


THE WEST IN MOTION

THE WEST WILL RISE AGAIN. ASIDE FROM ITS NATURAL MARVELS, ITS ECONOMY IS GROWING, TOURISM IS FLOURISHING AND ITS CULTURE HAS GAINED SOME SERIOUS MOMENTUM. AS A RESULT, WESTERN CANADIANS ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR PROVINCES.

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THE WEST IN MOTION / TOURISM

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SEA TO SKY, SQUAMISH, BRITISH COLUMBIA



THE BIG BOOM

WESTERN CANADA IS EXPERIENCING A PERIOD OF GROWTH THESE DAYS. BUSINESS IS FLOURISHING AND THE TOURISTS ARE FLOCKING. HERE'S A LOOK AT SEVERAL MAJOR INVESTMENTS INSTIGATED IN THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS OR IN THE PROCESS OF GETTING OFF THE GROUND.

Our neighbours to the South have been especially chummy this year. US tourism to Canada has soared by 13 percent and is expected to grow. It's the perfect storm. After more than a decade in decline, the numbers of American tourists visiting Canada are rising. This surge can be attributed to a few factors: the low loonie offering a favourable exchange rate, gradual economic recovery, uncertainty travelling abroad in the wake of recent terrorist activities, and a CAD 50 million surge of funds into our federal crown agency dedicated to promoting tourism, Destination Canada.

So far, so good. The future of tourism in Canada is promising, particularly in Alberta and British Columbia. It helps that millions of dollars have been invested in new attractions.

THE ROCKIES, A PERENNIAL FAVOURITE

In Alberta, \$26 million worth of enhancements have been invested in modernizing the Banff Gondola, an already popular attraction on Sulfur Mountain peak known for its 360-degree views of the Banff National Park. The addition includes a conference space, new culinary offerings and a cinema. It comes on the heels of Jasper's Glacier Skywalk, opened just two years ago with the help

of CAD 21 million of investments. This steel arc, hanging to the side of a cliff, is an architectural masterpiece offering a breathtaking view of the region surrounded by the Columbia Icefield. The glass platform deck, overhanging a 918-foot drop into the Sunwapta Valley, is among other major attractions that have recently come to the province, including Jasper canyoning excursions, Calgary's National Music Centre (see our interview with President and CEO Andrew Mosker) and Grande Prairie's Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum. The increase in tourism in this province is so significant that Hainan Airlines is now offering a direct flight from Beijing to Calgary, three times a week! This flight has created 625 new jobs and has generated a welcome CAD 76 million to Alberta's GDP.

In British Columbia, the new Sea to Sky Gondola in Squamish takes passengers 885 metres above sea level over sweeping views of Howe Sound, Shannon Falls and the iconic Stawamus Chief. At a cost of CAD 22 million, its viewing platforms, alpine dining, suspension bridge and high altitude backcountry hiking and climbing have attracted over half a million visitors since its launch in 2014.



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JASPER'S GLACIER SKYWALK, JASPER, ALBERTA

LUXURY, VANCOUVER STYLE

In addition to the mountainous landscape that has always been famous the world over, Western Canada is beginning to make its mark as a luxury tourist destination. And with the wave of modernisation it's currently experiencing, the city of Vancouver is certainly the proof.

Inaugurated last year, Telus Garden has quickly become the "greenest" building on the block thanks to its rooftop garden and solar panels. Marine Gateway, which opened this past spring, offers forward-thinking urban living. It boasts LEED Gold standards and is located in close proximity to two major transit hubs. The 24-storey building houses shops, cinemas and restaurants. And finally, 725 Granville Street has recently undergone renovations for the third time since its inception and now houses Nordstrom's flagship store and new, top-of-the-line office suites, including Microsoft and Sony Pictures Imageworks.

Elsewhere, the Parq Vancouver venture, which will be located next to BC Place, is set to transform the British Columbian landscape with an integrated casino resort. The 775,000-square-foot property will include the largest ballroom in Vancouver, two luxury hotels and 60,000 square feet of meeting space. This constitutes the largest ongoing development project in Western Canada. The American hotel group Marriott International, Vancouver development promoter Parq Holdings and Paragon Gaming—who lead the gaming and entertainment industry—are describing the casino as a world-class centre of urban luxury under the moniker *intelligent elegance*. Of note is the appointment of renowned international culinary consultant Elizabeth Blau and her husband, award-winning chef Kim Canteenwalla, who have been credited with transforming the Las Vegas dining scene. They will be overseeing the development of Parq Vancouver's eight restaurants and lounges.