

# ABORIGINAL TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADA

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In celebration of National Aboriginal Day on June 21, 2008, the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) is releasing a recent research report on the Aboriginal tourism market potential from the CTC's three primary European tourism markets - the UK, Germany and France.

Research objectives were designed to establish the demand for Aboriginal tourism experiences in Canada, and then to provide the CTC, provincial/territorial partners and the Aboriginal tourism industry at large with market insights, perceptions, motivators and expectation on aboriginal cultural tourism experiences.

Efforts brokered by Aboriginal Tourism Canada in 2007 led to the creation of a multi-provincial partnership to undertake this project. The partners include the CTC, Aboriginal Tourism Canada, Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia, Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Northwest Territories Tourism, Tourism Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick Tourism and Parks.

The report highlights:

- \* European demand for Aboriginal tourism
- \* What Canadian Aboriginal experiences can drive European visitation
- \* What are the underlying motivations of Aboriginal experience seekers
- \* Canada's relative competitive position vis-à-vis other notable destinations for Aboriginal tourism experiences.
- \* Profiling key traveller prospects
- \* European travel trade perspectives

Among the key findings:

- The percentage of potential travellers to Canada who are interested in Aboriginal products is substantial in France (85%), Germany (72%), and the UK (46%).
- Aboriginal tourism experiences can be highly motivating, but Aboriginal tourism is not a primary driver or motivation to visit Canada. It is a value-added opportunity for travellers to include in their travel plans once they arrive here.
- European Aboriginal experience seekers are very clear on what they want and do not want in terms of Aboriginal tourism products. Products that include their participation and provide enriching experiences are highly valued, while products that are entertainment-oriented and distance the traveller from the Aboriginal people are of lesser value and interest.
- European travellers seek the sense of discovery and adventure. In the context of Canadian Aboriginal tourism, this means authentic interaction with Aboriginal people, guiding them through Canada's beautiful and scenic natural environment. These travellers are relentless in achieving self-discovery

through Aboriginal tourism experiences, demand authenticity and scrutinize products thoroughly. They know that a good experience will lead to self-discovery, because of the self-reflection these kinds of trips create. The opportunity to feel something different and do something different in a unique environment through a unique culture is the strongest emotional trigger.

- European travellers under age 50 have more enthusiasm for physical involvement, including canoeing, kayaking, dog-sledding, horseback riding, and whitewater rafting. Those over 50 are more interested in softer activities like hiking, walks, nature observation, and indoor activities.
- The tourist profile index is higher on being married, no children, and better educated. Generally they seek information on Aboriginal tourism when they are at the country destination; source media most likely to be used for Aboriginal tourism products are the internet, word of mouth and magazines.
- European travel trade respondents who had included Aboriginal tourism products in Canadian tours and packages had mixed reactions. Some were impressed with the quality and authenticity; however in other cases, based on previous experience, they were concerned the products may not yet be market-ready.
- They were most impressed with experiential products where there is an opportunity to participate in traditional activities with Aboriginal people. They are still impressed with traditional regalia, although recognize this is only worn on ceremonial occasions or for special performances and competitions. However, the travel trade reacts very negatively to anything that seems artificial or overly staged specifically for visitors. They are very negative towards "fake" crafts and souvenirs.
- "The research clearly points to the opportunity in European markets for Canadian Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences," says Paul Nursey, CTC's manager for product innovation and enhancement. "The research also provides Canadian Aboriginal tourism stakeholders who have interest in global market development, with key insights into the experiential travel values sought by European visitors within our three principal source markets. This is key information for them when it comes to programming and marketing their product offering."

To download this report, please visit [www.corporate.canada.travel](http://www.corporate.canada.travel) where it can be retrieved from the "Latest Publications" section.

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