



COMMUNITY
TOURISM
FOUNDATIONS®

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

2007 PRINCE RUPERT VISITOR STUDY FINDINGS

FINAL

June 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2007 Prince Rupert Visitors Study was a comprehensive survey of travellers to Prince Rupert between June and August of 2007.

The Prince Rupert Visitor Study was a partnership of Tourism British Columbia and Tourism Prince Rupert. Partial funding for this study came from the Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program.

Tourism British Columbia would like to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations that assisted with the project by providing access for on-site interviews of their clients and/or by providing administrative data.

- BC Ferries
- Alaska State Ferries
- Prince Rupert Port Authority
- City of Prince Rupert
- Museum of Northern British Columbia
- VIA Rail
- Prince Rupert Airport
- Prince Rupert Chamber of Commerce (Visitor Centre)
- Prince Rupert Yacht Club

This report was partially written by the Liddie Sorenson-Lawrence on contract with Research and Planning, Tourism British Columbia.

Executive Summary

The Community Tourism Foundations Visitor Study of Prince Rupert was undertaken in the summer (June 1 through August 31) of 2007. The study was designed to provide information on the characteristics and volume of travellers to Prince Rupert and to support marketing plan design and product development in the Prince Rupert area. Partial funding for this project was provided Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program in partnership with key stakeholders in the area. The project was managed and carried out by Tourism British Columbia's Research and Planning department.

The study objectives were:

1. To profile travellers who visit Prince Rupert in terms of traveller and trip characteristics.
2. To estimate visitor volume and tourism expenditures of travellers to Prince Rupert during June – August 2007.
3. To profile users of the Visitor Centre in terms of travellers and trip characteristics.
4. To estimate the influence of the Prince Rupert Visitor Centre on the decision-making process of travellers in British Columbia, on the length of stay, expenditures, and selection of additional or alternative activities, attractions or destinations.

Methods

To fulfill the multiple objectives of this study information was collected using a number of methods and data sources. Information was collected from:

- Administrative data from transportation sites (BC Ferries, Alaska State Ferries, Prince Rupert Airport, VIA Rail and the Prince Rupert Yacht Club),
- A comprehensive visitor survey with an on-site interview and mailback questionnaire (45% response rate),
- A survey of Prince Rupert fishing charter businesses,
- Vehicle counts at the Rushbrook Floats boat launch,
- A postcard survey left on vehicles at the Rushbrook Floats boat launch,
- An exit survey of cruise ship passengers administered by the Ambassador Program in Prince Rupert, and
- A cruise ship passenger survey administered by the Northwest Cruise Ship Association and the Prince Rupert Port Authority.

Information presented here is representative of travellers to Prince Rupert between June and August of 2007.

Results

The results of the study have been segmented by type of traveller to the Prince Rupert region. The report is organized by those traveller segments including: overnight leisure travellers, leisure day trip travellers, anglers, cruise ship passengers and business travellers.

Overall, between June and August of 2007 it was estimated that about 190,000 travellers visited Prince Rupert. Those travellers spent approximately \$52.2 million dollars in the Prince Rupert region (Table ES1). Leisure travellers accounted for 79% of all travellers and 57% of all traveller revenues. Although business travellers accounted for only 21% of traveller volume they were responsible for 43% of traveller revenues, due to their longer length of stay and higher daily expenditures. Cruise ship passengers accounted for a high proportion of traveller volume (46% of total) but only nine percent of expenditures because of their comparatively short length of stay and lower expenditures.

Table ES1. The number of travellers and their expenditures in Prince Rupert between June and August 2007.

Traveller Segment	Travellers in Prince Rupert in June, July and August 2007			
	Volume	Percent of Total Volume	Expenditures in Prince Rupert	Percent of Total Expenditures
Total Leisure Travellers	149,558	79.2%	\$29,704,470	56.9%
<i>General Overnight</i> ^{1,2}	44,483	23.5%	\$ 8,597,117	16.5%
<i>Day Trips</i>	2,414	1.3%	\$142,096	0.3%
<i>Anglers</i>	15,003	7.9%	\$16,130,904	30.9%
<i>Cruise Ship Passengers</i> ³	87,658	46.4%	\$4,834,353	9.3%
Total Business Travellers	39,367	20.8%	\$22,499,925	43.1%
<i>General Business</i> ⁴	6,855	3.6%	\$20,793,683	39.8%
<i>Cruise Crew</i> ³	32,512	17.2%	\$1,706,242	3.3%
Grand Total	188,925	100.0%	\$52,204,395	100.0%

1. Travellers that said their primary activity was fishing were deducted from this estimate to reduce the chance of 'double counting' as an independent angler estimates was produced.
2. Group tour travellers were included in this estimate.
3. Cruise passenger and crew estimates were obtained from a report entitled, The Economic Contribution of the International Cruise Industry in Canada 2007 (see full citation in methods section of this report). The estimates here are slightly less than those found in the report because they have been adjusted for a slightly shorter study period. Note that a crew member could have visited Prince Rupert on several different cruises over the study period. In this study, consistent with World Tourism Organization definitions, each visit would be considered to have been made by a different traveller.
4. Travellers were not asked their travel party size, therefore erring on the side of caution; we have assumed that there was only one person in each travel party.

Overnight Leisure Travellers

- Over half (55%) of overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were from somewhere in Canada, 29% were from British Columbia and 27% were from other parts of Canada. Residents from the United States and other international countries each represented 22% of overnight leisure travellers.
- Over half (58%) of Canadian travellers from outside of British Columbia were from Alberta while an additional 25% were from Ontario, fewer were from Manitoba (6%), Saskatchewan (5%), Quebec (3%), the Territories (3%) and only 1% were from the Maritime Provinces in Eastern Canada. Almost a quarter (21%) of American travellers were from Washington State, 17% were from California and eight percent were from Montana. Fewer, were from Oregon (7%), Alaska (7%) or Idaho (4%).
- International travellers, other than U.S. residents, accounted for 22% of overnight leisure travellers. Almost all travellers from countries other than Canada or the U.S. were European (84%), 15% were from the Asia/Pacific and only 1% were from other countries.

- Only 11% of overnight leisure travellers were under 35 years old while over 56% were 55 years old or older and a third were between 35 and 54 years old. Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were skewed to older age groups.
- Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were highly educated. Over 47% had a University Degree, Masters or PhD. Twenty percent had a college or technical degree, and 18% had a high school diploma.
- More than one-third of travellers were high income earners with a household income of over \$100,000 annually while another 25% earned between \$65,000 and \$99,000. The remaining 40% earned less than \$65,000 per year.
- On average, there were 2.6 people per overnight leisure traveller party. Approximately 13% of these travel parties had children while the remaining 87% of parties were adult only.
- Visitors to Prince Rupert were frequent travellers taking an average of 3.4 leisure trips in the past year with 32% taking four or more trips.
- Just over one third (36%) of overnight leisure travellers had previously been to Prince Rupert. Not surprisingly, British Columbian residents had the highest incidence of previous visitation to Prince Rupert (64%). In comparison, 28% of U.S. travellers and 11% of other international travellers had previously visited Prince Rupert.
- Approximately 35% of overnight leisure travellers in Prince Rupert did not have a primary destination and were touring. Twenty-three percent of overnight leisure travellers were primarily visiting Prince Rupert and 10% were visiting Alaska. Just over 1-in-4 were destined for somewhere else in BC – of these nearly 18% were destined for the Northern BC region.
- The most common type of accommodation used in both Prince Rupert and the rest of the trip was a hotel/motel/resort, followed by camping/RV, staying at Bed and Breakfasts, followed by friends and relatives.
- Although approximately half (51%) of overnight leisure travellers were inflexible in terms of spending more time in Prince Rupert, 1-in-3 travellers could spend at least one extra day. In addition, 16% could spend a few more hours than originally planned.
- The average trip time away from home for overnight leisure travellers was 28 days, of which 16 days were spent in British Columbia and nearly 3 days were spent in Prince Rupert. Trip length was significantly different depending on the origin of the traveller.
- The most popular primary activity for overnight leisure travellers was general sightseeing (49%) followed by other sports and recreation (15%) and fishing (11%). Fewer travellers indicated their primary activity was shopping or entertainment (7.6%) or culture, attractions or an event (7.4%).
- Overnight leisure travellers responses from the mailback questionnaire indicated that the most popular specific activities that visitors participated in while on their trip were 'Wildlife Viewing'

(75%), visiting a 'Municipal, Provincial or National Park' (73%) and visiting a 'Museum, Heritage or Historical Site' (66%). While in Prince Rupert, participation in these various activities shifted with 'Shopping for Local Arts and Crafts' (56%) being the most popular followed by 'Wildlife Viewing' (53%) and visiting a 'Museum, Heritage or Historical Site' (52%).

- Approximately two-thirds of visitors travelled to and departed from Prince Rupert via road (Car/Truck/Motor Cycle/RV). Ferries were the second most popular arrival and departure mode of transportation to and from Prince Rupert. Fewer travellers travelled to/from Prince Rupert via air, private boat, train, bicycle, and bus. Of the 25% of travellers arriving by ferry, the majority (82%) came on a BC Ferry from Port Hardy, followed by arrivals on the ferry from the Queen Charlotte Islands and arrivals on the Alaska State Ferry.
- On the mailback questionnaire travellers were asked to draw in the route of their trip. The most popular highway and ferry route travelled was Hwy 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert, where over three quarters of respondents travelled at sometime during their trip. The BC Ferries Inside Passage route from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert was the second most popular route, used by more than half of respondents. Other popular routes included, the BC Ferries Queen Charlotte Islands route (Prince Rupert to Skidegate), Hwy 16/Hwy 93 from Banff to Prince George, Hwy 97 from Prince George to Cache Creek, BC Ferries Vancouver to Victoria routes, Hwy 1/Hwy 19 on Vancouver Island, and Hwy 37 from Terrace to Stewart.
- Travellers indicated they stayed overnight in many communities along the most popular route of Hwy 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert, including Prince George, Smithers and Terrace. Also, travellers frequently stayed overnight in communities along Vancouver Island's Hwys 19 and 1, including Port Hardy, Campbell River, Nanaimo and Victoria.
- Overall, daily expenditures on a trip and in Prince Rupert were approximately \$296 and \$202, respectively. However, there were significant differences in daily expenditure based on traveller origin and main purpose of trip. Canadians from outside of British Columbia (\$229) spent significantly more in Prince Rupert than travellers from British Columbia (\$192), the U.S. (\$194), or other International (\$193). In all cases, travellers had a higher average daily expenditure on their trip than in Prince Rupert.
- Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert planned ahead. Over half (55%) planned their trip thirteen or more weeks in advance.
- Advice from friends and relatives (53%), visitor guides and brochures (53%) and past experience (48%) were the most commonly used information sources before trips. Approximately 35% of travellers used local and regional websites for their planning. During trips, Visitor Centres were the most commonly used information source (65%) followed by visitor guides and brochures (60%) and advice from friends and relatives (33%).
- When asked to describe Prince Rupert's atmosphere/mood on the mailback questionnaire, the majority of travellers (63%) described how friendly people in the region were while 45% identified a relaxed/safe/calm atmosphere and 32% identified its beauty and nature. Fewer responded that Prince Rupert felt like it was expanding and prosperous (14%) or interesting (13%).

- Of all comments made about Prince Rupert images, almost two thirds were positive (63%) and just over one third were negative (37%). Positive responses were dominated by the natural beauty and scenic landscapes of the Prince Rupert region (46%), the presence of family/friends and friendliness of people in general (26%), the quiet/not crowded/peaceful nature (22%) and the wildlife/nature/wilderness (19%).
- Negative perceptions of overnight leisure travellers focused on rain (23%), limited activities (14%), unattractive/ run-down town (11%), the limited/poor restaurants (10%) and social problems (9%).
- A variety of characteristics were identified as unique to Prince Rupert. The most common unique characteristics were the wildlife/nature/wilderness (37%), attractions (27%), ocean/harbour/waterfront (25%), roads/links/highway accessibility (22%), and the beautiful scenery/landscape (15%).
- Respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for new or expanded services they would like to see if they visited the Prince Rupert region again. Although there was less consensus (i.e. a lower % of travellers mentioning the same things), 'more RV parks/campgrounds' and 'better/more cafes/restaurants' were the most common service improvement areas. Fewer overnight leisure travellers indicated that more accessible visitor information (9%), improved walkways (8%) and more/better shops (8%).
- Over four-fifths of respondents rated their overall travel experience as good (57%) or excellent (25%). Ratings for each trip component were also high. Access to information about Prince Rupert (81%), customer service (80%), recreation and adventure opportunities (78%) and local signage (78%) stand out as strengths with most respondents rating these components as either good or excellent. Attractions and events (70%) received the lowest rating.
- Nearly 72% of travellers visited the Prince Rupert Visitor Centre. Of those, 7% reported that the centre fell short of their expectations while 36% said it exceeded their expectations.
- Prince Rupert was compared to other, similar, communities by asking if Prince Rupert rated 'better', 'the same' or 'worse' on 25 key attributes. Prince Rupert's largest advantages were 'Aboriginal Culture' (+59), 'Fishing' (+53), 'Wildlife Viewing' (+37), and 'Water-Based Outdoor Recreation Activities' (+36). The three areas where Prince Rupert fell short compared to other destinations were having a 'Fun Nightlife and Entertainment' (-14), having 'Plenty of Things That Appeal to Children' (-10), and having 'Excellent Shopping' (-10).

Anglers that Travelled to Prince Rupert

- An estimated 10,091 guided and 4,102 non-guided anglers visited Prince Rupert between June and August of 2007. Charter fishing businesses commented that they had fewer than expected clients in June because of the Highway 16 road closure due to a landslide.
- There were an estimated 68 fishing charter businesses in Prince Rupert in 2007. The majority of charter fishing businesses used Rushbrook Floats to obtain access to the ocean (74%). Fewer fishing charter businesses used a marina, the yacht club or had unknown methods of accessing

the ocean (26%). A quarter of these businesses were large (>200 clients), 46% were medium (100-199 clients) and 29% were small businesses (<100 clients).

- Fishing charter businesses indicated that the majority of their clients (guided anglers) came from other Canadian provinces followed by British Columbia, the U.S. and other international countries. Less than one percent of guided anglers came from Prince Rupert.
- Overall, travelling anglers spent 5.8 days in Prince Rupert and 3.1 days fishing in Prince Rupert. There was an average of 3.3 people in each fishing party in Prince Rupert. Travelling anglers spent an average of \$261.40 per day. Expenditures were more when the whole fishing party or whole fishing trip were accounted for.
- Guided and non-guided travelling anglers differed in their characteristics. The majority (69%) of anglers interviewed indicated they were on a guided-trip. Guided travelling anglers spent fewer days fishing and fewer days in Prince Rupert but had more anglers in their fishing party and spent more per person per day. As a result guided anglers spent slightly more per party per trip (because they had a larger party size and had a higher daily expenditure).

Cruise Ship Passengers

- The vast majority of Prince Rupert cruise ship passengers were from the United States (97%), only a few were from overseas (2%), other Canadian provinces (0.9%) or British Columbia (0.2%). American cruise ship passengers represented 48 different states. Almost 15 percent were from California, eight percent were from Texas, seven percent were from Washington State and six percent were from Florida.
- Only 16% of cruise ship passengers were under 35 years old, a third of cruise ship passengers were between 36 and 50 years of age and 50% were 51 years of age and older.
- On average, there were 7.1 cruise ship passengers in each party. Almost a third of cruise ship passengers were on board with three to five other passengers.
- Not surprisingly, 89% of cruise ship passengers had not previously been to Prince Rupert.
- On average, cruise ship passengers spent 3.6 hours on shore in Prince Rupert. About a quarter of passengers spent less than one to two hours or two to three hours on shore.
- Cruise ship passengers were also asked to rate their experience while in Prince Rupert. Passengers were most impressed with Prince Rupert's shore excursions (66% rated as excellent) and hospitality (65% rated as excellent), fewer cruise ship passengers rated Prince Rupert's shopping and customer service as excellent (39%).

Business Travellers

- Not surprisingly, the majority of business travellers were BC residents (79%), followed by Other Canadians (12%). Travellers from the United States and other international countries represented 5% and 4%, respectively, of all business travellers. The majority of Canadian visitors from outside of BC were from Alberta (35%) while an additional 29% of non-BC Canadian business travellers were from Manitoba.

- The average total trip length for business travellers was 30 days away from home, of which 21 days were spent in British Columbia and nearly 8 days were spent in Prince Rupert.
- The average daily expenditure for business travellers while in Prince Rupert was \$396.
- Over 7-in-10 (71%) of business travellers had previously been to Prince Rupert. Business travellers that had previously been to Prince Rupert were frequent visitors; they averaged 7.66 trips in the past two years.