

HIGHWAY 3 CORRIDOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

HIGHLIGHTS



DESTINATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA



THANK YOU

The Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy was guided by input from over 100 tourism partners representing the diversity of communities, organizations, businesses, interests and passions.

We thank the First Nations on whose traditional territories we gathered for our community meetings including: Hope — home of the Shxw'ow'hamel, Manning Park — home of the Upper Similkameen and the Stó:lō, Osoyoos — home of

the Okanagan (Syilx), Cranbrook and Creston — home of the Sinixt and Ktunaxa.

Thank you to our tourism partners who participated in the process by attending planning workshops, conducting interviews, hosting site visits and responding to surveys. Special thanks to the members of the Working Group as well as the facilitators of the Highway 3 Corridor destination development process.

CATHEDRAL PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Johan Lolos

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1 INTRODUCTION

WHY A STRATEGY?

The Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of the Highway 3 tourism destination over the next 10 years and beyond. The strategy was developed as part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program to support and guide the long-term growth of tourism in British Columbia. This document presents the key highlights of the Highway 3 Corridor strategy.

WHO IS IT FOR?

The Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy is a guide for tourism partners as they work collaboratively to grow the visitor economy. The strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities, and market conditions. Results will be tracked and emerging learning outcomes will inform future implementation activities thereby optimizing their effectiveness in increasing economic, social, and cultural benefits for the entire Highway 3 Corridor.

WHERE IS IT FOR?

Known as the Crowsnest Highway, Highway 3 in its entirety stretches some 1,161 km from Hope, BC to Medicine Hat, Alberta. Within BC, Highway 3 is also known as the Southern Trans-Provincial Highway. The Highway 3 Corridor, which also includes Highway 3A,

3B and 43 and the immediate hinterland, comprises some 838 km of mountainous, valley and riverside roads. It travels through several First Nations communities linking cities, towns and smaller settlements along its length. It is strategically connected to air and rail transport infrastructure and intersects a number of key north-south transit routes. It is a corridor in transition. Historically significant as a gold rush trail, tourism and recreation opportunities, as well as lifestyle/amenity migration, have contributed to a transition along the corridor from a resource-based economy to a more diversified one. Key sectors now include agritourism, viticulture, cultural heritage tourism, manufacturing, and tech start-ups.

WHERE DOES IT FIT?

The Highway 3 Corridor is one of 20 planning areas across BC for which destination development strategies are being developed. Each planning area represents a logical destination or corridor for visitors in and around the province. As planning areas cross multiple jurisdictions, adopting an integrated approach with a shared vision and coordinated investment is critical. The Highway 3 Corridor traverses several tourism regions — Vancouver, Coast & Mountains, Thompson Okanagan and the Kootenay Rockies. In time, regional strategies will be developed, informed by the outcomes of the planning area destination development strategies. These regional strategies will in turn inform the creation of a

provincial strategy thereby ensuring a truly integrated and cohesive combination of bottom-up and top-down destination planning.

A KEY IMPERATIVE

Successful destination development recognizes that “we all have a role to play”. The recommendations contained within the Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional, focused and aligned discussions regarding implementation locally, regionally, and provincially. Tourism partners have already articulated their desire to work cooperatively, as a unified Highway 3 Corridor, on destination development initiatives. It is only by working collaboratively that the true potential of the Highway 3 Corridor can be realized.

AT A GLANCE

In what follows, the key features of the strategy — the vision, the motivating experiences and the key aspects of each of the development themes — are set out. While further detail on each of these elements is available in the full strategy, they are brought together here, in the following “At A Glance” section, to demonstrate the integrated nature of the approach being taken; the overall scope of the endeavour and the importance of working to a shared agenda.

2 REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

The appeal of the Highway 3 Corridor lies in its particular combination of people, place, pace and personality. With a First Nations' heritage that is cherished and celebrated, its distinctiveness derives from the quirkiness, small town friendliness and sense of belonging of its many communities.

Clean air, rejuvenating water, perfect powder snow and relatively easy access to a backcountry network of trails and tracks provide wonderful opportunities for being in nature, whether to indulge a passion for adventurous activity or seek out zen-like calm. As a road trip, Highway 3 offers the prospect of a relaxed pace of travel with multiple opportunities to stop, explore and spend time in distinctive communities along the way. Locally grown food and drink, live music, festivals and events creatively express the destination's contemporary culture while encounters with storytellers and story keepers reveal the depth of its history and heritage.

A SHARED VISION

The ambition is for the Highway 3 Corridor to become a truly remarkable driving experience. Weaving its way through stunning landscapes and linking distinctive communities, it provides access to a range of compelling

experiences, responding to the needs of visitors year-round. Working together and adopting a sustainable approach, partners seek to realise the following vision:



TRAVELLERS WITH A SENSE OF ADVENTURE ARE ATTRACTED TO THE HIGHWAY 3 CORRIDOR'S ABUNDANCE OF PARKS, REMARKABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND THE WELCOMING ECCENTRICITY OF ITS MANY SMALL COMMUNITIES, EACH OFFERING INTERESTING LANDSCAPES, STORIES AND HISTORIES TO SHARE. HIGHWAY 3'S SAFE, SCENIC ROUTE CAN BE EXPLORED BY TRAVELLERS AT THEIR OWN PACE. IT IS BC'S BEST KNOWN, BEST-LOVED, WEST-EAST DRIVING CORRIDOR.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

While the destination faces a number of challenges including the connectivity and reliability of the driving experience, the absence of a critical mass of product experiences, dependency on peak season and staff constraints, key opportunities focus on the need to:

- Enhance the road trip experience
- Showcase community character
- Create new off-peak season experiences to motivate travel — with a focus on outdoor recreation/trails, arts and culture, agritourism, storytelling
- Strengthen support for business viability
- Manage visitor growth and environmental sustainability

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REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

Specific product experiences and signature locations with the potential to motivate travel to the Highway 3 Corridor, encourage longer stays and generate year-round tourism include:

OUTDOOR AND RECREATION

- Hope/Manning Park — camping, hiking
- Osoyoos — Summer water activities
- Christina Lake — Summer water activities, hiking, mountain biking
- Fernie — Skiing and mountain biking
- Rossland — Skiing and mountain biking
- Powder Highway — Skiing and winter activities
- Kootenay — Dirt trail running/ mountain biking

ARTS, CULTURE, FESTIVALS, AND EVENTS

- Artisan communities/areas include Hope, Grand Forks, Castlegar, Creston, Nelson, and Crawford Bay.
- Further signature events to attract visitation to the destination to be identified

FOOD, DRINK, AND AGRITOURISM

- Osoyoos/Oliver (fruit, wineries)
- Keremeos/Cawston (fruit)
- Creston Valley (fruit, wineries)

- Kootenays (craft beer)

- Nelson (restaurants)

STORIES AND LEGENDS

- Othello Tunnels (Hope)
- Mascot Gold Mines (Hedley)
- Tashme Internment Camp (Princeton area)
- Grist Mill (Keremeos)
- NK'MIP Desert Cultural Centre (Osoyoos)
- Doukhobor Discovery Centre (Castlegar)
- Italian heritage/mining history (Trail)
- Historic downtown/mining history/ Gold Fever Follies (Rossland)
- Creston Wildlife Centre (Creston)
- Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre (St. Eugene)
- Fort Steele Heritage Town (Cranbrook)
- Underground Mining Railway (Kimberley)
- Historic downtown (Fernie)
- Elkview Mine (Sparwood)

RED MOUNTAIN RESORT

Photo: Kari Medig



3 AT A GLANCE

VISION STATEMENT Travellers with a sense of adventure are attracted to the Highway 3 corridor’s abundance of parks, remarkable outdoor recreation and the welcoming eccentricity of its many small communities, each offering interesting landscapes, stories and histories to share. Highway 3’s safe, scenic route can be explored by travellers at their own pace. It is BC’s best known, best-loved, west–east driving corridor.

	OUTDOOR & RECREATION	ARTS, FESTIVALS & EVENTS	FOOD, DRINK & AGRITOURISM	STORIES & LEGENDS
THEME 1	“GOING FURTHER” CREATING A MEMORABLE ROAD TRIP			
	SAFE A safe, convenient and reliable driving experience will be key to inspiring the confidence of travellers and safeguarding the reputation of the route.	SIGNED The availability of consistent and uniform signage of what’s ahead is a key consideration for visitors new to the route.	SERVICED An iconic stop every hour supplemented by a suite of supporting visitor services along and off the route will convert the highway from a “transit” to a “touring” experience.	SEGMENTED A suite of coherent, compelling and connected itineraries will meet the needs and satisfy the interests of different visitor segments, whether they want to explore on two wheels, in four or on foot.
THEME 2	“STAYING LONGER” – SHOWCASING COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY			
	DISTINCTIVE PLACES Convert the unique assets, attributes and associations into compelling experiences that will motivate visitors to come, explore, stay longer and return.	GREAT FIRST & LASTING IMPRESSIONS Ensure that the places — particularly the downtowns along the corridor — which visitors encounter are vibrant, attractive and well-looked after.	SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY Manage the impact of the highway in downtown locations by affording priority to residents and visitors in terms of pedestrian movement and circulation.	A WARM WELCOME Activate a suite of training initiatives to equip “ambassadors” with the skills to engage confidently and knowledgeably with visitors about the “end-to-end” offer of experiences available.
THEME 3	“GOING DEEPER” – DEVELOPING & ENHANCING INFRASTRUCTURE, PRODUCTS & EXPERIENCES			
	GREAT TRAILS FOR A GREAT OUTDOORS Create a suite of iconic trail based journeys that will motivate visitor interests, optimize local networks and align with iconic bike and rail trails. Facilitate access to the outdoors for year-round countryside and waterway pursuits, including camping.	CELEBRATING HERITAGE & CULTURE Curate and judiciously program a calendar of motivational events and festivals which best showcase the distinctive attributes of the communities along the corridor, extend the visitor season and promote unity of purpose.	FEEDING BODY & SOUL Engage farmers and growers in creating great food and drink experiences enabling visitors to explore a wealth of locally produced, locally crafted and locally served fare.	STIMULATING CURIOUS MINDS Enable the story keepers — the First Nations communities — to engage visitors in the rich history of their traditional territories, curate a compelling cultural tourism offer and derive real benefit from their participation in the visitor economy.

PROVIDING AN ENABLING & SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Work collaboratively across the corridor to enhance air access to the destination; promote business and investment opportunities and facilitate the development of experiences that are accessible for all.

3 AT A GLANCE

THEME 4	“GROWING STRONGER” – BUILDING YEAR-ROUND, LONG-TERM BUSINESS VIABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY				
<p>THRIVING INDIGENOUS TOURISM</p> <p>Build the capacity of First Nations communities to lead, develop and grow a sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry.</p>	<p>CONNECTED YEAR ROUND</p> <p>Facilitate those involved in the business of tourism to align their offer in response to visitor demand and work collaboratively to create, communicate, package and sell compelling experiences.</p>	<p>INVESTING IN PEOPLE</p> <p>Match sector needs in terms of required skills with the capacity of educational institutes to deliver relevant training. Offer tailored, affordable, on-site training and mentoring to existing tourism businesses.</p>	<p>SHARING INFORMATION & KNOW-HOW</p> <p>Communicate, update and disseminate information and guidance on the range of resources and supports available to tourism businesses to assist with funding, mentoring and training.</p>	<p>FACILITATING GROWTH</p> <p>Facilitate investment and streamline the approval process for new product development initiatives; meet the accommodation needs of industry employees and review tax policies.</p>	
THEME 5	“WORKING TOGETHER” – EMBRACING COOPERATION & COLLABORATION, BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT & UNDERSTANDING				
<p>COLLABORATE TO COMPETE</p> <p>Promote the Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy amongst key stakeholders and facilitate a culture of partnership at all levels to realize the ambition of this shared agenda for destination development.</p>	<p>ADVOCATE & COMMUNICATE</p> <p>Build a coalition of support to safeguard the resource base for tourism while acknowledging the capacity of other industries to enhance/constrain the development and performance of the sector.</p>	<p>BUILD RESILIENCE</p> <p>Find ways to renew, resource and reward the role of volunteers in sustaining key aspects of the visitor economy. Institute a forum dedicated to sharing learning outcomes; adopting best practice and building capacity.</p>	<p>GATHER & SHARE INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>Develop a research program to better understand the performance, perception and potential of tourism in the planning area. Engage visitor touch points in capturing data and market insights.</p>		
THEME 6	“TREADING LIGHTLY” – BALANCED & MANAGED GROWTH & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION				
<p>INTEGRATED PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Work collaboratively with key players to understand development needs, assess potential impacts and devise an agreed upon framework for realizing and managing future interventions.</p>	<p>DIVERSIFY TO THRIVE</p> <p>Develop evidence based scenarios to better understand the impact of climate change. Build the capacity of the sector to respond and become more resilient through, for example, diversifying its offerings.</p>	<p>MANAGE & REDUCE IMPACT</p> <p>Adopt a sustainable approach to the development of tourism supported by a program of monitoring and measuring the long-term health of the ecosystem to ensure its protection.</p>	<p>DESTINATION & BUSINESS ACCREDITATION</p> <p>Create a tourism charter to confirm, celebrate and communicate the importance of adopting a sustainable approach to growing the visitor economy.</p>		

4 GEARING UP

FRAMEWORK

The strategy presents the destination development objectives using a consistent framework to determine the prioritization of each objective and the relative timing for implementation. Objectives with a provincial or regional scope are identified as well and will inform the regional and provincial destination development strategies.

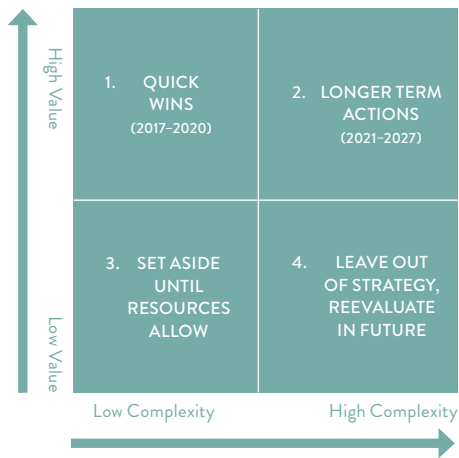
SUCCESS NETWORKS

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in local, regional, and provincial decision making. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will achieve better development decisions, drive greater tourism revenues, and realize benefits for businesses and communities on the Highway 3 Corridor. All this will contribute to a thriving, vibrant and growing economy.

Joint strategy ownership among all planning area tourism partners is a critical component of this program's success. The strategy identifies a suggested success network of tourism partners to champion and move actions within each objective forward. Being identified as a partner doesn't mean the actions have been endorsed or resources have been committed.

CATALYST PROJECTS

The following eight actions were identified as catalyst projects for immediately moving the strategy into implementation.



Going Further: Creating a Memorable Road Trip

- Map out entire visitor journey adopting a variety of travelling “personas” and identify opportunities to improve the overall visitor touring experience through enhancements.

Staying Longer: Showcasing Community Character and Personality

- Have each community develop an inventory and identify their own 5–10 unique assets to enhance in line with the four motivating experiences.

Going Deeper: Developing & Enhancing Infrastructure, Products & Experiences

- Create a trail asset inventory and analyze the community based trails to identify one or two iconic Highway 3 Corridor destination trails to motivate travel to the planning area.
- Develop a plan to enhance the Highway 3 Corridor journey to support the Stories + Legends pathways through First Nation

cultural/ancestral trade trails, settlers, stories of reinvention, and Japanese internment camps and resettlement.

- Facilitate meaningful engagement where First Nations are benefitting and ensure ownership of Indigenous tourism development.
- Implement Destination BC Remarkable Experiences Program across the corridor.

Working Together: Embracing Cooperation & Collaboration, Building Community Support & Understanding

- Present the Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy (same package/presentation) to each economic development agency along the corridor.
- Evolve the Mayors’ and Chairs’ tourism subcommittee to a Highway 3 Tourism Alliance to work with tourism regions to implement this 10-year Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development Strategy.

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

You can likely find it in the more detailed Highway 3 Corridor Destination Development strategy or you can reach us at:

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: HIGHWAY 3 AND THE KOOTENAY RIVER, Kari Medig

HIGHWAY 3 CORRIDOR

