

TOURISM ABBOTSFORD

**5 YEAR STRATEGY
2023-2027**



**TOURISM
ABBOTSFORD**

A scenic view of a lake with a wooden bridge, a duck, and a building in the background. The bridge is made of wood and has a railing. A duck is swimming in the water. In the background, there is a building with a green roof and some trees.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following five-year tourism strategy was developed with extensive input from the many tourism stakeholders and residents of the City of Abbotsford. Participants' willingness to share ideas and contribute to the direction for tourism in Abbotsford is acknowledged and appreciated.

The leadership of the Board of Directors of Tourism Abbotsford and Executive Director was foundational to plan development and will remain so as implementation proceeds.

It has been a privilege to work together again with everyone in Abbotsford. Thank you.

SUZANNE DENBAK

A word on acronyms – throughout the plan that follows, the following acronyms have been employed:

ADR

Average Daily Rate

DMO

Destination Marketing/Management Organization

MRDT

Municipal Regional District Tax

RDMO

Regional Destination Marketing/Management Organization

TA

Tourism Abbotsford Society

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Tourism Abbotsford's Mandate

We have 'Abbytude'

We are Abbotsford's tourism champions. We lead our industry, inspiring targeted travellers to choose Abbotsford and 'experience more Abby' through our strategic marketing campaigns and our visitor engagement programs. We educate residents and their elected representatives on the contribution tourism makes to life in Abbotsford. We advocate for our industry's needs and for improvements to infrastructure and experiences that visitors and residents alike will enjoy.

Our Shared Vision for Tourism in Abbotsford

Travellers know and love Abbotsford, visiting often and sharing their experiences with the world. Abbotsford's tourism sector is highly valued by residents and local businesses for the significant and positive contribution it makes to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our community.

OUR VALUES

We actively engage and respectfully listen. We proactively go out and meet with our industry. We are open and collaborative.

Having listened, we know when it is time to act. And when we act, we are bold leaders – strategic and focussed. We deliver measurable results for our industry.

We are innovators. We push the boundaries of status quo, never accepting 'good enough', always seeking to improve.

We strive to be sustainable and then push further to be regenerative, embracing our role as advocates and educators of responsible travel.

Through it all, we are respectful, we embrace diversity, and we are kind. We share our love for Abbotsford. We love what we do, and we have fun doing it.



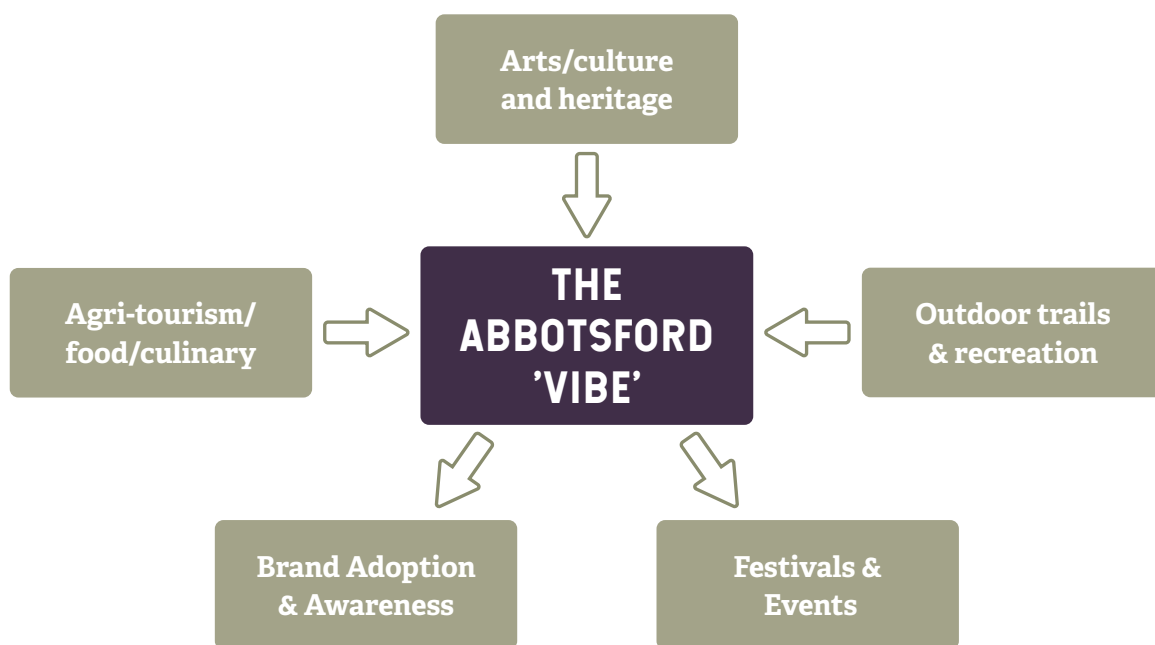
THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE:	THIS IS WHAT WE WILL DO: IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS....	THIS IS WHAT WE WILL MEASURE:
<i>We believe that our community is distinct from others around us and that we have unique and authentic experiences to share with the world.</i>	We will continue to celebrate everything that defines 'Abbotsford' and build awareness, excitement and intention to visit amongst visitors who stay longer, share their stories with their friends and return often.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel Occupancy and ADR • Average length of stay • Net promoter score • Marketing campaign measures
<i>We believe that tourism is a vital part of Abbotsford's economy and an important contributor to our cultural and social fabric providing opportunities for community pride building, for exchange of ideas, for employment and entrepreneurship all of which contribute to our shared quality of life.</i>	We will be leaders and tourism industry champions in Abbotsford, educating our residents and our local government on the importance of tourism and successfully advocating for investments that enhance the visitor experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and value of City investments that also enhance the visitor experience • Resident support for tourism economy
<i>We believe that we are stronger together.</i>	We will continue to foster partnerships, collaboration and mutual respect in order to strengthen every initiative upon which we embark.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement & participation in marketing campaigns, festivals/events, various Committee & Board opportunities
<i>We believe that our team and Abbotsford's diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We believe in supporting and empowering the team to deliver results for our stakeholders.</i>	We will continue to be open to new perspectives and different worldviews. We will support the development of more accessible and inclusive tourism experiences and employment. We will challenge status quo in our own organization and invest in the development of a strong and capable team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development initiatives • Diversity, equity and inclusion measures
<i>We believe in sustainable tourism development and meaningful reconciliation that goes beyond words.</i>	We will educate our industry, residents and visitors on sustainable tourism practices and responsible travel considering local priorities as well as the framework of the United Nations seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. We will work together with Indigenous communities, with industry, with government, and with Indigenous Tourism BC so tourism becomes a contributor to the economic, social and cultural aspirations of these communities. We will work with industry to understand, support and implement the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder participation rates in training and certification programs for Responsible Travel • Engagement with local Indigenous communities/ members & new authentic Indigenous cultural experiences shared with visitors to Abbotsford

The last few years have been hard on Abbotsford – pandemics, floods, heat domes – our farmers, our businesses, our residents suffered. Some would suggest that through all of this Abbotsford lost its ‘vibe’; that the grip of the pandemic, the lure of other industries, and the boom in residential development overtook Abbotsford’s sense of fun, adventure and connection to nature. We disagree – the spark is there and it is our job to fan the flames and share all that is special about Abbotsford.

Visitors to Abbotsford experience a tangible and memorable ‘vibe’ that can only be found here – a vibe that is born of the intentional and strategic co-mingling of agri-tourism/farm to table dining with our diverse art/

culture/heritage values and experiences and our easy access to epic outdoor recreation on a network of single track and family friendly trails.

You can see silos in Abbotsford, but we don’t operate in them – farm experiences are paired with musical performances; an epic trail ride can end with dinner and a theatre performance. When we thoughtfully build these experiential layers, we create experiences that can only be found in Abbotsford. In Abbotsford, pairings aren’t just for wines – we consider them strategically in all our experiential offers to create something only Abbotsford can deliver.



GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

Tourism Abbotsford is funded primarily through the collection of Municipal Regional District Tax at the rate of 3%. Accommodation providers have indicated their support to continue this collection for the next five years with 100% of providers signing the petition (see petition signatures). The City of Abbotsford is the designated recipient of the funds and retains amounts collected from Online Accommodation Platforms (OAPs) for investment in future affordable housing initiatives.

Tourism Abbotsford is the service provider for the City and receives the MRDT funds disbursed to the City, net of OAP contributions and a small administrative fee charged by the Province. In 2021, these funds totalled \$547,435. As the Tourism Services provider, Tourism Abbotsford receives an Annual Fee for Service from the City. Other funds used in destination marketing services are derived from cooperative marketing programs, corporate sponsorship, Federal Summer Student funding, and provincial funding for Visitor Services.

Tourism Abbotsford is governed by an independent, industry-led Board of Directors. The Directors represent the interests of all tourism stakeholders in Abbotsford with three seats for the accommodation sector, as well as seats for other experience providers and the City of Abbotsford, Economic Development staff. The current Board of Directors is comprised of:

- DANIEL LAVERICK
Clarion Hotel
Accommodation Sector
- KAMNA SURI
Sandman Hotel,
Accommodation Sector
- LOREN TAVES
Taves Family Farm,
Agritourism Sector
- ALLAN ASAPH
Abbotsford Chamber of
Commerce, Business Sector
- CARILYNN SIEMENS
City of Abbotsford
- RUPI RAJWAN
Sport Sector
- TANYA CURTIS
Business Sector

The Board of Directors has approved this five-year strategy for Tourism Abbotsford and each year also works with Executive Director Craig Nichols and his team to prepare an annual operating budget and tactical plan that will activate these strategies on a priority basis over the five-year term.

In accordance with the reporting requirements associated with the MRDT program, each year Tourism Abbotsford reports on its progress against the previously submitted Annual Plan and submits the plan for the upcoming calendar year.

For more information, visit the Industry page at www.tourismabbotsford.ca



TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

OUR RESPONSE

Post pandemic – competition is fierce domestically; international travel that was put off is now possible; travel has become expensive	<i>We must be strategic, focused and use primary research to guide our investments</i>
Digital literacy has grown exponentially through the pandemic – digital sophistication of marketers has also grown	<i>Create clear and compelling differentiators and express them loudly and often</i>
Economic uncertainty with rising inflation, fuel/food costs, higher interest rates are reducing personal disposable income	<i>Demonstrate value as well as excitement in our offers</i>
Yet people still want to travel – value is important; nature-related, outdoor activities remain desirable	<i>Appeal to this 'need' to travel and make it easy to choose Abbotsford</i>
Food sustainability/food security and knowing where food comes from continues to grow in importance	<i>Leverage this interest in where food comes from; buy local and reduce GHG emissions associated with transport and continue to advocate for food sustainability</i>
Continued interest in outdoor activities; personal health/wellness is paramount – hiking, trail running, mountain biking, road biking are travel motivators	<i>Advocate for destination development investments that prioritize trails, trail-related services, amenities</i>
Growing awareness of climate change – sustainable travel considerations; EV's; Ebikes; car share programs	<i>Advocate for destination development investments to support EV charging; E-bike routes/networks; Partner with car share programs on marketing campaigns</i>
Meetings, trade shows, conferences are resuming but often still have a hybrid component for virtual participation; cost of facilities/services/amenities in downtown Vancouver remains high and for many groups, unaffordable	<i>Pursue the Fraser Valley Conference Centre opportunity</i>
Continued strong interest in authentic Indigenous experiences – greater understanding of importance of meaningful reconciliation	<i>Build relationships and offer support to advance tourism aspirations</i>
Abbotsford has ability to speak to 'captive audiences' – traffic along Highway 1; passengers through Abbotsford Airport; attendees at events in various Abbotsford facilities	<i>Use these 'stages' to maximum impact to showcase all the reasons to stay longer in Abbotsford</i>
Abbotsford has event venues and significant event potential through new events and selective building of existing events that are considered 'signature' and 'travel motivating'	<i>Use festivals, events strategically to introduce travellers to Abbotsford; to fill need periods; to create an Abbotsford 'vibe'</i>
Abbotsford has good 'dirt' that distinguishes its single-track trails from other destinations like Squamish and has potential to offer competitive advantage if appropriate investments are made to protect/grow trail network and associated infrastructure (trail heads, washroom facilities, signage etc.)	<i>Create another compelling reason to visit Abbotsford by investing in single track trail networks</i>
Abbotsford has an interesting heritage to share – Indigenous culture; historic downtown; Gur Sikh Temple and Heritage Museum; Trethewey House Heritage Site	<i>Celebrate Abbotsford heritage – travel enhancing experiences</i>
Abbotsford has incredible cultural diversity and depth of artistic talent in all wide range of forms/media	<i>Celebrate culture in Abbotsford</i>

MEASURING SUCCESS

Tourism Abbotsford will measure its success against the following indicators across four performance themes:

1. Economic Indicators:

- ✓ Increasing visitor length of stay in Abbotsford (Visitor Survey)
- ✓ Increasing accommodation occupancy rates across all seasons (Accommodation reporting)
- ✓ Increasing average daily rate (ADR) in accommodation properties (Accommodation reporting)

2. Resiliency/Sustainability Indicators:

- ✓ Increasing depth of agritourism/culinary experiences on offer at individual locations and woven together across Abbotsford (Net Promoter Score)
- ✓ Increasing experiential diversity in Abbotsford – trail-based experiences and associated infrastructure are being enhanced; art/culture/heritage experiences are becoming travel motivators; new Indigenous cultural experiences in development (Net Promoter Score)
- ✓ Increasing participation in sustainability and accessibility initiatives, certifications and education programs by Abbotsford's tourism experiences (Annual participation levels in industry programs)

3. Advocacy/Collaboration Indicators:

(Net Promoter Score measures overall visitor satisfaction and helps predict future growth)

- ✓ Increasing support for tourism from elected officials as evidenced by City investments in infrastructure/services/amenities that contribute to the quality of visitor experience as well as resident quality of life (Annual investment summary)
- ✓ Increasing resident support and understanding of the value of tourism in Abbotsford (Annual survey)

- ✓ Increasing number of collaborative tourism initiatives within Abbotsford and where beneficial, with organizations outside of Abbotsford (Annual reporting)
- ✓ Participation in Fraser Valley Destination Development Council and initiatives to achieve 10-year vision for the region
- ✓ Number of stakeholder visits/drop-ins to new and existing tourism businesses/experience providers (possibly done together with Economic Development/City)

4. Organizational Indicators:

- ✓ Strong levels of awareness and support for the work of Tourism Abbotsford (Annual Survey)
- ✓ Growing number of endorsements received from stakeholders of Tourism Abbotsford (Annual Survey)
- ✓ Strong staff retention rates and investment in staff career development (HR Reporting)



TASTE of ABBY

Fall Food Festival

NIGHT MARKET PARTICIPATING VENDORS:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Archway/Day 1 Urban Farm | Maan Farms Country Experience & Estate Winery |
| Banter Ice Cream | Mindful Monk |
| Big Red's Poutine Truck | Mt. Lehman Cheese Co. |
| BIPOC + Local Marketplace | Mt. Lehman Winery |
| Bubble Tasty Tea | Ravens Brewing Company |
| Circular Harvest | Restaurant 62 |
| | Ripples Estate Winery |
| | Singletree Winery |
| | Taves Estate Cidery & Family Farm |
| | The Palm Coffee Trailer |
| | Wingerz Food Truck |

TASTEofABBY.CA

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The tourism strategies that follow are intended to leverage Abbotsford's tourism strengths and seize high return opportunities while being cognizant of the weaknesses and threats being faced.

Abbotsford's most significant strengths and opportunities lie in its scenic beauty, its location on the TransCanada and proximity to the Lower Mainland, its wealth of agri-tourism experiences, and growing winery/brewery/culinary scene alongside the opportunities associated with enhancing and extending these agri-tourism/culinary experiences and extending them to include more local arts, culture and heritage experiences. Single track trail development along with investment in associated amenities/trail maintenance has been identified as another significant opportunity.

Further, Abbotsford has facilities such as TRADEX and the Abbotsford Centre that are already drawing significant numbers of visitors creating an opportunity to speak to this somewhat captive audience and share with them the reasons to stay longer and come back to Abbotsford.

Strengths

Strengths are characteristics of Abbotsford that give it advantage over others.

- Scenic, wide, fertile valley/mountain backdrop
- Fraser River runs through the entire length of Abbotsford
- Excellent sturgeon fishing opportunities based in Abbotsford
- Ledgeview Golf Course – signature course; has produced champions – training centre
- Friendly community – ethnically diverse and generous – a 'giving' community
- Highly visible location along the TransCanada #1 – close to US border crossings
- Number/mix of agri-tourism experiences (berries, dairies, apples, honey, poultry/meats, family friendly activities – maze, petting zoo, playgrounds, ziplines...)
- Growing number of wineries, craft breweries
- Unique festivals/events that draw visitation (Air Show, AgriFair, Run for Water, Taste of Abby etc.)
- Community rich in arts, culture, heritage – Gallery 7, Abbotsford Arts Centre, Abbotsford Arts Council, Reach Gallery & Museum, Trethewey House, Downtown, Clayburn Village, Sikh Museum, Mennonite Heritage Museum
- Discovery Trail, 98 km network of trails – cycling/mountain biking/walking, 157 community parks (2,584 acres of parkland), lakes – single track trails on Sumas Mountain offer unique and compelling 'dirt' that differs and complements experiences on other trails in Squamish, Chilliwack etc.
- Facilities in place that are already drawing visitation and have unused capacity and potential for multiple simultaneous events:
 - Abbotsford Centre and Canucks franchise
 - TRADEX – consumer/trade shows
 - Meetings/conference facilities
 - Sport tourism facilities/fields
 - Churches/halls
- Abbotsford International Airport with flights to/from destinations across Canada



TASTE of ABBY

Fall Food Festival



Weaknesses

Weaknesses are characteristics of Abbotsford that place it at a disadvantage relative to others.

- Not quite enough...to warrant overnight stay
 - Not quite far enough away from Vancouver
 - Not quite enough culinary experiences... opportunity to extend
 - Not quite enough farm experiences...opportunity to extend within Abbotsford and to continue to work with Fraser Valley collective
 - Not quite enough craft breweries/wineries... opportunity to work with a larger 'trail'
- Lack of City-led comprehensive infrastructure development plan and strategy to keep Abbotsford competitive
- Private vehicle dependent – no connecting shuttles between experiences/experiences and hotels
- No 'bricks and mortar' visitor centre as an anchor for visitor information services
- Quality of service challenged by tourism industry labour shortages, lack of affordable housing for tourism staff
- Unclear business model and future focus for new TRADEX operator
- Abbotsford accommodation mix missing higher end options for travellers as well as missing camping facilities
- Fraser River experiences/connection to the river missing...opportunity to work with Indigenous communities to create a river-based experience
- Lack of authentic Indigenous cultural experiences and limited community interest/capacity to advance their tourism opportunities
- Limited investment in trail infrastructure to support mountain biking opportunity that is a growth sector and also tied to business attraction/lifestyle considerations of entrepreneurial capital – City focus appears to prioritize grass parks/stroller paths
- Lack of local government understanding of value of tourism industry and commitment to invest in infrastructure to support its growth and sustainable development

Opportunities

Opportunities are elements in the tourism environment that Abbotsford can exploit to its advantage.

- Strength of US Dollar is encouraging more American visitation and keeping more Canadians at home
- Growing use of social media/mobile technology for information gathering by travellers both in the planning stage of their trip and while in destination
- Increasing opportunities and resources to support sport tourism/event hosting – appeal to third party event producers
- Leverage growing desire for culinary experiences, access to locally grown ingredients, food education and closer relationships from field to table
- Appeal to growing number of mountain biking/road cycling enthusiasts; leverage BC's growing reputation
- Continued interest in Indigenous cultural experiences
- Sturgeon catch and release remains a 'bucket list' experience
- Birding enthusiasts are passionate and motivated to travel to see new species

Threats

(Threats are elements in the tourism or business environment that could cause trouble for Abbotsford)

- Climate change and extreme weather events like flooding and heat domes impact access and experience delivery
- High cost of fuel may reduce road travel
- Criminal activities in/around Abbotsford, issues of homelessness erode destination brand building efforts
- Active competitors who own much of the same 'space' – Chilliwack, Langley, Surrey
- High demand for hotel rooms arising from pipeline construction is permitting significant rate increases and may alienate leisure travellers
- A lack of affordable housing in Abbotsford makes attracting employees and entrepreneurs in tourism difficult
- Inflated real estate prices have made the economics challenging for boutique accommodation operators, like bed and breakfasts, to start up

ABBOTSFORD'S UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION, BRANDING & TARGET AUDIENCE

Based upon a review of available market research, Abbotsford's current situation analysis and knowledge of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for tourism in Abbotsford, the following elements of the visitor experience should be considered as foundational to Abbotsford's unique selling proposition:

- Agricultural experiences – wide variety of family friendly farms and activities – growing number farm to table experiences, food and culinary experiences – craft breweries/wineries/meadery
- Ideal multi-night stop on a longer touring journey through Western Canada or travelling to/from Okanagan and Vancouver Island – sunny, warm and relatively inexpensive getaway
- Rich diversity here and a passion for the arts – museums, heritage sites, festivals, performing and visual arts contribute to and enhance your local experience
- Abbotsford International Airport – fast, efficient and affordable with carriers and a growing number of routes in Canada
- Sport tourism infrastructure, amenities and hospitality are all here to ensure a successful tournament/event

It is important to note that these statements are not the narrative actually used for promotional purposes but rather serve to inform the creation of stories and associated imagery/videography that leverage this unique selling proposition in compelling ways that motivate travel to Abbotsford. In 2019 in keeping with the identified priorities in the current five-year strategy, Tourism Abbotsford undertook a comprehensive branding exercise to refresh and reinvigorate the Abbotsford brand.

The branding process included months of research using surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder workshops. The new brand captures the spirit of these conversations and highlights Abbotsford's agricultural history, authenticity, passion, and diversity. Its essence speaks to "A city, which connects people to the land and to each other...a place to set and grow roots together." Given the global trend of experiential tourism, tourists continue to crave meaningful experiences, ones that engage their senses and foster emotional and spiritual connections. Abbotsford is a strong experiential destination, attracting visitors from all over the world.

Source: July 2019 Press Release Tourism Abbotsford



Markets that should be targeted and offered specific Abbotsford experiences so as to achieve the objective of increasing overnight visitation, length of stay and visitor spending throughout the year include the following:

TARGET AUDIENCE	ABBOTSFORD EXPERIENCE	KEY MESSAGE ELEMENTS
<i>Millennials and Empty Nesters –getaways from Lower Mainland</i>	Craft breweries + unique experiences; quiet walking and hiking trails	Suggested itineraries (including car sharing options)
<i>Ale Trail Followers (all geographic markets)</i>	Craft breweries, wineries, meadery + dining + accommodation	Field House; Old Abbey Ales; Ravens Brewing – feature unique flavours, awards, etc.
<i>Family Vacations – Lower Mainland/AB/Washington State markets</i>	Memorable family experiences – easy hiking/biking, farm experiences, cultural/heritage experiences and opportunities to learn together, affordable accommodation and dining options	Connect to the land – connect to your family - suggested itineraries including range of places to stay, family friendly activities
<i>Golfing Enthusiasts</i>	Basecamp to enjoy multiple courses	Accessible, affordable and enjoyable way to pursue your passion
<i>Geo Caching Enthusiasts</i>	Affordable basecamp for geocaching	Accessible, affordable and enjoyable way to pursue your passion
<i>Birding Enthusiasts</i>	Migratory species easily viewed – part of the BC Bird Trail	Accessible, affordable and enjoyable way to pursue your passion
<i>Mountain Biking Enthusiasts</i>	Abbotsford 'dirt' offers a unique and enjoyable biking experience	Add to your Lower Mainland/Squamish/Whistler biking plans
<i>Angling Enthusiasts</i>	Abbotsford as a base for sturgeon fishing on the Fraser River	Bucket list experience – here in Abbotsford
<i>Regional BC/Alberta</i>	Opportunity to break up the drive and enjoy a day of farm experiences, dining, shopping and affordable accommodation Opportunity for a fun and affordable family getaway	Stop – Stay – Breath – Relax
<i>Washington State/California</i>	Arts, culture, heritage; agri-tourism experiences; shopping & great value (exchange)	'A' on your bucket list – Abbotsford must do's – feature best of Abbotsford experiences in sample 2, 3 and 5 day itineraries
<i>Regional, Provincial, National and International Sport Tourism Event Organizers – shoulder season focus</i>	Local clubs combine with sport tourism infrastructure + accommodation, dining, retail experiences	Abbotsford has the facilities and amenities to host successful tournaments, races and other sporting events

TARGET AUDIENCE	ABBOTSFORD EXPERIENCE	KEY MESSAGE ELEMENTS
<i>Festival and Event Goers – Regional Drive Markets</i>	Heritage, culture, live entertainment, family fun at events such as International Air Show, Agrifair, Canucks games, concerts TRADEX upcoming events	Reasons to stay longer in Abbotsford – incorporate sample itineraries and packages that include festival/event admission, overnight stay
<i>Shopping/Getaways – Regional Drive Markets/ Cross Border Shoppers</i>	Combination of ‘big box retail’ + unique local arts and crafts packaged with accommodation and dining/possible festival or cultural event/show	Shop and stay packages – combine with festival or other events particularly in shoulder season
<i>Touring Travellers – all geographic markets with particular European touring travellers</i>	Spring/summer/fall touring market can use Abbotsford as a base for multi-night stay to experience entire Fraser Valley – feature accommodation, dining, central location along with wealth of outdoor and cultural experiences	Farm experiences, heritage, culture, stunning scenery and local hospitality – Abbotsford is the ideal base for several nights as part of a longer touring vacation

Target audience can also be defined by their psychographic traits. The Explorer Quotient is a tool developed by Destination Canada to assist communities and businesses in understanding the psychographics of travellers – the reasons why they travel and the types of experiences they seek. This behavioral knowledge assists in identifying the types of travellers best suited to the product/experience being offered.

Traveller ‘types’ are defined and the destination or business is able to match the ‘type’ with the experiences they offer as a way of focusing marketing efforts on best potential customers and defining the nature of messaging/media tools that will reach and resonate with them. Additional information is available through Destination BC and on-line at www.en.destinationcanada.com. Destination Canada has identified the following Explorer Types as most attractive for the Canadian marketplace. Destination BC has confirmed that these markets are most relevant provincially:


- Free Spirits
- Cultural Explorers
- Authentic Experiencers

Authentic Experiencers are typically understated travellers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a particular interest in understanding the history of the places they visit.

Of the three priority segments identified by Destination BC, Abbotsford’s current visitor experiences would appear to best meet the experiential needs of Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers. However, several additional traveller types may also be relevant for Abbotsford including:

- No Hassle Traveller – worry free travel spending time with family and friends
- Cultural History Buff – intrigued by the cultural diversity and history in Abbotsford

As marketing efforts progress and specific campaigns are formulated and launched, they should be informed by the additional psychographic intelligence available from the EQ program and data collection in the Abbotsford area. In particular, where a database of visitor postal codes can be aggregated, resources invested in a PRIZM5 analysis offered through Environics Analytics can provide invaluable insight into current visitor profiles.



Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.

Cultural Explorers are defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit.

ENGAGEMENT

The development of this strategic plan was based upon extensive engagement with industry stakeholders, with residents to understand their level of support for tourism development and any possible 'pain points' and with visitors themselves. Conversations were also held with industry partners including Vancouver Coast & Mountains Indigenous Tourism Specialist Willie Sellars, with the Destination BC Team (Laura Plant, Jody Young and Jonathan Hereema). A workshop was held with representatives from Semá:th First Nation to understand their tourism aspirations and how Tourism Abbotsford could support their journey.

With regards to the development of the full MRDT application, Destination BC's Senior MRDT Program Adviser was consulted with for feedback on the application including confirming the current list of Abbotsford accommodation partners with four or more rooms and on requirements regarding the authority to impose tax. Additionally, a draft of the Five-Year strategy was shared for review prior to submitting.

What Our Residents are Saying

A survey was launched and held open for 8 weeks over July/August/September 2022. In total 180 responses were received. While this does not represent a statistically valid sample size, the findings are still informative and indicative of resident sentiment towards the tourism industry and further tourism development in Abbotsford.

- 83.14% of respondents believe that tourism is very or extremely important to Abbotsford's economy (56% indicate that tourism is very/extremely important to them personally – this lower % indicates that even for those residents not seeing direct economic returns from tourism, there is a general understanding of the broader value that tourism brings to the quality of life found in Abbotsford)
- 60% are extremely/somewhat proud to tell others that they live in Abbotsford. Tourism is felt to be a good opportunity to showcase the community with pride
- 53% feel their business or community group would benefit economically from more tourism development in Abbotsford with another 25.45% indifferent. Only ~21% of respondents somewhat/strongly disagreed with the notion of more tourism development indicating that Abbotsford, unlike some other destinations around the province, still has significant social license to continue on a growth path
- 72% agree that in general, the positive impacts of tourism outweigh the negative and over 85% believe that tourism should be actively encouraged in Abbotsford

- 87% support tourism and want to see it remain important to Abbotsford with nearly 88% agreeing that Abbotsford should work to become a year-round visitor destination with tourism as one of several important economic contributors
- Tourism is believed to attract new residents and businesses to Abbotsford that in turn encourages investment in the local economy (90% of respondents). This value as a catalyst for investment by entrepreneurs in a wide variety of sectors is an important consideration for the City's economic development objectives

Tourism is felt to contribute to resident lifestyle in three primary ways:

1. More outdoor activities and recreational infrastructure
2. More opportunities to experience arts & cultural performances
3. More restaurant and retail shopping options

When asked how Abbotsford could improve its appeal to visitors, respondents indicated that Abbotsford would be more appealing to visitors if there were:

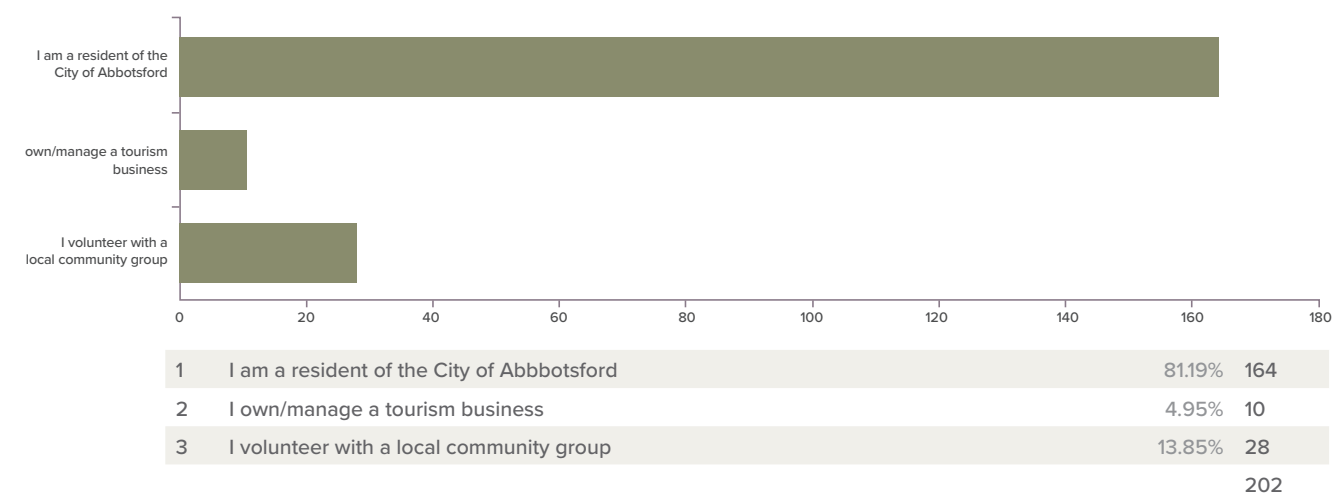
1. More festivals and events with arts/heritage and culture themes including culinary
2. More festivals and events with sports/outdoor recreation themes
3. More trails and trail maintenance

Respondent believed the greatest challenges to tourism development were:

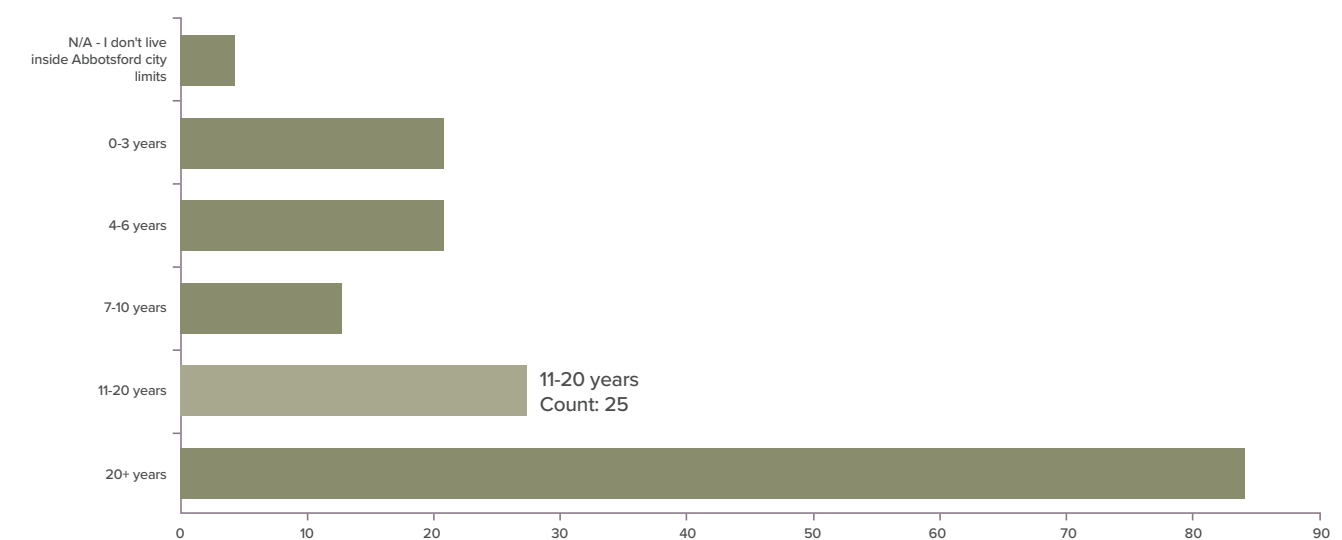
1. Not enough experiences in Abbotsford to warrant longer stays (70.19% Very Large/Large Barrier)

2. Misperceptions about what Abbotsford has to offer (65.84% Very Large/Large Barrier)
3. Unclear messaging to travellers about what is unique and compelling about the Abbotsford experience (57.51% Very Large/Large Barrier)

A summary of respondent's background and number of years living in Abbotsford follows:



How long have you been a resident of Abbotsford?



What Our Visitors are Saying

Align Consulting Group was engaged to conduct a Visitor Study. The study design was a two-phase approach with an initial intercept survey being conducted by Tourism Abbotsford staff using tablets with an online follow up being sent to those who agreed. In the latter part of the data collection period, a handout was also used to supplement the onsite efforts. Surveying was conducted between July 1 and September 1, 2022 researchers conducted 393 full visitor intercept interviews. A total of 233 visitors agreed to participate in the follow-up questionnaire, of those, 88 visitors completed the online follow-up survey for a response rate of 38%. The additional handout method garnered 19 more intercept survey completes and 11 follow-up completes.

Key Findings

- Visitors are predominantly from BC, in particular Greater Vancouver (29%) and the Fraser Valley (11%). Not surprisingly, Day visitors are significantly more likely to be from Greater Vancouver (46% vs. 12%) and the Fraser Valley (29% vs. 2%), while Overnight visitors are more likely to be from USA (31% vs. 9%), Other Canada (24% vs. 10%) and Other BC – other than Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley (18% vs. 3%)
- Travel parties most commonly consist of two people and only approximately one-quarter have children under the age of 18 with them. Day visitors are significantly more likely than Overnight visitors to have children in their travel party (36% vs. 18%). The average travel party is 2.5 people with 27% including children
- On average, travel parties spent \$585 while in Abbotsford. Day Visitors spend an average of \$185 while Overnight Visitors average \$922 per party.
- Among those staying overnight, Hotels is the most common accommodation (41%) followed by staying with friends or family (25%)
- The primary motivation for visiting Abbotsford is to attend a concert/festival/event or participate in a sporting event (including geocaching). Although there are some differences, overall the primary motivation does not differ significantly between Day Visitors and Overnight Visitors
- Dining, Shopping and visiting Parks were the top planned activities with Festivals, Fairs or Events, Hiking, Sampling local cuisine / culinary experiences, Shopping, and Visiting friends / relatives being the most common activities visitors did while in Abbotsford.
- There is a large social media opportunity as 40%

of visitors shared their Abbotsford experience on social media but did not tag #ExploreAbbotsford or #TheFraserValley. In addition, awareness of the Explore Abbotsford app is negligible which presents an opportunity for Tourism Abbotsford to expand awareness and usage

- Abbotsford summer visitors were quite satisfied with their overall experience with 92% rating it as 'somewhat' or 'very' satisfied. Events as well as Restaurants/Dining had high satisfaction levels while Local Transportation and Shopping appear to be areas for improvement.
- Despite nearly half of their visitors being 'Promoters', Abbotsford's Net Promoter Score (NPS) is low at 16.5. Day Visitors dragged the score down with a score of -11.5 compared to +32.2 for Overnight visitors. This reinforces the need to target Day Visitors to move them from Detractors to at minimum Passives but eventually Promoters. Although Overnight visitors had a much healthier NPS, it still leaves notable opportunity for improvement
- Visitors are satisfied with their trip; however, they are not very likely to recommend Abbotsford as a place to visit. This disconnect led to a low Net Promoter Score. Some of the barriers to advocating for Abbotsford as a destination is the proximity (for those living in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley) and general lack of awareness of things to do other than the event they may have attended

This visitor research indicates that while there is a significant opportunity to convert day visitors to overnight visitors and to promoters of Abbotsford, only a small number of day visitors (14%) indicated that there was a high likelihood of an overnight stay in the next 2 years. Consequently, Tourism Abbotsford rather than working to convert day visitors to overnight and having a low probability of success, should embrace that it will always have two core streams of visitation (day and overnight) and invest in one set of strategies to build day visitors and different strategies to build overnight stays.

This research further confirms the current travel motivating experiences in Abbotsford and suggests that the strategy of 'leaning into' Abbotsford's agri-tourism and festivals and events while promoting all the many other things available to experience in the way of art, culture, heritage, shopping and dining may be sufficient to attract growth in both streams of visitation (day and overnight) and may eventually support higher likelihoods of day visitors becoming overnight stays.

What Our Stakeholders are Saying

The MRDT Stakeholder Survey Report conducted in 2021 identified three key findings:

- Stakeholders would like to receive more communication from Tourism Abbotsford and collaboration on tourism opportunities
- Post-pandemic, stakeholders identified Events, Arts & Culture, and culinary experiences as activities with the most growth potential
- Tourism Abbotsford has an opportunity to more effectively share with local industry about activities being undertaken

In response to these survey results, the following recommendations have been reflected in the strategies for the next five years:

- Create more outreach and development programs for stakeholders
- Develop an awareness and engagement plan to residents of Abbotsford on what to do in Abbotsford, creating our own Abbotsford Ambassadors and excitement for our brand
- Continue marketing initiatives on destination type events
- Continue to support the growing food culture movement
- Create more outreach and awareness for government support programs for tourism related businesses
- Provide industry more updates on what marketing activities are being undertaken and what Tourism Abbotsford is doing to encourage visitation and incremental spending in the community

At the highest level, this 2021 MRDT Stakeholder Survey Report identified that while 65.9% of stakeholders are satisfied or very satisfied with Tourism Abbotsford's use of MRDT funds, there is a significant number (23.4%) that are neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Connecting with these stakeholders represents an opportunity for information sharing, education and ultimately more ideas to be brought forward that have the potential to benefit all.

As part of the strategy development process, over the summer of 2022 one-on-one interviews were conducted with a wide-range of Abbotsford's tourism industry stakeholders including:

ARTS & CULTURE:

Abbotsford Arts Council
Abbotsford Orchestra
The REACH Gallery
Gallery 7 Theatre

SPORTS/EVENTS:

Abbotsford Canucks
Abbotsford Trails Society
Abby Airshow
AgriFair
Abbotsford Trail Running Club

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS:

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce
Abbotsford Downtown Business Association
Private Enterprise:
High Street Shopping Centre
Seven Oaks Shopping Centre
Raven's Brewing

ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS:

Clarion Hotel & Conference Centre
Coast Hotels

STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Abbotsford Airport
University of Fraser Valley
City of Abbotsford
Fraser Valley Regional District
Semá:th First Nation

INDUSTRY:

Destination BC
Vancouver Coast & Mountains

These interviews identified a widely held desire for Tourism Abbotsford to advocate for the importance of tourism, particularly with City leaders and staff. Further, an Open House was held on October 25th with participation from a wide range of stakeholders who provided additional insights and guidance for this plan.

Continued strategic and effective marketing also remains paramount but there is also a growing desire for Tourism Abbotsford to lead and support the development of a greater depth of experiences to encourage visitors to stay longer in Abbotsford.

The focus of marketing efforts according to stakeholders should continue to be a strong social and web presence showcasing compelling reasons to visit Abbotsford. Suggested itineraries for various passion-based interests, itineraries for time available (1 day; 2 days; etc.) will assist visitors in understanding the many things to see and do in Abbotsford. Packaging around festivals and events with overnight stays and other activities beyond the motivating experience is also seen as an important opportunity with many stakeholders viewing events (whether cultural, outdoor recreation/sporting or business related being a critical introduction to draw visitors to Abbotsford.

The focus of destination development efforts by Tourism Abbotsford is seen to lie in the role of coordinator and facilitator ensuring that events are strategic, compelling, coordinated and held during need periods. Direction to grow select existing events and conceive new signature events should be led by Tourism Abbotsford with support of the Events Committee. Financial support for select key events is a consideration if warranted. The geographic scope of events can be grown so they truly infiltrate the 'DNA' of Abbotsford for the duration they are held. There is also interest from the Séma:th community in working with Tourism Abbotsford once a community tourism strategy is developed with their members.

Specifically with regard to the provision of affordable housing, there is a widely shared view that affordable housing is required. The City of Abbotsford intends to utilize MRDT funds collected from Online Accommodation Platforms to address this need. See Appendix 1.8 for more details.

The input of all stakeholders as well as the insights of the Board of Directors of Tourism Abbotsford Society and the tourism team serve as the foundation of the recommended strategies below.

Prior to the strategic plan being finalized, the Abbotsford Events Advisory Committee was updated on the events portions of the plan, while the entire draft plan was emailed to 154 stakeholders and partners on October 19th with an invitation to provide feedback at a virtual Open House on October 25th. The workshop was attended by Abbotsford Farm & Country Market, Gallery 7 Theatre, Nutriva Dairy/Eco Dairy, Heritage Abbotsford, Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford Arts Council, Ravens Brewing, Pacific Shuttles, Mennonite Museum, Singletree Winery, and FVMBA.





A close-up photograph of a person wearing a vibrant red robe with a subtle floral pattern. The robe is adorned with numerous gold-colored bells hanging from yellow ribbons that feature small blue floral motifs. The person's hands are visible, holding the ribbons. They are wearing a colorful, beaded bracelet on their right wrist. The background is slightly blurred, showing a hint of a blue garment.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

We will continue to celebrate everything that defines 'Abbotsford' and build awareness, excitement and intention to visit amongst visitors who stay longer, share their stories with their friends and return often to experience 'more Abby'.

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #1: DESTINATION MARKETING

***WE BELIEVE...** our community is distinct from others around us and that we have unique and authentic experiences to share with the world.*

Be Informed

- ✓ Continue to invest in primary market research to understand perceptions of Abbotsford and investments having the highest potential ROI – explore ways to collect postal code data in partnership with stakeholders and consider acquiring PRIZM data; review cost of Telus Insights data gathered at targeted geographic locations from cell phone ‘ping’ data

Be Loud, Proud & Compelling

- ✓ Share ‘Why Abbotsford’ via website, social channels, coop program celebrating the Abbotsford ‘vibe’ and embedding the brand in the DNA of all efforts
- ✓ Continue to secure new stories, new content and host media, influencers
- ✓ Review opportunity for Highway and Airport ‘TakeOvers’ to showcase reasons to stop and stay in Abbotsford
- ✓ Negotiate Swoop/Flair/WestJet in-flight promotions and giveaways; partner with car share companies like EVO to promote trips to Abbotsford
- ✓ Develop and share suggested itineraries (i.e. time based – 2 days in Abbotsford as well as passion-based – Experience Arts/Culture in Abbotsford; Angling in Abbotsford; Golfing in Abbotsford etc.) and share through the visitor engagement, website and social channels

Make it Easy to Choose Abbotsford

- ✓ Continue to promote the Explore Abbotsford App
- ✓ Launch a tool to ‘Build Your Abbotsford Itinerary’ based on custom interests, themes and dates of stay
- ✓ Create a cross-border shopping campaign to encourage frequent shopping trips to Abbotsford
- ✓ Create a family of collateral guides (Abbotsford only or entirety of Fraser Valley where more appropriate) – Hiking and Biking, Farm Tours, Arts/ Culture & Heritage
- ✓ Work with stakeholders to create special offers and packages around consumer shows, trade shows,

festivals, events, concerts, hockey games, sports tournaments that include event tickets, hotel stays, restaurants, wineries etc.

Leverage Abbotsford's Ability to Host Festivals & Events

- ✓ Leverage the ability of Festivals and Events to showcase the many reasons to return to Abbotsford – collaborate and seek input from the Abbotsford Events Advisory Committee to create a Festivals and Events strategy that considers:
 - Strategic review of current calendar – do we have the ‘right’ events at the ‘right’ time of year?
 - Which 3rd party produced events that are a good ‘fit’ for Abbotsford – how can we attract them?
 - Develop/support 3-4 signature events annually – what are the existing or new events that can be travel motivators? How can we extend programming both geographically and in overall duration so there is an Abbotsford-wide presence and impact and longer lengths of stay? What supports do they need?
 - AirShow/AgriFair
 - Cultural Celebrations – Diwali
 - Canucks Hockey
 - Concerts/Events at Abbotsford Centre
 - Trade and Consumer Shows at TRADEX
 - REACH exhibitions
 - Indigenous Arts & Culture Days/ PowWow
 - Consider creation of an ‘Event Development Fund’ for strategic investments to support signature event development
 - Work with City to establish ‘event concierge’ type service/clear guidelines and supports for event organizers
- ✓ Continue to grow ‘Taste of Abby’ as a signature event showcasing the best of Abbotsford’s culinary, arts, culture and farm to table experiences. Launch a Food Symposium in parallel with Taste of Abby for food industry and those interested in food security, food sustainability

Leverage Abbotsford's Ability to Host Sporting, Trade and Consumer Events

- ✓ Work with event organizers, local clubs and volunteer groups to bid on hosting regional, provincial and national tournaments that occur in need periods
- ✓ Engage with tourism stakeholders to put together offers for confirmed events that encourage 'come early/stay longer' for participants and their families
- ✓ Work with air carriers to package experiences including flights to YXX

Intercept visitors in key locations to share 'More Abby' and extend visitor length of stay/ encourage return visits

- ✓ Review opportunities for additional satellite Visitor Info services staffed by shopping centre personnel at High Street and Seven Oaks; UFV; Abbotsford Centre

- ✓ Provide visitor services and information to travellers in-destination about additional Abbotsford experiences, places to stay using mobile visitor kiosk; on-line chat; and a presence in key locations – UFV; YXX; festivals; High Street; Seven Oaks Shopping Centre
- ✓ Build resident understanding that they are part of the Tourism Abbotsford 'team' – encourage them to be 'Abbotsford Ambassadors' showcasing Abbotsford experiences to friends and family and sharing their love of Abbotsford in their day-to-day interactions with visitors

What We Will Measure:

- ✓ Hotel Occupancy and ADR
- ✓ Average length of stay
- ✓ Net promoter score
- ✓ Marketing campaign measures



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #2: DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

WE BELIEVE... tourism is a vital part of Abbotsford's economy and an important contributor to our cultural and social fabric providing opportunities for community pride building, for exchange of ideas, for employment and entrepreneurship all of which contribute to our shared quality of life.

We will be leaders and champions of the tourism industry in Abbotsford, further educating our residents and our local government in the importance of tourism and successfully advocating for investments that enhance the visitor experience.

- ✓ Work with the City of Abbotsford to attract a hotel/conference centre investor (before another Fraser Valley community does so)
- ✓ Lean into Abbotsford's agricultural strengths and encourage and support enhanced visitor experiences at current experience providers as well as new agri-tourism experiences showcasing goji berries, saffron, vertical strawberry growers as well as staples of berries, apples etc. (Taste of Abby as a vehicle for this)
- ✓ Celebrate and promote Abbotsford's diversity as expressed through its art, culture and heritage sector and work with stakeholders, together with the City of Abbotsford to add scale, depth and density of experiences so Abbotsford becomes known as a culture/heritage destination and investments made to implement the City's Cultural Strategy are supported and valued by arts, culture and heritage organizations in Abbotsford
- ✓ Work with YXX and carriers to increase lift into Abbotsford from an increasing number of domestic and international destinations
- ✓ Support Indigenous tourism development led by the Mathxwí and Semá:th communities with a particular focus on assisting in the launch of a river-based experience in Abbotsford
- ✓ Consider 'seed funding' support for new visitor experiences meeting established application criteria to support their launch and delivery
- ✓ Advocate for and collaborate with the Abbotsford Downtown Business Association to create a distinct, pedestrian friendly heritage district
- ✓ Educate residents, elected leaders and City staff and promote the value of tourism in Abbotsford. Find tourism champions amongst elected officials

and City staff to ensure tourism's interests are considered within the local government agenda

- ✓ Continue to participate on the Fraser Valley Destination Development Committee and advocate for continued investments in 'Experience the Fraser' (Experience the Fraser is a recreational, cultural and heritage project that extends along the Lower Fraser River Corridor connecting Hope to the Salish Sea. Over 550 km of trails (43% of which are already in place) and blueways will connect communities along the Fraser River
- ✓ Educate elected officials on 10-year vision for destination development in the Fraser Valley
- ✓ Support and advocate for strategic plan and comprehensive infrastructure investments by City, Regional District and Province that enhance the visitor experience including:
 - Single track trail development on Sumas Mountain/McKee Peak including necessary amenities for parking, washroom facilities, signage etc.
 - Interconnected network of trails throughout the Fraser Valley with key connections to experience providers to monetize use & enjoyment
 - Amphitheatre in Mill Park for arts/culture programs
 - Celebrate the River through Abbotsford – fishing spots, access points etc.

What We Will Measure:

- ✓ Number and value of City investments that also enhance the visitor experience
- ✓ Resident support for tourism economy

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #3: PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

WE BELIEVE... we are stronger together.


We will foster partnerships, collaboration and mutual respect to strengthen, leverage and amplify every initiative upon which we embark.

- ✓ Continue to work with the Fraser Valley Circle Farm Tour, Fraser Valley Explorer, Fraser Valley Wine Guide to promote Abbotsford experiences
- ✓ Continue to work with the BC Ale Trail, the BC Bird Trail, Mountain Bike BC to promote Abbotsford experiences
- ✓ Convene regular sessions of the Abbotsford Events Advisory Committee to create the above-noted strategy (engage consulting expertise if deemed necessary to support dialogue, research and strategy creation)
- ✓ Visit stakeholder businesses for one-on-one conversations about tourism opportunities and challenges – begin with hotel visits and expand from there to include all experiences providers on a regular cycle (farms, wineries, breweries, shopping centres, cultural/heritage groups, etc.)
- ✓ Provide regular informal platforms for tourism stakeholders to meet, share ideas/concerns and inform advocacy efforts and other investment strategies
- ✓ Strategic communications – newsletter to provide regular updates to stakeholders on a fixed schedule so they become anticipated – monthly ‘Tip Sheet’ – new funding announcements; upcoming events and marketing campaigns; cooperative marketing opportunities; training programs such as DBC’s digital literacy offer
- ✓ Automate and continue to produce and distribute weekly ‘What’s On in Abbotsford’ digital flatsheet
- ✓ Convene regular sessions with City staff to review ways to work together and to make Abbotsford an ‘event-friendly’ City with regard to permits, and to highlight and share Abbotsford’s cultural assets and experiences with residents and visitors
- ✓ Work with existing and potential new event organizers to support signature event delivery

- ✓ Work with local clubs and volunteer groups in regard to tournament hosting opportunities to support bid preparation; hosting and pre/post offers
- ✓ Work with facility operators to promote and package upcoming events (TRADEX, Abbotsford Centre etc.)
- ✓ Attend meetings of various not-for-profit groups; share Tourism Abbotsford’s activities and create ‘space’ for discussions as to how to work together more effectively and to better understand art, culture & heritage opportunities – The REACH, Gallery 7 Theatre etc.

What We Will Measure:

- ✓ Stakeholder engagement & participation in marketing campaigns and festivals/events
- ✓ Committee and Board opportunities



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #4: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & OUR TEAM

WE BELIEVE...our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We believe in supporting and investing in our team empowering them to deliver results for our stakeholders.

We will continue to be open to new perspectives and different worldviews. We will support the development of more accessible and inclusive tourism experiences and employment. We will challenge status quo in our own organization and invest in the development of a strong and capable team.

- ✓ Measure and report diversity of our workforce and Board
- ✓ Facilitate discussions to bring Abbotsford PRIDE parade back
- ✓ Work with each of our team members to create a career plan and invest in individual career development aligned with that plan
- ✓ Conduct 360 degree performance reviews for every team member

What We Will Measure:

- ✓ Diversity, equity and inclusion measures.
- ✓ Staff development initiatives

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #5: SUSTAINABILITY & RECONCILIATION

WE BELIEVE... in sustainable tourism development and meaningful reconciliation that goes beyond words.

We will educate our industry, residents and visitors on sustainable tourism practices and responsible travel considering local priorities as well as the framework of the United Nations seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. We will work together with industry, government, Indigenous Tourism BC and the Mathxwí First Nation and the Semá:th First Nation so tourism becomes a contributor to the economic, social and cultural aspirations of these communities. We will work with industry to understand, support and implement the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation.

- ✓ Incorporate messaging about responsible travel behaviour in our outreach to travellers
- ✓ Participate in VCM's Sustainability Council & Action Plan
- ✓ Review Heritage BC's Reconciliation Pledge and consider something similar for the tourism industry in Abbotsford, led by Tourism Abbotsford's organizational commitment.
Reference: Reconciliation Pledge
- ✓ Identify and share relevant training and certification programs that may be of interest and value to stakeholders
- ✓ Continue to reach out to local communities of Mâthexwi and Semá:th to offer support for tourism experience development

- ✓ Advocate for an Indigenous advisor role at the City of Abbotsford
- ✓ Offer support and resources to non-Indigenous tourism businesses to share how to engage respectfully with Indigenous communities
- ✓ Create 'intern' and 'summer student' opportunities for Indigenous youth to experience the tourism industry
- ✓ Work with Indigenous youth in school classrooms to explore what tourism means to them and what they might be interested in as a career opportunity

Note: The United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation (UNDRIP) can be reviewed here https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

What We Will Measure:

- ✓ Stakeholder participation rates in training and certification programs for Responsible Travel
- ✓ Engagement with local Indigenous communities/ members & new authentic Indigenous cultural experiences shared with visitors to Abbotsford

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The United Nation's 17 sustainable development goals are found here:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability.html>



APPENDIX A –

ABBOTSFORD – CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

In order to develop strategies to achieve the objective of growing overnight visitation, length of stay and visitor spending on a year-round basis, an assessment of the current situation of Abbotsford from a tourism perspective was updated from the 2016 strategy. The following analysis first considers Abbotsford location within First Nations' traditional territories. Access and infrastructure for visitors is considered next along with existing visitor experiences, current marketing and promotional efforts and the manner in which Abbotsford is currently organized and funded to pursue tourism opportunities.

INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Abbotsford lies within the traditional territory of the M̓athexwi First Nation, the Sé:math First Nation and the Leq'á:mel First Nation. These three nations belong to the Sto:lo Nation. The Sto:lo Nation covers territory from Yale in the Fraser Canyon to Fort Langley. In Halq'emeylem, the language of the Sto:lo, "Sto:lo" translates as "river". The Sto:lo people are called the "people of the river".

The Sto:lo people have lived in the Fraser Valley for at least 9,000 years. Traditional oral stories of the Sto:lo people tell of a time prior to 10,000 years ago. Archaeological evidence at Hatzic Rock (or Xa:ytem) in Mission, carbon dates artifacts at that site to be 9,000 years old.

The Sé:math First Nation is currently considering several tourism related opportunities. However their priority as a community is reconciliation and having a presence on their own landscape. They are interested in building awareness of their culture throughout the territory. Reconciliation will manifest first through a land use plan that will identify reconciliation zones such as Sumas Lake and Sumas Mountain. A project to conduct cultural mapping and traditional place names is also in development with the Regional District.

There have been recent discussions with a high-end wedding venue/spa that is considering relocating to reserve lands (off the Agricultural Land Reserve which limits the nature and scale of permitted activities). As well a trail network from the current reserve along the Sumas River is being considered. This trail would include interpretive signage.

The Kilgard brick plant is located on reserve and while it is now closed, it operated for 100 years using a rare clay found on Sumas Mountain that was ideally suited for brick making. Bricks from this plant can still be found in locally in Clayburn Village as well as in historic sites like Vancouver's Gastown. Eventually the Sé:math First Nation may create a visitor attraction around this historic site.

While much of this planned tourism development by the Sé:math First Nation is many years in the future, Tourism Abbotsford can still play a role offering advice regarding the nature of experiences that visitors are seeking and as a conduit for various tourism-related programs that may be beneficial.

The M̓athexwi First Nation is not yet engaged in a specific review of tourism opportunities but continued relationship building will remain an important strategy for Tourism Abbotsford over the next five years.

The Leq'á:mel First Nation is not actively engaged in tourism opportunities but is also a member of the Sto:lo Nation. <http://leqamel.ca>

The Fraser Valley Metis Society represents Metis people in the Abbotsford area and beyond. www.fvma.ca/about-fvma/

¹2015 Interview with Stephen McGlenn, Sumas First Nation Lands and Resources

ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Road Access to Abbotsford

Abbotsford is located along the TransCanada Highway (with 7 exits) and is one-hour from the City of Vancouver and only 10 minutes from the US Border (Sumas Crossing).

Despite the reasonable travel time from downtown Vancouver, anecdotally it was reported by many tourism stakeholders that Vancouver residents perceive Abbotsford to be 'far away'.

Abbotsford's location along this major highway is a significant strength and opportunity – the highway is a major artery with 72,000 vehicles passing by on a daily basis. While much of this traffic is likely commuter in nature, the sheer number of vehicles offers an opportunity to speak to those passing by about reasons to stop and stay in Abbotsford.

Air Access to Abbotsford

The Abbotsford International Airport offers flights by West Jet, Flair and Swoop. The airport manager reports that passenger volumes have rebounded in 2021 and 2022 post-pandemic.

Destinations accessible from Abbotsford International Airport include Toronto, Hamilton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Edmonton.

Connecting Flights

Connecting flights are available to destinations throughout Canada and internationally. Carriers like SWOOP and FLAIR are generally less expensive in price to corresponding flights using YVR, and along with the ease of access and affordability of overnight hotel stays and long-term parking make Abbotsford an attractive alternative particularly for outbound local and regional passengers thus creating opportunity for 'stay and fly' packages.





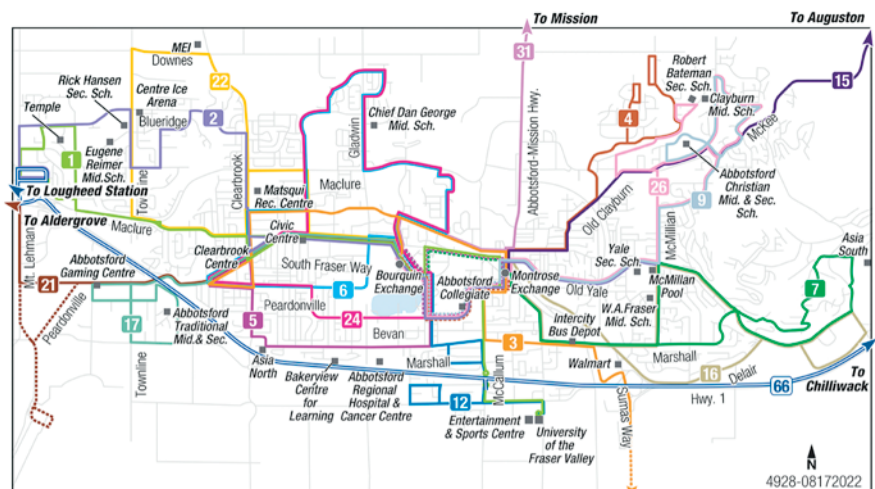
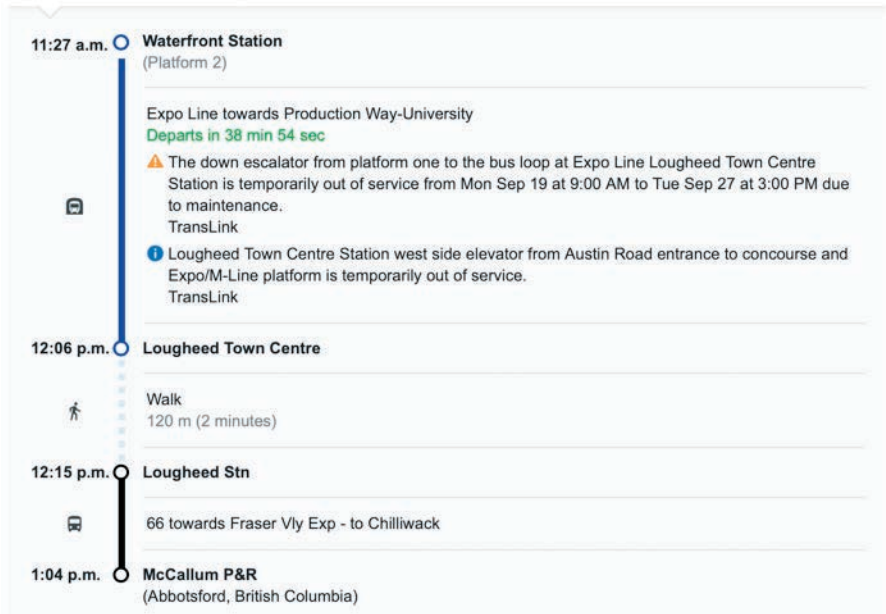
Bus/Train Access to Abbotsford

The SkyTrainExpo Line to Lougheed Station with a bus connection to Abbotsford takes approx. 1 hour 30 minutes from downtown Vancouver's Waterfront Station.

▲ 11:27 a.m. - 1:04 p.m. 🚶 🚶 🚶

1 hr 37 min

11:27 a.m. from Waterfront Station



- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Highstreet/UFV | 7 Sumas Mountain/Downtown | 21 Aldergrove/Abbotsford |
| 2 Highstreet/McMillan | 9 McKee/Downtown | 22 East Townline |
| 3 Clearbrook/Huntingdon | 12 UFV/Bourquin (peak) | 24 Centre Loop |
| 4 Saddle/Downtown | 15 Auguston/Downtown | 26 Sandy Hill/Bourquin |
| 5 Clearbrook/Bourquin | 16 McMillan/Downtown (peak) | 31 Abbotsford/Mission |
| 6 Gladwin | 17 Industrial/Bourquin | 66 FVX |

Source: BC Transit

Car Sharing to Abbotsford

It is more likely that those without personal vehicles in the Lower Mainland would utilize one of several car sharing services in Vancouver (Car2Go, Modo, ZipCar, Evo). These services all provide 200 km usage in their day rate which ranges from \$64/day to \$85/day. These rates include insurance and gasoline.

Visitor Infrastructure

Abbotsford offers a range of infrastructure to support visitor experiences including a variety of accommodation options, restaurants and retail shops. Outdoor experiences and activities are varied and include land-based hiking, mountain biking, road cycling, bird watching, as well as lake/river-based activities (fishing, stand-up paddle boarding). Abbotsford has 157 parks (2,584 acres of parkland) and 98 km of urban trails. Infrastructure to support sport tourism hosting is also available.

Accommodation

Accommodation in Abbotsford includes the following hotels, motels, lodges and B&B's:

- Coast Abbotsford Hotel & Suites
- Clarion Hotel & Conference Centre
- Sandman Hotel Abbotsford
- Abbotsford Super 8

- Abbotsford Bakerview Travelodge by Wyndham
- Sandman Hotel Abbotsford Airport
- Brookside Inn Boutique Hotel
- Alpine Inn
- Best Western Plus – Regency Inn & Conference Centre
- Ramada by Wyndham

The inventory of available rooms in Abbotsford when the larger properties are combined is 832 rooms (i.e. excluding B&B's and smaller retreats/guest houses). This does not include various vacation rental platforms such as VRBO and AirBnB. From mid-May to mid-August nightly accommodation is also available at the University of the Fraser Valley, Lálém te Baker student residences, and Columbia Bible College student residences.

Campgrounds/RV Parks

Of note is the fact that Abbotsford does not currently offer visitors camping or RV facilities. This is a gap that affects Abbotsford's ability to secure overnight RV stays associated with longer-haul touring itineraries. Notably, Abbotsford is home to one of only two locations of Fraserway RV rentals – an RV rental company with over 1,000 vehicles in its fleet. With the addition of attractive RV camping it would be possible to target renters and encourage them to spend several nights in Abbotsford at the beginning or end of their journey.





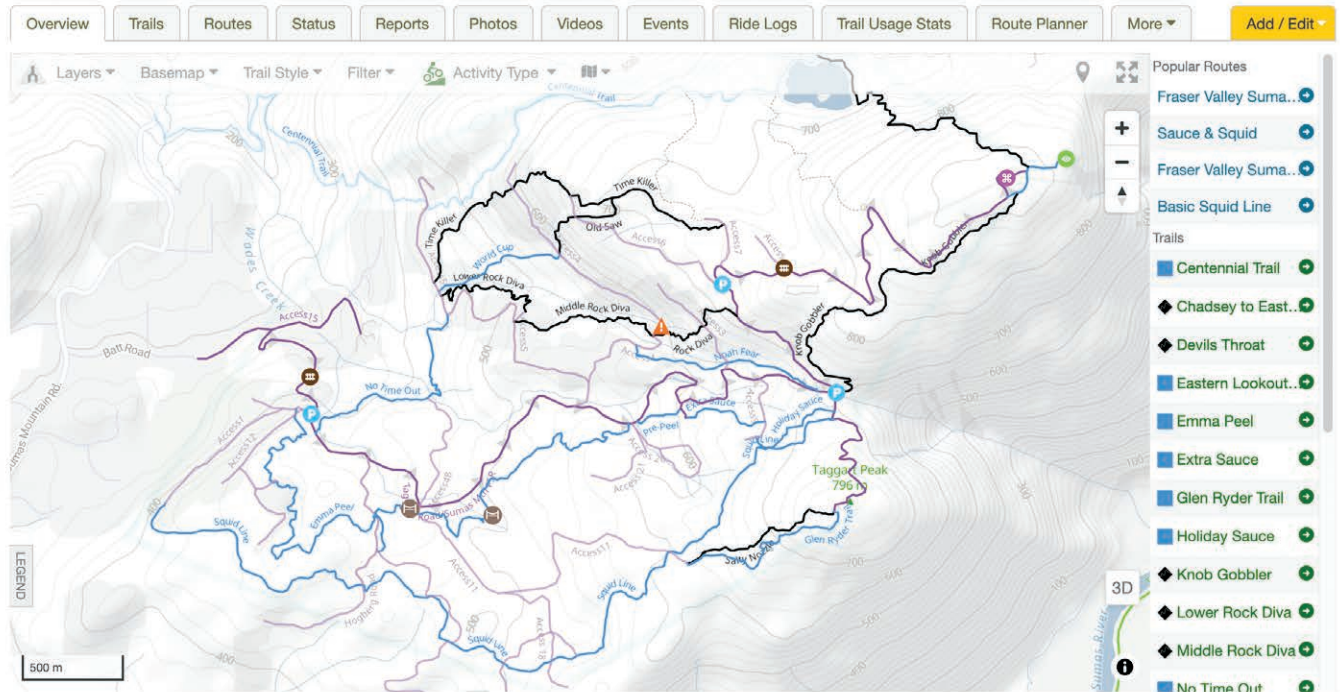
Parks and Trails

Abbotsford offers 157 parks (2,584 acres of parkland) and 98 km of urban trails. Several parks and trails are worthy of specific mention including:

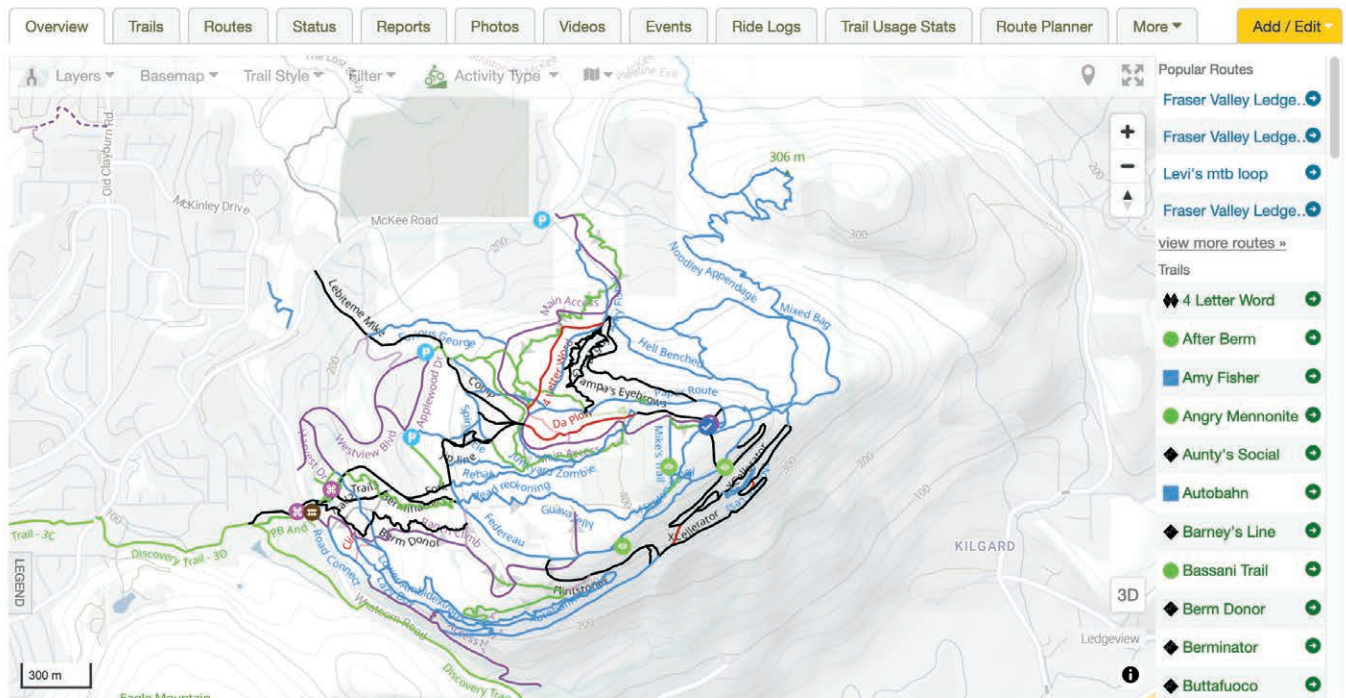
- Mill Lake Park (Noo-kó-kum) - A popular spot for walkers, joggers and fisherman. The 2.30 km trail winds around the lake. Wildlife viewing is also popular. The park also has playgrounds and a waterpark on location. Part of Discovery Trail
- Discovery Trail - A paved corridor spanning through the community, connecting the East and West sides of Abbotsford. This extensive trail system is perfect for all season activity including walking, running, rollerblading and cycling. The trail system winds through natural habitat and includes areas with forest, ponds, creeks and lush meadows. Interpretive signage along portions of the trail, as well as well-marked lookout spots, make the trail a great place for observing, photographing and learning about the community's indigenous ecosystem
- Sumas Mountain (Teq'qéyex) Interregional Park - A 1,471 hectare park jointly managed by the FVRD and Metro Vancouver. The FVRD manages 715 hectares of parkland on the eastern side of Abbotsford. Extensive trail network used for hiking, mountain biking

A number of websites offer trail route suggestions for road cycling (www.mapmyride.com); mountain biking (www.trailforks.com). Note that these websites are populated by the public at large and do not necessarily represent 'legal' trails. Stakeholders indicated in interviews that some of the most epic Abbotsford single track trails are at risk of residential development and suggested that to protect them, the City should negotiate various land swaps with developers so this network of single track through the forest can be protected and expanded along with additional infrastructure at trailheads (parking, washrooms, signage etc.).

Sumas Mountain Mountain Biking Trails near Abbotsford, bc



Ledgeview Mountain Biking Trails near Abbotsford, bc



Restaurant/Retail and Visitor Amenities

Much like accommodation, visitors require a range of restaurant and retail options to support their experience and encourage longer lengths of stay. Abbotsford offers a variety of restaurants that include fine dining, family fare and fast food chains to meet every visitor taste and budget. Many of the boutique offerings feature locally sourced ingredients. A complete listing is provided on www.tourismabbotsford.ca.

Abbotsford is also home to several craft breweries and wineries as well as a meadery and a wide range of places to dine including:

- Abbey Road Restaurant Tap House
- AfterThoughts Dessert Restaurant
- Ann Marie's Café
- Banter Ice Cream
- Baron's Bistro
- Boardwalk Café & Games
- Bow & Stern
- Brambles Bistro
- BRGR BRGR
- Brodeur's Bistro
- Brown's Social House
- Cactus Club Café
- Café Amarti
- Chef Boss Culinary
- Common Good Ice Cream Lounge
- Common Place Café
- Duft & Co.
- Field House Brewing
- Gian's Indian Cuisine
- Good Taco
- Greek Islands
- Hana Sushi
- Hugs in a Mug
- Little Saigon
- Little Sprout Café
- Lou's Grill
- New Saigon
- Noodlebox
- Oldhand Coffee
- Paliotti's Italian Restaurant
- Pizza Garden
- Re:Vive Boutique

- Red21 Tap & Grill
- Restaurant 62
- S&L Kitchen & Bar
- Sehmi Japanese
- Sippchai
- The Canadian BrewHouse & Grill
- The Habit Project
- The Other Place
- The Polly Fox
- The Sprouted Oven
- The Table Bistro
- Townhall Public House
- Tracycakes Café
- Trading Post Brewing
- Vi-La Palace
- Wings
- Old Abbey Ales Brewing
- Ravens Brewing Company
- Loudmouth Brewing Co.
- Campbell's Gold Honey Farm & Meadery
- Maan Farms Estate Winery
- Mt. Lehman Winery
- Singletree Winery
- Ripples Winery & New Wave Distilling
- Seaside Pearl Farmgate Winery
- Trading Post Brewing
- Taves Estate Cidery

Retail Shops

Abbotsford offers a range of retail experiences that support visitor needs for both basics (fuel, groceries, pharmacy), and for interesting local items. Some of the more unique retail offerings are found in historic downtown Abbotsford – see www.downtownabbotsford.com for details. Additional shopping experiences are offered at Highstreet and Sevenoaks Mall. Sevenoaks Shopping Centre is centrally located with over 100 retail shops, services and food establishments. High Street is a 600,000 square foot open-air retail, dining and entertainment experience easily accessed from Highway #1 featuring award-winning streetscapes and architecture. Anchor tenants include Sephora, Walmart, Supercentre, London Drugs, H&M, Old Navy and Cineplex.

Sport Tourism Infrastructure

Abbotsford has made a significant investment in sport infrastructure that allows it to compete for regional, provincial, national and international events including:

- Matsqui Recreation Centre (MRC) offers wave pool, swimming pool, skating, fitness, facility rentals, senior centre and community
- Abbotsford Exhibition Park is a world class 75-acre park which boasts a wide variety of indoor and outdoor facilities, including ball diamonds, playing fields, a track & field stadium and BMX track
- Rotary Stadium and Track offers a fenced 400 meter rubberized 8-lane track, a grass in-field, grand-stand seating for 4,000, a public address system, timing tower, a fieldhouse (complete with meeting room), plus six changing rooms, referees room, and first aid room
- MSA Arena - The MSA Arena is a 1,100 seat ice rink which also features 4 lit outdoor tennis courts and an outdoor lit asphalt basketball court
- Twisters Gymnastics Club - Twisters Gym, located on the grounds of Abbotsford Exhibition Park, is a fully equipped gymnastics training centre. Currently Twisters is the home of the National Training Centre for Men's Gymnastics and is the only club in Canadian history to have sent a male and female gymnast to the same Olympic Games. In the past 20 years Twisters has grown to become a renowned training centre for Olympic-caliber gymnasts
- Summit Centre - Abbotsford Centre Ice features twin NHL-size arenas and is an excellent place to hold multi-division tournaments
- Abbotsford Curling Rink - The dedicated staff and volunteers are committed to providing outstanding experiences through bonspiels and championships
- Abbotsford Recreation Centre - The facility provides an international size ice sheet, and has been the host to several major short track speed skating events. In addition to the world-class ice surface, the new adjoining community centre and outdoor grass fields provide world-class dry land training
- Abbotsford Centre - The Abbotsford Entertainment Centre is the premiere entertainment and sports venue in the region. Family Shows, Hockey, Motorsports, Concerts, Ice shows are hosted and it is now home of the Canucks franchise
- Tradex – has been used for various sporting events including volleyball and indoor soccer



CONCLUSIONS

Access and Infrastructure

Abbotsford is easily accessed by private vehicle (provided time of travel is chosen wisely) and offers visitors the necessary infrastructure to serve as a multi-night destination or a multi-night stop as part of a longer touring itinerary. There is an extensive network of parks and trails suitable to all ages and levels of expertise.

Abbotsford's accommodation, retail and restaurant services offer an excellent range and mix of options to achieve the tourism objective of growing overnight visitation, length of stay and visitor spending on a year-round basis. Included in this mix is a growing number of unique retail and culinary experiences including craft breweries, wineries and restaurants/café.

Anecdotally, some tourism stakeholders commented that Abbotsford would benefit from a higher end accommodation option and that the level of front-line service quality in many businesses is inconsistent. Also anecdotally there is concern that there is little to do for nightlife in Abbotsford. It remains to be seen if the business model of the new TRADEX operators will include more nightlife options.

Abbotsford's sport tourism infrastructure is significant and has the capacity to host a wide-range of regional, provincial, national and international tournaments.

Existing Visitor Experiences

The table below features key visitor experiences that have the potential to motivate travel to Abbotsford:

ACTIVITY	VISITOR EXPERIENCE	
<i>Arts, Culture and Heritage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbotsford Sikh Museum – National Heritage Site • Clayburn Village • Trethewey House Heritage Site • Mennonite Heritage Museum • The Reach Gallery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gallery 7 performances • Abbotsford Arts Centre performances • Fraser Valley Concert Society • Fraser Valley Stage • Matsqui Village
<i>Festivals and Events</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste of Abby • Mill Lake Music Festival & Symphony in the Park • Nagar Kirtan Procession • Abbotsford Air Show • Agrifair • Abbotsford Farm and Country Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various TRADEX events/shows • Various Abbotsford Centre events/shows • Run For Water • Vertikiller • Sun 'n Soil Concert series • Downtown Abbotsford Berry Fest • Downtown Abbotsford Winter Jubilee
<i>Sporting Events</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hockey Tournaments • Ball Tournaments • Soccer Tournaments • Kabaddi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Country Runs • Abbotsford School District Secondary Regional/Provincial Championships
<i>Agri-tourism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maan Farms Market • Birchwood Dairy • Bakerview EcoDairy • Neufeld Farms • Campbell's Gold Honey • Tanglebank Gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russlynn Blueberry Farm • Applebarn at Taves Farm • Goats' Pride Dairy • Lepp Farm Market • Rockweld Farm • Tuscun Farms
<i>Culinary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Abbey Ales • Field House Brewing • Ravens Brewery • Taves Estate Cidery • Trading Post Brewing • Loudmouth Brewing • Mt. Lehman Winery • Singletree Winery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbell's Gold Meadery • Maan Farms Winery • Seaside Pearl Winery • Tanglebank Gardens & Brambles Bistro • Restaurant 62 • Ripples Winery & New Wave Distilling • Cannon Winery
<i>Parks & Trails</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery Trail • Sumas Mountain Trails • Mill Lake Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willband Creek Park
<i>Retail/Shopping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highstreet • Downtown Abbotsford 	

Tourism stakeholders identified the following 'gaps' in visitor experiences in Abbotsford:

- More adult-oriented extensions of agri-tourism offerings (very family oriented currently) including greater density of culinary experiences and incorporation of more farm to table, hands-on learning opportunities
- More single track, forested trails and trail infrastructure – parking, signage, trailheads
- Connection to Fraser River is missing from Abbotsford experiences
- Improved presence from Highway – while there are 7 exits, there is no sense of arrival in Abbotsford
- Additional high-end accommodation
- More nightlife
- Quality and consistency of service levels could improve

CONCLUSIONS

of Existing Visitor Experiences

There is a wide range of experiences in Abbotsford that encompasses outdoor activities and arts/culture/heritage activities. Abbotsford has experiences that appeal to families and experiences that appeal to younger Millennials and touring Boomers. However, it would appear that Abbotsford struggles to have enough depth of experiences in any single theme to readily motivate overnight travel.

The number of agricultural and easily accessible trail experiences is well complemented by unique and authentic cultural and heritage offerings including a wide-range of talented artists, and local history/heritage. There are several festivals and events throughout the year that can serve as a catalyst to visitation. However, product extensions and new experiences would serve to create a more compelling offering.





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