

Greater Victoria tourism industry has banner 2018

by Paul Nursey
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The Greater Victoria tourism industry enjoyed a banner year in 2018 compared to the past several years. Our hotels and restaurants were full or near capacity for eight months of the year. Our meetings, events and conferences well-attended. Our attractions experienced brisk business. The numbers don't lie. Through October 2018 BC Ferries year-to-date vehicle traffic is up 2.27 per cent. Year-to-date average hotel occupancy in Greater Victoria is up 1.97 per cent. Victoria Conference Centre delegate days are up 13.9 per cent as well. This is the fifth straight year of growth in many of our key metrics.

The results this year were from executing the strategic direction initiated in 2014 and refined in 2017. This vision encompassed a greater role for meetings, events and conferences, sports tourism and addressing the seasonality of the business. This year we also launched our brand refresh. Worldwide the tourism industry is changing - and so is our destination. Our brand needs to reflect these changes.

Destination marketing and management is not simply about projecting an image to the outside world. Robust destination marketing emanates from a core identity – it is about the people, values, personalities and history of the place. In order to market a destination effectively and authentically, we need to first know who we are. This was the first step in our brand refresh process. As much as it is about attracting visitation, it is about the community owning the tourism industry as well. Over the six-month process of our brand refresh, we engaged Greater Victoria residents through surveys, workshops and interviews, engaged our local tourism businesses and conducted a sentiment analysis of 350,000 online conversations. The result was not only an updated brand, but one where residents of Greater Victoria were active participants in creating the final product.

The most substantial addition to Destination Greater Victoria's line of business this year was sport tourism. This was through the creation of the Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission (GVSTC) in April 2018. Led by committee chair Robert Bettauer and Executive Director Keith Wells, Destination Greater Victoria's business will increasingly focus on attracting sporting events to the Greater Victoria region. The GVSTC has already had some early wins, including a winning bid for the 2021 55+ BC Games. The 55+ BC Games will have over 4,000 attendees and create an economic benefit of \$3M. There is tremendous opportunity in sport tourism. Greater Victoria has a long history of sporting excellence, whether it is developing world-class athletes or hosting major multi-sport events. The Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission will build on this tradition to bid and win future sporting events for the Greater Victoria region.

Destination Greater Victoria looks forward to another strong year in 2019. It will be hard to eclipse 2018 and the success of many that work in the industry. However, the foundation is in place to market the destination and showcase the many positive attributes of Greater Victoria. In the years ahead, we will only be limited by the size of our vision and ambition. The economic impacts of the Greater Victoria

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tourism industry are deep, positive and often felt in ways not visibly apparent. We welcome the support we receive in the community to achieve our goals. We know we cannot do it without you as ultimately it is our community who welcome our visitors - providing positive experiences and encouraging them to return.

Destination Greater Victoria (Greater Victoria Visitors and Convention Bureau) is our region's official, not-for-profit destination marketing organization working in partnership with nearly 1,000 businesses and municipalities in Greater Victoria.

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