

# Banff Bow Valley Heritage Tourism Strategy

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## What Does Heritage Mean In Banff?

Banff National Park's reputation as a tourism destination and World Heritage Site is founded on its nature, history and local culture. Banff's unique heritage resides in the spectacular nature of the landscapes and ecosystems preserved in the park and by the nationally significant human history that has unfolded in this area of the Rockies. Our natural and human heritage is made real and shared with others by informing visitors from around the world about our strong local connection with place and how we respect where we live.



## What Is Heritage Tourism?

Heritage tourism is the active fostering of local and visitor appreciation and stewardship of the nature, history and culture of Banff National Park, the town of Banff, the village of Lake Louise and surrounding areas.

## Why Do We Need A Heritage Tourism Strategy?

The world is changing. Human influence on the planet is growing. Where human impacts on the environment were once localized, they are now being felt regionally and even globally. Natural landscapes are rapidly disappearing worldwide. As they become more precious, Canada's national parks will become increasingly desirable destinations.

The Canadian West has also changed since Banff began to establish its reputation. The ambition of settling the West has largely been fulfilled. There is a larger regional population and the park is beginning to be surrounded by other forms of land use. We are now

beginning to understand the cumulative effects of these changes and the impacts they may have on Banff National Park in the future.

There has also been change inside the park. New understanding of ecosystem dynamics is demanding that we re-think patterns of human use in the park if we want to protect the park over the long term.



There has also been a change in our cultural milieu. The world-wide standardization of business planning processes, the global influence of media and the increasing urbanization and homogenization of world culture are making it more difficult to remain aware and appreciative of where you live.

We need a heritage tourism strategy to ensure that we can anticipate and respond positively to global, regional and local environmental change. By encouraging tourism experiences that confirm the role played by local knowledge and a shared appreciation of

the unique nature, history and culture of our World Heritage destination, we can strengthen our local culture and do our part to balance tourism and use with park protection over the long term.

## The Heritage Tourism Corporation

The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation is comprised of a volunteer board of senior representatives including six representatives of the following organizations: Town of Banff; Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau; Parks Canada; Lake Louise Community Association; Banff Lake Louise Hotel Motel Association; Banff Small Business Association and six Directors at Large. The Corporation employs an Executive director, with the aim of implementing the Heritage Tourism Strategy in and around Banff National Park.

Its vision is that every visitor experiences, and is inspired by, the authentic heritage of Banff National Park. The Corporation's mission is to sustain Banff National Park as a special destination for unique tourism experiences by celebrating our authentic natural and cultural heritage, while encouraging respect for the ecological integrity of our mountain national parks. Cultivating this enhanced visitor experience through education of key service providers and through engaging industry partners to incorporate authentic heritage elements in their products, the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation will ensure that our unique mountain environment and sustainable tourism-based economy remains intact for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

## What Constitutes A Heritage Tourism Strategy?

The primary aim of this strategy is to sustain Banff as a tourism destination by preserving and celebrating the beauty and ecological integrity of the park and encouraging the same goal in surrounding areas. Powerful and memorable positive heritage experiences offered to visitors will contribute to our reputation as one of the world's most unique and environmentally sound tourism destinations.

The Heritage Tourism Strategy complements the Park Management Plan, the Banff Community Plan and the Lake Louise Community Plan by working to sustain the health of the tourism industry within the national park context. The Heritage Tourism Strategy supports a view of Banff that focuses specifically on heritage values compatible with landscape and heritage appreciation. The Heritage Tourism Strategy assures that the objectives of the Banff National Park tourism industry are consistent with changing ecological circumstances in the park.

The strategy is based on the fact that Banff has something that is becoming rarer and more valuable in the world — an authentic culture grounded in nature. It is the aim of the strategy to ensure that the natural character of the park remains its chief distinction as a tourism destination. Though it affects the form and content of tourism advertising, the Heritage Tourism Strategy is more than a marketing initiative.

In order to realize the Heritage Tourism Strategy it is necessary to fulfill four linked objectives. The objectives of the Banff Bow Valley Heritage Tourism Strategy are:

1. to make all visitors and residents of Banff Nation Park and the Town of Banff aware they are in a national park and World Heritage Site by actively fostering appreciation and understanding of the nature, history and culture of Banff National Park, the Town of Banff and surrounding areas;
2. to encourage, develop and promote opportunities, products and services consistent with heritage and environmental values;
3. to encourage environmental stewardship initiatives upon which sustainable heritage tourism depends;
4. to strengthen employee orientation, training and accreditation programming as it relates to sharing heritage understanding with visitors.



## Guiding Principles and Values

We believe there is an intrinsic value to the natural and cultural heritage of this region and that heritage is in and of itself worthy of preservation and commemoration and celebration.

Heritage Tourism embraces learning, enjoyment, education, understanding, appreciation and participation in the nature and authentic local culture of Banff National Park.

The communities of Banff and Lake Louise are an integral part of the park and contribute significantly to its values.

These communities are uniquely dependent upon the park's natural and cultural heritage.

Our tourism industry has a responsibility to help visitors understand, appreciate and respect our natural and cultural heritage so they can contribute to its preservation.

The pride the tourism industry exhibits in heritage presentation will encourage positive visitor contribution to the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage.

The strategy applies to all of Banff National Park but may have applications in surrounding areas.

We recognize that there are tangible benefits in ensuring that the Banff strategy compliments similar strategies in the other mountain national parks.

By embracing stronger heritage tourism considerations, tourism in Banff will contribute to better environmental stewardship in the national park.



## Stewardship Responsibility

Heritage tourism demands appropriate environmental practices that ensure the integrity of the natural systems upon which this form of tourism depends for its authenticity and sustainability.

The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation recognizes that the tourism industry and its partners must commit to working together toward constant improvement of waste, water and energy management and other environmental programming in order to validate and actualize this Heritage Tourism Strategy.

# The Function of the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation

The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation agrees to meet quarterly to:

1. cultivate on-going input and expanded participation in the Heritage Tourism Strategy;
2. monitor and measure progress toward the Heritage Tourism ideals and actions outlined in the strategy;
3. identify potential activities, services and products that will enhance the Heritage Tourism reputation of the Banff area
4. initiate and support further stewardship initiatives in Banff National Park that enhance Heritage Tourism.

The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation will also convene annual Heritage Tourism Strategy updates and information sessions that will help individuals and community groups find their own way to support the objectives of the strategy.

At these meetings, developments in the Strategy will be highlighted and suggestions will be offered as to how advancements in the Strategy might be incorporated into the activities of community groups.

Each year, individuals and community groups will also be invited to put forward nominations of people, organizations, businesses and products

that should be considered for Heritage Tourism Award recognition.

## Strengths of the Banff Heritage Tourism Strategy

The Heritage Tourism Strategy confers a number of advantages on the area:

- The strategy recognizes the importance of the Banff National Park Heritage Tourism initiative as a benchmark and as a tool for resource protection and heritage tourism.
- The strategy encourages a balance between tourism use and park protection that ensures a sustainable tourism future.
- The strategy celebrates the exclusive nature of a World Heritage Site in a way that builds on our established park heritage and cultural traditions and well-developed tourism infrastructure and expertise.
- The potential exists to expand this concept beyond the boundaries of Banff National Park utilizing it as a tourism model for other national parks and national historic sites in Canada.

For further information on the Banff National Park Heritage Tourism Strategy, please contact Robyn Dinnadge of the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation at 403-762-7610.