

Backgrounder

The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) is a non-profit, Stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable and culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry. The businesses and operators with AtBC range from gallery curators to jet boat guides, boutique hotels and lodges, wineries and cultural interpretative experiences and are located in every corner of the province.

What is Aboriginal cultural tourism?

Trends in tourism indicate a strong and increasing demand for cultural tourism attractions. Put simply, more and more visitors are looking for experiences that immerse them in a foreign culture and allow them to experience customs and traditions firsthand. British Columbia's Aboriginal cultural tourism industry has some of the most diverse and best developed operators in the world.

How is Aboriginal tourism revitalizing culture?

The demand for cultural tourism products has given Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia an unprecedented opportunity to develop businesses that showcase their traditions, histories and cultures. Tourism is helping create sustainable and meaningful employment for Aboriginal communities, and providing the impetus for elders to pass down culture, history and tradition to youth. Thanks in part to cultural tourism, Aboriginal traditions and customs are being revitalized for the benefit of communities across British Columbia.

Working to add to visitor experiences through *Plus Aboriginal BC*

It's now easier for visitors to add at least one Aboriginal tourism experience during their trip to British Columbia. ***Plus Aboriginal BC*** helps visitors explore the myriad of culinary, cultural and outdoor adventure opportunities throughout British Columbia that offer Aboriginal experiences. AtBC's website, www.AboriginalBC.com, includes suggestions for individual experiences as well as recommended itineraries for exploring the province, allowing visitors to custom plan their trip.

Aboriginal Travel Services (ATS): BC's First Aboriginal-owned travel agency

Developed as a social enterprise, Aboriginal Travel Services' mandate is to work with Aboriginal bands and corporations within British Columbia, Canada. Working with an established host agency, ATS uses the latest technology including a comprehensive online booking platform, which allows ATS to provide the best rates with airlines, hotels and car rental companies. Completing the full spectrum of services, it also offers full meeting and event planning. With an extensive knowledge of local, authentic Aboriginal experiences, ATS is also able to provide unique packages to interested leisure and corporate travellers. For information about the Aboriginal Travel Services, visit www.AboriginalTravelServices.com.

Aboriginal Tourism by the numbers:

- British Columbia is home to one third of Canada's First Nations and the second largest Indigenous population and has experienced strong growth in Aboriginal tourism over the past decade.
- In 2010, 3.7 million visitors included Aboriginal experiences on their itineraries and spent \$40 million learning about and experiencing First Nations culture. This represents nearly 100 per cent growth since 2006.
- Today, there are more than 200 Aboriginal tourism businesses in BC, an 85 per cent increase over 2006, which together contributes \$561 million in value added GDP.
- By 2017, British Columbia's Aboriginal tourism industry is expected to contribute and anticipated \$68 M.
- Adventure Tourism (31%), Tourism Services (22%) and Accommodation (21%) collectively comprise almost three quarters (74%) of existing Aboriginal tourism businesses in BC
- Tour operators are seeing growing consumer demand for authentic cultural experiences, with 89% indicating in a recent Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC) survey that they would consider offering or expanding Aboriginal experiences as part of their packages.

- Over a third (36%) of travellers surveyed in a study commissioned by AtBC for the Blueprint Strategy indicated that they had visited Aboriginal sites/attractions and events on previous trips to BC. On average, they had included such experiences on four trips in the past three years.
- Two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal cultural tourists indicated that they planned to return to BC for Aboriginal tourism within the next three years.
- In Sept, 2015 The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) and the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) successfully welcomed and hosted more than 200 delegates from around the world who attended the second Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism & Trade Conference (PAITC) in Vancouver, BC.
 - Ten countries from six continents were represented at the conference including: Canada, USA, Mexico, Chile, Nepal, New Zealand, Australia, Vietnam, Germany, and Ghana. Presentations from more than 30 tourism and travel experts in 10 individual sessions tackled key industry topics such as travel trade outreach, media relations, and authentic cultural tourism.

Travellers taking part in Aboriginal tourism in BC tend to be:

- Well-educated, upper middle-income wage earners, female baby boomers.
- Visiting from primarily North American and European destinations.
- Including Aboriginal tourism in their BC travels for the first time (65%).
- Taking part in Aboriginal tourism in places beyond BC (64%).
- Spending more money per trip than other tourists.

Compared to other BC travellers these Aboriginal visitors are more apt to:

- Spend more trip days in BC (average of 13 days).
- Include Aboriginal experiences on more of those trip days (average of 3 days).
- Visit more than one Aboriginal location on BC trip (average of 2.2 sites).
- Visit Aboriginal interpretive centres (24%), attractions (22%), and museums (21%).
- Travel in larger parties (average of 3.6 persons).

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About Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC)

The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) is a non-profit, Stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry. Through training, information resources, networking opportunities and co-operative marketing programs, AtBC is a one-stop resource for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities in British Columbia who are operating or looking to start a tourism business. AtBC works closely with tourism, business, education and government organizations to help BC's Aboriginal tourism businesses offer quality experiences and actively promotes these experiences to visitors and local residents.

www.AboriginalBC.com.

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