

# Fact sheet: Outdoor Recreation and Parks in BC

Canadians believe that nature should be a **key element of government economic plans**

- 91% agree nature is one of Canada's most valuable economic assets. 90% agree nature is a powerful resource for building a sustainable, proudly Canadian economy. 87% believe investing in nature can secure Canada's long-term resilience and independence.
- 93% say it's important for Canada to position nature as a key economic asset ([reference](#))

British Columbians love to **participate** in outdoor recreation and parks:

- 85% of British Columbians support the Government of BC's commitment to protecting 30% of BC's land and water by 2030 ([reference](#))
- 79% of BC residents participated in outdoor recreation in summer 2022 and 69% of residents participated in winter recreation (reference: B.C.'s Outdoor Recreation Participant Survey)
- 61% of winter recreation participants and 54% of summer recreation participants in B.C. say being close to outdoor recreation heavily influences where they call home (reference: B.C.'s Outdoor Recreation Participant Survey)
- Visitation to BC Parks has grown significantly in recent years, with an average compound annual growth rate of 8.7% between 2017 and 2023 ([reference](#))
- 89% of British Columbians support increased government expenditures on outdoor recreation amenities, and more than half said that access to recreation influences where they live ([reference](#))

Outdoor recreation and parks are a significant part of B.C.'s **economy**, with room for growth:

- In 2023, B.C.'s outdoor recreation sector directly contributed \$4.8 billion to B.C.'s economy (1.5% of B.C.'s GDP). In addition, \$17 billion in total revenue was earned by the outdoor recreation industry in 2023 and \$3.2 billion was paid in wages and salaries (reference: B.C.'s Outdoor Recreation Participant Survey)
- In the United States, the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation industry accounted for 2.3% of the nation's economy. It grew by 3.6% in 2023, outpacing overall GDP growth by more than half of a percent, and created 5 million jobs. The number of outdoor participants grew for a ninth consecutive year to a record 181.1 million in 2024, reflecting a global trend in increased demand. ([reference](#))
- The state of Colorado created a dedicated office to support its outdoor recreation industry in 2015. By 2019 its value had nearly tripled from \$23-billion a year to \$63-billion ([reference](#))

Access to nature has a direct impact on **education**:

- Kids with more green space in their neighbourhoods, especially near their schools, have higher standardized test scores and graduation rates ([reference](#))
- Schoolchildren who spend more time in nature as they grow up increase their brain volume in areas that improve memory and attention ([reference](#)).

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- Each extra day a child spends in a park per week steadily increases their resilience against stress ([reference](#)).

Access to nature has a direct impact on **healthcare** outcomes and costs:

- Worldwide, a global study found that access to protected green spaces provides an estimated \$6 trillion US annual savings in mental health costs. That is an order of magnitude larger than tourism benefits of the same spaces ([reference](#)).
- In Oregon, the total statewide illness savings from outdoor activities in 2018 was \$1.4 billion, approximately 3.6% of total healthcare costs in Oregon (pop. 4.3 million) ([reference](#))
- People who spend at least 2 hours in nature each week report significantly better health and well-being ([reference](#)).
- Spending time in natural areas is associated with reduced blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as the incidence of type II diabetes and stroke and cardiovascular mortality ([reference](#))

Outdoor Recreation and Parks are integrally linked with **tourism and adventure tourism**

- Tourism contributes \$22.1 billion in annual revenue and \$9.7 billion to our GDP. With nearly 17,000 businesses and 126,000 people employed, tourism is a pillar of our economy and one of our largest small-business generators.
- Adventure tourism has grown to become one of the BC's most exciting economic sectors, filled with development opportunities that provide diverse benefits to communities. The adventure travel visitor economy supports over 2,200 businesses in British Columbia – mostly small and medium enterprises – which generate in excess of \$3 billion in annual income and 120,000 jobs in every corner of the province. Jobs are highly skilled and certified, providing a career ladder for long term well-paying and hard-working jobs.
- Outdoor recreation travellers who participate in adventure tourism spend more. The average total spend for a BC resident who is an overnight adventure tourism participant on a summer trip is \$1,126, compared to \$772 for a non-adventure tourism participant ([reference](#))
- Canada was recently ranked #1 in the world for reputation, along with Switzerland. This prestigious index evaluates 74 nations on economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. A single-point increase in reputation results in a 7.2% boost in tourism revenue ([reference](#))

**New markets** are emerging related to outdoor recreation and parks

- Over 25% of North American populations (28.1% in BC) have some form of disability (physical, cognitive, aging-related). This is a large and underserved market that is expected to grow as the population ages. The sector includes day visits, equipment purchases, adaptive rentals, new technologies, guided trips, and multi-day tourism.

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- The global wearable technology market was roughly USD \$80–90 billion in 2024, with many analysts projecting double-digit compound annual growth rates ( $\approx 13\text{--}17\%$  depending on source) over the next 5–10 years ([reference](#)). Significant global demand plus growing demand for higher-value wearables creates a realistic opportunity to scale local design and manufacturing in outdoor recreational and related wearables.
- There is increasing interest in authentic cultural experiences tied to nature, led by Indigenous communities. 88% of Canadians are interested in indigenous cultural activities and one in four visitors to BC seeks authentic Indigenous experiences, one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry. Such offerings align with global trends in sustainable and culturally-rich tourism. Indigenous tourism currently contributes \$1.1Bn to BC's economy, with over 400 indigenous businesses ([reference](#)) Based on market research, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's goal is for Canada to become the global leader in Indigenous tourism with direct contributions to GDP of \$6 billion annually by 2030.
- Travellers are looking for new, unique, and authentic local experiences. Trending activities include hiking, trekking, and walking; culinary and gastronomy experiences; cultural activities; safaris and wildlife viewing; e-bike cycling; and wildlife or nature photography ([reference](#)).
- Artificial intelligence, robotics, digital tools, sensors, remote imagery, augmented reality, mobile apps and smart infrastructure are increasingly used in outdoor recreation and park use and management around the world ([reference](#)). BC can be a world leader in these emerging market areas by investing in them at the forefront.