

INVEST IN SOUTHWEST ALBERTA – TOURISM



Envisioning a Landscape of Investment Opportunities and Export Capacity

Invest in Southwest Alberta – Tourism contains an analysis of the tourism sector in the southwest region of Alberta from an investment perspective. This document contains information on the region's existing tourism product, its competitive edge, and access to markets, opportunities, incentives and resources.

Invest in Southwest Alberta – Tourism

AN UNLIMITED LANDSCAPE OF OPPORTUNITY

Southwest Alberta offers immediate opportunities to invest in existing businesses, start new ventures and/or explore partnerships with established firms in the thriving tourism sector.

This unique region is an ideal location to live, learn and invest due to its:

- Low Business Costs – one of the most competitive tax environments in North America – The combined federal/provincial corporate income tax rate is 27% for general businesses and 14% for small businesses;
- Strategic Location and Access – \$845 million in major provincial projects have been announced for the Southern Alberta Transmission Reinforcement initiative which equates to better service, more efficient transmission of renewable energy, and new opportunities in value chain growth; and
- Entrepreneurial Spirit – a skilled, young and productive workforce populates this stunning area.



Fort Macleod: Fort Museum North West Mounted Police Ride.

Today, tourism is one of the leading industries in the province of Alberta, employing over 114,000 Albertans and generating over \$7.4 billion in annual expenditures. It is supported by a range of hospitality and service-related businesses that cater to the needs of Albertans travelling in their own province as well visitors from other parts of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Europe and Asia.

Tourism is big business – and not only in Alberta. The federal government estimates that tourism contributes as much to Canada’s wealth as agriculture, fishery and forestry combined.

LAY OF THE LAND

The Alberta SouthWest Region includes 16 municipalities and covers an area of 15,446 square kilometers, larger in size than the state of Connecticut. The region accounts for 2.4% of Alberta’s land mass. Its population of 36,700 residents, living in 16 vibrant communities and representing 1.0% of Alberta’s population, call southwest Alberta home. The six major centres are Cardston, Crowsnest Pass, Claresholm, Fort Macleod, Nanton, and Pincher Creek.

This creates a region of wide open spaces that is very attractive to visitors and represents potential for continued growth. The communities in the region are within a 150 km radius and vary in size from full service centers of over 5, 500 people to charming villages of 200-450 people. The communities work in partnership on initiatives to facilitate sustainable economic growth.

The region boasts one of the highest quality of life standards in the world, with recreational settings, strong community values and an average household income of over \$80,000 (2011). Southwest Alberta has significant geographic diversity; from prairie grasslands and foothills, to river valleys and the majestic mountain peaks of the Canadian Rockies. Big sky

starry nights free of light pollution, and 333 days of annual sunshine add to the appeal of this spectacular region. With clean, fresh water, more hours of sunshine than anywhere else in Canada and a bounty of natural resources, Southwest Alberta proves an idyllic setting for living and a great location for commerce.



Over 1,900 businesses currently operate in Southwest Alberta’s vibrant and diverse economy. Local companies benefit from a young, highly skilled and educated workforce. In 2012, 48.3% of the labour force aged 25 and over reported holding a university degree or post-secondary diploma, and two-thirds of the region’s population was aged between 15 and 64.

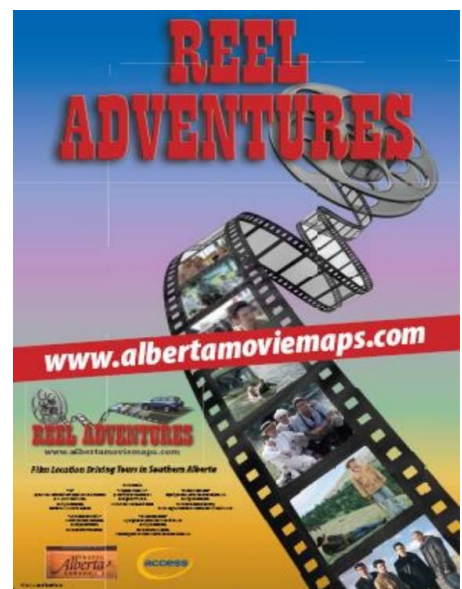
A DIVERSE ECONOMY

The tourism industry is an economic mainstay in the region, vibrant and growing with a breadth of opportunities relating to the abundant natural landscapes, historic landmarks, and a variety of cultural influences. In addition to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump), this region offers historic sites, golfing, delightful campgrounds, beautiful provincial parks, western and cowboy themed activities, and spectacular outdoor adventure and recreation including hiking trails and ski hills. The region has a diverse and visible heritage from coal mining in the Crowsnest Pass, prairie pioneering, the Northwest Mounted Police, a strong and vibrant agricultural tradition and the cultural richness of First Nations.

The varied and stunning landscapes and historic town sites have made this region a “living movie set”. Southwest Alberta is one of Alberta’s top film location sites where cinematic masterpieces such as Little Big Man; Betrayal; Days of Heaven, Unforgiven, and Brokeback Mountain were filmed. Technology-led enterprise could also extend into the video/film and digital media sector.

Southern Alberta’s beautiful vistas and mountain views have been captured in dozens of films over the years. The industry is positioned to grow in the next five years as the building of Alberta’s new \$23 million dollar film studio in Calgary will be completed in 2015.

Southwest Alberta also forms the northeast corner of the “Crown of the Continent,” which is a larger transboundary region encompassing the



[Click here to learn about past movie set locations and three free driving tours.](#)



Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, and the surrounding areas of British Columbia and Montana. In 2007 *National Geographic* identified the Crown of the Continent as a significant “geotourism” destination that is particularly attractive to the traveller who is interested in experiencing the unique character of place, in terms of landscape, culture and historical significance. The region has continued to partner with *National Geographic* and the transboundary partners to develop tourism product and market the region with a geotourism map guide and the **Crown of the Continent website**.

In 2012 *Pathways to Prosperity* was published illustrating how the Crown’s appeal has emerged as one of the area’s most important economic assets. Success stories of entrepreneurs are shared, demonstrating that locating to areas within the Crown “is no longer a trade-off between livelihood and lifestyle; today’s entrepreneurs are having their scenery and eating it too.”



Waterton Lakes National Park – An UNESCO SITE

A sampling of cultural, natural, historic, recreational, outdoor, entertainment and just plain fun experiences have been provided below:

Historical

- Remington Carriage Museum
- Courthouse Museum
- Frank Slide Interpretive Center
- Leitch Collieries
- Bellevue Underground Mine
- Nanton Bomber Museum
- Canadian Grain Elevator Discovery Centre
- Empress Theatre
- Fort Museum of NWMP and First Nations
- Pioneer Place/Kootenai Brown Village
- Heritage Acres Farm Museum

Recreation & Outdoor Adventure

- Riding/ranch vacations
- Canoeing & Kayaking
- White Water Rafting
- Climbing & Hiking
- Cycling
- Fishing
- Golf (Courses in Cardston, Claresholm, Crowsnest Pass, Fort Macleod, Granum, Pincher Creek, Nanton, Stavely, and Waterton)
- Skiing

Cultural & Natural destinations



- Buffalo Rock Tipi Camp
- Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
- Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park
- Windy Rafters Barn Dance
- Great Canadian Barn Dance

Blackfoot Nation Dance, Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump

Entertainment and Attractions

- Rodeo
- Festivals
- Live Music
- Theatre
- Powwows
- Art galleries
- Antiques



Nanton Pro Rodeo

Experiential Tourism

Waterton Shoreline Cruise Co.

Step aboard the historic M.V. International, cruise along the shoreline of the beautiful Upper Waterton Lake and cross the international border to Goat Haunt, Montana. In addition, water shuttles cross the lake to Crypt Landing daily; the gateway to a breathtaking hiking trail. Enjoy some of the most spectacular mountain scenery the Rockies Mountains have to offer.



Cruising on the M.V. International

View majestic towering cliffs, unique geological formations, beautiful waterfalls, snow clad mountain peaks and the international border. Bring your camera; tour boats make

photographic and wildlife stops. Bald eagle, bear, moose, deer, mountain sheep and mountain goats are often seen.

- Fishing

Southwestern Alberta is the perfect place to experience world-class fishing. The following operators offer equipment and guided fishing trips, as well as directions to a number of rivers to find the perfect location.

- The Crowsnest Angler Fly Shop & Guide Service
- Alberta Fly Fishing/Crowsnest Café & Flyshop
- Incept Adventure Co.

- Riding/ranch vacations

The Western lifestyle is a staple in the region. Learn what it takes to be part of an operational cattle ranch or simply enjoy riding through the stunning landscapes with your equine partner. Riding and ranch style experiences are offered by ranch vacation operators in the area. Each of these operators is extremely welcoming and offers an unforgettable experience.

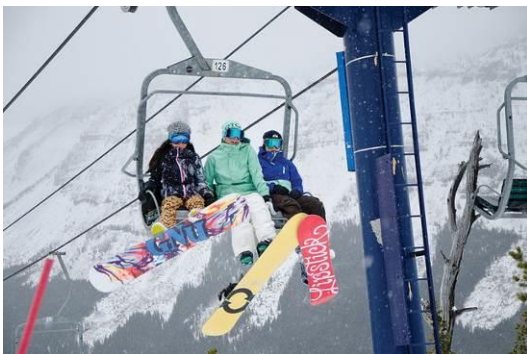


Southwest Alberta Ranch and Farm Life

- Rangeview Ranch Vacations
- Lucasia Ranch Vacations
- Alpine Stables
- Centre Peak High Country Valley Adventures
- Sierra West Cabins & Ranch Vacations
- Oxely Ranch Vacations

- Skiing

For families and high-performance skiers alike, the two ski hills in the region are sure to satisfy.



Castle Mountain Ski Resort

- **Pass Powderkeg**

Pass Powderkeg offers night skiing and challenging terrain parks. In the summer the trails are open for mountain biking.

- **Castle Mountain Resort**

Castle Mountain Resort has some of the longest vertical runs in North America (nearly 3,000 feet) making it a mountain worth visiting for avid skiers. At the same time they are able to maintain a

family-friendly focus to make everyone at every level feel welcome. Castle is the only ski hill in Alberta to offer the unique experience of Cat-skiing!

- White water rafting/kayaking

Incept Adventure Co. is the place to contact if you're looking to kayak, white water raft, or want a knowledgeable fishing guide.

Whether you're an "experienced adventurer" or just want to give one of these experiences a try, Incept Adventure Co. is the place to go.



Exhilarating Experiences with Incept Adventure Co.

- Sinister 7 Ultra

If you're a runner looking to push yourself to the max, the Sinister 7 Ultra is a race that may be the greatest challenge of your life. The 100-mile (161km) course will take you through the most rugged, remote and beautiful terrain in Alberta's stunning Rocky Mountains. With 5,687m of elevation gain across the course, this race will punish those who are not prepared.



The Sinister 7 Ultra.

UNPARALLELED ACCESS TO MARKETS

HIGHWAYS

- Highway 2 (CANAMEX) accelerates the north-south flow of goods, connecting Alberta to the U.S.A. and Mexico.
- Highway 1 (TransCanada) is Canada's major east-west trade corridor, spanning across all ten Canadian provinces, linking the east and west coasts.
- Highway 3 west connects Alberta to Vancouver, British Columbia and the Port Metro Vancouver deep-sea terminal, Canada's largest sea port and the fourth largest tonnage port in North America. Highway 3 East links to the Trans-Canada Highway, all major eastern Canadian highways as well as the Atlantic Ocean.
- Major Port of Entry to the USA: one hour south of Fort Macleod is Canada's 9th busiest border crossing, Coutts/Sweet Grass, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Distance to:	Kilometers	Miles
Lethbridge, AB	100	62
Calgary, AB	216	134
Fort McMurray, AB	952	592
Seattle, WA	956	594
Vancouver, BC	1166	724
Los Angeles, CA	2313	1437
Toronto, ON	3419	2125
Houston, TX	3389	2016
Montreal, QC	3499	2174
New York, NY	3854	2395
Halifax, NS	4735	2942

AIR

- One of Alberta's longest runways lies within the region, and is managed by the Municipal District of Pincher Creek. The runway is at 1190 meters (3,903 feet) elevation and is 2012 meters (6,600 feet) in length.
- Within an hour to 1.5 hour drive is the Lethbridge airport, operating 24/7 with daily scheduled flights. There is also an on-site NAV CANADA Flight Services Station that operates 16 hours per day.
- Just a two-hour drive away from most communities is the Calgary International Airport, Canada's third largest. Connecting passengers through daily scheduled flights to 100 International destinations, the airport also serves as a major cargo hub for Western Canada.

RAIL

- Products can be shipped by rail on the Canadian Pacific Railway mainline. Lethbridge boasts a major freight handling facility, with tracks running in all four cardinal directions. Products are easily shipped north to Calgary, south to the U.S.A., east to large markets in southern Ontario, and west to Vancouver and beyond to the Pacific Rim.



A major freight mainline runs through the region linking British Columbia and Port Metro Vancouver to a major freight handling facility in Lethbridge.

MAJOR TOURISM SECTOR EMPLOYERS

Examples of companies that contribute to the growth in this key industry are listed below:

- Waymarker Hospitality
- Bayshore Inn & Properties
- Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
- Castle Mountain Resort
- Frank Slide Interpretive Centre

A GLOBAL CONTENDER IN BUSINESS COSTS

Work here. Live here. Do business here. Get more. Pay less. Alberta has one of the most competitive tax environments in North America and fosters innovation through its pro-business attitude. Investors continue to take advantage of its low property, corporate and

personal income tax rates. Alberta is the only province that does not have a provincial retail sales tax. It has no provincial capital or payroll taxes, nor machinery and equipment taxes. Alberta has none of the taxes typical in many other provinces and in the U.S.A.

- Small business owners pay lower taxes (total of personal and business income tax, sales tax, gas tax, health premiums) in Alberta than in any other province in Canada.
- The combined federal/provincial corporate income tax rate is 27% for general businesses and 18% for small businesses.
- Alberta has the lowest gasoline taxes in Canada.
- Alberta Healthcare is the best funded in the country, representing one third of the annual provincial budget. Canada provides publically funded healthcare services, reducing the cost to private business.

Specifically, southwest Alberta's competitive advantage lies in its vast land resources, affordable cost of business and cost of living, as well as access to markets:

- Lower than provincial average labor costs
 - Small business owners pay lower taxes (total of personal and business income, sales, gas taxes and health premiums) than they would in any other province
 - Average house prices approximately 58% lower than the Alberta average
 - Municipal commercial taxes are roughly \$1500/\$100,000 of assessment. This is roughly 25% lower than the Calgary Region for comparable enterprise operating space;
 - Competitively low water, natural gas and electricity utility rates; and
 - Internationally competitive manufacturing costs in green energy.
-
- The tourism industry is growing and has breadth including culture, recreation, outdoor adventure, and all season destinations. Tourism infrastructure, service and operator opportunities are present.
 - The agricultural character of the region contributes to a stable economic base. Communities are effective service centers, and quality of life amenities are attracting technology and knowledge workers and entrepreneurs who can choose where to establish.

EXISTING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Crowsnest Pass Cabin/Resort Development
- Cardston County “The Great Canadian Barn Dance” Lodge Development
- Cardston RV Campground Expansion
- Belly River Teepee and RV Campground Development
- Sentinel RV Resort Development
- Waterton Eco-lodge Resort Development
- Crowsnest Pass Ski Resort Expansion
- MD of Willow Creek Cowboy Action Shooting Facility
- Pincher Creek, Crowsnest Pass or Castle Mountain Zip line Development
- Pincher Creek RV Park and Campground Development

For a more in depth review of these opportunities please consult the following document:

Government of Alberta Southwest Alberta Investment Opportunities

INCENTIVES

Southwest Alberta supports existing, expanding and new businesses through its strategic network of 16 regional communities. Collaborative initiatives with each other, the City of Lethbridge, Lethbridge County, the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College encourage budding entrepreneurs, and provide access to market and investment opportunities.

Travel Alberta Industry Programs and Resources

Website: www.industry.travelalberta.com

Phone: 1 (403) 648-1000

Email: info@travelalberta.com

Tourism Market Monitor

The monthly Alberta Tourism Market Monitor highlights travel, accommodation and attendance statistics:

- Accommodation occupancy rates and average daily room rates
- Air passenger enplanements and deplanements
- National Park visits
- Historic sites and museum attendance figures
- Employment in food and accommodation sector
- Restaurant receipts
- Highway traffic counts

The annual Tourism Market Modifier can be viewed [here](#)

If you would like to receive an email that informs you when the updated Market Monitor is available, please email research.innovation@gov.ab.ca

Cooperative Marketing Investment Program

The mission of the Cooperative Marketing Investment Program is to increase the marketing capacity of our industry partners. Their strategy is to grow tourism revenues by investing in industry-led marketing partnerships that foster collaboration, drive return on investment and align with Travel Alberta’s business strategy. Cooperative Marketing funding is available to Alberta’s tourism industry whose projects comply with the Cooperative Marketing Guidelines and Eligible Expenses.

The Canada’s West Marketplace Scholarship Program

Travel Alberta’s strategy is to target high potential international markets with export-ready experiences. The Canada’s West Marketplace Scholarship Program is designed to help industry showcase Alberta travel experiences to international tour operators at the annual Canada’s West Marketplace. Attracting more than 120 international tour operators and wholesalers from Europe, Asia Pacific and the Americas, Canada’s West Marketplace is the most effective way for Alberta tourism suppliers to present their products, experiences and services to tourism buyers from around the world.

The Canada’s West Marketplace Scholarship Program is an innovative program that assists Alberta-based tourism businesses that offer export-ready products or services. The program provides financial support and coaching to attend Canada’s West Marketplace.

Certified Destination Management Executive Scholarship Program

Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) is a recognized leader in the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) industry and their Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) program is designed to help DMO leaders effectively adapt and manage increasing change and competition.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

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