

Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association



Regional Marketing Plan

Fiscal Year 2016-2017

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Executive Summary

On behalf of the Kootenay Rockies region's tourism industry and regional stakeholders, our Marketing Plan focus will be to actively engage in tactics that will broaden the awareness of our geographic area of British Columbia by presenting the region holistically as a key destination with inspirational, icon product capped off with the presence of four jewels of Canada's National Parks: Yoho, Kootenay, Glacier and Mount Revelstoke. These parks are the gateway to so much of what we are known for, a spectacular outdoor playground, that in many cases as a region is the 'hidden' gem of British Columbia.

Our region is coming off of a good tourism season and with the exception of a couple of weeks in which major fires caused thick smoke throughout the region, and media gave people cause for concern about travelling to certain parts of the province, most of the businesses reporting indicated increases in the seasons revenues and visitation to that point. What we aim to do through our plan is to build on those increases, drive our stakeholder business even higher and work with Destination BC (DBC) to build on the new brand, to raise awareness and to heighten the sense of urgency to come to our province and specifically the Kootenay Rockies (KR) for some or all of their visit.

We will look to align and strengthen Destination BC's provincial direction as identified in the new Corporate Strategy. We will lead the regional marketing effort within the new Touring and Exploring program by focusing on expanding and elevating the existing marketing opportunities to present the products collectively through various mediums. Our regional itineraries will be enhanced further and we will be looking to create new opportunities for cross-regional and cross-border itinerary development and to work with new and non-traditional partners to build on our strengths and similarities.

Kootenay Rockies is active on Social Media with accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Instagram. We look forward to contributing to the Provincial content strategy in addition to growing engagement on our own platforms.

Our plan will see our efforts focus more sharply to bring additional revenues to this region and the province. As an integral part of the ecosystem, we will focus on extending the programs and efforts of DBC across all corners of our geographic area to elevate the awareness and strength of our industry stakeholders.

Situation Analysis

The Kootenay Rockies region generated 1.8 million overnight visits in 2012, which is approximately 10% of the overall visitation to British Columbia. Domestic overnight visits account for 83% of the visitation and international travelers account for 17%.¹

The primary market for the Kootenay Rockies region is Canadian regional with the main focus being Alberta. The region experiences predominately “close in” or “fly drive” visitation so overall expenditures tend to be directed at the 3-5 hour drive radius.

The Kootenay Rockies region is heavily reliant on the Alberta market for over 50% of our revenues and the security of that revenue percentage is somewhat dependent on Alberta’s economy to become economically stable and recover from their current recession. We have not currently seen any major shift of Alberta traffic into our region, but we are on the watch for any changes that may result in a negative impact. Our focus will be to create a sense of urgency for the Alberta consumer to visit our region and experience some of the new adventure products our region has to offer. We will focus some of our key messaging to drive more traffic directly to our stakeholders ‘call to action’ to close the sale and generate a more straightforward path to purchase.

With the Canadian currency weakened, there is increased opportunity to attract more US visitors by encouraging them to take advantage of a very favourable exchange rate and their ability to extend their purchasing power. As we have many communities situated within an hour of the international border, this presents a further marketing opportunity for our Touring and Exploring program plans.

The winter of 2014-2015 resulted in very little snow and the ski resorts have indicated it was a very bad year for visitor numbers. We hope that this winter season 2015-2016 will be much better for those businesses that rely on a good to excellent snow season.

Summer 2015 was promising with reports of an increase in visitation, but once the forest fires became a factor there may have been a slowdown in tourists. At one point this summer, Hwy 3 was closed in both directions – west and east – and impacted travellers had to re-route north to Hwy 1 to continue travelling either east or west in BC.

Kootenay Rockies continues to work with the regional airport authority and tourism stakeholders to attract additional air commitment to the Canadian Rockies International Airport (CRIA). The CRIA with the extended its runway of 8,000 ft. and with its expanded terminal has facilities and capability for international arrivals with Canada Border Services facilities. The airports in the region also include the West Kootenay Regional Airport (Castlegar) and Trail Airport.

¹ Destination BC-Kootenay Rockies Regional Tourism Profile-January 2015

Air Canada and Pacific Coastal Airlines offer scheduled service to Vancouver, Kelowna and Calgary. There are also many chartered aircraft arriving in the region. Airfares to and from the region are considered expensive, particularly to the gateway of Calgary (YYC) as Air Canada is the only provider on that route.

The lack of twinned highway routes within the region has been identified as an issue for the region, there is a lack of bus or group transportation and there is a perception that BC interior highways are impassable during the winter. Rental vehicles offer winter snow tires as an upgrade not standard. The Ministry tourism signage (the blue & whites) need refreshing and updating.

There are 15 communities in the region who have participated in the Community Tourism programs. As a result of the Community Foundations planning and tactics, 9 of the 15 communities have formed Community DMOs with access to the Municipal Regional District Tax funds to be used towards their marketing initiatives. To further expand tourism in the region, 7 of the communities have been successfully designated as Resort Municipalities and receive additional funding, which is directed at tourism infrastructure development.

“Visitors to the Kootenay Rockies tend to have few activities planned but make most decisions about what to participate in while on the trip, which places high importance on Visitor Centres and other information sourced during the visit”.²

The activities that motivate our target markets are also the same activities that we have in spades within our region. Canadian travellers Top 5 motivators are camping, hiking/backpacking, beach, National/Provincial parks, wildlife viewing/bird watching, and boating/canoeing/kayaking. Top motivators for the US & International travellers were National/Provincial parks, historic sites, museum/art gallery, camping, and ski/snowboard.³

The region boasts the highest concentration of lift, heli & cat-skiing and backcountry lodges anywhere in the world. Our plans include a focus on winter touring with all on snow activities choices featured and the communities that enhance the winter experience along the Powder Highway.

² Tourism BC-Kootenay Rockies-2012 In-Market Research Report

³ Destination BC-Kootenay Rockies Regional Tourism Profile-January 2015

Objectives and Targets

The objective of our Touring & Exploring marketing plan is to encourage the traveller to explore & discover multiple parts of the region by offering activities and itineraries that will inspire them to participate in activities that are unique and in stunning settings and to motivate them to do it now!

Touring is a major component of the visitor industry in the region. The Touring budget includes projects directed at the FIT, touring and destination visitors. It includes attractions, festivals & events, wellness, recreation (soft adventure) and getaway vacations. It transcends the seasons and includes visitors who travel to our region in the winter to enjoy a myriad of winter activities.

The target audience includes the general touring traveller, the RV traveller, the outdoor adventure seeker, the motorcycle traveller, families & friends and destination weddings, and the traveller touring along with POWDER HIGHWAY™ in winter.

Our marketing plan will also cover a wide range of outdoor activities in both summer and winter seasons. Stakeholder product presented will include Whitewater Rafting, Kayaking, Snowmobiling, Backcountry adventure & lodge stays, Biking, Hiking & Fishing.

Within the total gross budget there is 83% or \$414,624 targeted to the Canadian traveller (BC, AB, SK) and 17% or \$85,376 targeted to the American traveller (WA, ID, MT, CA).

Objectives:

1. Contribute to increase new and repeat visitation to our region from our primary (Alberta, BC & Washington) and secondary (Saskatchewan, Ontario, Montana & Idaho) markets.
2. Contribute to Increase visitor length of stay and overall expenditures
3. Improve traveler advocacy and Net Promoter Score
4. Retain a collaborative, insight-driven, results-focused team

Targets:

- A. An increase from 1.9M person-visits (2015 estimate) to 2.0M person-visits in 2018 to the Kootenay Rockies region (3% growth rate compounded year over year)
- B. An increase in overall visitor spending from \$738M (2015 estimate) to \$854M in 2018 (5% growth rate compounded year over year)
- C. An increase in Accommodation Sector revenue from \$298M (2015 estimate) to \$345M in 2018 (5% growth rate compounded year over year)
- D. A baseline has yet to be determined with regards to the Net Promoter Score

In order to ensure accurate measurements and metrics for growth, we need to obtain information on results for this current fiscal. Information on visitor arrivals tends to be 3 months lag and we understand the same is true for MRDT reporting of revenue.

NOTE: Target measurement predictions were calculated from a baseline number from the last year reported which was **2012** from the report 'Kootenay Rockies Regional Tourism Profile 2015'.

Strategies

We look forward to a strong partnership with Destination BC and to support and stimulate ongoing growth of the tourism industry in the Kootenay Rockies region.

We believe that Destination BC will provide much of the travel decision stimulus that will work to 'Captive' the traveller. There is also a very high awareness of the Kootenay Rockies region in our target audience.

Captivate 10% - Awareness of BC and the KR region is very high in our target audience. Our message will be to highlight the entire region and to keep their attention and interest.

Advocate 20% - Using non-leveraged projects to suggest itineraries, activities and to highlight the entire region and its tourism product offers.

Generate 70% - Using leveraged funds with regional content but with the call to action direct to the tourism supplier.

Our marketing plan includes multi-media projects that will reach out to the target consumer on multiple occasions so the message resonates with the audience.

We will work with our tourism suppliers to encourage collaboration and to maximize the value propositions available to visitors.

Our messaging will align with the type of trip activities that appeal to our target audiences. As mentioned earlier and in the statistics below⁴, the activities that motivate our target markets are also the same activities that we have in spades within our region.

Canadians surveyed: camping/hiking/backpacking, beach, National/Provincial parks, wildlife viewing/bird watching, and boating/canoeing/kayaking.

US & International surveyed: National/Provincial parks, historic sites, museum/art gallery, camping, ski/snowboard.

The research results are interesting when comparing 'Motivating' versus 'Participating' activities. Travellers participated in activities that didn't originally motivate them to choose our region. This indicates we can influence additional expenditures and activity engagement by ensuring information is available while the traveller is in region that can inspire them to commit.

Sightseeing, nature, wildlife viewing: Motivated - 27% versus Participated - 53%

National or Provincial parks: Motivated - 20% versus Participated - 44%

Hiking: Motivated - 13% versus Participated - 44%

Shopping: Motivated - 2% versus Participated - 41%

Historical sites: Motivated - 6% versus Participated - 25%

⁴ Destination BC-Kootenay Rockies Regional Tourism Profile-January 2015

Our marketing plan includes continued promotion and enhancement of the Kootenay APP and the companion print piece Circle Route Map. The Kootenay APP is promoted at Visitor Centres (VC) in the region with a free gift incentive. The Circle Route Map is stocked in the VC and has distribution through British Columbia and Alberta and the NW USA.

The Kootenay APP is the perfect tool in today's technology for tourism product information with over 1,000 pages of content. Our Kootenay APP has continued to grow in popularity with over 15,000 downloads in less than 3 years. This valuable in-region reference tool features over 1,200 tourism stakeholder content pages – 300+ festival & events listings – interactive mapping, Near Me function and Special Offers. Tourism product listings include Accommodation, Dining, Shopping, Attractions, Communities, Recreation, Circle Routes and Hot Springs. The site includes all web links, all Social media links, video & audio clips, Photo Tours, Webcams, Blogs, Road Reports, Ferry Schedules and more.

Understanding the travellers booking habits based on the In-Market research shows us that Internet that is accessed by a computer is the main source of planning before travelling, and that Apps and Visitor Centres are a strong source of planning during the travel period. Destination BC will be taking the lead on marketing with Online Travel Agencies, we believe the Kootenay APP and Circle Route Map will serve the visitor well while in region.

Increasing our traveller advocacy is also a high priority. And our region is well positioned to capitalize on our visitor' enthusiasm about the time they spend with us. It is reported that 59% of travellers surveyed have a positive overall impression of the Kootenay Rockies region.⁵ We are 2nd out of 6 in BC regions in positive impressions. Vancouver Island is number 1. Working with our communities and industry stakeholders we will highlight the value for businesses in promoting traveller reviews, recommendations, word of mouth referrals and repeat visitation. The Remarkable Experiences pilot project in Fernie will provide some new ideas for collaboration and ways to raise our Net Promoter Score in the region.



⁵ Tourism BC-Kootenay Rockies-2012 In-Market Research Report

Positioning and Messaging

Our regional tag line is 'British Columbia's Mountain Playground'. The region covers 58,000 sq.km in the province. The jagged peaks of the Canadian Rockies rise in parallel with those of the Purcell, Selkirk and Monashee ranges. In between are valleys, rivers and lakes that have enabled human existence for thousands of years. In the midst of this monumental landscape, geography, geology and history have conspired to create utterly charming Victorian small towns. This is the birthplace of adventure tourism.

Visitors come to the Kootenay Rockies for a rich palette of recreational activities that includes world-class hiking, biking, climbing, river rafting, paragliding, canoeing, and wildlife viewing and golfing. The region is home to 4 of the 7 national parks in BC and over 75 provincial parks. Most hot springs in Canada occur in BC and the Kootenay Rockies region is blessed with many that range from wonderful resorts to wilderness backcountry pools.

The Kootenay Rockies region boasts the highest concentration of lift serviced, heli, cat and backcountry skiing anywhere in the world. Since 2005, the region and its winter product offers have been using the Powder Highway brand. Our plans include continued promotion of the Powder Highway experiences and the mountain towns that enhance and elevate the vacation experience.

Regional iconic experiences that align with Destination BC's new corporate strategy include cities in wilderness, mountains and on snow activities.

Our region offers an escape from the large urban centres. We have wide-open, unspoiled spaces with more wildlife than people. The mountains are spectacular to view from afar and offer the traveller a chance to be part of nature, multiple outdoor activity choices and the hot springs offer relaxation in wilderness settings.

Target Audience – Geographic Markets & Audience Segments

Our main target market is the drive market within 3-5 hours. The tactics in our marketing plan will be targeted to the major cities in BC (Vancouver), Alberta (Calgary, Lethbridge), Saskatchewan (Regina) and the NW USA (Spokane).

Domestic overnight visits account for 83% of the visitation and international travellers account for 17%.⁶ Within the total gross budget 83% or \$414,624 is focused on attracting Canadians (BC, AB, SK) and 17% or \$85,376 is focused on attracting travellers from the NW US (WA, ID, MT).

To further identify the target market the budget is balanced to reflect the target audience with the following percentages of focus:

British Columbia 28%

CDN Regional 55%

US Regional 17%

Our region has not yet undertaken the EQ Strategy analysis but we anticipate through DBC, we will to have access and training very soon. We note that 4 of our key industry partners (CTC, DBC, TAVI, and TOTA) have identified the same 3 traveller types as desirable. We believe our region's visitors would also fall nicely into the 3 categories identified. With the huge array of product and activity offers in our region we observe that we attract families, couples, groups, winter and summer outdoor activity enthusiasts, heritage & cultural visitors, and an emerging group of 'farm to table', winery, brewery visitors.

Authentic Experiencers, who are identified as having over 50% who are 55+ with an equal count of men & women in both US and Canada, mature or middle age with no kids, having a desire to learn, be independent and seek living history and culture.

Cultural Explorer, ranges younger from 35-54 noted as middle age no kids, with a larger number who are women and they seek out personal challenge, are risk takers and are attracted to historical and cultural events.

Free Spirit, the younger, ambitious visitor with most in the 18-34 age range, and are either families or young with no kids seeking iconic experiences, inclined to group travel and sharing their experiences on Social Media.

⁶ Destination BC-Kootenay Rockies Regional Tourism Profile-January 2015

Following is a breakdown of the budget by specific marketing themes:

Touring Audience – budget 67%

- These visitors have an average stay of 8.1 nights, they travel an average 1,700 km, and 76% are parties of 2 or more with average spending \$1,800 per trip
- Top markets – BC & AB

Adventure Audience 33%

- 19.7 million visit Provincial parks, 2.4 million visit National parks, and 1.2 million participate in outdoor adventure activities
- Top markets – BC & US

The top factors listed by the **2012 In-Market Research Report** when choosing a destination were:

- Good value for money (83%)
- Place to relax & unwind (82%)
- Good getaway from everyday (79%)

Kootenay Rockies is well positioned to meet these top factors. We offer value for money – we do not have high tourist area pricing (such as Vancouver, Kelowna or Banff). Our region is a place to relax and unwind in the mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers. We offer a unique getaway from the everyday with hot springs, hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, golfing, and skiing. Our mountain and valley communities are attractive with their own sense of place and offer a range of accommodation options as well as unique shops and great restaurants in the middle of an incredible outdoor experience.

Note: Touring and Adventure Audience statistics from DBC – Tourism Sector Profiles May 2014

Provincial Alignment

As the Regional DMO, we embrace the chance to ensure the regional messaging within our marketing outputs is designed align with to the new Destination BC brand. All aspects including imagery, fonts, tone of voice will be aligned. We will continue to send the outputs to DBC for review and feedback. Together we will ensure the regional messaging aligns with the Provincial strategy. We also seek to have influence and to encourage further alignments on the marketing outputs from our communities and tourism stakeholders who will be participating in initiatives using Destination BC funding.



Performance Measures (Metrics)

In order to set measurement and metrics for a new fiscal year we will first need to obtain information on results of FY16. We anticipate being able to set target measurements by March 2016 for the next fiscal 2016/2017.

A. An increase in new and repeat visitation to our region.

- Measured by an increase in Visitor Centre statistics
- Measured by an increase in US to Canada border crossing statistics
- Measured by data collected by Stats Can including the International Travel Survey (ITS) and Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC)

B. An increase in visitor length of stay and overall expenditures.

- Measured by an increase in MRDT revenues
- Measured by data collected by Stats Can including the International Travel Survey (ITS) and Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC)

C. Improve traveller advocacy and Net Promoter Score.

- Once a baseline score is set for the region, continued tracking of increases to the NPS.

D. Retain a collaborative, insight-driven, results-focused team.

- Maintain employee engagement through collaboration, professional development opportunities, and an annual review process.

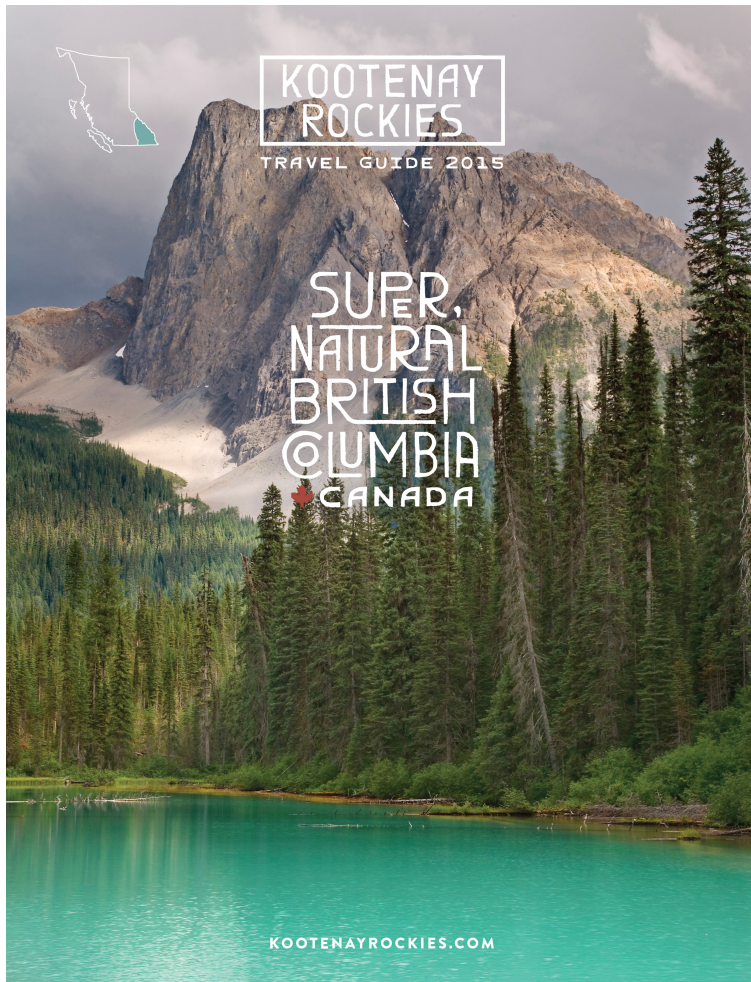
Marketing Budget

We have allocated a total of \$400,000 towards the Touring and Exploring Marketing Budget.

We will leverage \$200,000 with our tourism stakeholders for a total budget of \$400,000. Within the leveraged projects we will charge an administration fee of 15% on the stakeholder funds only (\$200K).

We have allocated an additional budget of \$100,000 for non-leveraged projects. Projects that carry the regional message and that are encompassing of the destination will be the focus.

The non-leveraged budget would also be utilized to bridge any gaps that may occur within the new co-op marketing programs.





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