

File: 3900-02

December 11, 2025

Via email: aproton@courtenay.ca

City of Courtenay
830 Cliffe Ave
Courtenay BC V9N 2J7

Attention: Ms. Adriana Proton, Manager of Legislative Services

Dear Ms. Proton:

Re: Bylaw No. 900 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4"

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board, at its meeting December 9, 2025, gave three readings to Bylaw No. 900 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4". The intent of the bylaw is to expand the service purpose to include destination development and management in accordance with the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.

This bylaw, prior to submission for approval from the Inspector of Municipalities, require written consent of two-thirds of the participants in the service, being the Directors for Electoral Areas A, B and C, the City of Courtenay and the Village of Cumberland.

In light of the above, the CVRD board requests your council to consent to the bylaw amendment by considering the following resolution:

THAT the City of Courtenay consent to the adoption of the Comox Valley Regional District Bylaw No. 900 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4" under section 346 of the *Local Government Act*.

By way of background information, please find attached the staff report dated December 5, 2025, that was presented to the Comox Valley Regional District Board on December 9, 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Kilpatrick, Community Development and Resilience Manager, at 250-334-6093 or via email at lkilpatrick@comoxvalleyrd.ca.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

L. Dennis

Lisa Dennis
Manager of Legislative Services

Attachments: Staff report dated December 5, 2025
 Bylaw No. 900

COMOX VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

BYLAW NO. 900

A bylaw to amend the Comox Valley Tourism Service purpose

WHEREAS the Board of the Comox Valley Regional District adopted Bylaw No. 345 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016" on October 25, 2016" to convert and establish the Comox Valley Economic Development Service;

AND WHEREAS the Board wishes to amend the service establishing bylaw to amend the purpose of the Tourism Service to include destination development and management in accordance with the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c.1), at least two-thirds of the service participants have given consent on behalf of the electors to the adoption of this bylaw;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c.1), the approval of the Inspector of Municipalities has been obtained;

NOW THEREFORE the Board of the Comox Valley Regional District in open meeting assembled enacts as follows:

Amendment

1. Bylaw No. 345 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016" is hereby amended by:

a) Replacing Section 2 (Purpose) which reads:

Purpose

2. The service is to provide for the promotion and marketing of the Comox Valley for the purposes of tourism and destination marketing and visitor information services, including through the formation of partnerships with community organizations and service providers.

with the following Section 2:

Purpose

- 2. The service is to provide destination management, development and marketing and visitor services for the Comox Valley including through the formation of partnerships with community organizations and service providers.


Citation

This Bylaw No. 900 may be cited as "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4".

Read a first and second time this 9th day of December 2025.

Read a third time this 9th day of December 2025.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of Bylaw No. 900 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4" as read a third time by the Board of the Comox Valley Regional District on the 9th day of December 2025.



Corporate Officer

Electoral Area A director written consent obtained this day of 202x.

Electoral Area B director written consent obtained this day of 202x.

Electoral Area C director written consent obtained this day of 202x.

City of Courtenay council resolution given this day of 202x.

Village of Cumberland council resolution given this day of 202x.

Approved by the Inspector of Municipalities this day of 202x.

Adopted this _____ **day of** _____ **202x.**

Chair

Corporate Officer

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of Bylaw No. 900 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016, Amendment No. 4" as adopted by the Board of the Comox Valley Regional District on the ___ day of _____ 202x.

Corporate Officer

DATE: December 5, 2025

FILE: 6900-01

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

Supported by James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

J. Warren

**RE: Final Comox Valley Tourism Strategy and Tourism Service Bylaw
Amendment**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the final Comox Valley Tourism Strategy for approval and seek Board approval on an amendment to the Service 550 Comox Valley Tourism purpose.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

1. THAT the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy attached to the staff report as Appendix A, dated December 3, 2025 be approved;

AND FURTHER THAT the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy dated December 2025, be shared with K'ómoks First Nation with an offer to present the plan to Chief and Council and next steps for implementation.

2. THAT an amendment to Bylaw No. 345 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Service Conversion Bylaw No. 345, 2016" to expand the service purpose to include destination development and management in accordance with the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy be considered for readings at the December 9, 2025 Board meeting;

AND FURTHER THAT participating area approval for the above-described amendment be sought by way of consent of at least two-thirds of the service participants in accordance with section 349(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Executive Summary

- The Service 550 Comox Valley Tourism was established in 2022. The Service provides tourism information and destination marketing services, branded as [Experience Comox Valley](#), to the Comox Valley except for Hornby and Denman Islands.

- Work began in late 2023 to develop a 10-year Comox Valley Tourism Strategy through a comprehensive public engagement process.
- In July 2025, the Board approved the [draft tourism strategic framework](#) to be shared with the public and Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland Councils for final feedback.
- Based on feedback, revisions have been made in the strategic framework to include increased emphasis on economic growth through tourism.
- The final draft presents the building blocks behind the strategy along with the strategic vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives and actions with example Key Performance Indicators. A draft implementation matrix is also included as a starting point for the development of the annual and five-year tactical plans.
- Staff are recommending that the final Tourism Strategy be adopted and shared with K’ómoks First Nation with an offer to present the Strategy and discuss the next steps in implementation.
- Pending the Board’s approval of the Tourism Strategy, staff recommends amending the purpose of the Tourism Service to include destination development and management.

Prepared by:

L. Kilpatrick

Lisa Kilpatrick
Community Development
and Resilience Manager

Concurrence:

A. Mullaly

Alana Mullaly
General Manager of Planning
and Development Services

Government and Community Interests Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Town of Comox	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓
K’ómoks First Nation	✓
Tourism Advisory Committee	✓
Tourism Strategy Steering Committee	✓

Service 550 Comox Valley Tourism Bylaw Amendment

The current bylaw for the Service 550 Comox Valley Tourism (the “Service”) states that the service purpose is to “provide for the promotion and marketing of the Comox Valley for the purposes of tourism and destination marketing and visitor information services, including through the formation of partnerships with community organizations and service providers”. During the establishment of the

Service, it was recognized that the new service would require a strategic plan to provide a roadmap and priorities for the service moving into the future.

The strategic planning engagement process has identified that to meet the needs of the community to ensure a strong vibrant tourism economy that also supports cultural, social and environmental wellbeing, the purpose of the Tourism Service needs to be expanded. This amendment is identified as a priority action in the Strategy. The proposed amended wording of the purpose is as follows:

“The service is to provide destination management, development and marketing and visitor services for the Comox Valley including through the formation of partnerships with community organizations and service providers.”

The expanded purpose will support the implementation of the Tourism Strategy and guide the work of the Service to address destination development and management along with destination marketing and visitor services. Staff are recommending this amendment now as a first step in the implementation of the Strategy.

Part 10 of the *Local Government Act* prescribes the legislative process for amending service establishment bylaws. In broad terms the process can be summarized as follows:

- Board grants three readings to the amending bylaw;
- Participating area approval through Director and Council consent, if eligible and if such method is chosen by the Board;
- Inspector of Municipalities approval;
- Participating area approval through alternative approval process (AAP), if applicable, or assent voting if such method is chosen;
- Adoption of bylaw by the Board

Consent of Municipal Councils and Electoral Area Directors is the most expedient and least costly approval method. Under this approach, written consent of Electoral Area Directors and a resolution of Council is required. Consent of at least two thirds of the participants in the service is required to obtain participating area approval if such method is utilized. Given the minor and administrative nature of the proposed amendment to the Service, staff strongly recommend such an approach for this bylaw.

Should the recommendation of this report be endorsed, the bylaw will be brought before the Board for consideration of three readings and will then be forwarded to the Service participants for their consideration of consent.

Options

Tourism Strategy

1. Approve the final Comox Valley Tourism Strategy for implementation.
2. Direct staff to complete further research and/or engagement in development of the final draft.

Staff recommends Option 1.

Bylaw Amendment

1. Approve the recommendation to proceed with amending the Service purpose and through Director and Council consent.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff to align the Service purpose with the Tourism Strategy or to return with additional information concerning alternative bylaw approval methods.

Staff recommends Option 1.

Financial Factors

The Service is currently supported through tax requisition, MRDT and various provincial and federal grants. The Tourism Strategy identifies the expansion of revenues sources which will support the decrease of tax requisition required to support the Service. A potential increase in the Municipal Regional District Tax through collection boundary expansion and rate increase will add additional support to the implementation of the Tourism Strategy. Regional collaboration and inclusion of destination management and development activities will also increase eligibility to various tourism granting programs such as Destination BC.

Strategic Considerations - Strategic Drivers									
Fiscal Responsibility	✓	Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection	✓	Community Partnerships	✓	Indigenous Relations	✓	Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	✓

The relevant key drivers are as follows:

- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Careful management of services and assets is essential to providing affordable and reliable services to citizens and businesses in the CVRD. The Strategy identifies service priorities and mechanisms to fund these priorities to minimize tax burden on residents.
- **Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection:** The Strategy identifies sustainable tourism actions that will preserve our natural assets.

- Community Partnerships: Collaboration, engagement and partnership development with community organizations, industry and Rights Holders will be integral to the success of the regional Strategy.
- Indigenous Relations: All lands visited by tourists are located in K’ómoks First Nation unceded traditional territory. The Strategy prioritizes reconciliation and indigenous relations. K’ómoks First Nation will continue to be engaged in the implementation of the Strategy.

Strategic Considerations - Regional Growth Strategy Goals							
Housing	✓	Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks	✓	Local economic development	✓	Transportation	✓
Infrastructure	✓	Food Systems	✓	Public Health and Safety	✓	Climate Change	✓

The project is connected to all eight of the goals:

- Housing: Increase affordable housing options with revenue from regional MRDT model.
- Ecosystems, natural areas and parks: protect, steward and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems supported by a sustainable tourism strategy.
- Local economic development: Achieve a sustainable, resilient and dynamic economy that supports businesses and entrepreneurship through tourism sector development.
- Transportation: Develop accessible, efficient, affordable and connected multi-modal transportation network and inter-regional transportation systems to support visitors.
- Infrastructure: Protect the quality of water sources by a sustainable tourism strategy.
- Food system: Support and enhance the agriculture sectors and increase local food security through agri-tourism.
- Public health and safety: Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being.
- Climate change: Minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation with a sustainable tourism and organizational practices.

Intergovernmental Factors

The Comox Valley Tourism Service includes the Village of Cumberland, City of Courtenay, Baynes Sound portion of Area A, and Electoral Areas B and C as participants. The Town of Comox supports the Tourism Service by way of a fee-for-service agreement. The current agreement with Comox expires in December 2026.

Conversations on the future of Comox involvement in the Service have begun at a staff level to determine the impact to the Service if Comox does not continue its participation. The direction of the Tourism Strategy will not be significantly impacted as the identified priorities, while addressing distinct needs for each community, support the overarching vision for Comox Valley tourism. The Tourism Strategy identifies annual meetings with local government to confirm priorities and identify areas of collaboration.

Further, the CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation look to partner on service-related components and as noted earlier in this report, K'ómoks has been engaged on developing the strategic framework. The Chief Administrative Officers, or designates, regularly meet to review service delivery practices and options. As noted in this report's recommendations, if approved, CVRD will look to share the Strategy with K'ómoks First Nation with an offer to present the Strategy and discuss the next steps in implementation.

Citizen/Public Relations

The Strategy identifies working together as a strategic key theme. Maintaining the Tourism Advisory Committee, establishing regular tourism community meetings with businesses, non-profit organizations and other interested parties for collaboration and information sharing, and annual resident tourism sentiment surveys are ways that citizens will continue to be engaged in the implementation of the Strategy.

If approved the community will be notified of the final Strategy through a press release, email notifications, CVRD and Experience Comox Valley websites, and newsletters and Engage Comox Valley.

Attachments: Appendix A – Comox Valley Tourism Strategy



Comox Valley 10-Year Tourism Strategy

December 2025

Experience Comox Valley respectfully acknowledges that the land we gather on is on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

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Acronyms

CVRD	Comox Valley Regional District
DBC	Destination British Columbia
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility
ECV	Experience Comox Valley
EV	Electric Vehicle
MRDT	Municipal & Regional District Tax
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
KFN	K'ómoks First Nation
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TAC	Tourism Advisory Committee
TSSC	Tourism Strategy Steering Committee
YQQ	Comox Valley Airport

Acknowledgements/Message from the Board/Chair
- *Page Place Holder*

FINAL DRAFT

Executive Summary

The 10-year Comox Valley Tourism Strategy is a comprehensive framework for stewarding economic growth and the sustainable development of the tourism sector across the Valley. Its purpose is not simply to attract more visitors, but to guide tourism growth in a way that enriches the lives of residents and visitors while protecting the natural environment and cultural heritage that define the region. Long-term economic resilience, a cohesive regional vision, preservation of community character, strengthened collaboration, and honouring Indigenous heritage are all central to this approach.

Demonstrating remarkable resilience, the Comox Valley's tourism sector has exceeded pre-pandemic performance, with general Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) revenue (also known as the hotel or pillow tax) showing strong growth from 2022 to 2024. This regional strength underpins the \$22.1 billion generated by tourism across British Columbia, reinforcing the sector's vital role. Tourism is a key economic driver in the Comox Valley, with this sustained growth signaling tourism's critical and expanding contribution to local jobs and overall prosperity.

This Strategy offers a clear and ambitious path toward a thriving and innovative visitor economy, one that strengthens resident well-being, honours the land and waters stewarded by the K'ómoks First Nation since time immemorial, and reflects the values of the people who call the Comox Valley home. Developed through deep engagement with residents, businesses, operators, and local governments, it is grounded in the belief that tourism can be a force for economic, social and environmental well-being when it is rooted in stewardship, reciprocity, reconciliation and meaningful collaboration.

By adopting this Strategy, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), Experience Comox Valley (ECV), and partners across the region commit to shaping a local tourism system that drives economic prosperity, protects the places that matter most, celebrates the cultural stories that define the Valley, and creates lasting benefits for residents and visitors alike. Its success will depend on continued partnership with K'ómoks First Nation, local and regional governments, tourism operators, community organizations, and residents.

The Comox Valley Tourism Strategy is the result of the completion of a [Comox Valley Tourism Situation Analysis](#) and extensive, multi-phase engagement conducted between late 2023 and 2025. This process gathered insights from over 120 community members, 60+ key tourism interest holders and local government through workshops, focus groups, interviews, and public sessions. The robust engagement, which was guided by the Tourism Strategy Steering Committee, was purposefully designed to reflect diverse community perspectives and address key regional challenges. This rigorous effort culminated in a comprehensive strategy featuring the following vision statement for the future of tourism in the Comox Valley:

The Comox Valley is a sustainable island destination that enriches the lives of residents now and for future generations. Environmental stewardship, culture, regional collaboration, and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples create a resilient and thriving tourism economy that is home to exceptional year-round experiences that tell the stories of the Comox Valley.

The Strategy identifies 12 goals, 22 objectives, and 89 actions across the 5 theme areas of Work Together, Strengthen Stewardship of Place, Empower a Resilient and Inclusive Tourism Economy, Support Connected Communities and Tourism Infrastructure, and Enhance Year-Round Experiences for Everyone, and can be summarized as follows:

- **Partnership & Governance:** Strengthen collaborative partnerships, including advancing Reconciliation efforts with Indigenous partners, to ensure the tourism economy reflects community values and is guided by local priorities.
- **Economic Growth:** Cultivate a strong, resilient, year-round tourism economy that attracts sustainable investment, creates quality local jobs, and positions the sector as a vital economic and cultural contributor to the region.
- **Community & Quality of Life:** Enhance the quality of life for residents and experiences of visitors by championing inclusivity, supporting accessible tourism businesses, and ensuring communities remain exceptional places to live and visit.
- **Environmental & Cultural Stewardship:** Implement regenerative and responsible actions that foster environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and empower visitors and residents to actively participate in shaping the Comox Valley's evolving landscape.
- **Product & Experience Development:** Develop and promote exceptional, unique, year-round visitor experiences that encourage deeper engagement and respect for the Comox Valley's natural, cultural, and community assets.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Invest in strategic tourism infrastructure and seamless transportation networks that reflect community priorities, contribute to decarbonization efforts, and safely connect communities to each other and the world.

Introduction

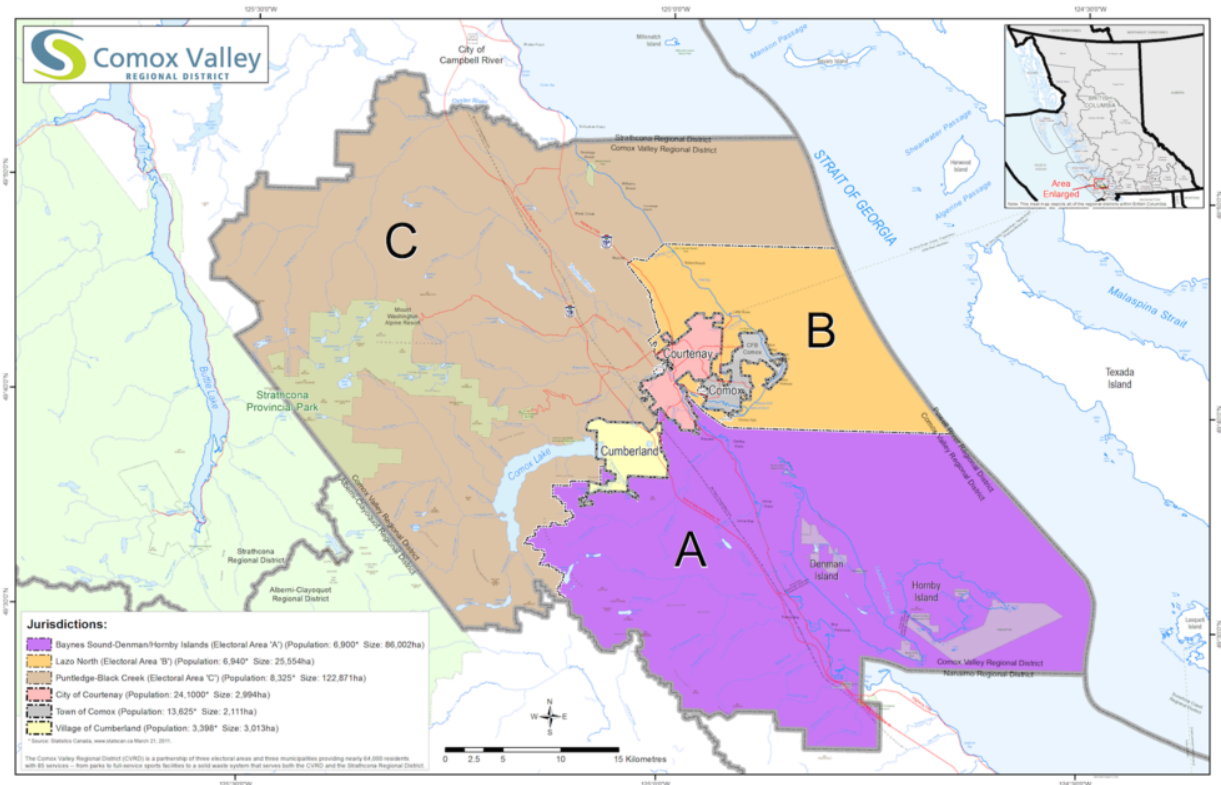
The Comox Valley is located in the Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation (K'omoks), renowned for its stunning natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant local communities. Tourism is a vital contributor to the region's economy, creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and generating revenue for essential community services and infrastructure. Tourism also plays an important role in supporting cultural preservation, protecting natural environments, and building understanding between visitors and residents.

The 10-year Comox Valley Tourism Strategy (the Tourism Strategy) provides a comprehensive framework for stewarding economic growth and sustainable development of the tourism sector in the Valley. This strategy aims to transform and establish the Comox Valley into a leading tourism destination, enriching the lives of residents and visitors while protecting the unique natural environment and cultural heritage that defines this region. The success of this strategy depends on collaboration between local governments, K'ómoks First Nation, tourism operators and businesses, public and non-profit organizations, community members, and other interested parties that intersect with tourism. Through careful implementation, regular evaluation, and adaptive management, this Tourism Strategy will remain relevant and contribute to the long-term well-being of the entire Comox Valley.

This dynamic strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated, incorporating feedback and adapting to changing circumstances. [Experience Comox Valley](#) (ECV), the CVRD's Tourism Service, will play a central role in implementing and adapting this strategy over the next decade, using key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress and make adjustments as needed.



Comox Valley - A Vancouver Island Destination



The Tourism Strategy spans the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and Electoral Areas A (not including Denman Island and Hornby Island), B and C in the unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. Stretching from mountains to sea, each of these communities, shaped by their unique assets and tourism experiences, bring distinct opportunities and considerations for destination development, management and marketing. While each community offers its own character and amenities, together, they contribute to a rich and interconnected visitor experience across the region.

- City of Courtenay, the largest urban center in the Comox Valley, offers a mix of urban amenities and small-town charm, with unique boutiques, restaurants, and a thriving arts scene. As the region's largest urban center, it holds the majority of the Valley's tourist accommodation. Courtenay appears to have achieved a relatively balanced tourism load that aligns well with community capacity and resident expectations, although capacity exists to maximize tourism growth in the shoulder seasons. The city successfully leverages its role as a regional hub while maintaining its quality of life for residents.
- Town of Comox, a picturesque seaside town, boasts a marina and a variety of shops, breweries, and restaurants, creating an ideal setting for leisurely strolls and wildlife photography while serving as a transportation gateway. Comox demonstrates continued capacity and appetite for tourism activity, particularly in its downtown core and marina.

Local businesses and interest-holders welcome additional visitation, viewing tourism as an opportunity to enhance economic growth while maintaining the community's seaside charm.

- Village of Cumberland, a former mining town, has reinvented itself as an outdoor recreation hub, hosting festivals, offering mountain biking trails, and providing access to lakeside activities. The Comox Lake, located in Cumberland is also the drinking water supply for communities, indicating the need for careful management. The Village faces unique challenges with tourism pressures that sometimes exceed community infrastructure capacity. Issues such as parking congestion and trail crowding, particularly related to its reputation as a premier mountain biking destination, require careful management to balance visitor experiences with resident livability.
- Electoral Areas A, B, and C encompass the rural and coastal communities surrounding the urban cores, each offering unique tourism assets. Together, these electoral areas serve as important connectors between urban amenities and natural attractions, contributing to the region's diverse tourism product while maintaining their distinct rural and coastal character.
 - Electoral Area A features a vibrant collection of small seaside communities along Baynes Sound, where seafaring history endures through the iconic Royston wrecks, the legendary shellfish farming bounties of Fanny Bay, and the historic friendly port of Union Bay. These coastal assets support aqua-tourism and marine-based experiences.
 - Electoral Area B (Lazo North) includes the Comox peninsula and features stunning seaside parks and beaches like Goose Spit and Seal Bay Park, ocean access points, campgrounds and woodland gardens. Little River terminal provides a key connection for visitors from Powell River and the Sunshine Coast through a direct BC Ferries route.
 - Electoral Area C (Puntledge/Black Creek), including Saratoga Beach and Mount Washington, provides a mix of rural residential character, agricultural operations, access to outdoor recreation, particularly in the summer months, including cottages, campgrounds, a marina, golf course, provincial park, and speedway. Mount Washington Alpine Resort acts as a key driver of winter tourism and more recently, summer activities, extending the region's appeal into the shoulder seasons and summer months. The Mount Washington Resort Association (operating as Tourism Mount Washington) independently delivers tourism marketing services within the Regional District through the collection of the Mt.Washington MRDT.
- Denman and Hornby Islands, while administrating local tourism services independently, contribute to the region's overall tourism appeal through their unique island culture and coastal recreation.

For a deeper understanding and assessment of the Comox Valley tourism industry and destination, please see the [Comox Valley Tourism Strategy Situation Analysis](#) that was completed as a foundational component of the strategy development.

Purpose of the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy

This regional strategy is about managing tourism growth to maximize economic benefits for all communities in the region while preserving the region's unique character and natural assets. Several key rationales underpin this strategic approach: long-term economic growth, a cohesive regional vision, preserving community character, building strategic collaboration, and honouring Indigenous heritage.

- **Sustainable Economic Growth:** Tourism in the Comox Valley has strong potential. Long term economic resilience depends on a coordinated regional effort to strengthen destination development and grow the Comox Valley tourism market through the implementation of the Tourism Strategy over time. A unified approach to tourism revenue distributes economic benefits more equitably and supports regional competitiveness on a national and international scale. Expanded Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) coverage is one possible tool to achieve this, however, the Tourism Strategy has been developed to support economic growth regardless of the MRDT collection boundaries.
- **A Cohesive Regional Vision:** Visitors experience the Comox Valley as a single destination, moving easily across municipal boundaries. A regional vision and strategy reflects this reality and acknowledges the region's unique strengths, enabling a cohesive approach to destination development, marketing, and resource management.
- **Preserving Community Character:** Tourism must contribute to, not detract from, the quality of life for residents. A regional strategy supports tourism growth that is balanced, managed, and aligned with local values to help communities in our region maintain their distinct character.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** Tourism management depends on collective leadership. This regional strategy provides a framework for collaboration among local governments, tourism businesses, community members, and K'ómoks First Nation that reflect the region's shared interests. This approach builds alignment, reduces duplication, and creates a sense of shared ownership in its implementation.
- **Honouring Indigenous Heritage:** The Comox Valley's identity is inextricably linked to the Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land. The CVRD's commitment to reconciliation focuses on self-determination, shared prosperity, protecting cultural heritage, and relationship with land and water.

Building the Strategy

From the outset, developing the Tourism Strategy was guided by several critical lenses that ensured comprehensive and inclusive planning:

Regional Collaboration Lens: Recognizing that tourists do not adhere to jurisdictional boundaries, the Tourism Strategy promotes regional cooperation in economic development and leverages shared resources across neighbouring communities to create cohesive tourism experiences.

Indigenous Reconciliation and Partnership Lens: The Tourism Strategy emphasizes creating authentic Indigenous partnerships, collaborating on tourism initiatives, and incorporating First Nation stories and cultural awareness to foster deeper connections to the region. Local governments have a duty to consult with Indigenous partners, as a matter of special public interest.

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Lens: The Tourism Strategy aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and emphasizes regenerative tourism approaches. Key focuses include sustainable water management, watershed protection, waste management, responsible resource use, and promoting mindful tourism through environmental conservation education.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Lens: The Tourism Strategy prioritizes making the Comox Valley welcoming and accessible to all visitors and residents and considers actions to support infrastructure, services, and experiences that are designed for people of all abilities, backgrounds, and identities. The Tourism Strategy considers how to create accessible experiences by adapting existing assets and infrastructure to remove barriers. This includes developing multi-use pathways accessible for seniors, enhancing transportation links, and ensuring tourism offerings are inclusive for all ability levels.

Comox Valley Tourism Strategy

Vision

The Comox Valley is a sustainable island destination that enriches the lives of residents now and for future generations. Environmental stewardship, culture, regional collaboration, and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples create a resilient and thriving tourism economy that is home to exceptional year-round experiences that tell the stories of the Comox Valley.

Guiding principles

- **Collaboration:** Turn our vision into action by building trust, valuing diversity and inclusivity, embracing healthy tension, and working toward a common goal.
- **Reconciliation:** Work in partnership with the K'ómoks First Nation as they pursue their tourism-related economic development vision.
- **Harmony:** Embrace reciprocity and ensure tourism enriches the lives of locals and visitors, integrating social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts equitably.
- **Resilience:** Adapt and prosper in the face of ever-changing political, social, economic and environmental forces.
- **Openness:** Act with integrity, respect, and transparency.

Strategic Themes

The strategic themes that shape this tourism strategy emerged from extensive community engagement, stakeholder consultation, and careful analysis of regional opportunities and challenges. Each theme is supported by specific goals, objectives, and actions that are aligned with community values, economic growth, environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Together, they provide a framework for achieving our vision while honouring the guiding principles. The following strategic themes are interconnected and reflect both immediate priorities and long-term aspirations:

- Work Together
- Strengthen Stewardship of Place
- Empower a Resilient and Inclusive Tourism Economy
- Support Connected Communities and Tourism Infrastructure
- Enhance Year-Round Experiences for Everyone



Work Together

Goals:

- Strengthen collaborative partnerships across sectors and with Indigenous partners to steward a thriving and regenerative tourism economy that reflects community values.
- Engage with communities frequently to understand pressures and local priorities.

Objective 1: To strengthen and expand collaborative regional partnerships in the tourism industry across Indigenous, public and non-profit organizations, businesses, residents, neighbouring communities, and local, provincial and federal governments.

- **Action 1.1:** Expand the Comox Valley Tourism Service (Experience Comox Valley) mandate to include destination development and management.
- **Action 1.2:** Conduct a review of the governance structure of the Experience Comox Valley (with consideration of the Tourism Advisory Committee).
- **Action 1.3:** Provide value-added regional experiences for visitors and residents by focusing on Indigenous partnerships and collaborating with neighbouring communities like Campbell River, Parksville, and Qualicum Beach.
- **Action 1.4:** Establish quarterly community meetings with interested parties from within and around the Comox Valley region to collaborate on initiatives and share resources across sectors.
- **Action 1.5:** Coordinate joint projects with arts and culture, recreation, and environmental organizations, local businesses, local governments, and community-based non-profit organizations to maximize regional impact and resource efficiency.
- **Action 1.6:** Increase the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) from 2% to 3% to support the implementation of the regional strategy.

Objective 2: To promote shared ownership of the Tourism Strategy and provide transparent progress updates.

- **Action 2.1:** Develop and implement a communications plan for the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.
- **Action 2.2:** Create an inclusive, participatory framework with the support of the Tourism Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.
- **Action 2.3:** Collect and analyze data such as visitor spending patterns, yearly visitation, existing tourism operators, and sector performance to support data-driven decisions and measurable outcomes against established goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- **Action 2.4:** Track and share progress for Comox Valley Tourism Strategy actions through [Engagecomoxvalley.ca](https://engagecomoxvalley.ca).

Objective 3: To enhance emergency preparedness and response capabilities through coordinated partnerships.

- **Action 3.1:** Partner with members of the tourism industry and relevant organizations, emergency services, and local, provincial, and federal government ministries to fully integrate Experience Comox Valley into Vancouver Island's tourism emergency management programs.
- **Action 3.2:** Create a Comox Valley emergency communications strategy focused on the tourism industry.
- **Action 3.3:** Utilize the Experience Comox Valley website as a centralized tourist emergency information hub for real-time updates during emergency events.
- **Action 3.4:** Conduct annual training for tourism operators and their employees on emergency response procedures, including first aid and crowd management. Include tourism operators in organized emergency simulations and drills.
- **Action 3.5:** Advocate for tourism-specific emergency preparedness to be included in municipal, provincial, and national emergency plans.

Objective 4: To meaningfully engage with the K'ómoks First Nation on the Tourism Strategy and follow their lead to advance reconciliation, including supporting Indigenous storytelling and tourism experiences.

- **Action 4.1:** Collaborate with K'ómoks First Nation to design and deliver targeted educational content about K'ómoks First Nation's history, culture, and protocols to tourism operators.
- **Action 4.2:** Develop a partnership between the K'ómoks First Nation and Experience Comox Valley to expand interpretive signage programs across the region that build cultural awareness through Indigenous storytelling.
- **Action 4.3:** Support K'ómoks First Nation members in expanding and/or developing tourism businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Work Together Example KPIs

- Active cross-sector partnerships, both within the Comox Valley and externally.
- Number of engaged groups or representatives collaborating with Experience Comox Valley.
- Completion rate of Tourism Strategy actions.
- Resident sentiment score regarding tourism.
- Annual MRDT revenue growth.
- Visitation data for key attractions and activities.

Strengthen Stewardship of Place

Goals:

- Residents and visitors are engaged and actively participate in shaping an evolving cultural landscape in the Comox Valley.
- Implement responsible and regenerative actions to create conditions for the region's biodiversity to thrive for future generations.

Objective 1: To enrich resident and visitor appreciation for and connection to the land, water, and culture of the Comox Valley.

- **Action 1.1:** Collaborate with educational institutions (e.g., North Island College, School District 71) to empower leadership roles in sustainable tourism initiatives.
- **Action 1.2:** Create opportunities for residents and visitors to actively participate in regenerative projects throughout the Comox Valley, such as trail maintenance, accessibility improvements, and environmental stewardship activities.
- **Action 1.3:** Leverage Experience Comox Valley's website and promotional activities to build visitor and resident appreciation for the region's natural environment.
- **Action 1.4:** Develop engaging educational content and storytelling initiatives, in the spirit of reconciliation, that showcase local environmental stewardship, Indigenous knowledge, and community heritage to inspire deeper connections with the region's natural and cultural assets.
- **Action 1.5:** Partner with local organizations to promote opportunities to give back to the community and environment through initiatives such as donation campaigns, environmental stewardship activities, volunteer programs, and community enhancement projects.

Objective 2: To strengthen and protect the Comox Valley's natural and cultural assets.

- **Action 2.1:** Conduct an annual assessment with K'ómoks First Nation, local and provincial governments, and community organizations to identify natural assets and cultural heritage sites that Experience Comox Valley should **not** promote due to high visitor volume.
- **Action 2.2:** Support the creation of new interpretive programs that provide immersive experiences to build understanding and respect for the Comox Valley's natural and cultural assets (e.g., [Wild Pacific Trail](#)).

Objective 3: To raise awareness and understanding of shared stewardship priorities, including environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism practices.

- **Action 3.1:** Implement a sustainability and stewardship tool (e.g., [Biosphere](#), [Wayfinder](#)) for the Comox Valley to guide destination stewardship and support decision-making.
- **Action 3.2:** Enhance the visitor experience and showcase local heritage and community stories by collaborating with Comox Valley Arts to curate and implement cultural and artistic storytelling programs.
- **Action 3.3:** Support tourism operators in maximizing operational efficiencies and minimizing environmental impacts through best-practice platforms and technology (e.g., [Be-Smart](#)).

Objective 4: To advance climate action in tourism in the Comox Valley.

- **Action 4.1:** Explore joint climate action initiatives with regional partners such as Destination Campbell River, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism, 4TVI and other Vancouver Island destination organizations.
- **Action 4.2:** Develop and implement a destination stewardship coaching program for tourism businesses and operators in the Comox Valley region to enhance their sustainability practices and innovative visitor experiences.
- **Action 4.3:** Partner with other agencies to benchmark the Comox Valley tourism industry's total carbon emissions and identify decarbonization initiatives, including the carbon emissions of visitor-source markets and options for local, high-impact offsets.

Objective 5: To align and amplify the efforts of municipal, regional, and community strategies to support connected environmental conservation and cultural vitality.

- **Action 5.1:** Embed diverse historical narratives in marketing content, weaving together stories of K'ómoks First Nation, natural history, settler communities, and the region's extractive colonial past, including exploration, coal mining, and logging, to reflect the complex relationships between people, land, and water.
- **Action 5.2:** Collaborate with local environmental organizations to develop messaging around environmental stewardship. These messages should emphasize visitor's role in preserving the environment and include topics such as trail etiquette, wildlife awareness, respect for cultural sites, seasonal ecosystem sensitivities, and watershed protection.
- **Action 5.3:** Use Experience Comox Valley's promotional efforts and related regional and community plans (e.g., Official Community Plans, Climate Action Plans) to build awareness of how visitors can lessen their environmental impact and support the preservation of the area's natural and cultural assets.
- **Action 5.4:** Identify specific opportunities to leverage tourism strategy actions and resources with other place based stewardship strategies (e.g., Comox Valley Agricultural Plan, City of Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan and Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.).

Strengthen Stewardship of Place Example KPIs

- Number of participants in ECV-supported stewardship initiatives, such as trail work, restoration, clean-ups, accessibility improvements.
- Number of educational content pieces co-developed with ECV (e.g., videos, articles, exhibits, signage, digital content).
- Total annual engagement with stewardship content (e.g., web visits, video views, QR scans, downloads).
- Number of operators adopting sustainability platforms and certifications.

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Empower a Resilient and Inclusive Tourism Economy

Goals:

- Grow a strong, year-round tourism economy that increases sustainable investment and local jobs.
- Increase the economic benefits of tourism across all communities through the development and attraction of new markets.
- Position tourism businesses and organizations as vital contributors to the region's economy, culture, environment, and quality of life.
- Support inclusive and accessible communities by empowering tourism businesses to uplift and lead with care.

Objective 1: To stimulate a resilient, year-round tourism economy by promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, and attracting investment.

- **Action 1.1:** Partner with regional, provincial, federal tourism and economic development programs to assess market opportunities and provide local business development support in niche tourism sectors like eco-tourism, wellness, culinary and agri-tourism, marine tourism, sports tourism, and cultural tourism. (e.g. [Spark Program](#)).
- **Action 1.2:** Offer digital transformation support by providing training and resources to help Comox Valley tourism businesses adopt digital tools for marketing, operations, and e-commerce.
- **Action 1.3:** Partner with Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce to develop a hub for entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses to access resources, mentorship, networking opportunities, and training in key areas.

Objective 2: To position the Comox Valley as the ideal destination for visitors seeking diverse and authentic experiences in nature, culture, and adventure.

- **Action 2.1:** Continue to collaborate with regional organizations, associations, and local arts and culture groups to leverage unique local experiences, such as wellness retreats, arts and culture workshops, cycling tours, marine education, agri-food tours, and other kinds of interactive learning experiences.
- **Action 2.2:** Collaborate with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce and business associations to explore opportunities to expand evening and nighttime business operations.
- **Action 2.3:** Partner with Tourism Mount Washington and Mount Washington Alpine Resort to develop summer events and experiences at the resort.

Objective 3: To support recruitment and retention of a skilled tourism workforce in the Comox Valley.

- **Action 3.1:** Raise awareness about tourism careers by collaborating with educational institutions, employment organizations, and tourism businesses to provide opportunities to youth such as familiarization trips and hands-on learning experiences.
- **Action 3.2:** Collaborate with go2HR to collect data and identify tourism workforce skills gaps and training needs to support growth and retention.
- **Action 3.3:** Educate and encourage tourism sector employers to become Living Wage Employers.
- **Action 3.4:** Partner with the Immigrant Welcome Centre to increase awareness of employment opportunities in the tourism industry for newcomers to Canada.

Objective 4: To raise awareness of the economic contributions and benefits of Comox Valley's tourism economy to residents and local businesses.

- **Action 4.1:** Develop opportunities for meaningful connections between tourism operators and residents through initiatives like volunteer community efforts (e.g., [Relax. Recharge. Renew.](#)).
- **Action 4.2:** Conduct an annual resident tourism sentiment survey to benchmark community support for tourism and identify opportunities for improving resident quality of life through tourism.
- **Action 4.3:** Collaborate with local businesses to introduce loyalty programs for locals, such as local discounts, to encourage hometown exploration and promote a sense of pride and engagement within the community.

Objective 5: To promote initiatives that strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility throughout all tourism experiences in the Comox Valley.

- **Action 5.1:** Collaborate with regional organizations and local experts who specialize in accessibility and inclusiveness to conduct accessibility audits for popular trails, routes, pathways, and tourism experiences, and develop solutions to improve accessibility.
- **Action 5.2:** Continue to invest in the expansion of accessibility guides and accessible itineraries for the Comox Valley region to reach various audiences.
- **Action 5.3:** Collaborate with other regions to increase opportunities for accessibility and inclusion training programs and certifications for tourism businesses, operators, visitor centre staff, and ambassadors.
- **Action 5.4:** Promote and support IBPOC-led arts and culture programs and projects.

Empower an Inclusive and Resilient Tourism Economy Example KPIs

- Number of participants in ECV-supported training, workshops, mentorship, or career-development programs annually.
- Number of workers employed in tourism.
- Number of tourism businesses registered as Living Wage Employers.
- Overnight visitation numbers.
- Annual MRDT revenue.
- Visitor yield (spend per visit).
- Resident participation in local tourism experiences during shoulder season.

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Support Connected Communities and Tourism Infrastructure

Goals:

- Support a sustainable and seamless transportation network that connects communities to each other and the world.
- Invest in tourism infrastructure that reflects community priorities, contributes to decarbonization, and provides immersive experiences for residents and visitors.

Objective 1: To enhance community and regional connectivity through low-carbon transportation options.

- **Action 1.1:** Work with local governments to improve the connectivity and frequency of low-carbon ground transportation to connect visitors and residents travelling within the Comox Valley.
- **Action 1.2:** Work with local governments to expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and E-Bike charging and sharing opportunities, focusing on key locations such as ferries, airports, and other tourist hubs.
- **Action 1.3:** Create a central information hub for low-carbon transportation options in the region, including bus schedules and routes, EV charging stations, and active transportation routes. Integrate this information into Experience Comox Valley promotional materials and story-telling content.
- **Action 1.4:** Amplify and create funding opportunities to create shuttle service(s) to and from key attractions.
- **Action 1.5:** Work with local governments to enhance cycling infrastructure by expanding bike lanes around rail trails and adding bike storage. Partner with organizations like BC Cycling Coalition and Friends of Rails to Trails Vancouver Island to promote active transportation and develop multi-use pathways accessible for all ages and abilities.
- **Action 1.6:** Partner with the Comox Valley Airport to advocate for enhanced decarbonization and sustainability initiatives by coordinating data collection and incentive programs.

Objective 2: To identify and address housing needs for tourism workers and accommodation needs for visitors.

- **Action 2.1:** Conduct a regional visitor accommodation needs assessment with public and private sector partners.
- **Action 2.2:** Conduct a regional tourism workforce housing needs assessment with public and private sector partners.

- **Action 2.3:** Expand the collection of OAP revenue through a regional MRDT and direct it to create affordable or workforce housing.
- **Action 2.4:** Ensure Experience Comox Valley plays an active role in regional housing task forces and working groups, advocating for tourism industry perspectives on affordable housing and workforce solutions.

Objective 3: To support tourism-related community infrastructure expansion and enhancement.

- **Action 3.1:** Work with local governments annually to confirm priorities and collaborate on the use, improvement and expansion of shared infrastructure facilities and multi-use community spaces for year-round events, such as farmers' markets, outdoor events, art festivals, and cultural gatherings.
- **Action 3.2:** Conduct an assessment of regional tourism infrastructure needs, focusing on recreational and conference facilities to support destination growth through sports and events tourism.
- **Action 3.3:** Collaborate on efforts to support marina revitalization, enhancement and promotion for diverse water-based tourism activities and operations.
- **Action 3.4:** Collaborate on efforts to improve public water and beach access where responsible, and expand amenities for trail heads.
- **Action 3.5:** Work with local governments to establish accessible public washrooms, strategic locations for recycling facilities, and a new sanitation dump.
- **Action 3.6:** Leverage existing accessibility audit data to develop and implement integrated solutions that enhance accessibility for all users.

Objective 4: To enhance digital infrastructure and connectivity across the Comox Valley region.

- **Action 4.1:** Work with local governments to strategically expand public WiFi zones across the region, focusing on areas with limited cellular networks and leverage this service to promote responsible travel messaging.
- **Action 4.2:** Work with local governments to champion and facilitate the development of cellular communications infrastructure to enhance network coverage across the region, with priority on Highway 19 and 19A corridors.
- **Action 4.3:** Enhance Experience Comox Valley's website to be more user-friendly and accessible by adding features like language translation, adaptive interfaces, and mobile-friendly integrations.
- **Action 4.4:** Collaborate with the Comox Valley Arts Council to create digital infrastructure, such as interactive maps, that connect Comox, Courtenay, and Cumberland to showcase local artists and highlight interactive community features, including murals and art galleries.

Support Connected Communities and Tourism Infrastructure Example KPIs

- Visitor satisfaction score for the ease of navigating regional transportation options.
- Funding leveraged for tourism-related infrastructure.
- Number of publicly accessible water-access points appropriate for diverse water-based tourism activities.
- Total kilometres of trails, park pathways, and waterfront access routes that meet accessibility best practices.
- Amount of OAP revenue directed towards affordable housing initiatives.

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Enhance Year-Round Experiences for Everyone

Goals:

- Continue to support the growth of vibrant and sustainable communities that are great places to live and visit.
- Provide exceptional and unique year-round experiences for residents and visitors.

Objective 1: To encourage inclusivity and accessibility best practices to improve experiences for visitors and residents.

- **Action 1.1:** Prioritize access and inclusivity in destination management and marketing initiatives, through efforts like implementing interactive trip building tools.
- **Action 1.2:** Tailor marketing and promotional efforts to key visitor demographics in alignment with Destination Canada's Traveller Segmentation Program, focusing on driving responsible tourism and sharing best practices from the program.
- **Action 1.3:** Partner with organizations (e.g., [Rainbow Registered Program](#)) that champion 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion to demonstrate allyship and enhance inclusivity efforts.
- **Action 1.4:** Develop and implement a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy for Experience Comox Valley.

Objective 2: To enhance relevant visitor information services to improve visitors' experiences and satisfaction throughout their travel experience, from initial planning to post-trip reflection.

- **Action 2.1:** Conduct and share research on local and global visitor trends to guide tourism businesses in adapting their offerings, while encouraging arts and cultural programming to enhance shoulder season, after-hours and ancillary experiences.
- **Action 2.2:** Implement entry and exit surveys through a partnership between Experience Comox Valley and Comox Valley Airport to understand visitor sentiment and help manage tourism capacity.
- **Action 2.3:** Evaluate the visitor servicing delivery model for the Comox Valley region in year one of the Tourism Strategy and every five years thereafter for relevance and continue to expand remote/ mobile visitor servicing throughout the region.
- **Action 2.4:** Explore providing multilingual visitor information services.
- **Action 2.5:** Organize collaborative familiarization tours with other Vancouver Island communities, like the Sunshine Coast Visitor Information Centre, to expand regional knowledge and awareness of the Comox Valley.

Objective 3: To manage destination marketing and development through adaptable strategies that focus on regional and seasonal dispersion.

- **Action 3.1:** Invest in continuous market research to stay competitive, understand visitor needs, and adapt marketing strategies accordingly.
- **Action 3.2:** Continue to enhance and strengthen the Experience Comox Valley brand through a diverse collection of assets and content to amplify a cohesive story of the region's unique outdoor, culinary, and arts and cultural offerings.
- **Action 3.3:** Continue to support the development of diverse year-round attractions and tourism experiences through the enhancement and expansion of the Comox Valley Events and Experiences Fund.
- **Action 3.4:** Support organizers and operators with resources and guidelines for local sourcing and procurement, emergency management, and year-round experiential programming opportunities.
- **Action 3.5:** Develop annual tactical plan informed by tourism industry engagement, feedback and data-driven insights to guide all tourism development initiatives in the region.

Objective 4: To foster a vibrant culture of Host engagement that creates a welcoming and safe environment that benefits all.

- **Action 4.1:** Develop a Host ambassador program that fosters local pride and increases visitor engagement.
- **Action 4.2:** Collaborate with communities to organize additional community-focused activities across the region, including rural communities such as Fanny Bay, Royston, Merville, and Saratoga.
- **Action 4.3:** Advocate for safe pedestrian experiences, improved accessibility, and public services like parking solutions to handle peak tourism periods effectively without overwhelming existing community resources and the daily life of residents.

Enhance Year Round Experiences for Everyone Example KPIs

- Number of businesses registered with ECV.
- Increase in shoulder season visitation.
- Number of new or enhanced experiences, attractions, events, workshops, or tours supported by ECV.
- Net Promoter Score for Comox Valley as a destination.
- Number of businesses that are participating in a Host ambassador program.
- Engagement with ECV marketing materials across all platforms and all ad buys (i.e. website, search ads, social media, broadcast, display ads, etc.).

Tourism Strategy Implementation

The draft Implementation Matrix (Matrix) below presents the recommended strategic actions in each of the strategic themes and identifies considerations such as timeframe, cost, resource requirements and priority level. This Matrix will be the cornerstone of the strategy implementation and will inform annual tactical plans and MRDT 5 year business planning. The Matrix will be expanded to include relevant considerations such as partners and funding sources and adapted to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Implementation Considerations	Categories
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short: Under 2 years (by end of 2028) ● Medium: 2-5 years (by 2031) ● Long: 5-10 years (2032 - 2036) ● Ongoing: No defined timeframe, continuous
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$: Under \$10,000 ● \$\$: Between \$10,000 - \$25,000 ● \$\$\$: Over \$25,000
Resource Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low: Low cost, minimal capacity needed, delivered with existing staff and expertise. ● Medium: Moderate cost, some additional funding needs likely, likely needs additional expertise or cross-team coordination. ● High: High cost, requires new funding, specialized expertise and sustained capacity over multiple years.
Priority Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High Priority: These actions are essential for providing momentum and developing groundwork for the strategy, and should be advanced first. They address pressing needs, unlock other actions, reduce risk and respond to challenges and time-sensitive opportunities. High-priority items typically require funding, dedicated capacity, and clear accountability for implementation. Delaying these actions may undermine momentum, resilience, or core goals. ● Medium Priority: These actions are important but can be phased in after the highest-impact work is underway. They support strategic progress, strengthen systems, and add value but are not time-critical. Medium-priority items often depend on capacity availability, partnerships, or foundational work completed through high-priority actions. ● Low Priority: These actions are beneficial but not urgent. They tend

	<p>to be longer-term, higher cost, or dependent on future conditions. Low-priority actions should be monitored, revisited periodically, and advanced when capacity, funding, or enabling conditions align. Deferring these actions does not jeopardize the core goals of the strategy.</p>
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Draft Implementation Matrix

Working Together

Action	Timeline	Cost	Resource Reqs.	Priority
Objective 1				
1.1 Expand the Comox Valley Tourism Service (Experience Comox Valley) mandate to include destination development and management.	Short	\$	Low	High
1.2 Conduct a review of the governance structure of the Experience Comox Valley (with consideration of the Tourism Advisory Committee).	Short	\$	Low	High
1.3 Provide value-added regional experiences for visitors and residents by focusing on Indigenous partnerships and collaborating with neighbouring communities like Campbell River, Parksville, and Qualicum Beach.	Medium	\$\$	Medium - High	Medium
1.4 Establish quarterly community meetings with interested parties from within and around the Comox Valley region to collaborate on initiatives and share resources across all sectors.	Short ongoing	\$	Low	Medium - High
1.5 Coordinate joint projects with arts and culture organizations, recreation, environmental organizations, local businesses, local governments, and community-based non-profit organizations to maximize regional impact and resource efficiency.	Medium	\$	Medium	Low
1.6 Increase the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) from 2% to 3% to support the implementation of the regional strategy.	Short	\$	Medium	High
Objective 2				
2.1 Develop and implement a communications plan for the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.	Short	\$\$	Medium	High

2.2 Create an inclusive, participatory framework with the support of the Tourism Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.	Short	\$\$	Medium	High
2.3 Collect and analyze data such as visitor spending patterns, yearly visitation, existing tourism operators, and sector performance to support data-driven decisions and measurable outcomes against established goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).	Short and ongoing	\$\$	Medium	High
2.4 Track and share progress for Comox Valley Tourism Strategy actions through Engagecomoxvalley.ca.	Short and ongoing	\$	Low	Medium
Objective 3	Time	Cost	Resource	Priority
3.1 Partner with relevant organizations and advocate to government ministries to sustain partnerships, provide continuity, and fully integrate Experience Comox Valley into Vancouver Island's tourism emergency management programs.	Short - Medium	\$	Low - Medium	High
3.2 Co-develop Comox Valley emergency communications procedures for tourism that can serve both short and long term visitors, residents, and businesses affected by disruptions.	Short	\$\$	Medium	High
3.3 Utilize the Experience Comox Valley website as a centralized tourist emergency information hub for real-time updates during emergency events.	Short	\$	Low	High
3.4 Conduct annual training for tourism operators and their employees on emergency response procedures, including first aid and crowd management. Include tourism operators in organized emergency simulations and drills.	Short and ongoing	\$\$	Medium - High	Medium
3.5 Advocate for tourism-specific emergency preparedness to be included in municipal, provincial, and national emergency plans.	Medium and ongoing	\$	Low - Medium	Medium
Objective 4	Time	Cost	Resource	Priority
4.1 Collaborate with K'ómoks First Nation to design and deliver targeted educational content about K'ómoks First Nation's history, culture, and protocols to tourism operators.	Short	\$\$	Medium - High	High
4.2 Develop a partnership between the K'ómoks First Nation and Experience Comox Valley to expand interpretive signage programs across the region that build cultural awareness through Indigenous storytelling.	Short - Medium	\$\$	Medium - High	High
4.3 Support K'ómoks First Nation members in expanding	Short and	\$	Medium	High

and/or developing tourism businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives.	ongoing			
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Stewardship of Place

Action	Timeline	Cost	Resource Reqs.	Priority
Objective 1				
1.1 Collaborate with educational institutions (e.g., North Island College, School District 71) to empower leadership roles in sustainable tourism initiatives.	Medium	\$	Low	Medium
1.2 Create opportunities for residents to actively participate in regenerative projects throughout the Comox Valley, such as trail maintenance, accessibility improvements, and environmental stewardship activities.	Medium and ongoing	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
1.3 Leverage Experience Comox Valley's website and promotional activities to build visitor and resident appreciation for the region's natural environment.	Short and ongoing	\$	Low	Medium
1.4 Develop engaging educational content and storytelling initiatives, in the spirit of reconciliation, that showcase local environmental stewardship, Indigenous knowledge, and community heritage to inspire deeper connections with the region's natural and cultural assets.	Medium and ongoing	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
1.5 Partner with local organizations to promote opportunities to give back to the community and environment through initiatives such as donation campaigns, environmental stewardship activities, volunteer programs, and community enhancement projects.	Medium and ongoing	\$\$	Medium	Medium
Objective 2				
2.1 Conduct an annual assessment with K'ómoks First Nation, local and provincial governments, and community organizations to identify natural assets and cultural heritage sites that Experience Comox Valley should not promote due to high visitor volume.	Short and ongoing	\$\$	High	High
2.2 Support the creation of new interpretive programs that provide immersive experiences to build understanding and respect for the Comox Valley's natural and cultural assets.	Medium	\$\$	Medium	Medium
Objective 3				
3.1 Implement a sustainability and stewardship tool (e.g., Biosphere, Wayfinder) for the Comox Valley to guide	Short	\$\$	Low to Medium	High

destination stewardship and support decision-making.				
3.2 Enhance the visitor experience and showcase local heritage and community stories by collaborating with Comox Valley Arts to curate and implement cultural and artistic storytelling programs.	Medium	\$	Low	Medium
3.3 Support tourism operators in maximizing operational efficiencies and minimizing environmental impacts through best-practice platforms and technology (e.g., Be-Smart).	Short and ongoing	\$\$	Low	Medium
Objective 4				
4.1 Explore joint climate action initiatives with regional partners (e.g., Destination Campbell River, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism, 4TVI) and other Vancouver Island destination organizations.	Short	\$\$	Medium to High	High
4.2 Develop and implement a destination stewardship coaching program for tourism businesses and operators in the Comox Valley region to enhance their sustainability practices and innovative visitor experiences.	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium to High	Medium
4.3 Partner with other agencies to benchmark the Comox Valley tourism industry's total carbon emissions and identify decarbonization initiatives, including the carbon emissions of visitor-source markets and options for local, high-impact offsets.	Medium	\$\$\$	High	High
Objective 5				
5.1 Embed diverse historical narratives in marketing content, weaving together stories of K'ómoks First Nation, natural history, settler communities, and the region's extractive colonial past, including exploration, coal mining, and logging, to reflect the complex relationships between people, land, and water.	Short - Medium	\$\$	Medium to High	Medium
5.2 Collaborate with local environmental organizations to develop messaging around environmental stewardship. These messages should emphasize visitor's role in preserving the environment and include topics such as trail etiquette, wildlife awareness, respect for cultural sites, seasonal ecosystem sensitivities, and watershed protection.	Short and ongoing	\$\$	Medium	High
5.3 Use Experience Comox Valley's promotional efforts and related regional and community plans (e.g., Official Community Plans, Climate Action Plans) to build	Short and ongoing	\$	Low	Medium

awareness of how everyone can lessen their environmental impact and support the preservation of the area's natural and cultural assets.				
5.4 Identify specific opportunities to leverage tourism strategy actions and resources with other place based stewardship strategies such as the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan, City of Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan and Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.	Short	\$	Low	Medium

Empower an Inclusive and Resilient Economy

Action	Timeline	Cost	Resource Reqs.	Priority
Objective 1				
1.1 Partner with regional, provincial, federal tourism and economic development programs to assess market opportunities and provide local business development support in niche tourism sectors like eco-tourism, wellness, culinary and agri-tourism, marine tourism, sports tourism, and cultural tourism (e.g. Spark Program).	Medium	\$\$	Medium to High	High
1.2 Offer digital transformation support by providing training and resources to help Comox Valley tourism businesses adopt digital tools for marketing, operations, and e-commerce.	Short to Medium	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
1.3 Partner with Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce to develop a hub for entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses to access resources, mentorship, networking opportunities, and training in key areas.	Medium	\$\$	Medium	Medium
Objective 2				
2.1 Continue to collaborate with regional organizations, associations, and local arts and culture groups to leverage unique local experiences, such as wellness retreats, arts and culture workshops, cycling tours, marine education, agri-food tours, and other kinds of interactive learning experiences.	Short to Medium	\$\$	Medium to High	High
2.2 Collaborate with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce and business associations to explore opportunities to expand evening and nighttime business operations.	Short to Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
2.3 Partner with Tourism Mount Washington and Mount Washington Alpine Resort to develop summer events and	Short	\$	Medium	Medium

experiences at the resort (e.g., weddings).				
Objective 3				
3.1 Raise awareness about tourism careers by collaborating with educational institutions, employment organizations, and tourism businesses to provide opportunities to youth such as familiarization trips and hands-on learning experiences.	Short to Medium, ongoing	\$	Medium	Medium
3.2 Collaborate with go2HR to collect data and identify tourism workforce skills gaps and training needs to support growth and retention.	Short	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
3.3 Partner with the Immigrant Welcome Centre to increase awareness of employment opportunities in the tourism industry for newcomers to Canada.	Short	\$	Low to Medium	Medium
Objective 4				
4.1 Develop opportunities for meaningful connections between tourism operators and residents through initiatives like volunteer community efforts.	Short	\$	Medium	Medium
4.2 Conduct an annual resident tourism sentiment survey to benchmark community support for tourism and identify opportunities for improving resident quality of life through tourism.	Short	\$\$	Low	High
4.3 Collaborate with local businesses to introduce loyalty programs for locals, such as local discounts, to encourage hometown exploration and promote a sense of pride and engagement within the community.	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium	Medium
Objective 5				
5.1 Collaborate with regional organizations and local experts who specialize in accessibility and inclusiveness to conduct accessibility audits for popular trails, routes, pathways, and tourism experiences, and develop solutions to improve accessibility.	Short to Medium	\$\$\$	Medium to High	High
5.2 Continue to invest in the expansion of accessibility guides and accessible itineraries for the Comox Valley region to reach various audiences.	Medium	\$\$	Medium	Medium
5.3 Collaborate with other regions to increase opportunities for accessibility and inclusion training programs and certifications for tourism businesses, operators, visitor centre staff, and ambassadors.	Medium	\$\$	Medium	Medium
5.4 Promote and support IBPOC-led arts and culture programs and projects.	Short to Medium	\$	Low	Medium

Support Connected Communities and Tourism Infrastructure

Action	Timeline	Cost	Resource Reqs.	Priority
Objective 1				
1.1 Work with local governments to improve the connectivity and frequency of low-carbon ground transportation to connect visitors and residents travelling within the Comox Valley.	Short	\$\$	Low to Medium	High
1.2 Work with local governments to expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and E-Bike charging and sharing opportunities, focusing on key locations such as ferries, airports, and other tourist hubs.	Medium to Long	\$\$\$	Low to Medium	High
1.3 Create a central information hub for low-carbon transportation options in the region, including bus schedules and routes, EV charging stations, and active transportation routes. Integrate this information into Experience Comox Valley promotional materials and story-telling content.	Short to Medium, ongoing	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
1.4 Amplify and create funding opportunities to create shuttle service(s) to and from key attractions.	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium to High	High
1.5 Work with local governments to enhance cycling infrastructure by expanding bike lanes around rail trails and adding bike storage. Partner with organizations like BC Cycling Coalition and Friends of Rails to Trails Vancouver Island to promote active transportation and develop multi-use pathways accessible for all ages and abilities.	Medium	\$\$\$	High	Medium
1.6 Partner with the Comox Valley Airport to advocate for enhanced decarbonization and sustainability initiatives by coordinating data collection and incentive programs.	Medium	\$\$	High	Medium
Objective 2				
2.1 Conduct a regional visitor accommodation needs assessment with public and private sector partners.	Short	\$\$	Medium to High	High
2.2 Conduct a regional tourism workforce housing needs assessment with public and private sector partners.	Short	\$\$\$	Medium to High	High
2.3 Expand the collection of Online Accommodation Platform revenue through a regional MRDT and direct it to create affordable or workforce housing.	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium	High
2.4 Ensure Experience Comox Valley plays an active role in regional housing task forces and working groups, advocating for tourism industry perspectives on affordable	Short, Ongoing	\$	Low	Medium

housing and workforce solutions.				
Objective 3				
3.1 Work with local governments annually to confirm priorities and collaborate on the use, improvement and expansion of shared infrastructure facilities and multi-use community spaces for year-round events, such as farmers' markets, outdoor events, art festivals, and cultural gatherings.	Short to Medium, ongoing	\$	Medium	Medium
3.2 Conduct an assessment of regional tourism infrastructure needs, focusing on recreational and conference facilities to support destination growth through sports and events tourism.	Short to Medium	\$\$\$	Medium to High	Medium
3.3 Collaborate on efforts to support marina revitalization, enhancement and promotion for diverse water-based tourism activities and operations.	Medium to Long	\$	Medium	Medium
3.4 Collaborate on efforts to improve public water and beach access and amenities for trail heads.	Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
3.5 Work with local governments to establish accessible public washrooms, strategic locations for recycling facilities, and a new sanitation dump.	Medium	\$	Medium	High
3.6 Leverage existing accessibility audit data to develop and implement integrated solutions that enhance accessibility for all users.	Short to Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
Objective 4				
4.1 Work with local governments to strategically expand public WiFi zones across the region, focusing on areas with limited cellular networks and leverage this service to promote responsible travel messaging	Medium to Long	\$\$	High	Medium
4.2 Work with local governments to champion and facilitate the development of cellular communications infrastructure to enhance network coverage across the region, with priority on Highway 19 and 19A corridors	Medium to Long	\$\$	High	Medium
4.3 Enhance Experience Comox Valley's website to be more user-friendly and accessible by adding features like language translation, adaptive interfaces, and mobile-friendly integrations	Short	\$	Low to Medium	Medium
4.4 Collaborate with the Comox Valley Arts Council to create digital infrastructure, such as interactive maps, that connect Comox, Courtenay, and Cumberland to showcase local artists and highlight interactive community features, including murals and art galleries	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium	Medium

Enhance Year-Round Experiences for Everyone

Action	Timeline	Cost	Resource Reqs.	Priority
Objective 1				
1.1 Prioritize access and inclusivity in destination management and marketing initiatives, through efforts like implementing interactive trip building tools.	Short	\$	Low	Medium
1.2 Tailor marketing and promotional efforts to key visitor demographics in alignment with Destination Canada's Traveller Segmentation Program, focusing on driving responsible tourism and sharing best practices from the program.	Short	\$	Low	Medium
1.3 Partner with organizations (e.g., The Rainbow Registered Program) that champion 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion to demonstrate allyship and enhance inclusivity efforts.	Short to Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
1.4 Develop and implement an equity, diversity and inclusion strategy for Experience Comox Valley.	Medium to Long	\$\$\$	Medium to High	High
Objective 2				
2.1 Conduct and share research on local and global visitor trends to guide tourism businesses in adapting their offerings, while encouraging arts and cultural programming to enhance shoulder season, after-hours and ancillary experiences.	Short to Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
2.2 Implement entry and exit surveys through a partnership between Experience Comox Valley and Comox Valley Airport to understand visitor sentiment and help manage tourism capacity.	Medium	\$\$	Medium	High
2.3 Evaluate the visitor servicing delivery model for the Comox Valley region in 2026 and every five years thereafter for relevance and continue to expand remote/mobile visitor servicing throughout the region.	Short and ongoing	\$	Medium	Medium
2.4 Explore providing multilingual visitor information service.	Medium	\$	Medium	Medium
2.5 Organize collaborative familiarization tours with other Vancouver Island communities, like the Sunshine Coast Visitor Information Centre, to expand regional knowledge and awareness of the Comox Valley.	Short to Medium	\$\$	Medium to High	Low
Objective 3				
3.1 Invest in continuous market research to stay	Short to	\$\$	Medium to	High

competitive, understand visitor needs, and adapt marketing strategies accordingly. Where available, emergency risk data, including seasonal hazard trends, transportation vulnerabilities, and emerging safety concerns relevant to the Comox Valley.	Medium, ongoing		High	
3.2 Continue to enhance and strengthen the Experience Comox Valley brand through a diverse collection of assets and content to amplify a cohesive story of the region's unique outdoor, culinary, and arts and cultural offerings.	Short to Medium	\$\$	Low to Medium	Medium
3.3 Continue to support the development of diverse year-round attractions and tourism experiences through the enhancement and expansion of the Comox Valley Events and Experiences Fund.	Medium to Long	\$\$\$	Low to Medium	High
3.4 Support organizers and operators with resources and guidelines for local sourcing and procurement, emergency management, and year-round experiential programming opportunities.	Medium	\$	Low to Medium	Medium
3.5 Develop annual tactical plan informed by tourism industry engagement, feedback and data-driven insights to guide all tourism development initiatives in the region.	Short	\$\$	Medium	High
Objective 4				
4.1 Develop a Host ambassador program that fosters local pride and increases visitor engagement.	Medium to Long	\$\$	Medium	Medium
4.2 Collaborate with communities to organize additional community-focused activities across the region, including rural communities such as Fanny Bay, Royston, Merville, and Saratoga.	Short to Medium	\$\$	Medium	Medium
4.3 Advocate for safe pedestrian experiences, improved accessibility, and public services like parking solutions to handle peak tourism periods effectively without overwhelming existing community resources and the daily life of residents.	Medium	\$	Low	High

The Implementation Matrix will be finalized, revisited and updated regularly with communities, industry and partners across the region to plan, sequence, and resource work effectively while ensuring the Tourism Strategy remains responsive, achievable, and aligned with emerging opportunities and community needs.

MRDT Five-Year Strategic Business Plan

Every 5 years the Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) program requires a 5-Year Strategic Business Plan and each year a One-Year Tactical Plan. The next Five-Year Strategic Business Plan

for 2027 - 2031 will be submitted to the province in 2026 and will include actions as prioritized in the Matrix . Each year's One-Year MRDT Tactical Plan will then detail each tactic with a description, rationale, action steps, potential partnerships, resources, timeframe, budget and performance measures. For an example, please refer to the [2026 One-Year MRDT Tactical Plan](#) (Experience Comox Valley, 2025).

FINAL DRAFT

Background Information

Comox Valley Tourism Profile

The [Comox Valley Tourism Situation Analysis](#) was completed as a foundational component of the strategy development process to provide a deeper understanding of the Comox Valley tourism industry context. Below are excerpts from the Situation Analysis that provided guidance in the development of the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy.

Economic Development

Across British Columbia, the tourism industry generated \$22.1 billion in total revenue in 2023, with accommodation and food services accounting for \$7.9 billion—a 12.7% increase from 2022. Provincial tourism employment reached 125,700 jobs, growing by 7.9% year-over-year (Source: [Destination BC, 2023 Value of Tourism Data Tables](#)). Vancouver Island remained a key tourism hub with approximately 2,700 tourism-related businesses operating in the region in 2023 (Source: [Destination BC, 2023 Value of Tourism Data Tables](#)).

Tourism is a cornerstone of the Comox Valley's economy, with significant growth in visitor spending and accommodation revenues. In 2024, the region recorded \$462,611 in general MRDT revenue, representing a 10.8% increase from 2023. This translates to nearly \$28.5 million in total room revenue from traditional accommodations. The region saw strong post-pandemic recovery, with 2022 general MRDT revenue surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The six months of 2025 revenue tracking indicates approximately ten percent growth above the same timeframe in 2024, highlighting the sector's continued resilience and expansion.

Since 2020, Online Accommodation Platform (OAP) revenues have been directed to affordable housing initiatives through the City of Courtenay, accumulating over \$1 million total. The City is currently developing a comprehensive plan for deploying these funds to address housing challenges that directly impact tourism workforce availability.

Housing affordability has become a major barrier to the growth and competitiveness of the Comox Valley's tourism industry. Employers struggle to recruit and retain staff because workers cannot find attainable places to live, leading to reduced operating hours, labour shortages, and added pressure on small businesses. The 2018 Vital Signs Report highlighted the affordability gap, with a living wage of \$16.59 compared to a minimum wage of \$12.65; by 2024, the living wage had risen to \$24.36 while the minimum wage reached \$17.40, significantly widening the challenge for tourism and hospitality workers (Source: [Living Wage BC](#)). With more than 200 tourism-related businesses operating in the region, addressing housing affordability is essential to sustaining a resilient visitor economy and supporting a strong year-round workforce.

Sustainability

Balancing tourism growth with environmental stewardship and community well-being remains essential across the valley's diverse communities. The Comox Valley region faces numerous climate change impacts, including sea level rise, high temperatures, extreme weather events, increased strain on ecosystems and water resources, and infrastructure capacity limitations, all of which are likely to impact seasonal activity offerings.

Despite these challenges, climate change also presents opportunities for the tourism industry in the Comox Valley. For instance, extreme heat during summer months may support tourism during the shoulder seasons like spring and fall and reduce the pressure on destinations in peak summer months. In the same vein, ski resorts and other seasonal destinations can explore the opportunity to diversify their offerings to operate year-round and offset losses from shortened winter seasons. Investing in sustainable tourism practices and outdoor recreation can foster a deep connection to nature and prompt community-led environmental stewardship in the Comox Valley. Initiatives like Indigenous-led environmental standards, community guardians, and responsible recreation advocacy highlight the role of community engagement in environmental protection in the Comox Valley. Finally, innovating to develop new products and experiences that cater to changing climate conditions, such as indoor attractions during extreme weather events, can diversify the tourism portfolio.

Arts & Culture

The Comox Valley is a vibrant and creative region, celebrated for its diverse arts community, world-renowned Indigenous artists, and flourishing live theatre, music, and visual arts scene. This cultural richness is a defining part of the visitor experience, supported by institutions such as North Island College Fine Arts and a strong network of local creators, venues, and festivals. Community engagement in culture is exceptionally high, 94% of residents reported themselves as actively engaged in cultural activities in Courtenay's 2023 Strategic Culture Plan survey, demonstrating that arts and culture are central to the identity and appeal of the region.

Despite these strengths, the cultural sector faces challenges that limit its full tourism potential. Reports such as *Converge: Cultural Tourism and Marketing in the Comox Valley* highlight the need for stronger collaboration with cultural organizations, more visible support for Indigenous arts, and greater access to funding and affordable creative spaces. Small organizations in particular face capacity constraints, restrictive funding guidelines, and barriers to youth engagement and cultural inclusion.

By strengthening partnerships, increasing access to resources, and supporting spaces and programming, especially for youth and Indigenous creators, the Comox Valley can enhance its cultural vibrancy, attract more visitors, and reinforce its reputation as a creative, welcoming, and culturally rich destination.

Social Vibrancy

Social vibrancy is essential to the Comox Valley's identity and appeal, contributing to resident well-being and memorable visitor experiences. A lively social environment, built on cultural exchange, community traditions, and opportunities for meaningful connection, helps foster belonging, community pride, and a strong sense of place. When residents are engaged and communities feel alive throughout the year, visitors are more likely to stay longer, explore more broadly, and form lasting positive impressions of the region.

However, the Comox Valley faces a noticeable decline in vibrancy during the winter months, particularly in its downtown cores. Early business closures, limited evening options, and seasonal dependence on summer visitation create gaps in both the resident experience and tourism economy. Addressing this challenge presents a major opportunity: by extending operating hours, enhancing nightlife and cultural programming, and developing year-round and shoulder-season products, including indoor entertainment, cultural events, and winter-focused experiences, the region can diversify its visitor base, strengthen economic resilience, and enrich community life. A coordinated effort among businesses, cultural partners, and local leaders will be key to building a dynamic, welcoming, and socially vibrant destination in every season.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a growing regional and provincial priority, reinforced by a 2022 mandate requiring public sector organizations to create accessibility committees, develop plans, audit facilities, and implement feedback tools. In the Comox Valley, this work is supported by the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee and aligns with broader efforts to understand and map accessible infrastructure in relation to community needs. Despite progress, significant gaps remain. A provincial audit led by Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC found that only 2% of accommodation units in the region were considered accessible, limiting options for travellers with diverse mobility, cognitive, and sensory needs. These deficiencies create barriers for residents and visitors, reduce the region's competitiveness, and prevent the Comox Valley from being fully inclusive.

Strengthening accessibility presents a major opportunity to improve quality of life, expand the visitor market, and future-proof the region for an aging population. Initiatives such as the *Guide to Accessible Travel in the Comox Valley*, developed by travellers with disabilities, demonstrate proactive leadership and provide valuable insights to support more inclusive planning. By aligning with the provincial mandate, conducting comprehensive audits, and steadily improving public and private infrastructure, the Comox Valley can position itself as a leader in accessible travel. A more accessible destination supports year-round tourism, enhances social equity, and ensures that residents and visitors of all abilities can participate fully in the region's experiences.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Comox Valley's transportation network plays a critical role in shaping both the resident experience and visitor economy. As a regional gateway, the Comox Valley Airport (YQQ) and BC Ferries connections provide essential access for tourists and support economic exchange, including emergency links with neighbouring regions such as Powell River. The annual number of passengers served, both enplane and deplane, at YQQ has steadily increased over the last few years, with 402,489 in 2024, 371,989 in 2023, and 323,429 in 2022 (Source: [Comox Valley Airport](#)). 2025 has been an exceptionally busy year so far, with May to October 2025 breaking monthly terminal records compared to the same months in terminal history.

The Valley's transportation system remains largely car-dependent, with 85% of trips in Courtenay made by private vehicle, contributing to a significant share of local emissions. Sustainable travel modes, 7% walking, 4% cycling, and 4% transit, remain a small but meaningful foundation to build on. Limited flight connectivity, seasonal congestion, and a lack of major event facilities (such as conference or stadium infrastructure) constrain tourism potential, inhibit large-scale event hosting, and reduce the region's ability to disperse visitors year-round.

Strengthening transportation infrastructure offers major opportunities for both climate resilience and tourism competitiveness. Improving flight connectivity at YQQ and exploring stronger ferry linkages would support recovery, broaden visitor markets, and help smooth out seasonal peaks. Investments in active transportation networks, public transit, and seamless travel connections can reduce congestion, support the region's sustainability goals, and improve mobility for residents and visitors alike. At the same time, developing facilities that accommodate conferences, events, and sport tourism would diversify the visitor economy and attract new markets. By advancing sustainable mobility, improving connectivity, and addressing infrastructure gaps, the Comox Valley can create a more welcoming, accessible, and resilient destination for all seasons.

Target Markets

The Comox Valley attracts visitors primarily from British Columbia, including Southern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and Kelowna, Alberta (primarily Calgary and Edmonton), and Washington State. The primary demographic is couples aged 30+ and small groups, followed by multi-generational families, all with strong interest in outdoor and marine adventure, culinary experiences, and cultural exploration. Experience Comox Valley is now working towards aligning their target markets with Destination Canada's Traveller Segmentation profiles, focusing on two primary markets; Outdoor Explorers and Cultural Seekers and Fun & Sun Families (Source: [Destination Canada](#)).

Visitors seek authentic, rejuvenating, and immersive experiences, aligning with the region's natural and cultural assets. The diversity of experiences, from Cumberland's mountain biking trails to Comox's marina activities and Courtenay's cultural offerings, enables the destination to

serve varied interests while managing distribution across communities based on their respective capacities and tourism readiness.

Between summer 2023 and spring 2024, a comprehensive visitor intercept survey was conducted by ECV in partnership with Vancouver Island University. The survey revealed the primary purposes for visiting Comox Valley were pleasure or holiday (40.7%) and visiting family or friends (32.2%), followed by outdoor recreation and adventure (8.8%). The highest-ranked destination attributes were parks and public spaces (4.3 out of 5), overall atmosphere (4.1), outdoor adventure activities (3.9), and food and dining experiences (3.9). The most visited locations were Downtown Courtenay (66.3%), Downtown Comox (49.4%), and Downtown Cumberland (39.3%), with overnight visitors showing stronger preferences for Cumberland (45.4%) and Mount Washington trails. Beach activities (51.1%), shopping (48.0%), and hiking (45.8%) were the top activities. Day-trippers prioritized shopping (58.8%) and beach activities (44.1%), while overnight visitors favored beach activities (55.4%) and hiking (52.8%), suggesting deeper engagement with outdoor recreation. Notably, overnight visitors patronized local restaurants, cafes, craft breweries, and wineries more frequently than fast food chains, while day-trippers showed the opposite pattern. (Source: [Experience Comox Valley, 2024](#)).

Experience Comox Valley - Governance & Funding

Governance Structure

In 2021, the Comox Valley Regional District established the Comox Valley Tourism Service to provide the foundational structure for regional tourism management. The Tourism Service operates as Experience Comox Valley through a collaborative governance model designed to ensure transparent decision-making and meaningful industry engagement. The CVRD currently contracts 4EVER Strategies to operate ECV as the region's primary destination marketing organization.

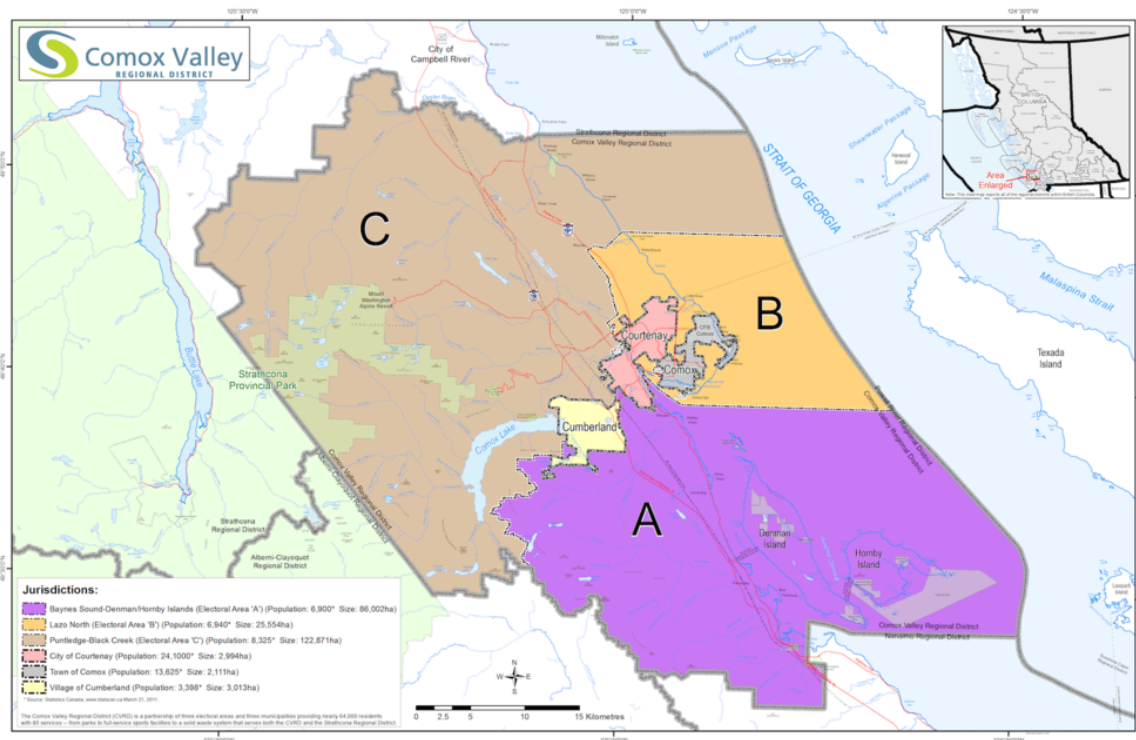


Figure 1. Map of the Comox Valley Tourism Service area includes Areas A (except Hornby Island and Denman Island), Area B, and Area C including Mount Washington Alpine Resort, Village of Cumberland, Town of Comox and City of Courtenay.

The [Comox Valley Tourism Advisory Committee](#) (TAC) provides industry guidance and ensures transparent collaboration with the local tourism sector. The TAC serves multiple functions, including:

- Providing input into the management and use of the City of Courtenay's MRDT and other tourism-related funds,

- Advising, reviewing, and recommending annual marketing plans and budgets for approval by the City of Courtenay and the CVRD,
- Working collaboratively to grow the economic and social benefits of tourism while strengthening the region's reputation as a year-round overnight destination,
- Providing strategic advice on various tourism-related matters, and
- Representing the interests of tourism businesses and interest-holders throughout the Comox Valley.

Today, ECV's role is evolving from delivering traditional destination marketing and visitor information services toward comprehensive destination management functions, including destination development, stewardship and industry support. This evolution reflects a fundamental industry shift from simply attracting visitors to actively managing the region to ensure its long-term desirability and sustainability, while also supporting livability for residents.

Funding Sources

ECV operates through a diversified funding model that ensures financial stability and enables comprehensive programming as follows:

- Taxation - annual tax requisition from the Comox Valley Tourism Service participants: City of Courtenay; Village of Cumberland; Defined portion of Electoral Area A - Baynes Sound; Electoral Area B; and, Electoral Area C.
- Fee for Service - the Town of Comox participates in ECV through a fee for service agreement with the CVRD. The current service agreement expires at the end of 2026.
- General [Municipal & Regional District Tax](#) (MRDT) revenue - The City of Courtenay MRDT (currently at 2 per cent) is an essential funding mechanism for ECV. Thanks to the unique partnership of the Comox Valley Tourism Service participants, general MRDT revenues collected in the City of Courtenay are invested alongside Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Tourism Service 550 revenues to fund Experience Comox Valley. *MRDT is not a tax placed on residents; it is an up to three percent tax applied to sales of short term accommodation.*
- Additional funding streams that strengthen the organization's capacity and reach include:
 - The Destination BC (DBC) Co-op Marketing grant which provides provincial partnership funding for collaborative marketing initiatives.
 - DBC Visitor Centre grant to support essential visitor services.
 - Federal grants, including programs like Canada Summer Jobs, enable seasonal capacity building and employment opportunities.
 - Revenue diversification through the Visitor Centre consignment retail store revenue, generated from local artisan goods and products, creates additional economic benefits for regional creatives while supporting operational costs. Advertising revenue from tourism businesses provides mutual benefit through promotional opportunities and sustainable funding mechanisms.

This model has totaled over \$2.7 million in MRDT general revenue collected since 2021 with additional streams providing operational flexibility and enabling ECV to deliver extensive programming including social media promotion, business directory listings, events calendar management, industry workshops, visitor centre services, retail consignment programs for local artisans, and travel media relations. Currently, ECV serves over 200 local tourism and tourism-related businesses through free website listings, demonstrating the breadth of the region's tourism ecosystem. Since 2022, more than 650 events have been listed on the regional events calendar.

ECV also funds the Events & Experiences Fund grant program offering up to \$7,500 for qualifying tourism initiatives. The Events & Experiences Fund grant program has provided targeted support for destination development, backing 6 events and experiences in its 2023 pilot year and expanding to support 10 initiatives in 2024 and 10 in 2025. This program represents a direct investment in enhancing visitor experiences while supporting local event organizers and experience providers.

The financial structure reflects the CVRD's commitment to fiscal responsibility while ensuring adequate resources for destination marketing, visitor services, and emerging destination management priorities that support the region's evolution from a seasonal to a year-round preferred destination.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Engagement Process

The Comox Valley Tourism Strategy engagement process gathered insights from over 120 community members and 60+ stakeholders. Engagement began in late 2023 and continued throughout 2024 with workshops, focus groups, and interviews. Public engagement continued into 2025 through the Tourism Strategy Steering Committee (TSSC), the TAC, presentations of the draft Strategy to the CVRD Board and municipal councils, and a final round of public open houses and an online survey. The engagement process was purposefully robust to develop a Tourism Strategy that reflects diverse community perspectives while addressing key challenges and opportunities.

Engagement activities were tailored to ensure broad representation across the Comox Valley region, encompassing the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and Electoral Areas A, B, and C (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands). Stakeholders engaged through workshops, focus groups and targeted interviews represented a broad cross-section of the community, including, but not limited to:

- Tourism industry representatives
- Environmental organizations
- Social Service organizations
- Business sectors and associations
- Educational institutions
- Cultural organizations
- Recreational groups
- Community members
- Students
- K'ómoks First Nation
- Local Government officials
- Provincial and Local Government staff

Engagement Methodologies

- **Workshops:** Collaborative discussions engaging stakeholders and residents in conversations around critical challenges and opportunities, fostering a shared vision for tourism's future in the Comox Valley.
- **Focus Group Conversations:** Deep-dive sessions with specific community groups including arts and culture organizations, events and festivals coordinators, culinary experience providers, community-based and environmental NGOs, marine tour operators, and spa and wellness businesses.

- **Targeted Interviews:** In-depth conversations with key stakeholders, industry leaders, and tourism experts, including Tourism Strategy Steering Committee members, local government staff, and community residents, providing specialized knowledge to enrich the Tourism Strategy.

Engagement Activities

- Establishing a balanced TSSC and hosting five committee meetings to date.
- Launching a virtual engagement platform: *Comox Valley Tourism Strategy Plan | Engage Comox Valley*.
- Delivering two virtual public information sessions on the Tourism Strategy planning process.
- Hosting two major public engagement workshops: Vision & Opportunities (40 attendees) and Strategic Framework (70 attendees).
- Hosting a Local Government Staff Session (12 participants)
- Facilitating an Elected Officials Forum workshop.
- Conducting targeted engagement through 60+ one-on-one interviews and focus group sessions.
- Engaging directly with the K'ómoks Economic Development Corporation and Chief Administrative Officers from Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland, and K'ómoks First Nation.
- Hosting three public open houses in Courtenay, Comox, and Cumberland.
- Presenting to Council on the Tourism Strategy in Courtenay, Comox, and Cumberland.

The engagement timeline followed a structured approach:

Phase 1: Initial Engagement (November 2023 - March 2024)

- Virtual Information Session (November 9, 2023).
- Public Engagement Session 1: Tourism Strategy & Vision Opportunities (November 20, 2023).
- Public Engagement Session 2: Tourism Strategy Framework & Initiatives (March 4, 2024).
- Concurrent focus group conversations and targeted interviews.

Phase 2: Strategy Development (April - September 2024)

- Analysis of engagement findings and development of draft strategies.
- Identification of key opportunity areas and implementation timelines.
- Presentation to TSSC and CVRD for initial feedback and refinement.

Phase 3: Community Validation (October - November 2024)

- Community Open Houses for additional public input.
- Final draft strategy refinement based on community aspirations.

- Completion of Final Draft Strategy by November 2024.

What We Heard from Engagement

A comprehensive engagement process was conducted through workshops, focus groups, and interviews revealing a range of themes that form the foundation of the Tourism Strategy. While many important community issues surfaced through the engagement process, several extend beyond the scope of the Tourism Strategy and fall within broader governance and community planning and infrastructure mandates. The Tourism Strategy is a tool to support better management of visitation, reduce the pressures associated with over-tourism, and guide future investments that improve infrastructure and the overall visitors experience and resident livability.

- **Strong Emphasis on Environmental Sustainability and Cultural Preservation:** Stakeholders consistently prioritized the need for regenerative tourism approaches that align with UN SDGs. This includes sustainable water management practices, watershed protection, responsible waste management, and the promotion of mindful tourism through environmental education. Cultural preservation emerged as equally important, with emphasis on celebrating local and First Nation stories, increasing cultural awareness, and using cultural and artistic storytelling to curate authentic visitor experiences that showcase the region's heritage and community narratives.
- **Focus on Balancing Tourist and Resident Needs:** A recurring theme throughout engagement was ensuring tourism development enhances rather than detracts from residents' quality of life. Participants emphasized the importance of conducting resident sentiment surveys to align destination marketing with community perspectives, fostering positive brand messaging, and creating tourism initiatives that provide value-added experiences for both visitors and locals. This balance includes managing peak tourism periods effectively through seasonal waste management, water usage coordination, and traffic flow improvements.
- **Recognition of Housing Affordability Challenges:** Stakeholders consistently identified housing costs as a critical barrier affecting both tourism workforce sustainability and community livability. The Tourism Strategy acknowledges the need for more affordable, student, and seasonal staff housing, particularly expanding accommodation options outside Courtenay into Cumberland and Comox. This challenge was recognized as directly impacting the tourism industry's ability to attract and retain quality staff while ensuring long-term community sustainability.
- **Commitment to Inclusive Economic Development:** Engagement revealed strong support for ensuring tourism's economic benefits are distributed equitably across the community. This includes supporting small businesses, start-ups, and social enterprises to promote a circular economy, providing funding and resources for community organizations and non-profits, and focusing on youth engagement and local employment opportunities. The Tourism Strategy emphasizes creating economic opportunities that benefit diverse community members while maintaining the region's authentic character.

- **Emphasis on Year-Round Tourism Opportunities:** Stakeholders prioritized developing seasonal resilience through year-round tourism offerings. This includes promoting seasonal events and monthly promotions such as food festivals, art tours, and sports events to improve shoulder season visitation. The Tourism Strategy emphasizes leveraging weather-independent activities like wellness tourism, sports tourism, educational tourism (agri-tourism and adventure tourism), and indoor cultural activities to create sustainable tourism flows throughout the year.
- **Priority on Infrastructure Development:** Comprehensive infrastructure needs emerged as fundamental to supporting sustainable tourism growth. This includes enhancing transportation infrastructure with EV charging stations, improved cycling infrastructure with safe routes and bike storage, expanding multi-use trails and pedestrian walkways, and developing multi-use community spaces. Participants emphasized the need for upgraded conference facilities, better signage systems, interactive maps, and improved accessibility features across all tourism infrastructure.
- **Integration of Digital Solutions and Modern Amenities:** Stakeholders recognized the importance of modern digital infrastructure to enhance visitor experiences and operational efficiency. This includes developing platforms for booking experience packages, implementing shared digital signboards, creating interactive community features and digital infrastructure with interactive maps connecting the three main communities. The Tourism Strategy emphasizes establishing comprehensive information hubs and using technology to support geographical dispersion of visitors while improving overall service delivery.
- **Recognition of the Need for Regional Collaboration:** A consistent finding was that effective tourism development requires collaboration that transcends municipal boundaries, as visitors experience the region as a cohesive destination. This includes fostering partnerships with neighboring communities, leveraging shared resources through regional parks cooperation, and integrating tourism strategies with broader economic and land use planning such as Official Community Plans. Stakeholders emphasized the need for Experience Comox Valley to adopt a more holistic destination management approach, collaborating more effectively with CVRD and integrating MRDT funds for better resource allocation and coordinated tourism development.

The engagement process emphasized the critical importance of balancing tourist and resident needs, addressing housing affordability challenges, and ensuring that tourism development contributes positively to community quality of life while preserving the region's natural beauty and cultural integrity for future generations.

Comox Valley Tourism Strategy Steering Committee (TSSC)

A TSSC was engaged through the project to guide, advise and contribute to the development of the Strategy. Members included:

Name	Organization/Business
Darren Adams	Cumberland Brewing Company
David Rooper	Old House Hotel & Spa
David Pinel	North Island College
Dougal Browne	United Riders of Cumberland
Jennifer Casey	Comox Valley Arts
Greg Chadwick	Downtown Courtenay BIA
Karin Kratz	CV Regional Accessibility Committee
Linda Thomas	Filberg Heritage Park Association
Meaghan Cursons	Cumberland Community Forest Society
Mike Atkins	Comox Valley Airport Commission
Tracey Clarke	CV Chamber of Commerce
Twila Skinner	CV Farmers' Market Association

APPENDIX B: Glossary

Accessibility	Broadly, this term means people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities free of barriers. In a tourism sense, this means the design, development, and delivery of tourism experiences, services, and destinations that can be used by all people regardless of their age, ability, or circumstance without barriers to participation, comfort, or dignity. (Source: Office of the Auditor General, British Columbia)
Destination Development	The strategic planning and advancement of defined areas to support the evolution of desirable destinations for travellers, with a focus on the supply side of tourism, by providing compelling experiences, quality infrastructure, and remarkable services to entice visitation. (Source: Destination BC)
Destination Stewardship	The continuous pursuit of a net positive tourism ecosystem that exists in alignment with shared community values. This means a positive tourism experience for visitors and residents alike. (Source: Destinations International)
Eco-Tourism	Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education (Source: The International Ecotourism Society)
Sustainable Tourism Development	Sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. (Source: Global Sustainable Tourism Council)
Regenerative Tourism	Regenerative tourism is often described as a practice that seeks to leave destinations in a better state than they were found. It draws inspiration from regenerative agriculture, which emphasizes restoring ecosystems and enhancing biodiversity. (Source: Global Sustainable Tourism Council)
Tourism Ecosystem	The intricate web of interactions between tourists, the natural environment, local communities, and the various businesses and organizations that cater to visitors. (Source: Prism Sustainability)