations, transportation, itineraries and most common travel planning information sources, by primary target market, are summarized in the table below for the leisure traveller. Similarly, the demands of organizers of Business Events are summarized for business travel.

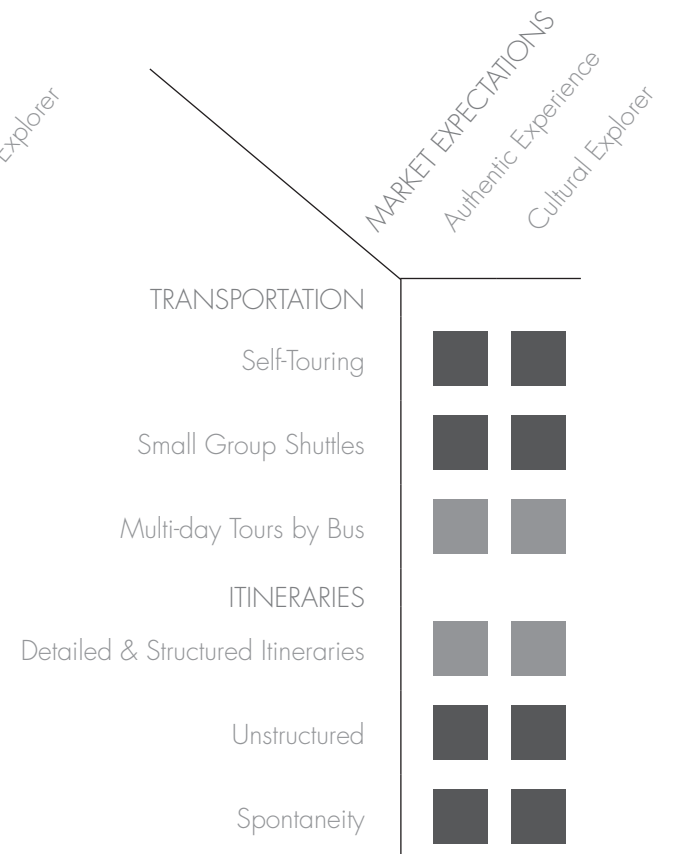
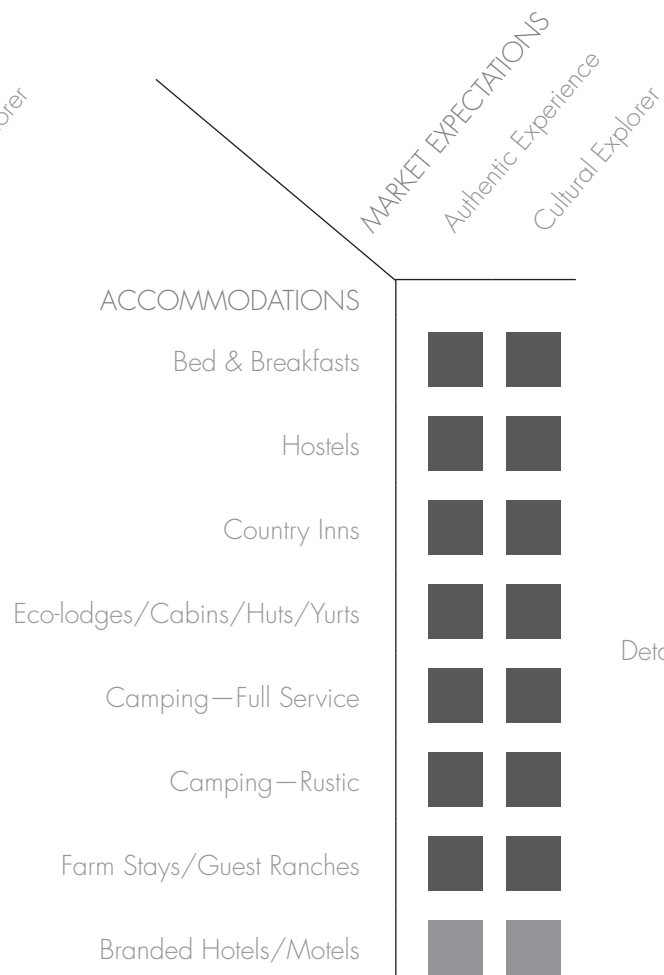
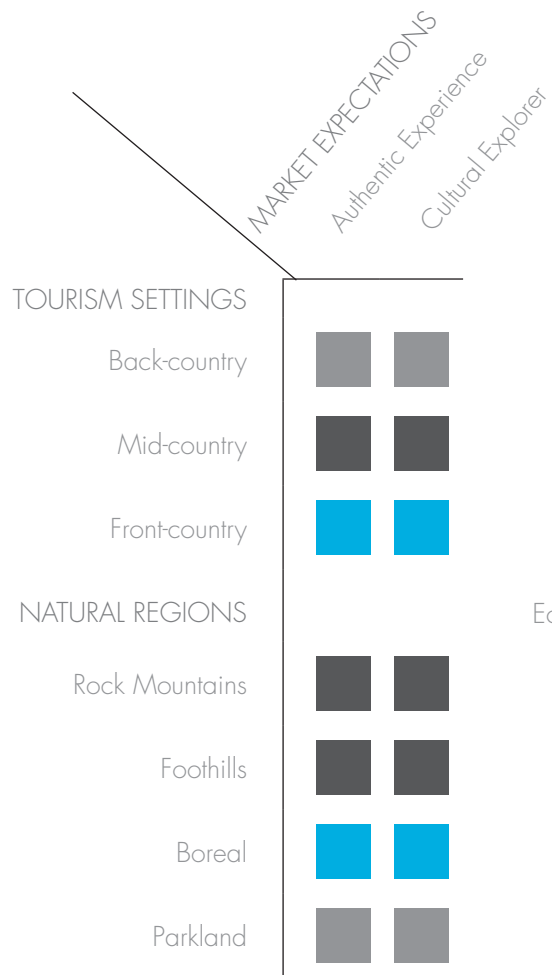
*Note, the market expectation analysis is based on Destination Canada’s EQ profiles for the Canadian market.*

#### 7.4.3.1 Leisure Travel

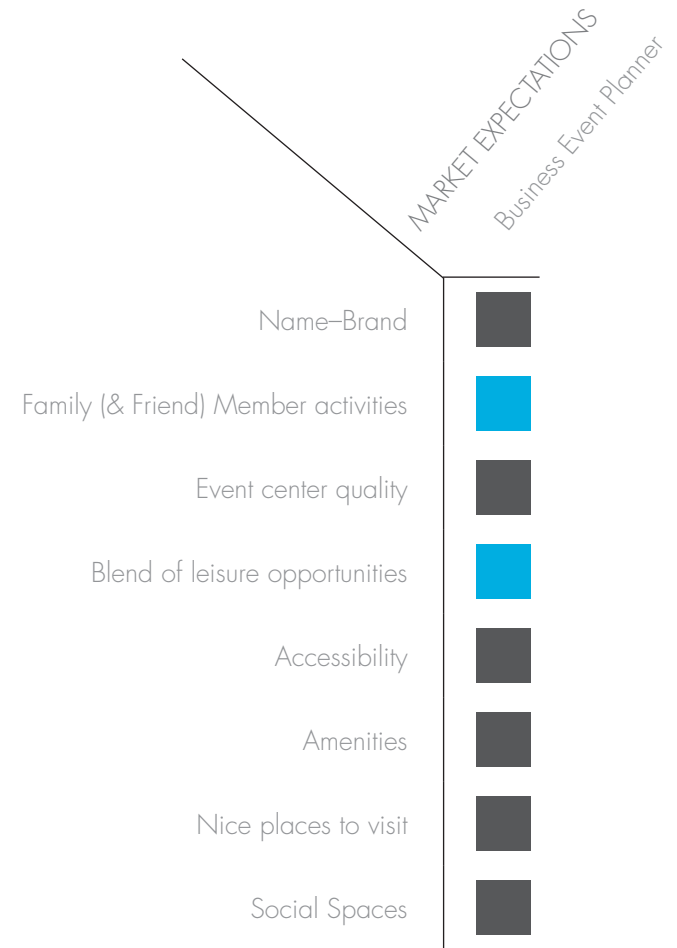








### 7.4.3.2 Business Events

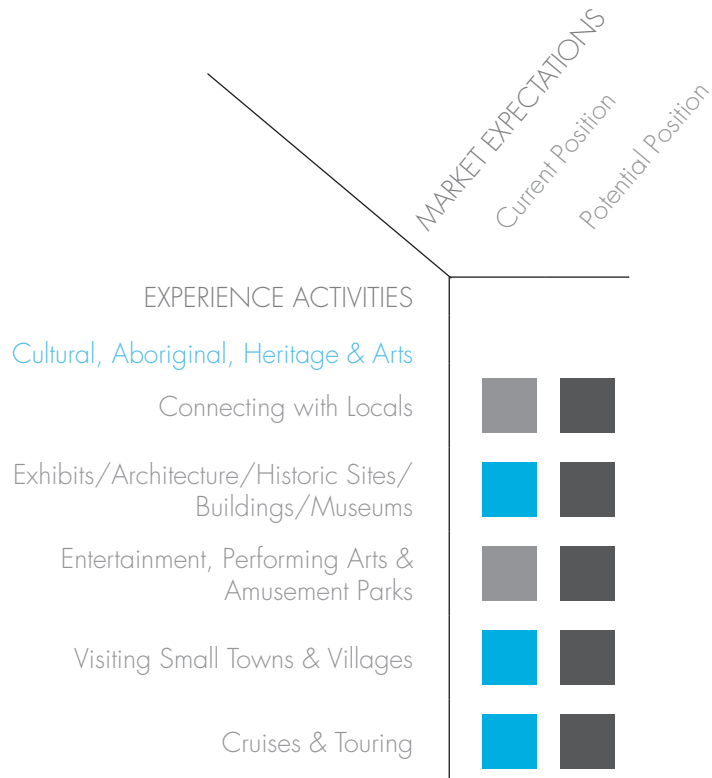


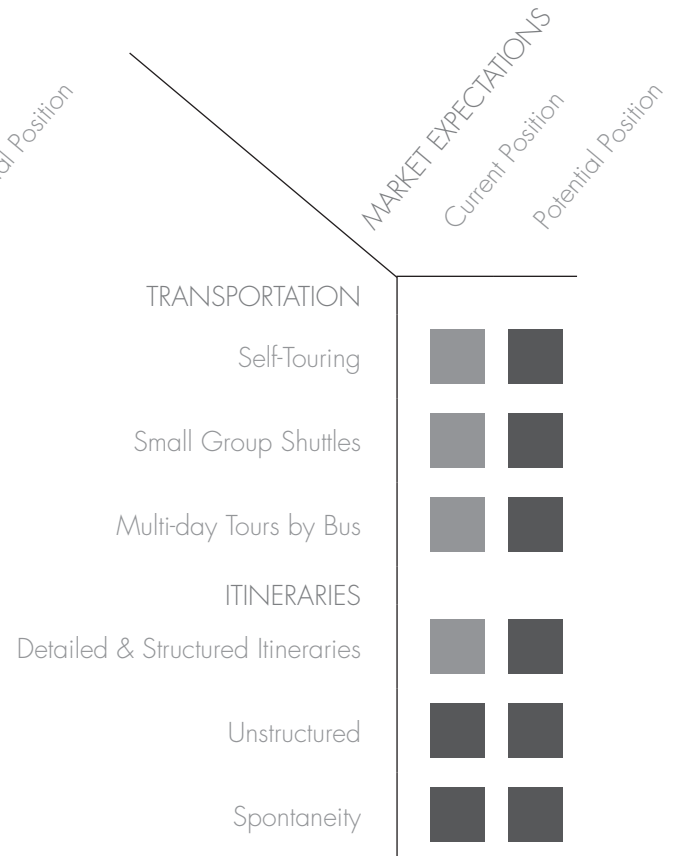
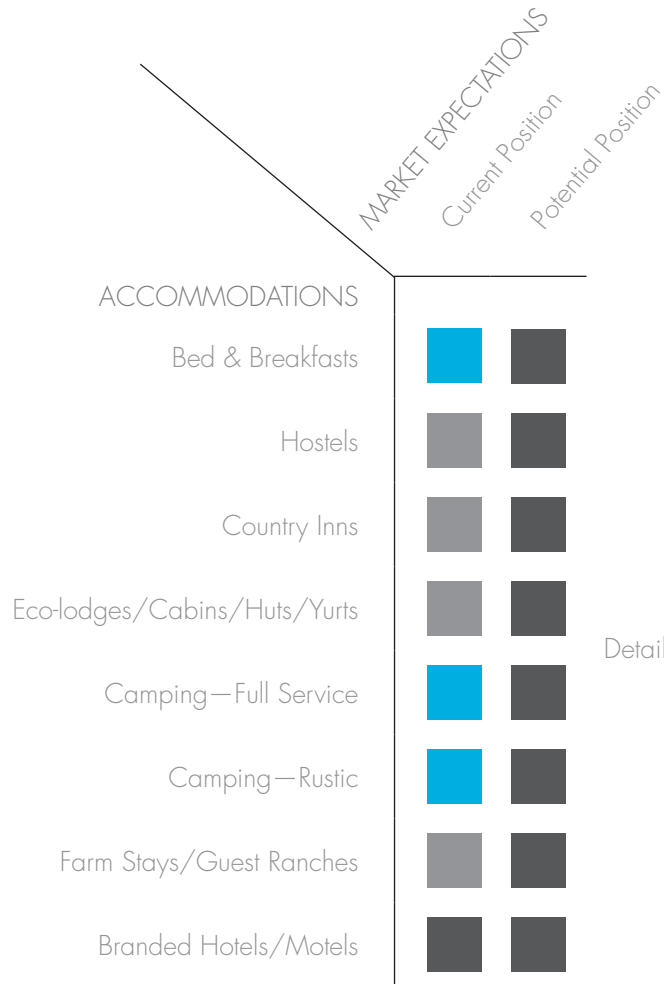
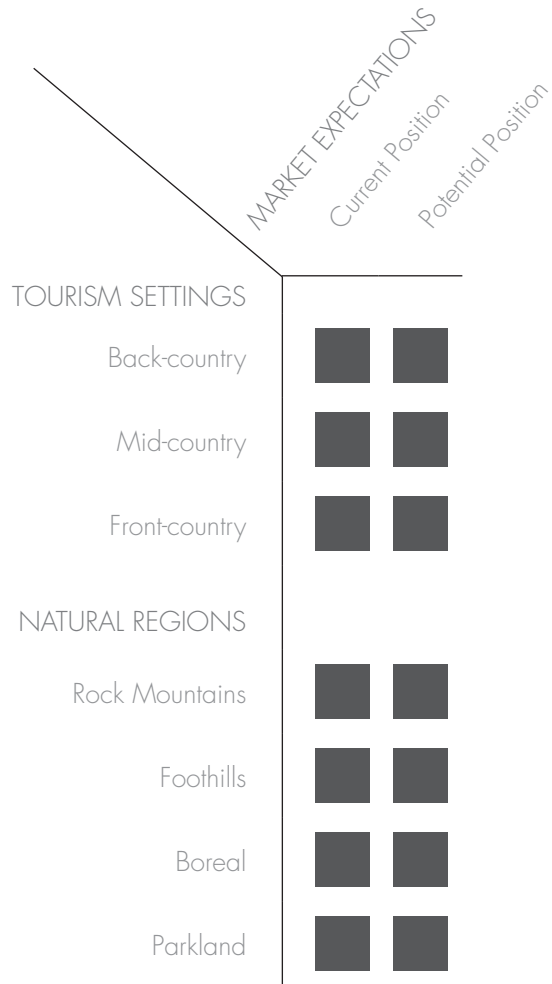
## 7.4.4 Experience Assessment

### 7.4.4.1 Leisure Travel

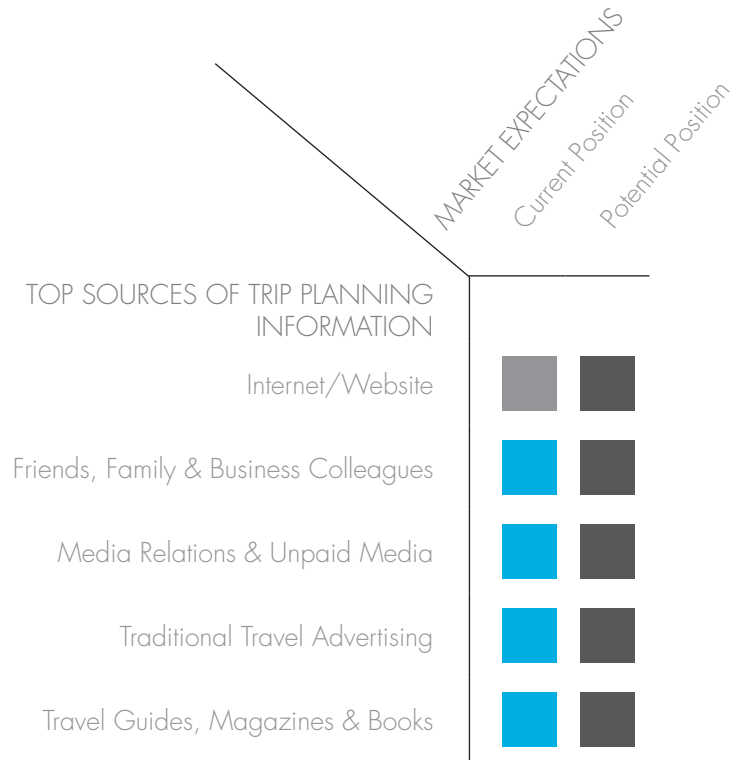
Recognizing our target markets' expectations (as presented above), professional opinion was used to assess the current strength of our position/strength of our region to meet those expectations of leisure travellers and business travel organizers. Our destination's potential to meet that expectation is also illustrated.



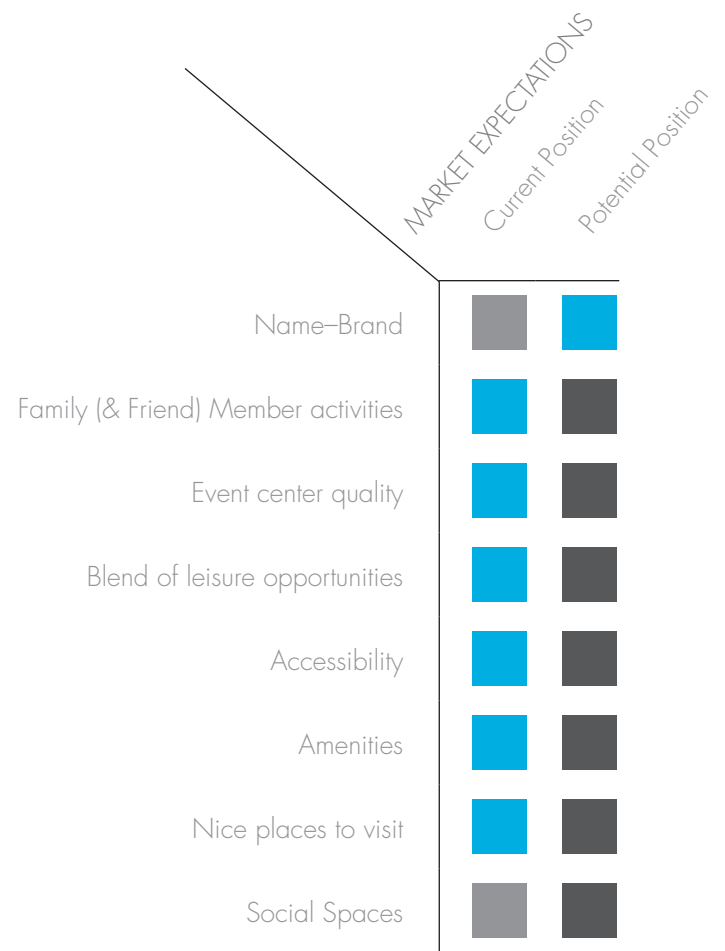
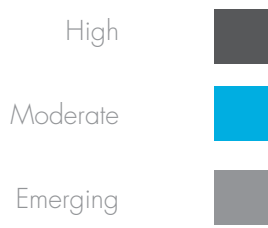




### 7.4.4.2 Business Travel



#### DESTINATION STRENGTH



## 7.5 Experience—Market Match

### 7.5.1 EXPERIENCE—MARKET MATCH

In the simplest terms, visitor satisfaction depends on the ability of the destination to provide the right mix of visitor experiences to meet the expectations of target markets. By contrasting the market readiness of the destination's experience mix with the expectations of target markets through an experience market match, gaps in the supply of attractions, activities, amenities, accommodations and access can be identified and strategies to address the gaps prioritized.

Experience  
Assessment

Market  
Assessment

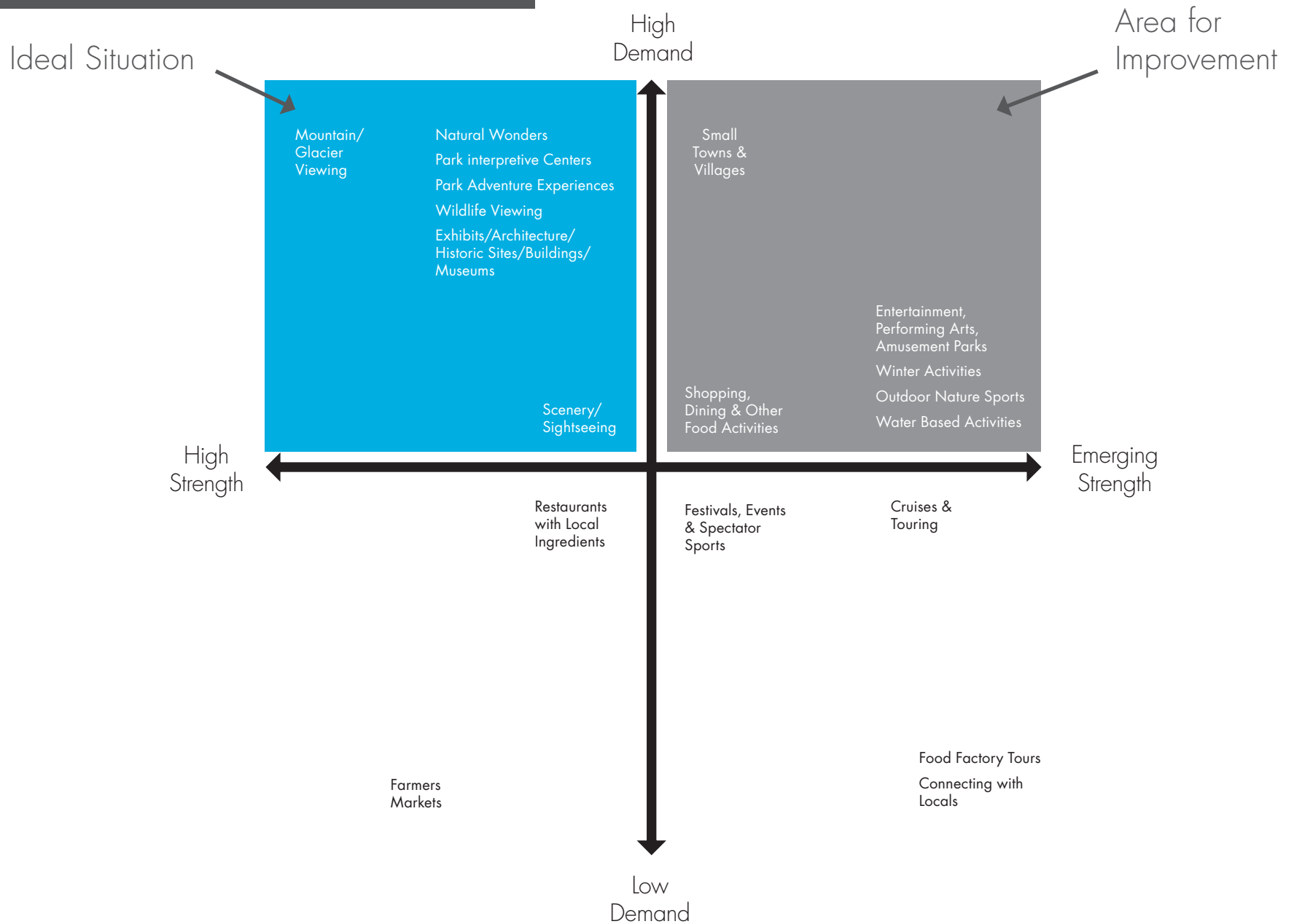
Match Experience(s)  
Strength to Market  
Demands &  
Identify Gaps



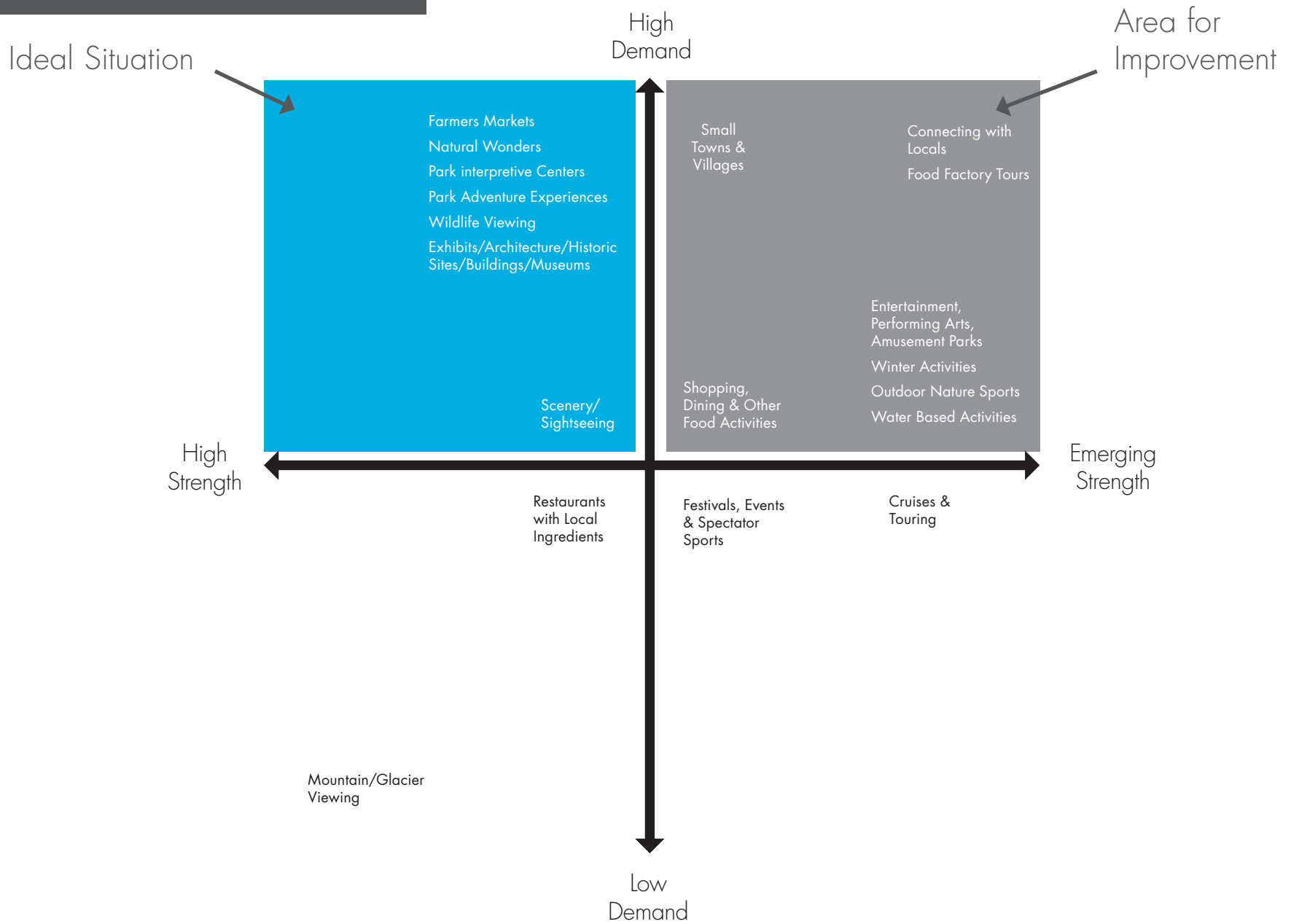
Gull Lake  
Photo Credit: Travel Alberta



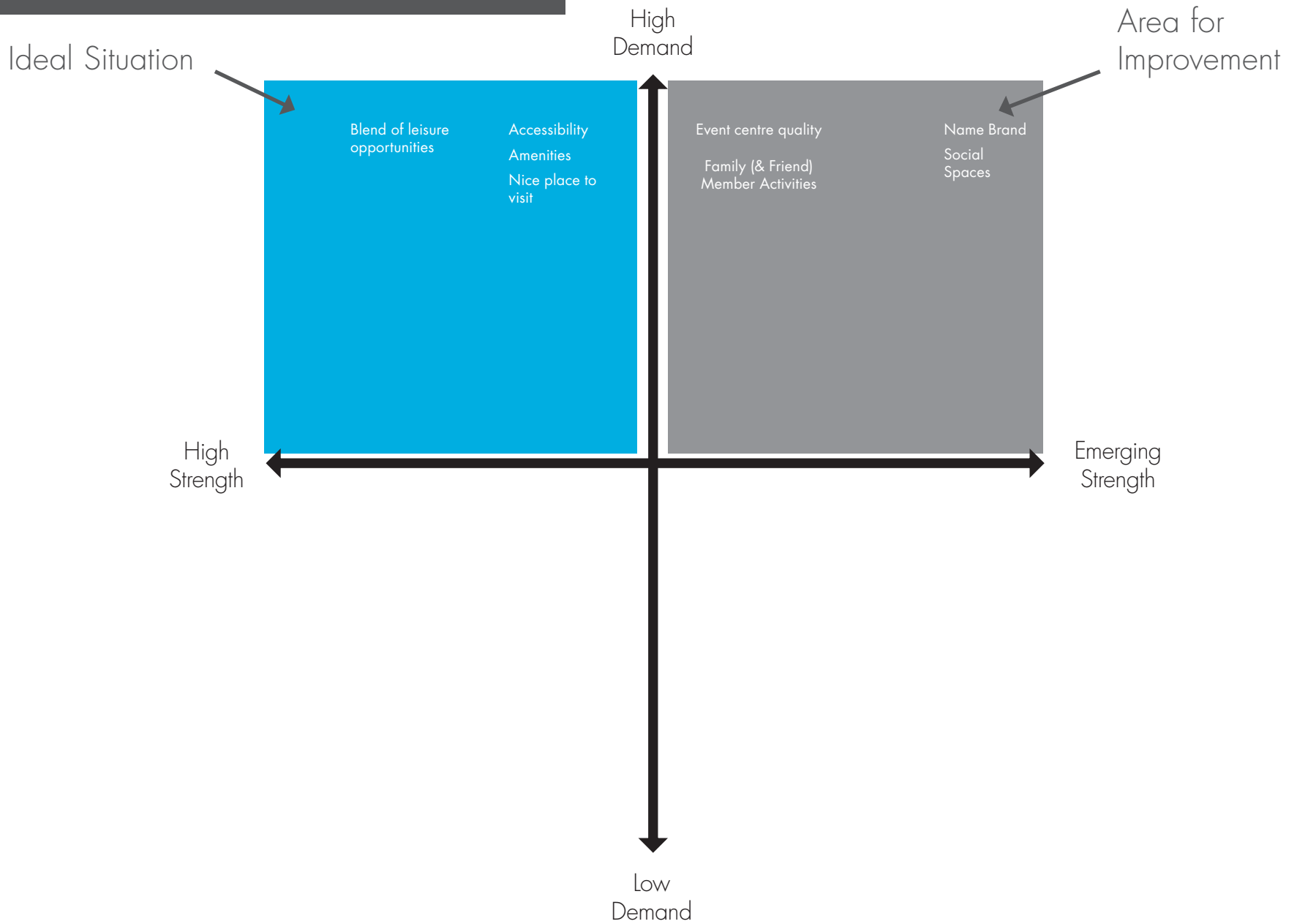
# AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS



# CULTURAL EXPLORERS



# BUSINESS EVENT PLANNERS



The analysis on the previous pages demonstrate where we have opportunity to grow the quality and supply of experiences in each visitor experience cluster. Priority initiatives and action plans will be presented in the following sections to ensure we grow those visitor experiences that are of high to moderate demand but are currently at moderate to low strength. It is clear that the supply of tourism settings available in the region and our diversity of natural regions are in strong demand by target markets. Efforts will also be focused on ensuring the mix of accommodations, transportation, packaged itineraries and the manner in which we provide trip planning information matches the expectations of our target markets.

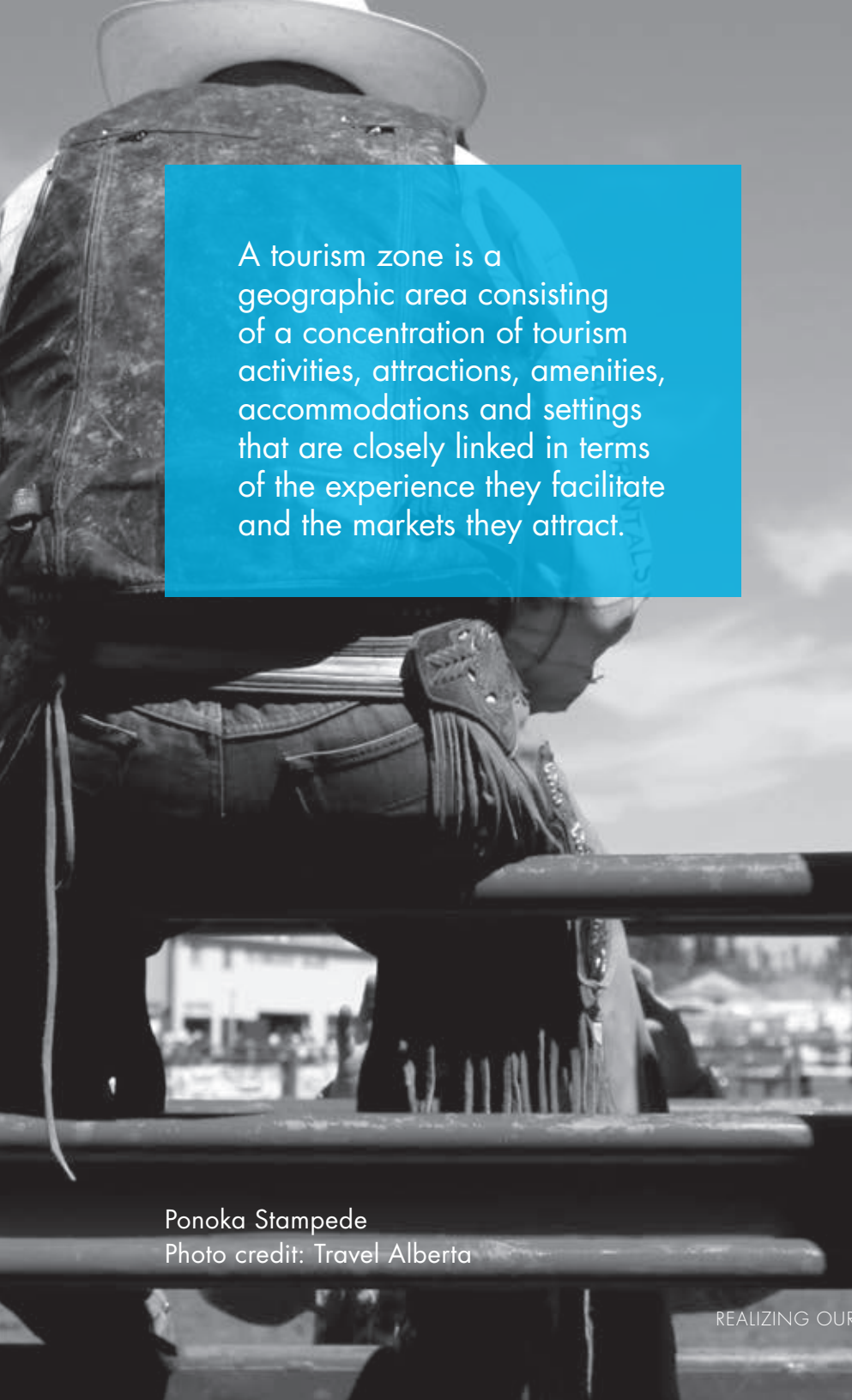
## 7.6 Our Unique Selling Proposition

As provincial, national and international competition for visitors is fierce, we need to work to differentiate our destination from our competition. We do this by developing a clear and purposeful “destination position” that communicates our unique selling proposition. Our unique selling proposition is:

*Central Alberta brings together all of the diverse and authentic experiences for which Alberta is known, within a region that is unspoiled, uncrowded, welcoming and ready to be explored.*

This position is intended to be integrated into communications about and experiences on offer in our region.





A tourism zone is a geographic area consisting of a concentration of tourism activities, attractions, amenities, accommodations and settings that are closely linked in terms of the experience they facilitate and the markets they attract.

Ponoka Stampede  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta

## 7.7 Central Alberta's Tourism Zones

### 7.7.1 Tourism Zones

Our region's tourism offering is diverse. Despite this diversity, the tourism experiences on offer can be clustered into distinct zones based on geography and the potential to meet specific target market motivations. A tourism zone is a geographic area consisting of a concentration of complementary tourism activities, attractions, amenities, accommodations and settings that are closely linked in terms of the experience they facilitate and the markets they attract. These zones serve as a point of focus, signaling the primary visitor experience objectives for the geographic area. Zones are established with purposeful consideration of our target markets' primary travel motivations and our region's unique selling propositions. Depending on the supply of tourism assets, tourism zones often contain one or more secondary visitor experience objectives. The secondary objectives serve to supplement visitors' primary travel motivations. Zones stimulate the creation of itineraries. These itineraries enable travellers to experience as much of the area with the least amount of effort. Itineraries could also be developed that include multiple Zones. Though the zones are spatially explicit, they are not intended to exclude or create division between communities nor do they communicate official land management intent agreed to by land management regulators. Instead, the zones should be viewed as permeable areas that communicate a focus for the tourism industry on what will be of interest to target markets.

Five tourism zones have been identified based on the dominant visitor experiences each is intended to provide.

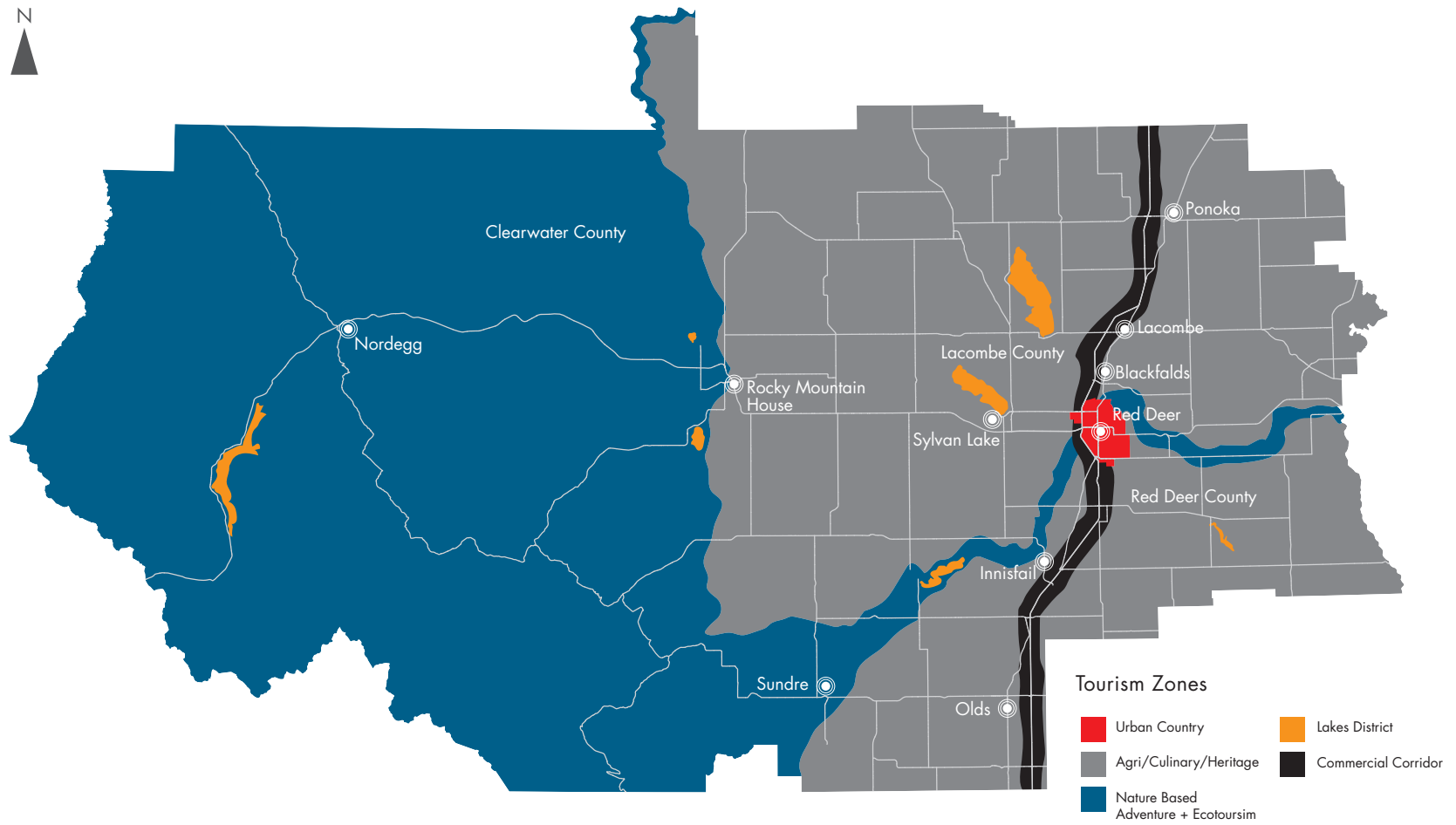


Figure 28. Central Alberta Tourism Zones

# 1

## • Nature-Based, Adventure and Ecotourism

### Intent:

To attract markets motivated to travel for year-round nature-based, adventure and/or ecotourism experiences where visitors wish to be physically active, interact with nature, contribute to conservation and experience local culture.

### Experience Objectives:

Experiences will range from short day trips and weekend getaways to longer multi-day journeys. Careful attention will be paid to developing major and secondary attractions and visitor infrastructure that fit the character and context of the area, utilizes best practices to avoid or minimize impacts to species, habitats and ecosystem processes. The primary objective of this zone is to provide visitors access to guided and self-guided:

- Soft adventure<sup>82</sup> experiences—such as backpacking, hiking, canoeing, camping, off-highway vehicles, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, landscape photography, whitewater kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, ski-touring
- Hard adventure<sup>83</sup> experiences—such as rock climbing, via-ferratta, ice climbing, skiing, caving, mountaineering, paragliding
- Nature and adventure based special events and sports
- Learning about and connecting with the natural heritage, unique ecosystems and species

The secondary objective of this zone is to enable visitors to connect with locals and the heritage of the area. Primary experiences will be supplemented with opportunities to learn about and experience the:

- Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site
- Brazeau Collieries—Nordegg National Historic Site
- Aboriginal people’s culture, traditions and history
- David Thompson and the area’s Fur Trade History

Visitor experiences will be enabled in all tourism settings, from backcountry to front-country. Accommodation opportunities will focus on providing visitors access to fully serviced and un-serviced campgrounds, glamping, cabins and eco-lodges. Visitor amenities and services targeting the needs of nature-based, adventure and ecotourism travellers will be provided in strategic hubs throughout the zone.

### Tourism Management Considerations:

Effective integration and management of land use (e.g. forestry, oil and gas) and tourism resources—features, settings and scenery—will be critical to achieving its tourism potential. Development of tourism infrastructure will be sensitively sited and visitation within this zone will be proactively managed to avoid and/or minimize negative impacts to sensitive environments.

## 2. Agriculture, Culinary and Heritage Tourism

### Intent:

To attract markets motivated to travel for seasonal agri, culinary, heritage and arts tourism experiences.

### Experience Objectives:

Experiences will range from short day trips and weekend getaways to longer multi-day journeys. The primary objective of this zone is to provide visitors opportunities to experience:

- Small town Alberta
- Western cowboy culture—rodeos, agriculture and western events, festivals
- Farm stays and working farm experiences
- Farm tours
- U-picks
- Agricultural history of the region
- Scandinavian history of the region
- Award winning local cuisine and opportunities to interact with and learn from local chefs
- Farmers markets and opportunities to interact with local farmers
- Upscale dining opportunities—farm-to-table culinary experiences
- Engaging connection with local people—both present and past

- Settlers, settlement history of the region
- Iconic places of the region—museums
- Local arts, festival and events
- Themed agri, culinary and heritage touring routes

The secondary objectives of this zone include:

- Sports events and sport tourism—tournaments, cycling races, triathlons etc.
- Support Business Events
- Nature-based and ecotourism

Accommodation opportunities will focus on providing visitors access to farm stays, guest ranches, inns, and bed & breakfasts with a strong agri, western or arts theme. Visitor amenities and services targeting the needs of agri, culinary and heritage travellers will be provided in strategic hubs throughout the zone.

### Tourism Management Considerations:

Management attention will be paid to retaining and/or providing an authentic sense of place that features the agricultural, western culture, heritage arts focus of the region. Attention will also be paid to retaining authentic architecture and the integrity of historic places and assets such as buildings, historic main streets and museums.



# 3. Urban Country

## Intent

To attract markets motivated to travel, year-round, for a western urban tourism experience, sport tourism or business events.

## Experience Objectives:

Experiences will range from short day trips and weekend getaways to longer multi-day journeys. The primary objective of this zone is to provide:

- Western urban experiences—retail, shopping, night life
- Spa and wellness
- Upscale culinary experiences featuring local ingredients
- Business events—meetings, conferences, conventions, exhibitions
- Festivals, events and sport tourism experiences—sports hall of fame, tournaments, races
- City history and western cultural experiences
- Performing arts, artisans and crafts

The secondary objectives of this zone include provision of:

- Nature-based, adventure and ecotourism experiences

Accommodation opportunities will focus on providing visitors access to hotels with conference centers and bed and breakfasts.

Visitor amenities and services targeting the needs of urban travellers will be provided in strategic hubs throughout the zone.

## Tourism Management Considerations:

Management attention will be paid to proactively identifying, planning and designing theme based tourism precincts within the City that are connected, stimulate and incentivize tourism investment, deliver authentic and memorable experiences and maintains a physical form and atmosphere that appeals to the expectations of travellers. This zone will also work proactively to promote and package with experiences available throughout the destination.

# 4. Lakes District

## Intent:

To attract markets motivated to travel, year-round, for lake based nature, adventure and ecotourism as well as festivals, events and sports based experiences.

## Experience Objectives:

Experiences will focus on short day trips and weekend getaways. Extended seasonal stays will also be available on some lakes. Careful attention will be paid to developing major and secondary attractions and visitor infrastructure that fit the character and context of each lake and utilizing best practices to avoid or minimize impacts to lake species, habitats and ecosystem processes. The primary objective of this zone is to provide visitors access to:

- Memorable waterfront experiences—restaurants, pubs, cafés, promenades
- Family based beach activities and events
- Summer beach and lake based festivals, events and sport tourism— e.g., water skiing, canoe/paddling/boat races, golf
- Winter lake based festivals, events and sport tourism— e.g., ice fishing, snowmobile races, skating, outdoor hockey tournaments
- Spa and wellness
- Summer and sport youth camps
- Heritage and performing arts
- Culinary Experiences featuring local ingredients

The secondary objectives of this zone include provision of:

- Retail and shopping near some lakes with urban centres, such as Sylvan Lake.

Accommodation opportunities will focus on providing visitors access to waterfront cabins/cottages, villas, full service campgrounds with seasonal rental options and hotels that respect the local context and provide authentic experience. Visitor amenities and services focused on water-based experiences (marinas, boat launches, public docks, marine fueling etc.) will be provided.

## Management Considerations:

Development of tourism infrastructure will be sensitively sited and visitation within this zone will be proactively managed to avoid and/or minimize negative impacts to sensitive environments, perceptions of crowding and associated impacts on visitor experience. For lakes with adjacent urban centers, attention will be paid to proactively identifying, planning and designing theme based tourism that stimulates and incentivizes tourism investment, delivers authentic and memorable experiences, maintains a physical form and atmosphere that appeals to the expectations of travellers and provides seamless connectivity to the lake and its visitor offerings.

# 5. Commercial Corridor

## Intent:

To provide services to travellers who are coming to and passing through the destination and to entice those passing through to stop, experience and hopefully return.

## Experience Objectives:

The primary objective of the commercial corridor zone is to promote the destination and entice pass-through travellers to stop, experience and return to Central Alberta. The secondary objective of the zone is to:

- Provide visitor accommodations and services that support business events and travellers engaged in agri, culinary and heritage tourism experiences.

## Tourism Management Considerations:

Management attention will be paid to ensuring visitors along the corridor are exposed to the Central Alberta brand and unique selling proposition, trip planning information about the destination is readily available and a compelling sales pitch to return to the destination is made. Appealing entranceway and wayfinding signage will be provided.





Cline River  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta, George Simhoni

# The Way Forward

A unique, must-experience, destination offering visitors authentic, affordable and sustainable experiences—year round.

## Vision

## Unique Selling Proposition

Experience Central Alberta—unspoiled, uncrowded, uncomplicated, welcoming and ready to be explored.

## Outcomes

By 2025 we will have...



### Experiences

- Transformed Central Alberta into a must-experience destination that is authentic, memorable and sustainable.



### Growth & Diversification

- Increased year-round visitation from both short haul and long-haul target markets.
- Increased the direct and indirect economic contributions of tourism to our regional and local economies by 25%.
- Attracted increased private and public sector investment in tourism experiences, services and infrastructure.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the benefits tourism brings to our communities, the region and the province.



### Environment & Host Communities

- Established a positive and inclusive relationship between the region's tourism industry, community leaders, visitors and residents to ensure our communities are engaged and active stakeholders.
- Maintained the integrity and quality of tourism resources in the region and the destination's competitiveness.
- Enhanced the positive benefits of tourism to the environment and host communities while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment, local cultures and host communities.

## Strategies & Priority Initiatives

To achieve these outcomes we will...

### Destination Development

#### Define Municipal Roles in Tourism System

- Articulate the roles

#### Grow & Diversify Authentic Memorable Experiences

- Activate the West Country
- North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers
- Themed Touring Routes
- Major Farm-Market Attraction
- Performance Artists Events
- Strengthen Festivals, Events and Sports
- Strengthen Business Events Appeal

#### Provide Right Mix of Places to Stay in Right Locations

- Diversify accommodations

### Destination Management

#### Formalize Destination Leadership

- Leadership Model
- Leverage Partnerships and Complementary Packaging

#### Ensure Easy Travel to and Within the Region

- Enhance access

#### Strengthen Capacity

- Position to Provide Exemplary Experiences
- Enable timely and informed decision making

#### Improve Access to Capital and Investment

- Regional approach to private and public sector investment

#### Enhance Sustainability & Maintain Competitiveness

- Consider Tourism in Provincial, Regional and Local Land Use Planning
- Visitor Codes of Conduct and Education
- Encourage Sustainability in Planning, Construction and Operations

### Destination Marketing

#### Build Community & Stakeholder Support & Awareness

- Strengthen buy-in
- Collaboration with Travel Alberta

#### Build Market Awareness & Inspire Growth in Visitation

- Develop Brand and Story Telling Framework
- Framework for Marketing & Communications

## 7.8 Strategies, Priority Initiatives & Actions

### 7.8.1 Destination Development

#### 7.8.1.1 Define the Municipal Roles in the Tourism System

**Priority Initiative:** Articulate the role that each municipal destination partner can serve in the regional tourism system by designating Gateways, Hubs and Tourism Service Centres.

#### RATIONALE

Our communities are diverse and so too are the experiences and services they offer visitors. Regardless, each of the communities in our destination have a meaningful role in contributing to its tourism success. If we think about our destination as a system, and envision and articulate the role each of our communities can play in the system, we will be better positioned to ensure our visitors have access to the experiences they seek and the services they need where they need it.

#### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

**Articulate the role that each municipal destination partner can serve in the regional tourism system by designating Gateways, Hubs and Tourism Service Centres.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Designate, market and work to develop and/or enhance the ability of Red Deer, Rocky Mountain House and Olds to serve as effective Gateways in the regional tourism system.	Local Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High

## Articulate the role that each municipal destination partner can serve in the regional tourism system by designating Gateways, Hubs and Tourism Service Centres.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Designate, market and work to develop and/or enhance the ability of Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Nordegg, Lacombe, and Sundre to serve as effective Hubs in the regional tourism system.</p>	Local Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
<p>Designate, market and work to develop and/or enhance the ability of Ponoka and Blackfalds to serve as effective Tourism Service Centers in the regional tourism system.</p>	Local Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
<p>Undertake a Visitor Friendliness Assessment, in general accordance with the Visitor Friendly Alberta (VFA) program, in each municipal partner's community and implement the associated action plan. At a minimum, the VFA should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambience &amp; Visual Appeal and Identity of the Community</li> <li>• Quality of Service and Professionalism</li> <li>• Pedestrian Friendliness</li> <li>• Universal Accessibility</li> <li>• Wayfinding &amp; Signage</li> <li>• Public Services &amp; Visitor Amenities—quality, location, type</li> <li>• Visitor Information.</li> </ul> <p>It is recognized that VFA has been completed in Olds &amp; Sundre and will begin implementation.</p>	Local Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> </ul>	Short-term	High

**Articulate the role that each municipal destination partner can serve in the regional tourism system by designating Gateways, Hubs and Tourism Service Centres.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Consider designating Tourism Precincts in Gateway and Hub communities through Municipal Development Planning. Tourism precincts will ensure strong visitor friendliness and seek opportunity to incentivize and enable tourism investment.</p>	<p>Local Municipality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>





## **GATEWAYS:**

Gateways are communities that most tourists to the region will travel through whether arriving by air or road. It is often a destination onto itself that motivates travel to the region. These communities provide visitors a critical mass of experiences, attractions, activities, accommodations and amenities that enable longer multi-night stays. Gateways promote and provide visitors comprehensive travel information about the experiences available to them within the region and serve as a strategic base from which visitors travel out to nearby hubs, major and secondary attractions and communities.

- Red Deer
- Rocky Mountain House
- Olds



## **HUBS:**

Hubs are communities that provide a smaller mix of experiences, attractions, activities, accommodations and amenities that enable shorter, one or two night, trips. They may or may not motivate travel to the region. Hubs act as service and re-supply areas for visitors engaged in experiences in nearby areas that do not offer any or enough accommodations or necessary servicing. The communities promote and provide trip planning information about the experiences within the community and nearby areas.

- Sylvan Lake
- Lacombe
- Innisfail
- Sundre
- Nordegg



## **TOURISM SERVICE CENTRES:**

Tourism service centres are typically communities where visitors stop to eat, refuel and stretch as they travel. These communities provide businesses and amenities to meet travellers' needs. They may, or may not, contain minor tourism attractions that support short-break day use trips and accommodations. Visitors originate from major transportation corridors or nearby Hub and Gateway communities. Tourism service centres are critical sources of trip planning information and play an important role in promoting the experiences in the region to pass-through travellers.

- Blackfalds
- Ponoka

Here is some further detail on the tourism focus and role of each of our Gateway and Hub communities. We have also included tourism roles for each of our counties.

	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>PRIMARY TOURISM ROLE</b>	<b>SECONDARY TOURISM ROLE</b>
<b>GATEWAYS</b>	Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Experiences with Country Flare—night life, retail</li> <li>• Business Events—lower cost than Edmonton &amp; Calgary</li> <li>• Festivals, Events &amp; Sport Tourism Experiences</li> <li>• Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>• Upscale Culinary Experiences featuring domestic foods</li> <li>• Hotel, Motel &amp; B&amp;B based Accommodations</li> <li>• Visitor Servicing for travellers to the City, within the region and those passing through</li> <li>• Regional promotion and regional trip planning information</li> <li>• Regional Destination Marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences focused on the river valley, trails and natural areas</li> </ul>
	Rocky Mountain House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences—North Saskatchewan River jet boating, paddling &amp; whitewater, staging for the Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail, local motorized &amp; non-motorized trails,</li> <li>• Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>• Visitor servicing with a strong focus on the needs of Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism visitors to the northern sections of the West Country and North Saskatchewan River</li> <li>• Equipment rentals (off-highway vehicles, mountain bikes, camping, canoe/kayak, ice climbing, rock climbing) and repair services and supplies.</li> <li>• Hotel, Motel &amp; B&amp;B based Accommodations</li> <li>• Regional promotion and regional trip planning information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences</li> <li>• Aboriginal Tourism Experiences (e.g., opportunities to visit the National Historic Site in Rocky Mountain House; story of David Thompson)</li> </ul>
	Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Events—lower cost than Edmonton &amp; Calgary</li> <li>• Festivals, Events &amp; Sport Tourism Experiences</li> <li>• Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>• Hotel, Motel and B&amp;B-based Accommodations</li> <li>• Visitor servicing with a strong focus on the needs of Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism visitors to the southern sections of the West Country</li> <li>• Regional promotion and regional trip planning information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences</li> </ul>

	COMMUNITY	PRIMARY TOURISM ROLE	SECONDARY TOURISM ROLE
HUBS	Sylvan Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences—summer and winter lake based experiences (swimming, fishing, boating/mooring/paddling, beach activities, ice fishing, skating, snowmobile racing)</li> <li>Festivals, Events &amp; Sport Tourism Experiences—water sports, lake focused festivals &amp; events,</li> <li>Recreational cottage/villa rentals &amp; real estate</li> <li>Business events</li> <li>Hotel, Motel, B&amp;B &amp; full serviced campgrounds and comfort camping</li> <li>Equipment rentals (commuter bikes, mountain bikes, camping, canoe/kayak, boat) and repair services and supplies.</li> <li>Trip planning information for nearby and regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> </ul>
	Lacombe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>Ag-Tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences</li> <li>Hotel, Motel, B&amp;B &amp; Farm Stays &amp; Guest Ranches</li> <li>Trip planning information for nearby and regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Festivals &amp; Events Experiences</li> </ul>
	Innisfail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ag-Tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences including iconic Regional Farmers Market</li> <li>Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> <li>Hotel, Motel, B&amp;B &amp; Farm Stays &amp; Guest Ranches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Festivals &amp; Events Experiences</li> <li>Heritage &amp; Culture Experiences</li> </ul>
	Sundre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences Red Deer River jet boating, paddling &amp; whitewater, staging for local motorized &amp; non-motorized trails</li> <li>Ag-Tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences</li> <li>Campgrounds, comfort camping, Farm Stays &amp; Guest Ranches</li> <li>Visitor servicing with a strong focus on the needs of Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism visitors to the southern sections of the West Country and Red Deer River</li> <li>Equipment rentals (off-highway vehicles, mountain bikes, camping, canoe/kayak) and repair services and supplies.</li> <li>Trip planning information for nearby and regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> </ul>

	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>PRIMARY TOURISM ROLE</b>	<b>SECONDARY TOURISM ROLE</b>
<b>HUBS</b>	Nordegg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences North Saskatchewan River jet boating, paddling &amp; whitewater, staging for Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail and other local motorized &amp; non-motorized trails</li> <li>• Heritage Experiences—Brazeau Collieries Minesite National Historic Site, David Thompson</li> <li>• Visitor servicing with a strong focus on the needs of Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism visitors to the northern sections of the West Country and North Saskatchewan River—fuel, food, supplies.</li> <li>• Equipment rentals (off-highway vehicles, mountain bikes, camping, canoe/kayak, ice climbing, rock climbing) and repair services and supplies.</li> <li>• Nature based/adventure sport tourism events</li> <li>• Recreation homes/cabins &amp; real estate</li> <li>• Campgrounds, comfort camping, cabins, hostel, hotel accommodations</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Experiences (e.g., wild horse mountain range)</li> </ul>

	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>PRIMARY TOURISM ROLE</b>	<b>SECONDARY TOURISM ROLE</b>
<b>TOURISM SERVICE CENTRES</b>	Blackfalds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing basic travel amenities (e.g., fuel, restaurants, and other services) to meet traveller's needs</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals &amp; Events Experiences</li> <li>• Heritage &amp; Culture Experiences</li> <li>• Overnight accommodations</li> </ul>
	Ponoka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing basic travel amenities (e.g., fuel, restaurants, and other services) to meet traveller's needs</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals &amp; Events Experiences</li> <li>• Heritage &amp; Culture Experiences</li> <li>• Overnight accommodations</li> </ul>

	<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>PRIMARY TOURISM ROLE</b>	<b>SECONDARY TOURISM ROLE</b>
<b>COUNTIES</b>	Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals, Events &amp; Sport Tourism Experiences</li> <li>• Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>• B&amp;B &amp; Farm Stays &amp; Guest Ranches</li> <li>• Trip Planning Information for nearby and regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences focused on the river valley, trails and natural areas</li> </ul>
	Clearwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences, North Saskatchewan River jet boating, paddling &amp; whitewater, staging for Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail and other local motorized &amp; non-motorized trails</li> <li>• Heritage Experiences—Brazeau Collieries Minesite National Historic Site, David Thompson</li> <li>• Visitor servicing with a strong focus on the needs of Nature-Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism visitors to the northern sections of the West Country and North Saskatchewan River—fuel, food, supplies.</li> <li>• Equipment rentals (off-highway vehicles, mountain bikes, camping, canoe/kayak, ice climbing, rock climbing) and repair services and supplies.</li> <li>• Nature based/adventure sport tourism events</li> <li>• Recreation homes/cabins &amp; real estate</li> <li>• Campgrounds, comfort camping, cabins, hostel, hotel accommodations, and eco-lodges</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature Based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism Experiences</li> <li>• Aboriginal Experiences</li> </ul>
	Lacombe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage, Culture &amp; Arts Experiences</li> <li>• Ag-Tourism &amp; Cowboy Culture Experiences</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> <li>• B&amp;B, Farm Stays &amp; Guest Ranches</li> <li>• Trip planning information for regional experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals &amp; Events Experiences</li> </ul>

## 7.8.1.2 Grow and Diversify Authentic Memorable Experiences that Leverage our Competitive Advantages

### Nature, Adventure & Ecotourism

#### Priority Initiative: Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential

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##### RATIONALE

The density of nature, based, adventure and ecotourism assets is similar to the Banff and Jasper National Park but without the crowds. The tourism potential of the West Country has long been recognized. With an incredible array of travel motivators and attractions, the West Country hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year from across Alberta, Canada and beyond<sup>84</sup>. The summer peak season generates the most travellers though winter visitation is also strong. As the West Country contains vital habitat for many species, including species at risk, and provides many ecosystem services, public recognition of its ecological importance is growing. Public expectations are that all tourism development in the region be designed and managed to be compatible with conservation objectives. In activating the West Country, consideration will be given to the Visitor Services Development Plan for the David Thompson Corridor<sup>85</sup>.

In 2014, nearly 51,500 new ATV's were sold in Canada. Nearly 9,100 of these units were sold in Alberta with many thousands of machines already being registered in the province. About 56,000 motorcycles were sold, with 6.5% being for off-road recreation or dual purpose. It is estimated that nearly 1,000 new motorcycles were sold in Alberta for off-road recreation or dual sport purposes with over 7,500 already registered<sup>86</sup>. With its focused attention on providing and managing motorized recreation opportunities, the area has the potential to become Western Canada's first purposefully planned, developed and managed motorized recreation destination. However, the area's supply of essential visitor infrastructure such as trails and staging areas is limited, some trails are unsustainable and many key attractions to the region are not connected via the trail system.

In addition to motorized recreation, the West Country contains many non-motorized travel motivators and attractions including backcountry hikes, alpine lakes, mountain summits, one of two via-ferrata's in the province, a concentration of world class ice-climbing, sport fishing, hunting and paddling opportunities.

Accommodation along the corridor (camping, eco-lodge and hostel) typically operates at or near capacity during peak season and is closed for the winter season. Despite the trends and rapidly growing visitation, visitor accommodations, amenities and attractions are limited in the West Country and, in some cases, the infrastructure to manage current use and facilitate greater visitation is absent or unsustainable.

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##### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

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## Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Request that the Government of Alberta evaluate the market appeal and relevance of the current Outline Plans for the David Thompson Corridor Development Nodes. If the plans align with modern market expectations, address the barriers to investment in the nodes (highway access/egress, servicing, length of tenure, protection of scenic values), and move forward with implementation of the nodes. If the plans are not aligned, evaluate the viability of each node and redevelop updated outline plans.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Government (e.g., Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Culture and Tourism)</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Explore the development of an interconnected network of sustainable motorized and non-motorized trails, staging areas and visitor amenities (washrooms, wayfinding) to attract and manage increased visitation to the West Country.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Government (e.g., Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Culture and Tourism)Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>

## Hero Experiences are the 'essence' of our tourism zones. They are:

- Those iconic experiences that provide our destination with a real competitive advantage over other destinations;
- Those experiences that focus on what is truly unique, memorable or engaging about our destination; and
- Those experiences which meet the needs of our target markets.

(Hero Experiences Guidebook, Tourism & Events Queensland, 2015) <sup>87</sup>

## Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Work with the Government of Alberta to explore the potential of implementing a competitive Expression of Interest and selection process to issue exclusive commercial tourism tenures to nature-based and adventure operators who are best positioned to deliver the brand promise of the region and avoid “first-in-line, first-in-right” tenure issuance.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Government (e.g., Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Culture and Tourism)</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Encourage operators to develop guided and promote self-guided backcountry and mid-country motorized recreation tours.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Explore the feasibility of developing an appropriately sited and sustainably designed motorized recreation “play area” that provides opportunities for beginners to advanced riders of ATVs, UTVs, off-road motorcycles and trials bikes.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Government (e.g., Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Culture and Tourism)</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>



## Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Advocate the Alberta Recreation Trails Partnership Pilot Project to include Central Alberta trails in the pilot program as a means to enhance their profile, market appeal and to stimulate further trail development.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Encourage and support efforts to develop an interconnected regional mixed-use trail system that seamlessly connects visitors to the region's gateways, hubs and attractions. Priority should be placed on working to complete the Trans Canada Trail in support of national efforts to achieve connection from coast to coast to coast by 2017.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Expand the provision of day trip and extended multi-day guided and self-guided hard and soft adventure experiences including ice climbing, rock climbing, via-ferrata, backcountry hiking, backcountry camping, mountain summits, cave exploration, white water paddling/rafting, windsurfing/kiteboarding on Abraham lake, mountain biking, heli-mountain biking and equestrian trail-ride tours.</p>	<p>Tourism Operators Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

## Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Continue to provide and promote memorable hunting and sport fishing experiences.	Tourism Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate
Address the outstanding gaps in the connectivity of the Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail Corridor and move forward with implementation of the Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail Master Plan to enable a trail based connection between the Rocky Mountain House Gateway and the Nordegg Hub.	Clearwater County Town of Rocky Mountain House Alberta Environment and Parks Alberta Culture and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Local Clubs (e.g., ATV, hiking, fishing, etc.)</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate
Work with local First Nations to explore interest and feasibility of developing a catalyst Aboriginal Tourism experience—e.g. backcountry equestrian tours, Kootenay Plains etc.	Destination Leadership Committee/Organization Aboriginal Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Alberta Aboriginal Relations</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate

## Activate the West Country's Tourism Potential



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Improve the packaging of hard and soft adventure, motorized, trail based and Aboriginal experiences with other service providers (accommodations, transportation, agri-culinary/heritage and cultural operators) in region.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>High</p>

### SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Right places to stay in the right locations.
- Realize the tourism potential of our rivers
- Attract private sector and influence public sector investment
- Proactively Manage Visitor Use
- Integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses.

### HERO EXPERIENCES

- Multi-day ice climbing adventures on the West Country's Natural Ice
- Multi-day rock climbing adventures including climbing one of two via-ferrata's in Alberta
- Adventures into the West Country's remote lakes—Landslide, Pinto, Lake of Falls, Michelle Lakes
- Iconic outdoor/nature/adventure sport event
- Travelling the backcountry's traditional routes with Aboriginal Elders

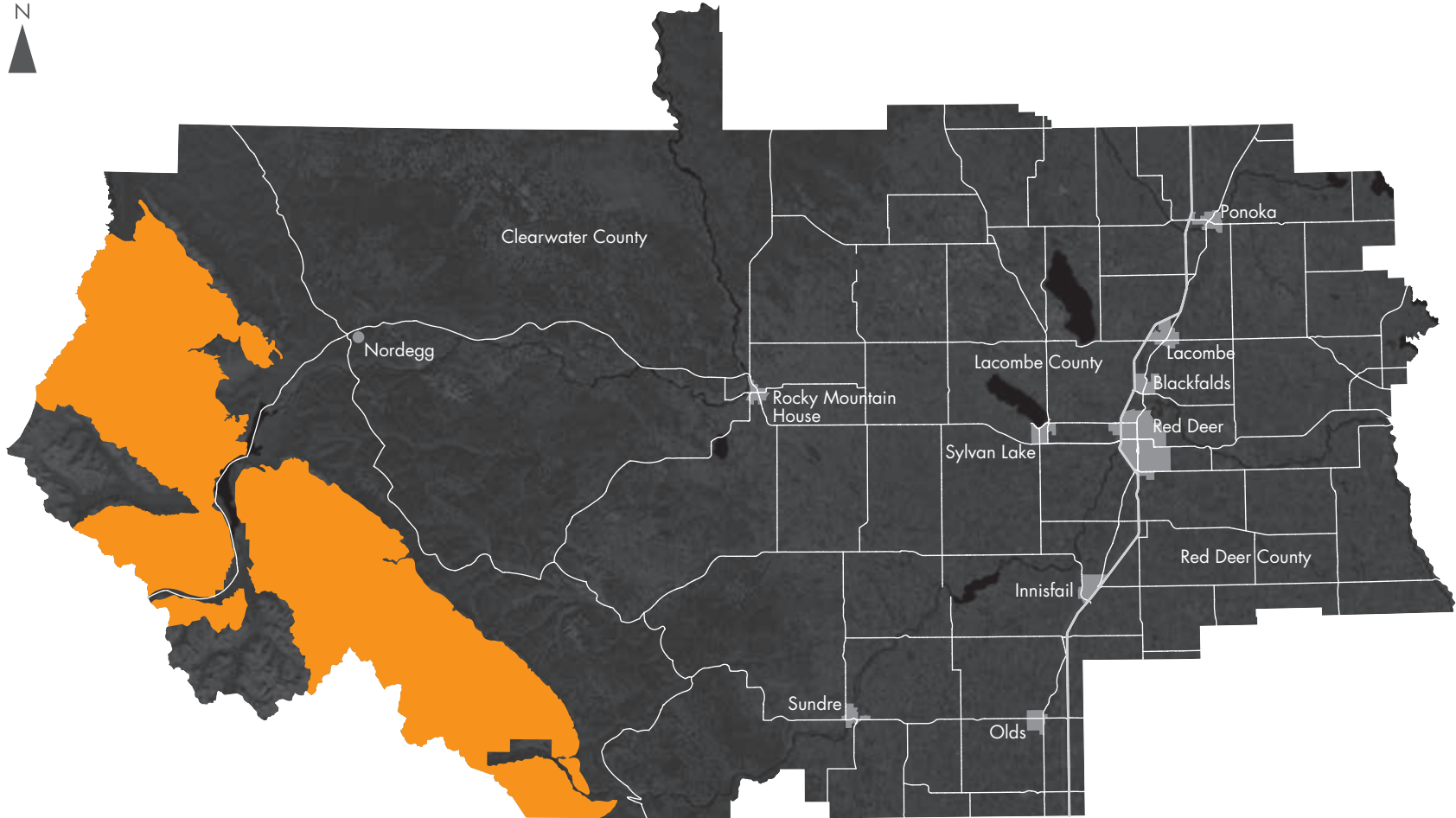


Figure 29. The Bighorn Backcountry—A Vital Tourism Asset of the West Country

**Priority Initiative:** Realize the Tourism Potential of the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers.

**RATIONALE**

The North Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers are outstanding tourism resources providing long-distance linear opportunities for nature, adventure and ecotourism. With spectacular scenery, natural attractions and rich history, our region’s two largest rivers host tens of thousands of visitors every year from Alberta, Canada and beyond. These rivers already offer visitors opportunities for sightseeing, flat water and white water paddling and rafting, jet boating, fishing, hiking and much more. As potential travel motivators, the rivers also act as blueways that provide visitors appealing and unique connections to many other tourism attractions.

Despite our rivers tourism potential, a proactive approach to developing visitor-centric infrastructure and amenity planning and development, themed itinerary development, wayfinding and focused marketing has not occurred. There is opportunity to enhance and ensure visitors are provided connected, functional and high quality experiences along these rivers from the headwaters to eastern extent of our regions.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

**Realize the Tourism Potential of the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Identify tourism themes for each reach of the rivers, evaluate the market readiness of attractions and amenities along the rivers, identify development priorities and sites to share the history and natural heritage of each river with visitors.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate
Provide a deliberate system of access and egress points for river visitors; ensuring access points align with natural trip durations and patterns.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate

## Realize the Tourism Potential of the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Work with Alberta Environment and Parks to provide visitor amenities such as washrooms, boat launches, signage and wayfinding, parking and accommodations at river access points and staging areas.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate
Develop river itineraries targeting the interests and needs of the main river visitors—paddlers, white water paddlers/rafts and jet boats. Itineraries should also be provided by length of trip—day, overnight and extended duration experiences.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Explore the feasibility of developing a white water paddling/play boat focused staging, day use area, campground and trail systems to support more focused use of natural white water on the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate
Develop and install a branded visitor signage and wayfinding system from the headwaters to the eastern extent of the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO's</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

## SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Attract Private Sector and Influence Public Sector Investment
- Proactively Manage Visitor Use
- Integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses
- Enhance access to the region and the ability for visitors to travel independently within it.

## HERO EXPERIENCES

- Multi-day water excursions from the mountain headwaters to the prairie on the Red Deer & North Saskatchewan Rivers
- Retracing the travel route David Thompson and the Fur Trade



Red Deer River, Sundre  
Photo credit: Travel Alberta

**Priority Initiative:** Connect the region’s gateway and hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes.

**RATIONALE**

Our region has many stories to share and research is clear that our stories are of interest to our target markets. The preparation of themed touring routes is an effective way to share our stories in a consistent, appealing and connected way that resonates with our target markets. Themed touring routes provide an opportunity to connect gateway and hub communities with our most prominent travel motivators, attractions, accommodations and amenities providing a continuous visitor experience along the way. Our region has one example of a themed touring route—the Cowboy Trail. However, there are other opportunities to capitalize on our heritage, cultures, scenery and environments and establish themed travel routes between our most appealing assets. As our potential themed touring routes often begin and end beyond the boundaries of our region, collaboration and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions will be essential if we are to achieve a seamless visitor experience.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

**Connect the region’s gateway and hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Initiate master development planning for each of the themed touring routes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine routes, as necessary, to connect to market ready travel motivators and attractions</li> <li>• Establish a brand for the route that is connected to the Central Alberta brand and story-telling framework</li> <li>• Identify and design visitor amenity areas</li> <li>• Develop visitor itineraries</li> <li>• Establish a signage and wayfinding plan.</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Short-term	High



**Connect the region’s gateway and hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>As directed by the Themed Touring Route Master Development Plans, encourage partners to develop and enhance visitor amenity areas (e.g., interpretive areas, scenic viewpoints, rest areas) to ensure the materials, plantings and furnishings used within visitor amenity areas are inspired by and in character with the theme for each route.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of Alberta</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Develop a clear typology of branded signage for each route, including: route/gateway signage, roadside markers, notification signage, amenity area signage, interpretive signage.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Develop mobile ready and/or smart-phone application to enable experiential self-guided journeys by visitors. Where feasible, incorporate emerging technologies such as augmented reality into the application to present key route messaging and a unique visitor experience.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Work with adjacent regions and municipalities to ensure a seamless touring route experience where the routes move beyond the Central Alberta region.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local DMO’s</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>High</p>

## SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Activate the West Country's tourism potential
- Develop a Central Alberta brand and storytelling framework

## HERO EXPERIENCES

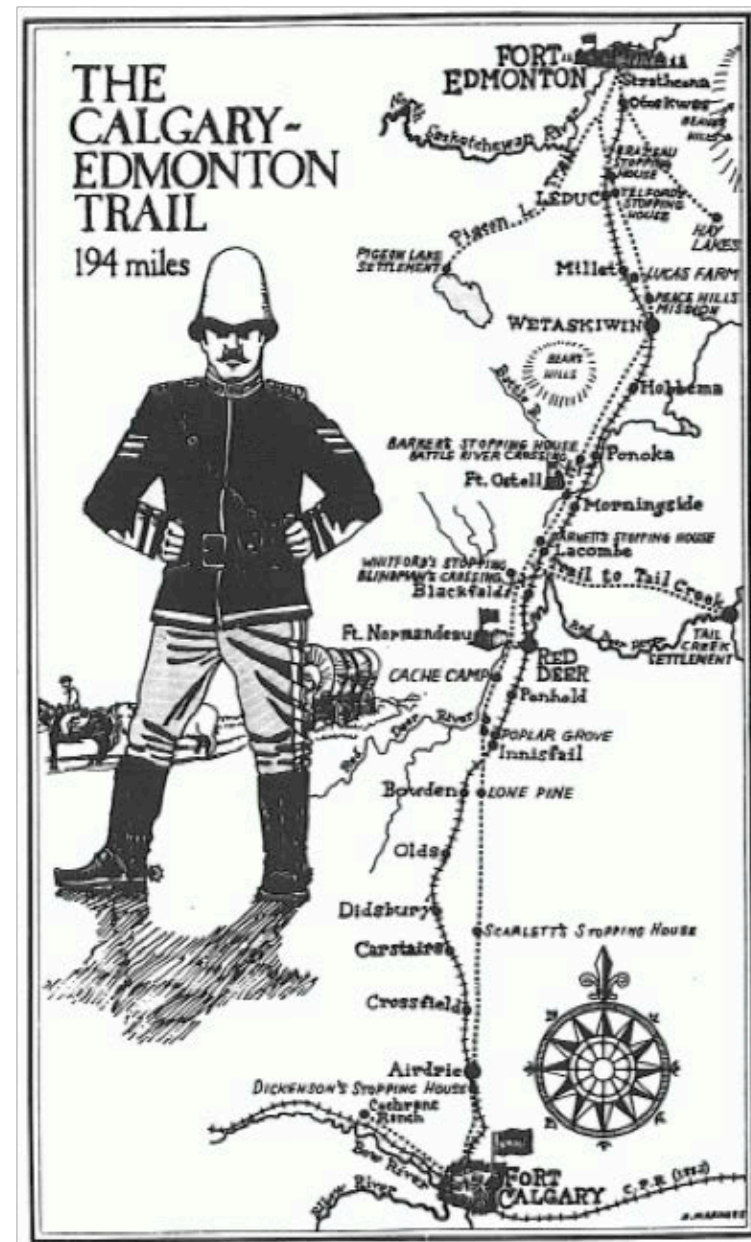
- David Thompson Corridor
- Forestry Trunk Road
- Highway 22 Cowboy Trail
- Ag, Artisans & Rodeo Tour
- Calgary to Edmonton Trail



Sundre

Photo credit: Travel Alberta, Roth and Ramberg

TOURING ROUTE	FOCUS
David Thompson & Aboriginal Peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Thompson</li> <li>• Fur Trade</li> <li>• First Nations</li> <li>• Coal Development</li> <li>• Wildlife &amp; Natural Heritage</li> </ul>
Experience the West Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Thompson</li> <li>• Wildlife &amp; Natural Heritage</li> <li>• First Nations</li> <li>• Outdoor Recreation</li> <li>• Industry</li> </ul>
Ag, Artisans & Rodeo Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Towns &amp; Villages</li> <li>• Follow the Rodeo</li> </ul>
Calgary to Edmonton Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation Evolution &amp; History</li> <li>• Train History</li> <li>• Stopping Houses &amp; Fort Normandeau</li> <li>• Law Enforcement Heritage</li> <li>• Aboriginal Peoples</li> </ul>
Cowboy Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western Heritage</li> </ul>



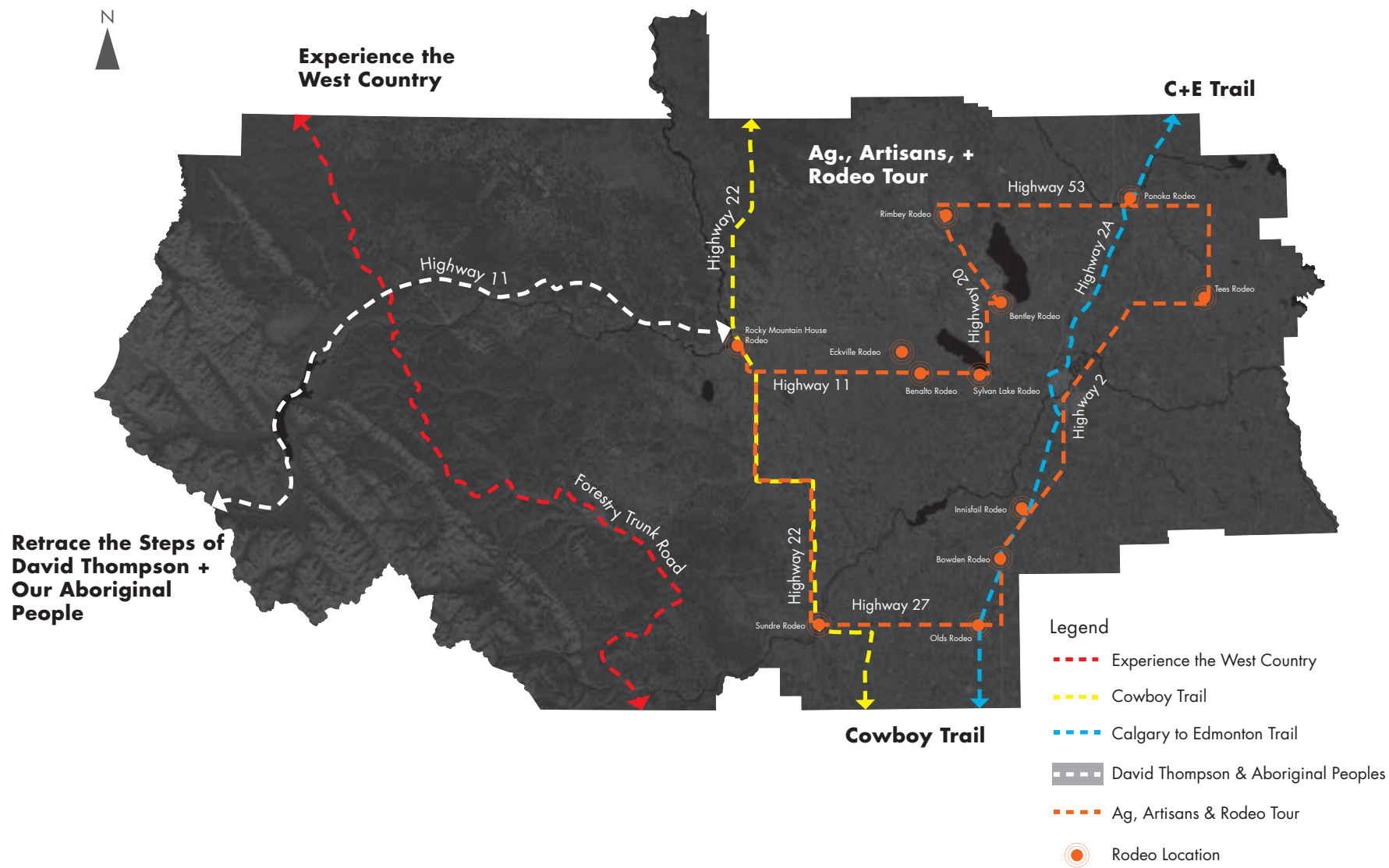


Figure 30. Themed Touring Routes and Rodeo Locations

## Agriculture & Culinary Tourism

**Priority Initiative:** Create a major regional Agri-Culinary tourism Farm Market Attraction, supported by a designated touring route, and corresponding events during Fall Harvest Season.

### RATIONALE

We have the potential to become Alberta’s leading region for agriculture and culinary tourism. Leveraging our agricultural heritage and the current interest in local food, a major centralized farm market attraction focused on “Farm to Table” may be developed to attract appropriate travellers market segments. Complementary to the major farm market, a designated touring route (encourage participation in the Country Drive program, developed by Tourism Red Deer), finishing at the market and coinciding with special events during the Fall Harvest Season may leverage heightening interest in agriculture and culinary tourism. For example, aligning activities/events with Alberta Open Farm Days—which occurs in August—including culinary activities/events (Saturday) and farm/ranch visits (Sunday). Smaller regional Farmer’s Markets, restaurants and other agri/culinary product/service providers could partner and participate in a linked touring route to celebrate local food from farm to table. *“The local food movement has taken off in Alberta, evidenced by an exploding interest in farmers’ markets, increasing numbers of restaurants that boast locally sourced produce and a growing contingent of food-centric festivals.”*<sup>88</sup> However, Central Alberta has yet to fully realize its agriculture and culinary tourism potential. Through agriculture and culinary tourism, the necessity for food and drink has become a source for pleasurable leisure experiences that are growing in demand and provide strong motivators for travel and destination selection. A key objective of these initiatives is to leverage market opportunities for existing businesses and create new products and experiences for travellers.

Agri-tourism is considered a viable sub-sector under the Culinary Tourism umbrella where the two work hand in hand towards increasing the competitiveness of many destinations. Connecting with the region’s agricultural history, its agri-tourism and culinary tourism industry offers many Local Foods, Farmers Markets and Food Festivals, U-Picks, Family Farms & Corn Mazes, Farm Gate Sales, Farm Museums, Agriculture Festivals, Farm Stays, Guest Ranches, Rodeos, Greenhouses, Orchards, and Botanical Gardens. The development of themed culinary and agri-tourism events provides visitors access to a variety of experiences centering on the major farm market, as well as ease of vacation planning. A central attraction and successful events also create a “central gathering place” for experience providers where they can share best practices and pool resources<sup>89</sup>. Several organizations provide information and resources for identifying investment opportunities, creating new products and experiences, and organizing culinary and agri-tourism events (e.g. Government of Alberta, Alberta Culinary Tourism Association, Travel Alberta).

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification



Environment & Host Communities

**Create a major regional Agri-Culinary tourism Farm Market Attraction, supported by a designated touring route, and corresponding events during Fall Harvest Season.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Establish a regional tourism sub-committee to fulfill planning, communications and coordination tasks.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector Association</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High

**Create a major regional Agri-Culinary tourism Farm Market Attraction, supported by a designated touring route, and corresponding events during Fall Harvest Season.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Work with potential investors to develop plans which identify investment opportunities and improve their market readiness and appeal to target markets.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization  DMOs, EDAs, Community Futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector Association</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Develop an iconic agri-culinary tourism experience (e.g., Major Central Farmers Market) focused on local foods, food culture and agriculture to serve as a travel motivator.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization  DMOs, EDAs, Community Futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Investors</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Work with the agricultural industry to develop food related farm tours (e.g., Sylvan Star Cheese and Bles-Wold Dairy Farms).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Agriculture &amp; Forestry</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Agricultural Industry and Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Identify experiences and businesses which epitomize “Farm to Table” experiences along the ag, artisans and rodeo touring route and for festivals/events.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culinary Tourism Association</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Agricultural Industry and Operators</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
Plan timing of events to maximize impact and avoid conflict with other major events for similar target markets.	DMOs, EDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culinary Tourism Association</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Agricultural Industry and Operators</li> </ul>	Short-term	High

**Create a major regional Agri-Culinary tourism Farm Market Attraction, supported by a designated touring route, and corresponding events during Fall Harvest Season.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Promote the touring route, the markets along the route, festivals, and events.	DMOs, EDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culinary Tourism Association</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Agricultural Industry and Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES	HERO EXPERIENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect the region’s gateways and hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes</li> <li>• Events, Festivals and Sport Tourism</li> <li>• Culture, Heritage &amp; the Arts initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the Innisfail Regional Farmers Market</li> </ul>

## Culture, Heritage & the Arts

**Priority Initiative:** Develop Special Mobile Events Using Performance Artists from Central Alberta cultural groups supported by a designated touring route and corresponding static festivals and events.

### RATIONALE

Central Alberta is rich in Aboriginal and European history with many stories to share and a diversity of Cultural, Heritage & Arts attractions. Special events can help to preserve our region's cultural heritage & arts, including our places, spaces and stories. These events can focus on telling the stories of our region's Aboriginal and European history through arts & crafts, performances, and other artistic avenues. The development of special mobile events using performance artists from Central Alberta cultural groups can bring the culture and history of our region alive by bringing performers to static facilities to support festivals and events.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

## Develop Special Mobile Events Using Performance Artists from Central Alberta cultural groups supported by a designated touring route and corresponding static festivals and events.



ACTIONS	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Identify and work with interested Aboriginal and Scandinavian cultural, heritage, and arts operators (including market-ready museums, performing artists, and cultural heritage operators) to develop plans to improve their market readiness and appeal to target markets.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Cultural Groups</li> <li>Tourism Operators</li> <li>Travel Alberta</li> <li>Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate
Explore interest with cultural groups in developing tourism mobile performance experiences that celebrate their culture, traditions and peoples and stimulates further interest in cultural tourism development in the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Cultural Groups</li> <li>Tourism Operators</li> <li>Travel Alberta</li> <li>Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate



**Develop Special Mobile Events Using Performance Artists from Central Alberta cultural groups supported by a designated touring route and corresponding static festivals and events.**



<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
Support expansion and promotion of the “Scandinavian Trail” touring route.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Cultural Groups</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

<b>SUPPORTING INITIATIVES</b>	<b>HERO EXPERIENCES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate performances with other events and festivals.</li> <li>• Connect the region’s gateway and hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an annual major cultural festival to celebrate Aboriginal and European culture, heritage, and the arts.</li> </ul>



Sylvan Lake—1913 Days

## Festivals, Events & Sport Tourism

**Priority Initiative:** Grow and strengthen our market readiness as a festivals, events and sport tourism destination.

### RATIONALE

Our region already hosts numerous sporting and cultural events such as rodeos, tournaments, races, fairs and concerts and is host to the 2019 Canada Winter Games. These activities have the potential to bring even more benefits to the area including: increasing tourism expenditures and creating memorable experiences; providing activities and improving quality of life for locals; and leveling distribution of tourism demand by generating year-round interest and visitation. Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Canada, increasing 8.8% from 2008 to 2009, with similar growth also occurring in the United States.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification



Environment & Host Communities

**Grow and strengthen our market readiness as a festivals, events and sport tourism destination.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Establish a tourism sub-committee to better coordinate, organize, and promote events throughout the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Explore and pursue funding options to assist in developing event-specific strategies.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

**Grow and strengthen our market readiness as a festivals, events and sport tourism destination.**



<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
Create a compelling, year-round events calendar for the region; ensure online information is mobile friendly (e.g., Alberta Tourism Information Service).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Work to coordinate hosting of events throughout the region to minimize overlap of timing and duplication of themes.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Expand off of the Tourism Red Deer website to continue to promote the region as a festival, event and sport tourism destination.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Red Deer</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Develop comprehensive pre, during and post Canada Winter Games event management, visitor experience and marketing activities to maximize the tourism potential of the games including legacy strategy. Foster and integrate advocacy to promote the benefits of the games to the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

**Grow and strengthen our market readiness as a festivals, events and sport tourism destination.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Develop and implement major/iconic annual summer and winter events, race(s) or competitions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adventure race</li> <li>• Motorized recreation rallies</li> <li>• Ice climbing festival</li> <li>• Triathlons</li> <li>• Road Cycling</li> <li>• Motorcycle Rallies</li> <li>• National Rodeo Competition</li> <li>• Outdoor Ice Hockey Tournament.</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES	HERO EXPERIENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance access to the region and the ability for visitors to travel independently within it</li> <li>• Activate the tourism potential of the West Country</li> <li>• Develop Special Events Using Performance Artists from Central Alberta cultural groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada Winter Games (2019—Red Deer)</li> <li>• 2016 MasterCard Memorial Cup</li> <li>• Ponoka Stampede</li> <li>• West Country Outdoor Nature/Adventure Event/Race</li> </ul>

## Business Events

**Priority Initiative:** Grow and strengthen our profile as a business events destination.

### RATIONALE

Building on strong economic growth in our business sector, existing facilities, and an already robust business events program, we are poised to capitalize on a healthy increase in business events. Situated centrally between Calgary and Edmonton, and serviced by our own regional airport, we are easily accessible for the business event visitors.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Growth & Diversification



Environment & Host Communities

**Grow and strengthen our profile as a business events destination.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Delegate tourism sub-committee to focus specifically on attracting, organizing and growing the number of business events hosted in the region.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

## Grow and strengthen our profile as a business events destination.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Collaborate more closely with business associations, economic development organizations and educational institutions, including Olds College and Red Deer College; look for potential partnerships between possible meetings and local businesses; connect potential meetings with College instructors.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate
Target the hosting of business events that support and align with local industry trends and capacity.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate
Develop a business event planner kit and online resources to make organizing business events in the region easier. Evaluate emerging trends to match business event planner and business traveller expectations.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate
Build/strengthen partnerships with Destination Canada and Travel Alberta to enhance the profile of the region as a business event hosting destination with a focus on targeted categories of events appropriate to the region (e.g., agriculture).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Destination Canada</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate

**Grow and strengthen our profile as a business events destination.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Develop and promote “B-leisure” package itineraries to Business Event organizers to extend the length of stay and increase spending by business travellers, including small group retreats.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES	HERO EXPERIENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the right mix of places to stay in the right locations</li> <li>• Leverage regional and inter-regional partnerships to develop complimentary packaging with adjacent destinations</li> <li>• Position our workforce and businesses to provide exemplary visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting an international business event</li> </ul>

**Business Events include:**

- Meetings
- Incentives
- Conferences
- Exhibitions



### 7.8.1.3 Provide the Right Mix of Places to Stay in the Right Locations

**Priority Initiative:** Diversify the supply of accommodations by modernizing campgrounds and offering opportunities for comfort camping, eco-lodges and farm stays.

#### RATIONALE

The popularity of camping is growing. In 2014, over 40% of Albertans and 22% of Canadians took part in overnight camping as a leisure activity. Over three quarters of camping is done using an RV<sup>90</sup>. About 61% of these campers expect drinking water directly on their campsite; 77% expect electricity, 37% sewer, and 27% Wi-Fi. The top three criteria used to select a campground among Albertans were: price, beauty, and cleanliness. Forecasts suggest there will be even more participation in RV camping over the coming years due to the affordability of camping and the strong existing investment in recreation vehicle ownership<sup>91</sup>. Our region’s provincial and many private campgrounds operate at or exceed capacity during the peak season. Most campgrounds close at the end of peak season and do not provide support in areas popular for winter recreation (e.g. David Thompson Corridor). In addition, many of our campgrounds are aging and their designs do not support modern expectations of campers (e.g. servicing, size, motorized recreation).

Tourists and visitors to Central Alberta are looking for higher quality accommodations including B&Bs, eco-lodges and farms stays which provide greater variety and enrich the experience. An ecolodge can help to diversify the accommodation options, particularly in places such as the West Country, and cater to target markets. In addition, other accommodation options such farm stays and guest ranches in our region can provide enhanced experiences for guests and diversify revenue streams for operators.

#### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

**Diversify the supply of accommodations by modernizing campgrounds and offering opportunities for comfort camping, eco-lodges and farm stays.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Encourage the development of the Bighorn Dam Campground in addition to general campground development across the West Country.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

**Diversify the supply of accommodations by modernizing campgrounds and offering opportunities for comfort camping, eco-lodges and farm stays.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Encourage Alberta Environment and Parks to continue efforts to modernize provincial campgrounds and public land recreation areas to meet target market expectations. The region’s Nature-based, Adventure &amp; Ecotourism and Lakes District (e.g., Sylvan Lake) zones should be promoted as the priority for expansion.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Work with private sector campground operators so they may learn about target market expectations and encourage them to continue efforts to align their offering with market expectations.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Cultivate and support the development of hotels and other accommodations within Gateways, Hubs and Tourism Service Centres in each individual community based on local market factors.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Development of accommodations should be encouraged to consider and plan for the needs of small business event organizers as means to support growing the attraction of the region as a host for small business events.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

## Diversify the supply of accommodations by modernizing campgrounds and offering opportunities for comfort camping, eco-lodges and farm stays.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Explore development of a reliable supply of winter comfort camping opportunities for winter users of the West Country. Given the proximity to winter attractions, priority sites include the Whitegoat Lakes Development Node, Thompson Creek PRA and/or Kootenay Plains PRA.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Investigate preparation of a feasibility assessment and concept design plan for an interconnected backcountry hut to hut system (e.g., yurts or other comfort and glamping structures) targeting motorized &amp; non-motorized travellers to the West Country and providing connectivity to the Alpine Club of Canada's huts in Banff and Jasper National Parks.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Investigate the development of an upscale, yet affordable, authentic Eco-lodge in the West Country.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Work with the region's agricultural operators to develop new and refreshed farm stay and guest ranch accommodations.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>

## SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Activate the West Country
- Attract Private Sector and Influence Public Sector Investment
- Grow tourism investment in our region

## HERO EXPERIENCES

- Eco-lodge in the West Country
- Hut to Hut System

An eco-lodge is a 5–75 room low-impact accommodation that:

- Uses alternative and sustainable means of water acquisition and minimizes water consumptions.
- Meets energy needs through passive design and renewable sources.
- Carefully manages solid waste.
- Uses environmentally friendly sewage treatment systems.
- Built form Fits the physical and cultural contexts.
- Uses environmentally friendly building and furnishing materials.
- Minimizes impact on natural surroundings and utilizes traditional building techniques.
- Endeavors to work with local community in the planning and design stages.

Aurum Lodge, Mt. Michener

## 7.8.2 Destination Management

### 7.8.2.1 Formalize the Approach to Destination Leadership and Partnerships

**Priority Initiative:** Develop a collaborative destination leadership model.

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#### RATIONALE

Good leadership, governance, funding and community support is essential to the success of a destination. Destination leadership is about achieving cooperation, collaboration and integration among stakeholders involved in the management of a destination—community residents, government, tourism industry and other industries. It ensures the destination continues moving towards its vision and remains accountable for achieving the goals the destination aspires to. Strong leadership also ensures there is a coordinated, consistent and effective voice and advocate for the region’s tourism industry.

From highly formal incorporated organizations complete with skills based boards to informal steering committees comprised of interested stakeholders, destination leadership and governance models can take many forms. What is gaining agreement among the industry is that any destination leadership model must take a comprehensive approach to destination development, management and marketing and move beyond a focus on pure marketing. In addition, recent trends suggest that destination management organizations are moving away from traditional “pay to play” membership driven structures to a model that is visitor focused and promotes all tourism assets in the region regardless of whether the asset is a paying member or not. This model ensures visitors receive a complete picture of the experiences available to them and, in turn, offers enhanced marketing services to those tourism assets that are paying members.

Tourism stakeholders in our region often work collaboratively. Under the guidance of a Memorandum of Understanding, tourism partners in our region formed a Tourism Committee to lead the development of this Destination Management Plan. However, the future role of the committee and its role in championing the implementation of the plan and leading the destination are unclear. Formalizing the destination’s preferred approach to leadership and governance will be essential to the successful implementation of the destination management plan. It is likely that the formalizing the current partnership based leadership structure will serve the region well in the short to mid-term. This approach will allow the committee to demonstrate tangible progress toward implementing the plan. In addition, it can minimize the potential that implementation of the plan will be slowed by the politics involved with establishing a formalized leadership and governance structure.

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#### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Growth & Diversification

## Develop a collaborative destination leadership model.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Undertake a destination leadership review to develop a preferred leadership and governance model for the region. The review should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the strengths and weaknesses of the current leadership and governance model with stakeholders.</li> <li>• Research leadership and governance models in other destinations similar to Central Alberta and identify the critical success factors.</li> <li>• Define alternative leadership and governance options for input from tourism stakeholders.</li> <li>• Confirm the preferred leadership and governance model including buy-in for the mandate, organizational structure and administrative policies.</li> <li>• Integrate advocacy and promotion of the value of tourism to communities into leadership strategy</li> <li>• Protect integrity of tourism assets while supporting investment, highlighting the linkage between collaboration, sustainability and visitor management.</li> <li>• Formalize structure for coordination.</li> <li>• Coordinate information sharing.</li> </ul>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Develop and formalize a cross regional approach to information management and distribution so municipal partners are kept informed and communication channels remain open.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>

## Develop a collaborative destination leadership model.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Begin to advocate as a single coordinated and collaborative voice on issues that affect the region's tourism industry. Similarly, advocate as single voice about the benefits that tourism brings to the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Municipalities</li> <li>Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>Travel Alberta</li> <li>DMOs, EDOs</li> <li>Industry Associations</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High



Figure 31. DestinationNEXT Scenario Model for DMOs

**Priority Initiative:** Leverage regional and inter-regional partnerships to develop complementary packaging with adjacent destinations.

**RATIONALE**

Building inter-regional partnerships and itineraries which follow traveller movements, rather than political and geographic constraints provides for enhanced market opportunities. Seeking inter-regional partnerships would assist in leveraging pooled resources beyond the Central Alberta region. Collaborative partnership opportunities should be explored amongst Central Alberta tourism stakeholders, communities, and businesses, adjacent regional partners with an interest in realizing mutual benefits across destinations.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

**Leverage regional and inter-regional partnerships to develop complementary packaging with adjacent destinations.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Host meetings with adjacent DMO’s and tourism operators to identify mutual interests and opportunities for inter-regional collaboration, partnering and packaging. Priority should be placed on packaging with DMO’s and operators in Banff and Jasper National Parks, Edmonton and Calgary.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Pursue targeted partnerships with established tourism operators from adjacent regions to build and market itineraries promoting Central Alberta tourism experiences (e.g., Brewster Tours to Nordegg).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High



**Leverage regional and inter-regional partnerships to develop complementary packaging with adjacent destinations.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Encourage municipalities to explore the potential of offering cross municipality business licensing for tourism operators.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High



Sylvan Lake–Century Dance



Ya Ha Tinda Ranch–Bighorn

## 7.8.2.2 Ensure easy travel to and within the region.

**Priority Initiative:** Enhance the ability of target markets to access the region and travel independently within it.

### RATIONALE

Our region is easily accessible from most target markets. Road quality in the region is generally good throughout the year. Air access to the region is provided by Air Canada. Flights from and to the region are available every day of the week. The Air Canada service provides potential travellers the opportunity to access our region from over 191 destinations worldwide via travel through the Calgary International Airport. Though access is strong, there is opportunity to improve the ability of our target markets to get to our region and to move within it once they are here.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Growth & Diversification



Environment & Host Communities

### Enhance the ability of target markets to access the region and travel independently within it.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
As a region, collaboratively advocate the provincial and local governments on highway and road access issues that affect tourism in the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Mid to Long-term	Moderate
Work collaboratively with the Red Deer Airport to enhance air access to the region from target market origins.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Mid to Long-term	Moderate

**Enhance the ability of target markets to access the region and travel independently within it.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Encourage the development of small group shuttle and other efficient ground transportation options to enable visitors to access the region from Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer airports.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Mid to Long-term	Moderate
Develop, implement and maintain an online trip planning tool, with an events calendar, that allows visitors to search out experiences by date, activity, tourism setting, natural region and proximity to entry points and communities in the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Mid-term	High
As air access starts to improve in the region, work to provide more car rental outlets to enable ground transportation around the region.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> </ul>	Mid to Long-term	Moderate

**SUPPORTING INITIATIVES**

- Connect the region’s Gateway and Hub communities with market ready travel motivators and attractions through themed touring routes.

## 7.8.2.3 Strengthen the Capacity of our Industry

**Priority Initiative:** Position our Workforce and businesses to provide exemplary visitor experiences.

### RATIONALE

The delivery of quality customer service in the tourism sector is critical to satisfying increasing consumer expectations and achieving business success<sup>92 93 94</sup>. A critical factor for developing tourism is increasing the capacity of front-line staff and tourism operators to effectively run businesses and host visitors. Customer service and business training helps individuals to develop the confidence to work with visitors and operate sustainable businesses. Development of enhanced training opportunities for customer service, business and entrepreneurship skills should be implemented in partnership with regional training partners, including school districts, post-secondary institutions, and public and private sector training agencies.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

### Position our workforce and businesses to provide exemplary visitor experiences.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Engage with regional tourism industry leaders to identify training needs.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

**Position our workforce and businesses to provide exemplary visitor experiences.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Work with industry partners and training providers to customize and deliver appropriate front-line staff training (i.e., pilot the WorldHost Customer Service Training Program).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Work with industry partners and training providers to provide opportunities for business training within the tourism sector.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• DMOs, EDAs</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Work with tourism and hospitality programs at educational institutions to find opportunities for students to participate in tourism related activities, e.g. conducting visitor surveys, collecting statistics, research, workplace internships etc.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Deer College</li> <li>• Olds College</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	Moderate

**Priority Initiative:** Enable timely and informed decision-making based on sound destination intelligence.

**RATIONALE**

Dependable destination intelligence, based on timely and reliable research and data that is specific to our region, is essential to our long-term competitiveness, sound decision making, ensuring marketing efforts are targeted, experience developments are market-driven and we are able to track our growth and progress. Research specific to our region is limited to non-existent. To date, decision making relies, in part, on information generated by Alberta Culture and Tourism for the Alberta Central region which is much larger than our destination. Its utility in informing decisions in our region is limited.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Growth & Diversification

**Enable timely and informed decision-making based on sound destination intelligence.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Work with Alberta Culture and Tourism and Travel Alberta to develop and implement a destination research strategy to enable science based decision making and to generate better insights on market intelligence, economic impact, destination performance and visitor satisfaction specific to Central Alberta.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Destination Canada</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

## 7.8.2.4 Improve Access to Capital and Investment

**Priority Initiative:** Undertake a regional approach to attract private sector investment and influence public sector investment.

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### RATIONALE

Attracting private sector investment in tourism is a highly competitive business. Investment decisions are affected by many variables including market data, the operating environment, return on investment and future growth plans for the sector, available infrastructure and permitting/land tenures, and profitability.<sup>95</sup>

To achieve optimal investment conditions, there is widespread recognition that government at all levels must play a role in directly facilitating tourism investment and addressing those investment barriers that reduce investor confidence. Specifically, governments can facilitate investment by providing a clear vision and plan for the destination, building capacity, distributing information about investment opportunities, developing effective partnerships, ensuring efficient approval processes, and providing public infrastructure.<sup>96</sup>

Efforts to attract tourism investment to our region have been largely undertaken at the local/municipal level and promoted through local investment prospectus' and provincial tourism investment attraction efforts. Though valuable, these efforts miss the opportunity to take a regional approach that focuses limited resources on attracting investment into the key catalyst developments that will stimulate rapid growth in the region and drive the destination development cycle. Best practices suggest destination leaders should:

- Focus efforts on a limited number of opportunities based on competitive advantages and potential return on investment.
- Identify potential development sites.
- Target specific investor groups with an appetite for tourism.
- Develop supporting resources and an understanding of investor motivations.
- Develop targeted marketing communications strategies to connect with appropriate potential investors.
- Leverage partnerships to enhance promotion and facilitation of tourism investments.<sup>97</sup>

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### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Growth & Diversification

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## Undertake a regional approach to attract private sector investment and influence public sector investment.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Profile tourism development opportunities that motivate travels. Two to three development opportunities can/should be identified for each visitor experience theme.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Undertake site selection studies to identify market ready sites on which the highest potential developments are best suited to occur—minimize barriers to development and investment on each site by ensuring land use tenures/zoning are secured, infrastructure and services are provided, on-site and adjacent tourism resources and scenic values are maintained and investment incentives are determined.</p>	<p>DMOs, EDOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Prepare site concept plan, investment prospectus and business case for each development opportunity.</p>	<p>DMOs, EDOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>



## Undertake a regional approach to attract private sector investment and influence public sector investment.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Identify and align prospective tourism investors according to the identified opportunities and develop and implement an investment promotion/ attraction strategy promoting each investment opportunity to potential investors.	DMOs, EDOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Develop and promote a regional "Invest Central Alberta Tourism" website to promote and connect interested investors with investment opportunities.	Destination Leadership Committee/Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High
Host investor familiarization and orientation tours for the region and priority development opportunities.	Destination Leadership Committee/Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	Short to Mid-term	High

## Undertake a regional approach to attract private sector investment and influence public sector investment.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Develop, and consistently apply, incentive packages across the region to enhance investment attractiveness.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Utilize available resources such as Alberta’s Tourism Development Guide and Business Planning Guide<sup>98</sup> to educate interested parties about the tourism development process and requirements, and writing business plans.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Central Alberta Economic Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation and Advanced Education</li> <li>• Community Futures</li> <li>• Industry Associations</li> <li>• DMOs, EDOs</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>High</p>

### SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Activate the West Country’s Tourism Potential
- Realize the tourism potential of the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan Rivers
- Upgrade existing and expand the supply of modernized campgrounds and comfort camping opportunities
- Promote the development of an upscale, yet affordable, authentic Eco-lodge in the West Country
- Work with the region’s agricultural operators to develop new and refreshed farm stay and guest ranch accommodations
- Position our Workforce and businesses to provide exemplary visitor experiences.

## 7.8.2.5 Enhance the Sustainability and Competitiveness of our Tourism Industry

**Priority Initiative:** Plan for and Consider the Needs of Tourism in Provincial, Regional and Local Land Use Planning and Decision Making.

### RATIONALE

Many segments of our tourism industry are resource based. Their success and competitiveness is dependent on maintaining the quality and integrity of our tourism resources—features, settings and scenery. Other industry and land use can have both detrimental and positive effects on the success of tourism. Careful land use planning and decision making is required to ensure the competitiveness of the tourism industry is not compromised. It is essential that tourism, and our region's tourism resources, are effectively integrated into and considered in provincial, regional and municipal land use planning and decision making processes. To date, few Municipal Development Plans in our region consider tourism and the Province is working through the development of a Regional Land Use Plan to set direction for all public and private lands in our region.

### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

### Plan for and consider the needs of tourism in provincial, regional and local land use planning and decision making.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Advocate to maintain an up to date inventory of tourism features, tourism settings and scenic resources and make this available for land use planning processes.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>Alberta Agriculture</li> <li>Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short to Long-term	High
Encourage provincial and local land managers to evaluate the effects of land use decisions on tourism resources and incorporate strategies to avoid or mitigate effects on tourism resources and operations.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>Alberta Agriculture</li> <li>Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short to Long-term	High

**Plan for and consider the needs of tourism in provincial, regional and local land use planning and decision making.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Work with the Alberta Government to ensure tourism, and the aims of this plan, are meaningfully considered and reflected in the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Regional Plans.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Agriculture</li> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Long-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Work with municipal planners and local Councils to integrate and plan for tourism during Municipal Development Plans. Consideration should be given to the benefit of designating Tourism Precincts via local Municipal Development Plans.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Long-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Encourage the Alberta Government to develop a best practices manual identifying strategies to mitigate the effects of industrial development on tourism resources and the tourism industry's competitiveness.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> <li>• Alberta Agriculture</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Long-term</p>	<p>High</p>

**Priority Initiative:** Proactively encourage the implementation of visitor codes of conduct and education programs.

**RATIONALE**

Tourism can be a positive force for conservation but it can also be a source of various negative impacts if not effectively managed and routinely monitored<sup>99</sup>. As the popularity of our destination grows, so too does the potential for undesirable environmental, social and cultural impacts which can negatively affect visitor experience and the destination brand. Environmental, social/cultural and visitor experience impacts occur through the direct and indirect interactions and relations between visitors, the tourism industry, the environment and host communities. Some impacts are the result of uninformed and inexperienced users while others result from careless behaviors or illegal activities. Host communities, land managers and visitors expect that our region and the values associated with it will be protected.

Recognizing the environmental, social and cultural sensitivities of our region and the importance of retaining the highest quality visitor experience, a proactive and deliberate approach to managing visitor use will be needed. Though the visitor management strategies will be determined cooperatively by the respective land managers and as management issues arise this plan provides a general visitor management framework that should guide the manner in which tourism is managed in the region.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Experiences



Growth & Diversification



Environment & Host Communities

**Proactively encourage the implementation of visitor codes of conduct and education programs.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Implement and support, or where necessary, develop visitor codes of conduct and education programs (e.g., Leave No Trace, Respect the Land) that promote responsible visitor behaviors, skills and ethics to influence behaviors.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and Municipal Land Managers</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate

## Proactively encourage the implementation of visitor codes of conduct and education programs.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Encourage the tourism industry to train their staff in the application of visitor codes of conduct and education programs (e.g. Leave No Trace certification).	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and Municipal Land Managers</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate
As necessary, encourage land managers to implement a comprehensive, proactive visitor management framework (see Figure 32) and actively support and participate in the update of visitor and other related management plans such as the Bighorn Access Management Plan, Sylvan Lake Management Plan, Alberta Recreation Trails Pilot Project etc.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial and Municipal Land Managers</li> <li>• Alberta Environment and Parks</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate

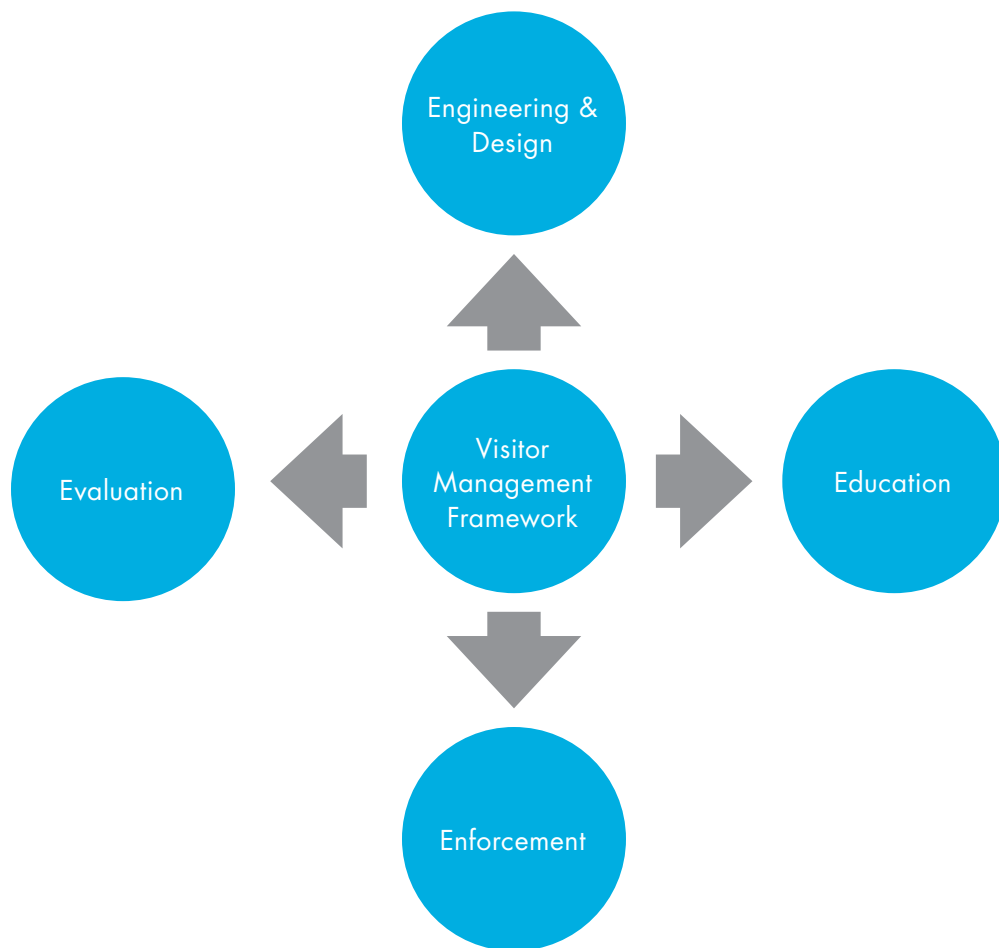


Figure 32. Comprehensive Visitor Management Framework

Visitor Information Centres are evolving. The VIC's of the future will do more than provide visitors information, via maps and print media in a single physical location. VICs will need to provide:

- High level of customer service with knowledgeable staff,
- Digital Information kiosks,
- Wi-Fi,
- Interactive online mapping and information,
- Complementary services (café),
- Relevant real-time information,
- Mobility, such as mobile vans for special events and high-traffic locations,
- Share information and human resources between multiple physical VICs,
- Improved signage,
- Deeper content and accurate trip planning information,
- Be located in the heart of the visitor spending district



#### Environmental Impacts:

- Vegetation and habitat damage or loss
- Wildlife harassment & encounters
- Erosion and soil compaction
- Air quality reduction
- Water pollution
- Greenhouse gas emissions

#### Social and Cultural Impacts:

- Change or loss of local identity
- Culture clashes
- Commodification of local cultures
- Crime increase
- Crowding and congestion

#### Visitor Experience Impacts:

- Crowding
- Conflict between motorized & non-motorized
- Aesthetics



**Priority Initiative:** Encourage the industry to integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses.

**RATIONALE**

Sustainable tourism is no longer considered a niche sub-sector. Visitors are much more environmentally and socially conscious and are giving more attention to how a destination avoids and manages undesirable environmental, social and cultural effects while expecting that their expenditures benefit the local economies. A focus on sustainability extends the destination life cycle, saves operators money, protects the tourism resources on which the destination’s competitiveness depends and allows the region to differentiate itself from its competition.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has led the development of a global set of sustainable tourism criteria and indicators for hotels and tour operators as well as Destinations<sup>100</sup>. These criteria are the minimum standards that any destination, hotel, or tour operator needs to achieve in order to be considered as ‘sustainable tourism’. Implementation of these criteria will help to ensure our destination avoids or minimizes the undesirable cumulative effects of tourism on our region while maximizing the desirable effects.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Experiences



Environment & Host Communities

**Encourage the industry to integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
As a destination, adopt, implement and promote the GSTC’s Criteria for Destinations. Encourage hotels and tour operators within the region to adopt and apply the GSTC’s Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMO’s</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate
Develop educational materials and tools to support implementation of the GSTC criteria. Further, work with educational organizations and institutions such as Olds College, to adopt and integrate the GSTC criteria and approaches for improving sustainability into the tourism education and training curriculum.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMO’s</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Institutions</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate

**Encourage the industry to integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Promote, to target markets, the destination's efforts to improve its sustainability by adopting and implementing the GSTC criteria. Feature the destination's sustainability leaders in case studies and marketing collateral.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Develop an information management system to track the hotels and tour operators that have adopted and are implementing the GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators and those that have received external sustainability accreditation or certification.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

**Encourage the industry to integrate sustainability practices into the planning, design, construction and operations of tourism businesses.**



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Prepare, publicly disseminate and promote a regular State of the Destination Monitoring Synopsis to report on the destination performance measures and progress toward achieving the outcomes set in this plan.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMO's</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Mid-term	Moderate

**Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria act as the global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The criteria are organized into four pillars:

- 1) Sustainable management
- 2) Socioeconomic impacts
- 3) Cultural impacts
- 4) Environmental impacts (e.g., consumption of resources, pollution reduction, and conservation of biodiversity and landscapes).



Sylvan Lake–Parade

## 7.8.3 Destination Marketing

### 7.8.3.1 Build Community and Internal Stakeholder Support and Awareness of the Central Alberta DMP and Brand

Today's destination brands require constant development, management, and vigilance to ensure that their brand essence is protected as much as its story is loved. Brands are a synthesis of perceived community, industry, and marketplace realities. Shaping them into an authentic and compelling compilation of experiences and stories takes leadership and vision, as well as the ability to engage both internal and external audiences to develop the destination's future. DMOs must play a shared leadership role in managing their destination brands. This transforms the DMO role from tourism transaction broker between the marketplace and the industry to one of destination manager synthesizing the needs of the community, the marketplace, and the industry into a rich destination experience. DMAI DestinationNEXT 2014.

**Priority Initiative:** Strengthen buy in and sustain endorsement and commitment to implementing the DMP.

**RATIONALE**

In alignment with our vision, it is important that all stakeholders and the ‘champions of tourism’ become ambassadors for the region, for ongoing collaboration and for implementing the DMP. As learned through our interviews, there are concerns about the level of collaboration and support for tourism in the region. To continue to be inspired, stakeholders need to become well informed of the intentions behind creating a regional, cohesive destination through the DMP. While communicating Central Alberta’s DMP vision to stakeholders, it will be very important to inspire them with why the leadership undertook the DMP process, communicate and confirm the shared values among the regional tourism stakeholders and foster an appreciation and buy in to the destination positioning statement.

Creating a stakeholder communications strategy will allow destination leadership to identify champions early, gaps in information which may reduce future buy-in and realize those who will never come on board. The 20/60/20 rule of communications holds true for this initiative—20% of stakeholders will not believe Central Alberta as a region can become a viable tourism destination and 20% are already believers. Therefore it is important to focus on the 60% who are unaware of the intention, are uninformed of the opportunities and once educated and inspired, can join the 20% who are already supporters, building positive consensus.

Through collaboration, this strategy will also help to better integrate marketing and PR efforts, and further reduce ‘silo’ approaches that are currently happening in the region.

**OUTCOME ALIGNMENT**



Growth & Diversification

ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Prepare a list of critical stakeholders that need to become champions of the plan and identify mutual interests (see Table 7 for an initial list of stakeholders and their mutual interests)	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
Identify and pursue opportunities to present the DMP at face-to-face meetings, group presentations, town hall meetings, local media/information events to share the vision and ensure ongoing, consistent communications. Connect with potential endorsers early to begin creating ambassadors.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
Identify and attend relevant industry functions—Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Travel Alberta meetings, regional DMO AGMs and functions to promote the plan.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Local Municipalities</li> <li>• DMOs</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate

To strengthen community and stakeholder buy in and endorsement of the plan, we need to be clear with what the destination needs from the tourism stakeholders and what they need from the destination (See Table 7).

**Table 7. Critical Stakeholders & Mutual Needs**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>What Central Alberta Needs From Them</b>	<b>What They Need From Central Alberta</b>	<b>Tools</b>
Destination Canada	Support, championing, guidance	Information, updates, spokespersons, communications tools	Presentations, reports, press releases, e-news, social media, inclusion on fam trips
Travel Alberta	Endorsement, feedback, guidance, promotion	Information, engagement, communications tools, stories, images, spokespersons, confirmation of regional buy-in	Face-face meetings, presentations, updates, press releases, e-news, social media, inclusion on fam trips, Central Alberta representatives attending industry workshops and conferences.
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Support, feedback, guidance, engagement	Information, updates, awareness of impact to tourism industry overall.	Face-face meetings, presentations, e-news, copies of press releases ( regional)
Community Travel Influencers within the region including EDO's,	Endorsement, feedback, engagement, participation, ideas	Information, engagement, communication materials	Personal meetings, advisory panels, social media, round table discussions, town halls, press releases, e-news and reports.
Regional travel influencers including activity associations and event organizers.	Endorsement, feedback, engagement, participation, information and updates on activities.	Information, promotion materials, engagement and outreach.	Presentations, inclusion in round table discussions, reports, press releases, e-news, social media
Domestic and Global Travel Influencers— Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Adventure Travel Trade Association.*, Hike Canada, GoRVing Canada, Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada	Endorsement, market information, feedback , guidance	Engagement, information, promotional materials, membership*	Press releases, e-news, social media, conferences
Aboriginal Leaders	Support, engagement, enhance existing experiences, interpreters	Education, training, engagement, feedback.	Presentations, inclusion in round table discussions, reports, press releases, e-news, social media, inclusion on fam trips, conferences**
Outdoor Retailers Canada (local and regional)	Endorsement, potential marketing partnerships	Information, engagement	Press releases, e-news, social media, in-store presentations
Municipal & Provincial Government Departments (Environment & Parks, Transportation, Municipal Affairs)	Support, access, permits, funding	Information, engagement, stewardship	Presentations, inclusion in round table discussions, reports, press releases, e-news, social media, inclusion on fam trips

\*Travel Alberta has just joined ATTA and is working on a spring 2016 workshop for adventure travel operators and destinations

\*\*ATAC hosted the Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Association conference in Vancouver, September 2015 <http://paitc2015.com/>

**Priority Initiative:** Continue to build a collaborative relationship with Travel Alberta to showcase commitment to best practices and position the region as an “emerging jewel” in the crown of Alberta experiences with a consistent brand and voice.

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### RATIONALE

Travel Alberta’s vision is to be the pre-eminent tourism marketing organization in Canada. By determining and acting upon Central Alberta’s tourism potential, we have the opportunity to position our region as a best practice example, and demonstrate to Travel Alberta, how to encourage ongoing regional collaboration focused on leveraging the investment in market growth and development.. Travel Alberta will welcome a regional collaborative effort, which encompasses a wide range of stakeholders and experiences.

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### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Growth & Diversification



Travel Alberta is defining best practice in destination marketing and integrating our strategy to other national, provincial and regional plans. We foster partnerships with our tourism partners to align Alberta’s marketing power under a consistent brand and a consistent voice. We seek out tourism connections as they relate to culture, industry, economy and public affairs for insight into how our stakeholders approach Alberta. *TAB Strategy 2014*

**Continue to build a collaborative relationship with Travel Alberta to showcase commitment to best practices and position the region as an “emerging jewel” in the crown of Alberta experiences with a consistent brand and voice.**



<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>Importance</b>
Introduce Travel Alberta to the DMP through presentations, briefing notes and encourage them to educate their own stakeholders about the plan.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
Pursue opportunities to present/promote the plan at industry conference (e.g., 2015 Tourism Works). Work with Travel Alberta to host Canada’s West Marketplace (2018) and the Travel Media Association of Canada’s Conference & AGM.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate
Ensure there is good attendance by regional operators for Travel Alberta’s adventure travel EDU workshop with ATTA, spring 2016.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization DMOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate
Request a member of Travel Alberta to sit on the advisory board.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High



### 7.8.3.2 Build Market Awareness of the Central Alberta Brand and Inspire Growth in Visitation

**Priority Initiative:** Develop a Central Alberta brand and storytelling framework and promote to target markets.

#### RATIONALE

A branded “story-telling” framework, when aligned with the regional brand, provides the opportunity to deepen the emotional connection between the traveller and the destination. As our inventory of tourism assets and review of the region’s history showed, we have many stories that are unique to our region and found nowhere else. We have the opportunity to define the stories we want all travellers to the region to be exposed to—creating a sense of place that truly differentiates us. Our stories will be driven by our landscapes, natural heritage, culture, heritage, traditions, and people. These stories can create powerful emotions for travellers as they immerse themselves in the unique experiences we have to offer. The creation of a story-telling framework should be consistently integrated into product and experience development, training/ education, and marketing activities in order to support the consistent delivery of our region’s unique experiences.

As we learned through the social media analytics, the potential of social media as a key communications and marketing tool that engages target markets at all points along the path to purchase is under realized. A vibrant social media presence is essential to a destination’s success.

#### OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



Experiences



Growth & Diversification

#### Develop a Central Alberta brand and storytelling framework and promote to target markets.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Develop a regional destination brand and story-telling framework.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
Integrate the regional brand story-telling framework into all visitor experiences, marketing and front-line staff training.	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	High

## Develop a Central Alberta brand and storytelling framework and promote to target markets.



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Identify skills and marketing support which will assist stakeholders in improving their own marketing expertise as well as support regional marketing efforts</p> <p>Social Media workshop</p> <p>Guide and interpretation workshops</p> <p>Measuring and monitoring ROI (to feed into Central Alberta and Travel Alberta's own monitoring system)</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Undertake a coordinated regional social media campaign(s) to introduce target markets to the region's brand, stories and compel greater visitation. Efforts should also focus on engaging visitors before, during and after their journey.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

### The Benefits of a Story-Telling Frameworks:

- Engage in more effective marketing communications initiatives
- Create an emotional connection with visitors
- Draw out unique stories from tourism operators and their visitors (co-creation)
- Inspires social media sharing enabling operators to leverage marketing messages about their destination from visitors.
- Enable the development of themed, technology enhanced, destination experiences
- Story-Telling & Destination Development, Nordic Innovation (2010)

**Priority Initiative:** Provide a framework for marketing and communications which encourages all stakeholders to engage.

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## **RATIONALE**

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As the thought leaders behind the DMP, it is important to have input into the strategy for marketing and communications. By providing a framework, we can help steer the implementation and encourage active participation by Central Alberta stakeholders which leads to greater buy-in.

The goal of the marketing and communications strategy is to:

*Show how to position Central Alberta as the dynamic centre of the province, bringing together all the diverse and authentic experiences, for which Alberta is known, within a region that is unspoiled, uncrowded, uncomplicated, welcoming and ready to be discovered. This framework will allow stakeholders to participate and support the process.*

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Indicate how to raise awareness of the range and diversity of year round experiences available to visitors to Canada and Alberta.
- Highlight Central Alberta's competitive advantages of unspoiled, un-crowded wilderness and outdoor experiences, which will support tourism goals of all stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities to profile the sophisticated urban communities along with the small towns, hidden gems and warm welcoming hospitality.

Implementation of the marketing and communications strategy will occur in the 3 general phases (see below for more details):

- 1) Launch the Central Alberta tourism vision, the plan and the opportunities.
  - 2) Assist Travel Alberta in launching the destination.
  - 3) Launch our itineraries and visitor experiences
  - 4) Position an experience within the region as one of Destination Canada's signature experiences
-

The integrated marketing and communication strategy framework has been purposefully aligned with Travel Alberta’s Path to Purchase Model (see Figure 33). As we consider our marketing approach, it is of equal importance that we focus as much effort on the “post journey” experience for consumers as we do on “pre-journey”. With the power of social media—sharing experiences among friends and families—we can continue to build the ‘buzz’ about our brand. Once our visitors have experienced the quality and diversity of experiences in our region, as long as it’s a positive experience, they can become our biggest brand ambassadors. The priority initiatives have been identified below and each one is accompanied by an action, lead, partners, timing, and importance. The organization is slightly different from Destination Development and Destination Management; these priority initiatives are not tied to a specific DMP outcome, instead, each one has been assigned a step on Travel Alberta’s Path to Purchase model to be consistent with the province’s marketing strategy.

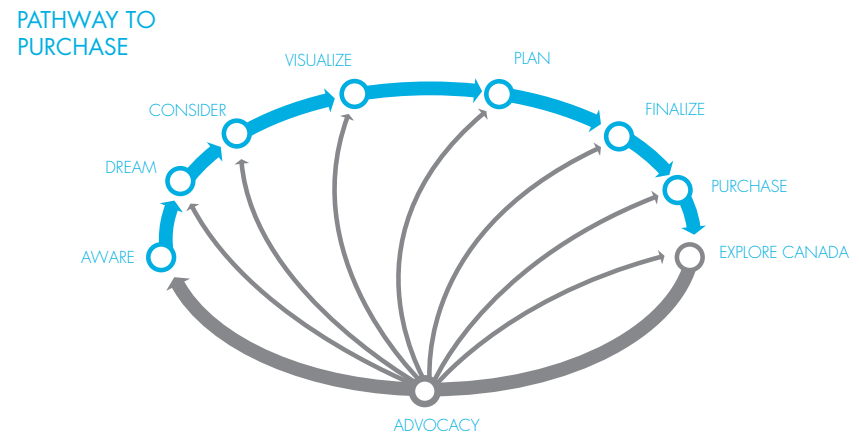


Figure 33. Travel Alberta’s Path to Purchase (Source: Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Travel Alberta, 2013)

Travellers typically visit 22 websites in 9.5 web-sessions when researching a trip. Fewer than 19% consult a DMO website *Google and Destination Analysis*

DMO leaders identified brand marketing and destination development as primary roles for new DMO start-ups.

DMO leaders ranked:

- “brand identity becoming more critical for meeting-planner perceptions about value and experience” as seventh most important trend.
- “brand becoming a more important factor in travel decisions to consumers” as 13th most important trend.

*DMAI DestinationNEXT*

**Provide a framework for marketing and communications which encourages all stakeholders to engage.**

**Phase 1** Launch the vision behind creating the Central Alberta DMP and profile the opportunities.

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES:**

- Profile ways local tourism influencers can provide input and support with consistent message and brand alignment.
- Educate on the due diligence that has been undertaken to come up with the vision and plan.
- Promote what is available now for residents and visitors to enjoy and the ability to increase stays and revenue per available room (REVPAR) by adding value to experiences.

**PATH TO PURCHASE**  Aware

<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
<p>Identify and create promotional platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate the draft creative brief with regional stakeholders and move forward with implementation.</li> <li>• Prepare initial <i>Central Alberta Tourism</i> media kit including Q &amp; A's, backgrounders, images and regional fact sheets.</li> <li>• Prepare presentation and information materials</li> <li>• Create time line for digital strategy and social media platforms</li> <li>• Establish spokespeople, endorsers, communications protocols and feedback channels</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Short-term	High
<p>Begin engagement with stakeholders and tourism industry influencers as well as new potential partners (e.g., retail brands, outdoor gear manufacturers).</p> <p>Launch tools for feedback i.e. surveys, social media, email address.</p> <p>Be prepared for media to attend gatherings and town halls and monitor news and online tools to correct wrong information and share positive feedback.</p>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Short-term	Moderate

**METRICS:** Engagement and feedback from stakeholders.

**Provide a framework for marketing and communications which encourages all stakeholders to engage.**

**Phase 2** Launch Central Alberta’s tourism destination brand to the public.

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES:**

- Promote region as a tourism destination
- Profile online assets and marketing/PR efforts for gathering more information and providing feedback
- Educate local, regional and national stakeholders how they can support ‘building the buzz’.

**PATH TO PURCHASE**



Aware



Dream

ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
<p>Paid Media: Collaborate with regional partners on a media strategy that targets domestic and short haul markets and also leverages existing Travel Alberta assets.</p> <p>Earned Media: Target local, regional, national and Int’l target market travel journalists &amp; bloggers.</p>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term to Long-term</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Digital Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch website and ensure brand is pulled through existing social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram blogs, Twitter, Google +</li> <li>• Prepare and implement storyboard, outlining series of stories that can be promoted throughout the year (i.e. seasonal roundups of activities, milestone dates, profile of cultural and historical experiences) using traditional media and digital media. Itineraries for multi-day exploration of the region)</li> <li>• Build on existing images and video assets for sharing online</li> <li>• Create online contesting to increase engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term to Long-term</p>	<p>High</p>

ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
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**METRICS:**

- Set up media monitoring to evaluate results.
- Feedback from stakeholders and industry
- Inquiries by consumers for more information
- Online engagement and web traffic.



**Provide a framework for marketing and communications which encourages all stakeholders to engage.**

**Phase 3** Launch the series of itineraries which showcase the diversity and wealth of experiences.

By identifying natural routes and themed experiences, tourism stakeholders will see results sooner from collaboration. Successful themes in other jurisdictions have included Victoria’s ale trail, Vancouver Island’s Gourmet Trail, Australia’s Great Ocean Road, and Newfoundland’s Backland Trail.

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES:**

- Promote region as a well-rounded tourism destination
- Profile themed experiences—adventure, eco, aboriginal, food, culture, heritage, arts, festivals, sports, blended travel or b-leisure (mixing of business and leisure experiences).



<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
Gather stakeholder feedback on recommended routes and seasonal themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consistent messaging and delivery of service</li> <li>• Agree on uniform methodology to gather results</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization  DMOs  Tourism Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Long-term	High
Establish partnerships with local clubs for activities (hiking, paddling, snowmobiling, indigenous, historical and conservation groups): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential suppliers to adventure industry to cross-promote themed adventures as an experience that shares their brand values i.e. Alberta manufacturer of outdoor equipment, canoe/kayak manufacturer, outdoor gear supplier)</li> <li>• Potential for a digital partner to create a mobile app for exploring Central Alberta</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization  DMOs  Tourism Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Long-term	High



ACTION PLAN	LEAD	STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	TIMING	IMPORTANCE
Launch themed experiences via earned and digital media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate stakeholders on how to support promotion along all social channels</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> <li>DMOs</li> <li>Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Long-term	Moderate
Industry awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide DMOs with information to profile at Destination Canada media marketplaces, GO! Media, Travel Media Association of Canada, Society of American Travel Writers and to travel trade at Canada's West and Rendezvous Canada.</li> <li>Identify opportunities and timing to host familiarization trips ( for industry, travel trade and media)</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel Alberta</li> </ul>	Long-term	Moderate

**METRICS:**

- Set up media monitoring to evaluate results.
- Feedback from stakeholders and industry
- Inquiries by consumers for more information
- Online engagement and web traffic.

**Provide a framework for marketing and communications which encourages all stakeholders to engage.**

**Phase 4** Position a key Central Alberta experience as one of Destination Canada’s signature experiences by 2020

- Ensure experience features the range of experiences available throughout Central Alberta for maximum ROI.

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES:**

- Celebrate experiences as part of the iconic Trans Canada Trail
- Profile level of tourism expertise ( on the ground) in Central Alberta
- Continue to educate on range of year round experiences and increased accessibility

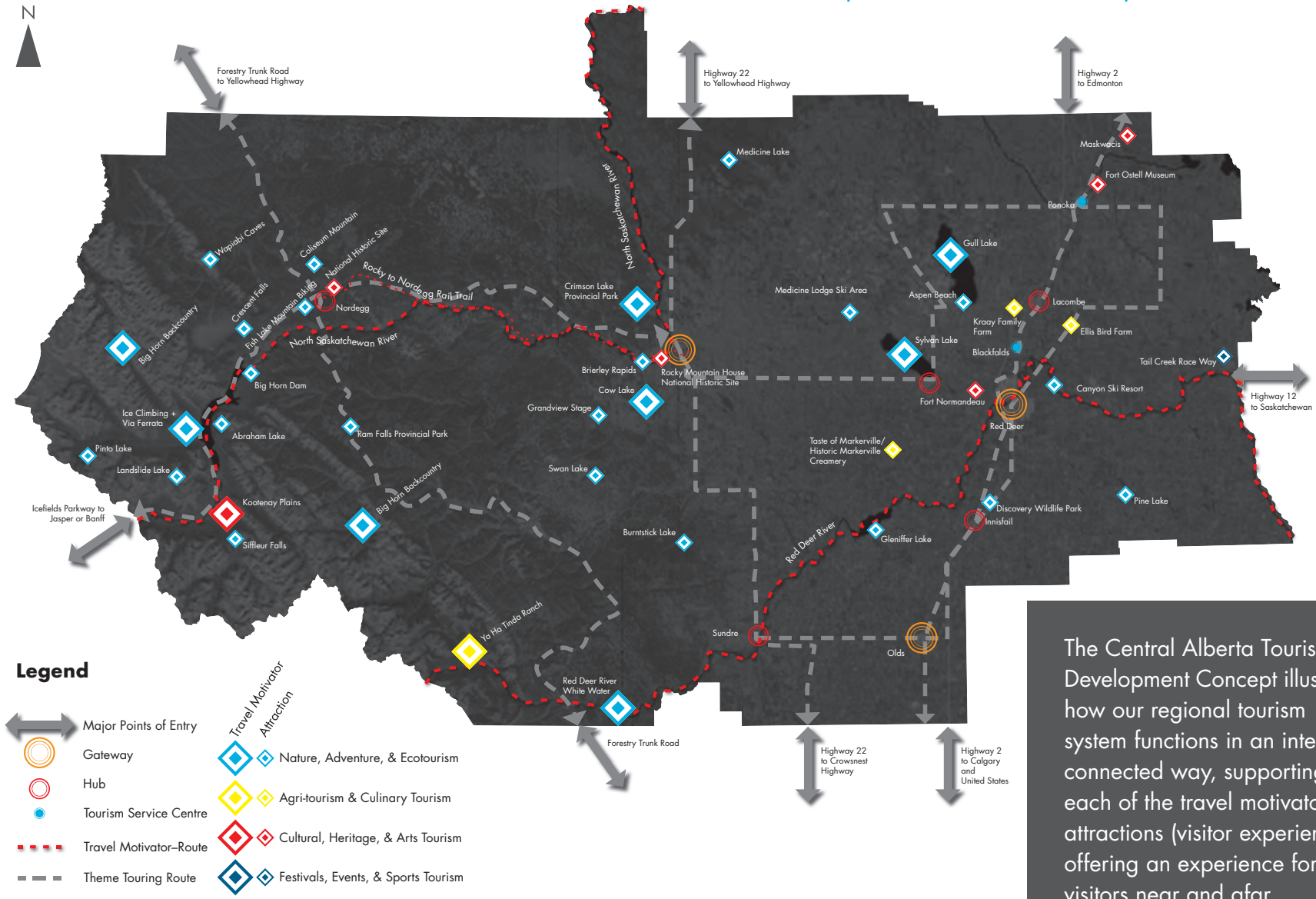


<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>LEAD</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ALLIANCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
Identify criteria for signature experiences and review with key stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Destination Canada’s Expert Ready Criteria</li> <li>• Review list of current Canadian Signature Experiences and case studies.</li> <li>• Build out separate marketing plan and budget.</li> </ul>	Destination Leadership Committee/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Alberta</li> <li>• Destination Canada</li> </ul>	Long-term	Moderate
Once a potential CSE is chosen, nominate for potential media awards (National Geographic Traveller—Experiences of a lifetime, Outdoor Magazine Best new experiences, regional and TIAC awards)	Travel Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Leadership Committee/Organization</li> <li>• DMOs</li> <li>• Tourism Industry</li> </ul>	Long-term	Moderate

**METRICS:**

- Range of regional stakeholder engagement
- Feedback from industry, tour operators and media
- Awards and CSE designation

# 7.9 The Central Alberta Tourism Development Concept



The Central Alberta Tourism Development Concept illustrates how our regional tourism system functions in an interconnected way, supporting each of the travel motivator attractions (visitor experiences), offering an experience for visitors near and afar.

# 8. Monitoring Our Progress

## 8.1 Destination Performance Monitoring & Indicators

Performance monitoring is essential to sound destination planning and management. Ongoing monitoring of meaningful performance metrics provides essential information to our tourism champions and stakeholders; enabling informed decision making and management responses. Monitoring can draw early attention to emerging issues and problems enabling proactive response. With the growing market interest in sustainability, monitoring and reporting has become increasingly important in destination marketing and positioning as well.

Recognizing the value and importance of regular monitoring, we intend to produce regular “State of the Destination” summaries in which we will report on the status of each of the priority initiatives identified in the plan as well as the performance indicators shown below.

### OUTCOMES

Transform Central Alberta into a must-experience destination that is authentic, memorable and sustainable.

Increase year-round visitation from both short haul and long-haul target markets.

Increase the direct and indirect economic contributions of tourism to our regional and local economies.

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Net Promoter Score—visitor satisfaction rate.
- Tourism relate social media sentiment—as posted on main social media platforms
- Frequency in which the region and regional tourism assets are featured in social media traffic.
- Total visits.
- Off-peak season occupancy rates.
- Occupancy rates.
- Number of and attendance at tourism industry training/work force development sessions
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR)
- Number of off-peak season visits.
- Average length of stay by visitor origin.
- Average overnight spending per visitor by origin.
- Value of direct and indirect tourism contributions to regional economy.
- Number of full-time equivalent jobs generated.

Attract increased private sector investment in tourism experiences, services and infrastructure.

- Value of private sector investment.
- Number of major private sector projects.
- Number of market-ready private sector experiences.

Encourage increased local and provincial public sector investment in tourism experiences, services and infrastructure.

- Value of public sector investment.
- Number of major public sector projects.
- Number of market-ready public sector experiences.
- Increase in the number of tourism businesses.

Increase awareness and understanding of the benefits tourism brings to our communities, the region and the province.

- Increase in partnerships/participation and support from stakeholders, municipalities and tourism industry.

Establish a positive and inclusive relationship between the region's tourism industry, community leaders, visitors and residents to ensure our communities are engaged and active stakeholders.

- Number of, and attendance at, annual public meetings to discuss destination management issues.
- Degree of public satisfaction with destination management.

Maintain the integrity and quality of tourism resources in the region and the destination's competitiveness.

- Percent change in distribution of tourism settings.
- Change in scenic value.
- Loss of tourism features.

Enhance the positive benefits of tourism to the environment and host communities while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment, local cultures and host communities.

- Number of tourism operations that have received tourism certification (GSTC recognized) or environmental management accreditation.
- Number of sustainably certified or verified tourism operations.
- Biodiversity condition trends.
- Area of habitat restored through tourism efforts.

# 9. References

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# Appendix A.

## Summary of 10 Partner Municipalities' Policies and Plans

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the page, consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent lines in shades of brown and tan, creating a layered, geometric effect.

PARTNER	MDPs	Municipal Strategic Plans	Economic Development Strategies	Other Plans
Blackfalds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Its Economic Development Board Strategic Business Plan will integrate tourism plan with overall marketing efforts</li> <li>It will promote the development of facilities, attractions and services to increase visitor and tourism attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal Sustainability Plan will target diverse visitor and tourism industry</li> </ul>
Clearwater County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A greatly expanded tourism sector by promoting locally appropriate tourism opportunities</li> <li>Designated Tourism Development Nodes on the David Thompson Corridor &amp; associated concept plans,</li> <li>Identification of other development nodes for recreation and tourism</li> <li>Support trail enhancement and development of trail connection between Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nordegg Development Plan</li> <li>Clearwater County/Rocky Mountain House Intermunicipal Development Plan</li> <li>Clearwater County Reeve's Economic Summit: Tourism Working Group Report—the Working Group makes a number of recommendations for how the region can work towards growing the local economy and mitigating potential future risks.</li> </ul>
Innisfail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a goal of developing a strong tourism sector in the local and area economy</li> <li>Contains a policy that the town will encourage development of a tourism industry in and around Innisfail</li> <li>Contains a policy that the town considers development of tourism marketing plan to coordinate marketing efforts, to attract more tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>
Lacombe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In process of being developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Lacombe Regional Tourism Marketing and Strategic Plan 2014-2017 has a broad goal to develop and promote Lacombe Regional experiences to be desirable tourism options. It contains a number of specific tourism goals ranging from branding, improved marketing and communications, developing tourism products, and greater alignment with the Alberta tourism industry. Its key objectives include marketing, regional development, education of industry and brand unification and awareness.</li> </ul>

PARTNER	MDPs	Municipal Strategic Plans	Economic Development Strategies	Other Plans
Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has goal to foster local business retention and attract diverse, long term economic growth, including tourism, through a partnered approach to marketing Olds and Central Alberta</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Space and Trails Master Plan—no information about tourism</li> </ul>
Ponoka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan contains section on economic development and tourism; objectives include increasing tourism visitations and expenditures through development and enhancement of tourism attractions, services, and infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town of Ponoka Growth Strategy: 2009–2059</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal number 7 of the 2011–2013 Economic Development Strategic Plan is “Promote Ponoka as a Destination” which aims to develop and promote a tourism cluster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan contains section on economic development and tourism with goal to foster business retention and to attract diverse, long term economic growth, including tourism, by a partnered approach to marketing Red Deer and Central Alberta</li> <li>Contains specific policy to increase tourism visitation through promotions, development and enhancement of local tourism products, services, and infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Plan Report (2015–2018)—no information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Development Strategy (2013) identifies a lack of selling points for Red Deer, specifically a lack for an “iconic attraction” as well as marketing and regional packaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>
Red Deer County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 3.1 ‘Agricultural Land and Operations’ supports agri-tourism initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red Deer County Municipal Sustainability Plan: 2009-2011 indicates that tourism development is part of the County’s economic development strategy</li> </ul>
Rocky Mountain House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan contains section on economic development and tourism with goal to foster business retention and to attract diverse, long term economic growth, including tourism, by a partnered approach to marketing Rocky Mountain House and area</li> <li>Contains policy (7.1) “regional cooperation in promoting economic development and tourism”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed Trails Development and Implementation Plan aims to “utilize trails as tools to support local businesses and encourage tourism”</li> </ul>
Sylvan Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contains specific objective of “enhanced hospitality and tourism opportunities” recognizing that Sylvan Lake is a successful tourism destination and tourism remains an important part of the economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information about tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment Attraction Strategy and Implementation Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Asset Inventory</li> <li>– Hospital Prefeasibility study</li> <li>– Tourism Investor Forum booklet</li> </ul> </li> <li>No plan available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town of Sylvan Lake Tourism Strategy (2013–2018) contains four strategic priorities for advancing tourism. One strategy “tourism product and experience development”, is focused on making enhancements to existing tourism products/experiences and creating new tourism experiences to expand the tourism season and visitor markets for Sylvan Lake.</li> </ul>

Central Alberta

Destination  
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REALIZING OUR POTENTIAL

December 2015