

NORTHERN SKY CORRIDOR STRATEGY SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2025

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada

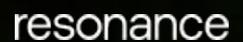


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction** 3
- Project Background** 4
 - Destination Canada’s Tourism Corridor Strategy Program 4
 - Northern Sky Corridor 5
- Methodology & Framework** 6
- Key Findings** 9
 - Destination Assessment 10
 - Industry Perspectives 11
- Vision** 12
- Strategic Priorities** 13
 - Indigenous-Led Development 14
 - Transformational Corridor Experiences 16
 - Foundational Infrastructure Development 19
 - Accommodation Diversification & Growth 22
 - Industry Advancement 24
- Investment Opportunities Approach** 27
- Investment Opportunities Summary** 28

INTRODUCTION



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada

The Northern Sky Corridor represents a transformative vision for sustainable tourism development spanning the dramatic landscapes and vibrant communities of Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Extending more than 1,500 kilometers from Edmonton, Alberta into the Northwest Territories, this initiative within Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program invites visitors on a journey of discovery through ancient boreal forests, shimmering lakes, and skies alive with the midnight sun and the dance of the Northern Lights.

More than a route, the Northern Sky Corridor weaves together authentic experiences rooted in the rich cultural heritage and natural wonders that define Canada's North. It celebrates the deep connections binding diverse peoples to this land and to each other—from Indigenous nations who have called these territories home since time immemorial, to intrepid adventurers drawn by the call of the wild.

This strategy, developed through extensive research and engagement with over 200 tourism partners across the corridor from October 2024 to July 2025, charts a path toward a regenerative tourism model that generates lasting benefits for communities, businesses, and the environment. It envisions the Northern Sky not just as a destination, but as a transformative journey that challenges preconceptions, expands horizons, and forges profound connections between people and place. Guided by core principles of Indigenous leadership, community wellbeing, and environmental stewardship,

the strategy outlines five strategic priorities and 55 targeted initiatives to guide tourism development over the next decade:

- 1. Indigenous-Led Tourism Development**
- 2. Transformational Corridor Experiences**
- 3. Foundational Infrastructure Development**
- 4. Accommodation Diversification & Growth**
- 5. Industry Advancement**

By focusing on authentic cultural experiences, strategic infrastructure investments, innovative branding, and collaborative leadership, the Northern Sky Corridor is poised to emerge as one of Canada's premier wilderness tourism destinations - one that invites visitors into a deeper understanding of the North while creating regenerative value for the communities who make this remarkable journey possible. The report welcomes readers to explore this strategy and join in bringing the Northern Sky vision to life.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program

[Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program](#) aims to strengthen Canada's tourism industry by developing interconnected corridors that showcase diverse regional experiences.

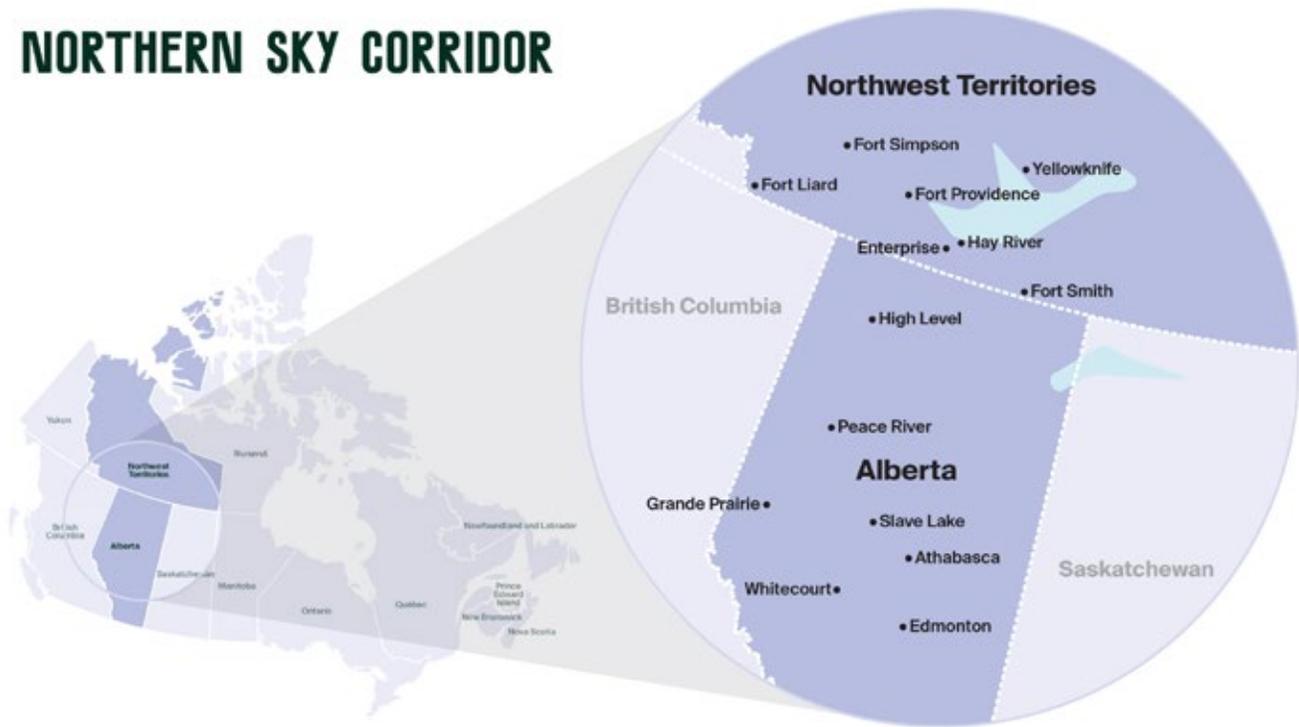
Tourism corridors connect clusters of tourism assets and motivate visitors to travel through regions while

accelerating collaboration among stakeholders. Following the success of three pilot projects in 2023, Destination Canada expanded the program for 2024-2025. This initiative now includes the Northern Sky Corridor alongside other notable projects such as Cycle Ontario and Quebec, Juan de Fuca Corridor, and Field to Fork Agritourism Corridor.



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada

NORTHERN SKY CORRIDOR



Northern Sky Corridor

Spanning more than 1,500 kilometers from Edmonton, Alberta into the Northwest Territories, the Northern Sky Corridor project launched in October 2024. This region showcases the North's rich heritage and natural splendor through a diverse array of experiences including Indigenous tourism, cultural immersion, outdoor adventures, historical sites, vibrant festivals, and exceptional skywatching opportunities. The Northern Sky Corridor aims to transform northern tourism by:

- Identifying product gaps and creating new itineraries that showcase the region's unique offerings
- Exploring transportation partnerships to enhance connectivity throughout the corridor
- Identifying infrastructure needs to support the creation of compelling visitor experiences
- Employing a regenerative approach that benefits local communities and environments
- Supporting businesses and communities along the corridor route

GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The corridor extends from Edmonton through northern Alberta communities such as Whitecourt, Grande Prairie, Peace River, and High Level, before connecting with the Alaska Highway corridor and integrating seamlessly into the Northwest Territories road system. An alternate route also links through Athabasca and Slave Lake, providing an additional option for travellers heading north. Along its northern reach, the route connects Enterprise, Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Hay River, Fort Smith, Fort Providence, Yellowknife, and others, offering a continuous journey through Canada's northern landscapes. This route was selected for its ability to connect major population centres with iconic northern destinations, build on existing travel patterns, and align with community priorities, while offering year-round access and diverse visitor experiences across the corridor.

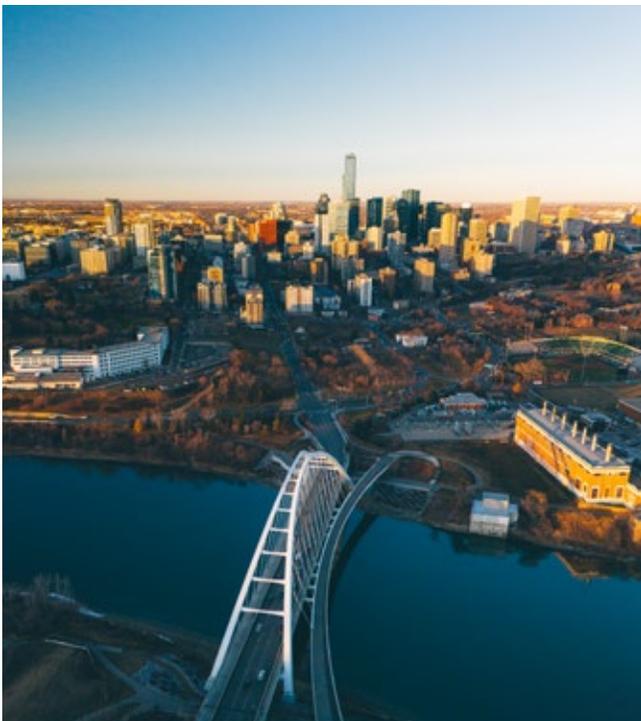
METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

The Northern Sky Corridor Destination Development Strategy was executed through a comprehensive six-phase approach designed to systematically assess, engage, and strategize for tourism development along the Edmonton- Northwest Territories route. Each phase built upon the previous, creating an integrated framework that combined extensive stakeholder consultation, a detailed destination assessment, strategic planning, and actionable implementation measures to create a cohesive development roadmap. Conducted from October 2024 to July 2025, this collaborative process engaged over 200 stakeholders from diverse communities, tourism operators, and government agencies to ensure the resulting strategy would authentically represent regional aspirations while delivering market-relevant tourism experiences.

PHASE 1: Onboarding and project launch

The first phase of the Northern Sky Corridor Destination Development Strategy focused on building a clear picture of the region's tourism landscape. This began with an in-depth review of existing regional studies, tourism strategies, and development projects, which provided a foundation for understanding current conditions and opportunities. To complement this desk research, the project team undertook an eight-day road-based site visit from Edmonton to Yellowknife. This journey allowed the team to evaluate existing attractions, observe infrastructure, and gather insights directly from local partners and community representatives across the entire corridor. Together, these efforts established the baseline knowledge that informed subsequent phases of research and engagement.

Edmonton, Alberta © Destination Canada



PHASE 2: Community and partner aspirations

Phase 2 focused on exploring community, visitor, and partner aspirations for the corridor through three interconnected activities. Beginning with careful partner and rights holder mapping to identify key stakeholders along the route, the project team employed a structured participation matrix ensuring appropriate engagement levels. This groundwork enabled more than 80 targeted interviews across the corridor allowing for deeper and more comprehensive stakeholder engagement. The engagement process culminated in a follow-up survey that quantified insights, prioritized opportunities, and gauged consensus on strategic directions, ensuring the final development plan authentically reflects the collective vision of communities and partners throughout the corridor. In total, more than 200 stakeholders were consulted throughout this engagement process.

INDIGENOUS CONSULTATION

Indigenous governments, business owners, and communities were engaged throughout multiple phases and milestones of the project and review of deliverables. Members of Indigenous Tourism Alberta and Travel Alberta were also included in the steering committee, ensuring Indigenous representation in project governance.

Consultation efforts prioritized face-to-face meetings where possible, including site visits to Indigenous communities to engage directly with leaders and community members. These visits created opportunities for meaningful dialogue about community priorities and aspirations for tourism development. Indigenous perspectives gathered through this engagement process were instrumental in shaping the Northern Sky Corridor development approach, ensuring it reflects principles of reconciliation and creates opportunities for Indigenous-led tourism and economic participation. Looking ahead, continued engagement will be essential throughout implementation to ensure that Indigenous voices remain central in guiding the Corridor's development and shaping future opportunities.



Edmonton, Alberta © Travel Alberta

PHASE 3: **Destination assessment**

Phase 3 focused on establishing a comprehensive baseline understanding of the Northern Sky Corridor's tourism landscape through two primary components. The marketing audit evaluated the corridor's current positioning, social and content strategy, and key messaging in both consumer and trade materials across Edmonton, Northern Alberta, and the Northwest Territories. Equally important was the thorough destination assessment, which employed a systematic evaluation of tourism assets throughout the corridor. This comprehensive assessment categorized offerings across eight key areas: arts and culture, visitor attractions, sightseeing, shopping, culinary, nature and outdoors, connectivity, and lodging.

PHASE 4: **Industry trend analysis**

Phase 4 centered on identifying key market trends and future visitation patterns for the corridor. The industry trend analysis examined evolving traveller behaviors and preferences through a comprehensive environmental scan of global and national tourism trends. This research was enriched by expert testimonials and an examination of case studies from comparable northern and remote destinations, providing practical insights into successful development approaches. This forward-looking assessment delivered actionable insights tailored to the Northern Sky Corridor's unique geographical, cultural, and experiential context, ensuring development strategies would align with emerging traveler expectations and industry best practices.

PHASE 5:

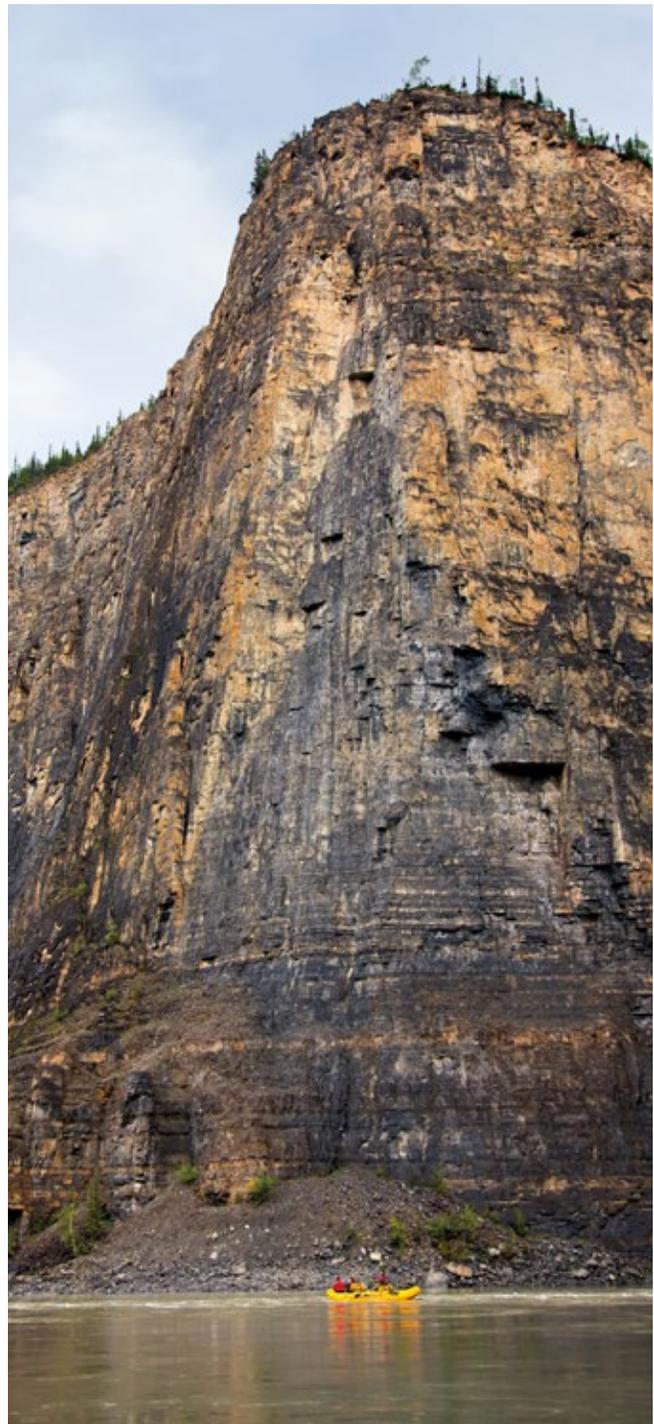
Corridor development strategy

Phase 5 focused on developing a strategic framework and actionable roadmap for the Northern Sky Corridor based on insights from previous research phases. Beginning with vision workshops that engaged key partners from across the corridor, Resonance facilitated collaborative sessions that synthesized findings, established shared aspirations, and identified core values for sustainable development. These workshops informed the development of strategic pillars and specific strategies for achieving corridor objectives, which were subsequently validated and refined through stakeholder feedback sessions. The process then identified strategic opportunities capable of driving corridor development, evaluating each based on its potential to create compelling visitor experiences while addressing community priorities and market demands. In parallel, a Climate Risk Assessment was integrated into the strategic considerations to better understand climate-related threats to the region and ensure long-term resilience. The culmination of this phase was a comprehensive corridor strategy that outlined the corridor's unique characteristics and established a clear strategic direction.

PHASE 6:

Corridor investment and implementation plan

Phase 6 focused on transforming strategy into action through three key deliverables. The Implementation Plan provided prioritized initiatives with timelines, resources, and partner responsibilities for each strategic pillar. The Investment Plan identified five high-impact catalyst projects—Northern Creative Hub (Yellowknife), Adventure Base Camp (Peace River), Northern Boreal Retreat (High Level), RV Terminus (Yellowknife), and Signature Wellness Stay (Edmonton)—with detailed economic impact assessments and funding strategies. A concise Summary Report and presentation effectively communicated findings and recommendations to decision-makers, integrating all elements of the strategy with supporting data and visuals.



Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada

KEY FINDINGS

This comprehensive assessment of the Northern Sky Tourism Corridor examines the region's tourism potential through multiple lenses. Drawing on extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and industry analysis conducted in 2024 and 2025, it identifies strategic opportunities and challenges facing this distinctive northern destination. The assessment findings integrate rich qualitative insights from diverse stakeholders—including tourism operators, destination managers, and local partners throughout the corridor—alongside comprehensive quantitative data analysis, illuminating both collective aspirations and tangible challenges to tourism development in the region. Through careful analysis of regional strengths, infrastructure gaps, and emerging visitor trends, this assessment establishes a foundation for informed decision-making and collaborative action to enhance the corridor's appeal, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability as a tourism destination.



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada

Destination assessment

The Northern Sky Tourism Corridor Destination Development Strategy builds upon a comprehensive evaluation of the region's tourism landscape, including its distinctive assets, current marketing approaches, and performance of the visitor economy. This research surfaced five key learnings that point to opportunities to enhance the corridor's distinctiveness, appeal, and competitiveness as a destination.

Collaborative regional storytelling can enhance visibility

Across the Northern Sky Tourism Corridor, destinations often employ similar language and imagery focused on outdoor adventure, resulting in a regionally indistinct identity. While these existing local narratives effectively showcase the area's adventure offerings, there's a compelling opportunity to enrich these stories with a more distinctive sense of place. By incorporating local characters, seasonal rhythms, cultural values, and other unique elements into their storytelling, communities can highlight their individual charm while contributing to a cohesive regional narrative. This integrated approach creates a more inviting and textured experience, encouraging visitors to explore the diverse experiences that make up the Northern Sky Corridor.

Strengthening digital visibility can boost discoverability

Currently, a limited number of the corridor's businesses from restaurants to cultural events are listed on major online travel platforms. Improving the region's digital presence through enhanced listings, online engagement, and collaborative regional marketing could significantly increase its visibility to potential visitors. Equally important is cultivating a shared understanding among local businesses of their integral role in the tourism economy.

They are geographically concentrated

While cultural, arts, and Indigenous experiences are a key strength for the corridor overall, these assets are not evenly distributed. Smaller communities, despite having unique histories and heritage sites, tend to lack the dedicated cultural infrastructure found in larger urban centres like Edmonton and Yellowknife. This geographic imbalance limits opportunities for visitors to deeply engage with the region's diverse cultural fabric. For this reason, strategies to expand access to cultural experiences are pivotal to corridor development.

Gaps in foundational tourism infrastructure limit the visitor experience

Many communities in the corridor lack core tourism infrastructure such as quality accommodations, reliable transportation links, well-resourced visitor information services, and purpose-built events venues. Addressing these foundational needs through coordinated regional investment and planning will create a more cohesive and compelling visitor experience across the corridor.

Targeted investments can enhance competitiveness of signature experiences

The Northern Sky is renowned for its stunning natural assets, from pristine boreal forests and lakes to the mesmerizing Northern Lights. Targeted investments in the supporting infrastructure around these signature experiences, such as developing world-class Aurora viewing sites, improving access and amenities at provincial and national parks, and creating themed touring routes, can boost the region's competitive positioning and catalyze increased visitation and spending across the corridor.

Industry perspectives

A comprehensive stakeholder engagement process provided valuable insights into the Northern Sky Corridor's tourism landscape. More than 200 stakeholders—including community members, visitors, industry partners, and local leaders—were engaged through multiple formats to ensure a diversity of voices shaped the vision. Over 80 targeted interviews with tourism operators, destination managers, Indigenous business owners, and government representatives captured in-depth perspectives on opportunities and challenges across the region. This was complemented by an industry survey conducted in February and March 2025, which gathered 77 responses and highlighted emerging trends, visitor needs, and partnership opportunities. Engagement also took place in person through workshops in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and Yellowknife, creating space for dialogue between regional partners. Indigenous consultation was a dedicated stream of work, with direct meetings and site visits to communities and entrepreneurs, ensuring that Indigenous leadership and values are reflected in the development of the corridor. Together, these conversations illuminated the unique character of the Northern Sky Corridor and articulated a collective vision for strengthening tourism opportunities.

Regional strengths and challenges

Respondents rated tourism categories by importance and performance, enabling a key driver analysis. Core strengths included nature and wildlife viewing, heritage tourism, local food and beverage, sky viewing, arts and culture, and winter activities. These were identified as cornerstone offerings.

Emerging opportunities with strong visitor appeal include Indigenous cultural experiences and adventure tourism, which hold significant potential for growth and differentiation. Other areas such as sports facilities, fishing, wellness, agri-tourism, and geology tours were rated less important but may serve as niche complements.

Barriers to tourism growth

Key barriers that were identified include a limited portfolio of market-ready products, restricted funding, limited air access, and seasonal constraints that affect transportation and visitation. Addressing these will require targeted infrastructure investment, stronger visitor services, and improved connectivity, both physical and digital.

Priorities for development

Stakeholders emphasized Indigenous tourism development, year-round attractions to balance seasonality, and curated itineraries that extend stays and simplify planning. Priority areas included expanding Indigenous cultural experiences, growing adventure tourism, and enhancing winter offerings with supporting infrastructure.

Partnership opportunities

Partnerships were identified as critical to unlocking potential. Funding collaborations between governments, investors, and communities can address infrastructure gaps. Joint marketing can build a unified identity and extend market reach. Coordinated infrastructure investments in transportation, digital connectivity, and visitor amenities were also seen as essential.

Emerging tourism trends

Insights from both stakeholders and global market research show that the Northern Sky Corridor is well positioned at the intersection of several tourism trends. Travellers are seeking more regenerative and locally grounded experiences that give back to people and places. Indigenous-led tourism remains a powerful growth sector, while interest in heritage and cultural storytelling continues to expand globally. Nature-based niches such as noctourism and soft adventure highlight the value of the corridor's dark skies, aurora, and accessible wilderness. Lifestyle trends including slow tourism, glamping, and localism reflect a demand for immersive, longer-stay experiences rooted in community, while accessibility and inclusivity are shaping new approaches to adventure travel. These trends, echoed in stakeholder priorities, underscore the potential for the corridor to differentiate itself through meaningful, authentic, and sustainable visitor offerings.

VISION

There are many, many places to go in the world, yet there are few that take you as far, in every sense of the word, as the North. “Not to sound too mystical about it,” said writer David Treuer, an Indigenous visitor from the U.S. “but the North isn’t necessarily a destination as much as a way of moving, a way of being, a habit.” It’s also a scale beyond: rivers too wide, too alive, too fast and deep to wrap your mind around; lakes where the fish never end; an endless sky possessed of supernatural dancing magic and a dozen lifetimes of stars. An infinite horizon that stretches out before you, a family of wolves that cross the highway, their highway; a trundle of muskox. You are as a molecule, as a lichen, as small as you have ever felt. Yet it feels wonderful.”

But more than the sky and rivers and the fish, it’s the people; peoples, actually. Indigenous of many nations who have called the North home since time was time, French Canadians with ancestry since European contact, diverse cultural and religious communities who settled in search of new beginnings, and then others who say they wandered up for a summer of work, felt an embrace of community as nowhere else, and never left.

It can touch you like that. Every season is intensely felt, but in winter, one thing you feel is a thunderclap of realization that eons before you, before snowmobiles and F-150s with the engine running and the heat blasting and Canada Goose parkas, before even houses, people lived and slept and hunted and ate and wandered and had children and survived and thrived, somehow as much a part of the landscape as the river—so seamlessly connected to the animals that they spoke their language, as close to the ground as the roots of their healing plants, and so much a part of the sky that the cosmos opens up and tells a story you’ve never heard before.

You’re not just in another world. You’re in another worldview.

You go there and come back, and you won’t look up at the stars in quite the same way. You’ll find yourself contemplating the ground beneath your feet differently. You’ll show everybody your pictures of the aurora, but find yourself lacking the words to explain the half of it. Whether words can capture it or not, you’ll know it in your soul: you’re coming home transformed.

VISION STATEMENT

The Northern Sky Corridor invites visitors on a transformative adventure across dramatic landscapes, ancient boreal forests, and shimmering skies where culture and nature intertwine to challenge, enlighten, and expand horizons.

This destination celebrates the connections that bind diverse communities to their heritage and environment.

As visitors engage with authentic experiences, they become part of a larger story—one that transforms their understanding and their own worldview while creating lasting value for communities, operators, and travelers alike.



Whitecourt, Alberta © Government of Alberta

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES SUMMARY

The Northern Sky Corridor represents a bold vision for regenerative approach to tourism development spanning provincial and territorial boundaries across Alberta and the Northwest Territories. To realize this vision, five interconnected strategic priorities have been identified that together form a comprehensive framework for action. These priorities balance economic opportunity with cultural authenticity, environmental stewardship, and community well-being.

The strategic framework emphasizes transformational visitor experiences supported by thoughtful infrastructure development and diverse accommodation options. A unified branding strategy, industry advancement initiatives, and collaborative governance mechanisms complete this holistic approach.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1: Indigenous-Led Tourism Development

The Indigenous-Led Tourism Development priority places Indigenous communities, knowledge, and stewardship at the center of the Northern Sky Corridor's tourism vision. This strategy empowers First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners to develop authentic cultural experiences, shape tourism narratives, and direct benefits back to their communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2: Transformational Corridor Experiences

The Transformational Corridor Experiences priority focuses on creating distinctive tourism offerings that deliver meaningful personal growth and connection for visitors. This strategy develops experiences across the pathways of knowledge seeking, nature connection, and communal celebration that showcase the region's natural phenomena, cultural heritage, and community gatherings.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: Foundational Infrastructure Development

The Foundational Infrastructure Development priority addresses the essential physical components required to support tourism growth throughout the Northern Sky Corridor. This strategy enhances transportation networks, visitor services, wayfinding systems, and digital connectivity to remove barriers to visitation while maintaining the authentic character that distinguishes the region.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4: Accommodation Diversification and Growth

The Accommodation Diversification and Growth priority seeks to expand lodging options that reflect the unique character of the Northern Sky Corridor. This strategy develops varied accommodation types—from wilderness lodges and Indigenous-owned properties to quality hotels and distinctive camping experiences—while encouraging investment in underserved areas to enhance the overall visitor experience.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5: Industry Advancement

The Industry Advancement priority strengthens the Northern Sky Corridor's tourism sector through professional development, quality standards, and business support initiatives. This strategy builds a resilient tourism ecosystem by investing in human capital, establishing inclusive frameworks, and creating sustainable economic opportunities for communities along the route.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1: INDIGENOUS-LED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Indigenous-led tourism development is essential to the Northern Sky Corridor's success. By centering Indigenous relationality and knowledge systems, the corridor creates experiences that are authentic, distinctive, and sustainable. This approach builds Indigenous tourism capacity through targeted entrepreneurship support, establishes protocols for cultural authenticity, and develops partnerships that respect unique governance structures and specialized funding sources. When Indigenous perspectives guide tourism development, the corridor creates a foundation where communities determine how their knowledge is shared, while creating transformative visitor experiences that generate lasting value for all.

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada



Strategy 1.1: Capacity building

Building Indigenous tourism capacity requires dedicated entrepreneurship support that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous operators. This includes providing specialized training, mentorship, access to capital, and market connections that are tailored to Indigenous contexts. Strengthening these supports helps to grow Indigenous-owned businesses, advance economic sovereignty, and create the authentic experiences travellers increasingly demand.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support Indigenous participation in existing tourism training and entrepreneurship programs; *ongoing timeline.*
- Amplify awareness of funding streams available for Indigenous tourism capacity building; *ongoing timeline.*

Strategy 1.2: Cultural authenticity and protocols

Tourism experiences must be rooted in cultural authenticity, guided by Indigenous communities and operators who determine what knowledge and traditions are shared, by whom, and in what context. This ensures that cultural expression remains self-determined and respectful, while deepening visitor understanding of Indigenous heritage.

KEY ACTIONS

- Promote existing Indigenous cultural protocols and increase awareness of when and where they apply; *ongoing timeline.*
- Support Indigenous communities in developing self-determined protocols where they are not yet formalized; *ongoing timeline.*

Strategy 1.3:
Indigenous partnership development

Strong and respectful partnerships with First Nations and Métis communities are critical to the corridor's future. These partnerships must recognize diverse governance structures, community priorities, and specialized funding mechanisms. By creating frameworks that honour self-determination and align with cultural and environmental stewardship, tourism ventures can advance in ways that directly benefit communities. Awareness-raising about tourism's economic, social, and cultural value also helps Indigenous governments and organizations make informed decisions about their participation. Realistic timelines are essential, acknowledging that while grants and funding exist, capacity challenges require sustained support to bring projects to life.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support access to tourism-aligned funding that advances community priorities; *ongoing timeline.*
- Engage with First Nations and Métis economic development leaders to co-develop tourism goals and advance projects; *ongoing timeline.*

Strategy 1.4:
Indigenous climate resilience and stewardship

Building resilience requires centering Indigenous leadership in climate adaptation. This strategy supports Indigenous partners in identifying heritage and cultural sites at risk, advancing joint emergency preparedness workshops, and embedding Indigenous governance and knowledge into tourism planning. By ensuring Indigenous perspectives guide adaptation measures, the corridor protects cultural continuity while strengthening community capacity to respond to climate change.

KEY ACTIONS

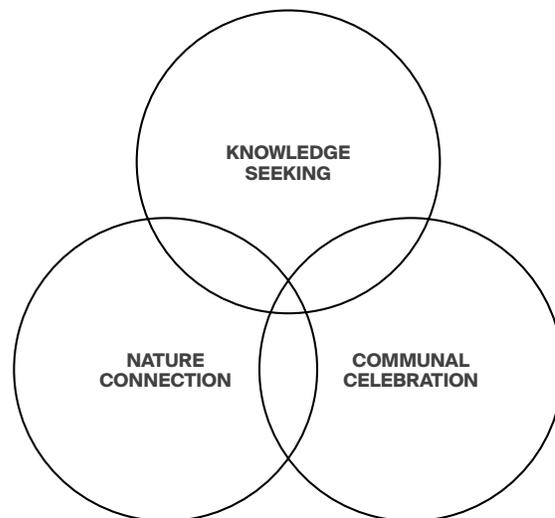
- Support Indigenous partners in identifying heritage assets vulnerable to climate change and advocate for funding streams to protect and interpret them; *ongoing timeline.*
- Collaborate with Indigenous communities, local governments, and tourism operators to share climate adaptation knowledge and best practices (e.g., fire safety, flood preparedness); *ongoing timeline.*
- Ensure Indigenous knowledge and governance perspectives are represented in corridor adaptation and tourism planning conversations; *ongoing timeline.*
- Support Indigenous and community partners in accessing funding to protect cultural and heritage sites from climate risks (e.g., fire mitigation, flood resilience); *ongoing timeline.*

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada



STRATEGIC PILLAR #2: TRANSFORMATIONAL CORRIDOR EXPERIENCES

Transformational corridor experiences serve as the beating heart of the Northern Sky tourism strategy, transforming ordinary visits into life-changing journeys. By creating distinctive, high-quality experiences around knowledge, nature, and celebration, the Northern Sky Corridor establishes itself as more than a destination—it becomes a pathway to personal transformation. The Northern Sky Tourism Corridor offers three distinct yet interconnected pathways through which visitors can experience meaningful transformation. Each pathway provides unique opportunities for engagement while contributing to a cohesive journey.



Alberta © Destination Canada



Strategy 2.1: Knowledge Seeking experiences

Knowledge Seeking experiences encourage visitors to broaden their understanding through cultural exchange and diverse perspectives on the land and its history. Guided by Indigenous ambassadors, historians, naturalists, and storytellers, these offerings deepen appreciation of local knowledge systems while providing opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning. They attract curious travellers who seek to grow personally and learn about different worldviews.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support operators in enhancing and expanding existing knowledge-based experiences; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Use destination assessment findings to guide experience development in priority areas. *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Collaborate with partners to support the creation of new, market-aligned experiences; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Catalyst Project: Support investment readiness and capital attraction for the Northern Creative Arts Hub; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*



Edmonton, Alberta © Travel Alberta

Strategy 2.2:
Nature Connection experiences

Nature Connection experiences repositioning visitors within the living systems of the North, fostering respect, wonder, and belonging. Journeys through boreal forests, under the midnight sun, or along ancient waterways encourage sensory immersion, moments of silence, and encounters with the intelligence of the natural world. Experiences are designed for all ability levels, ensuring accessibility while inspiring profound connections to the corridor’s natural treasures.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support experience providers in enhancing and expanding existing offerings; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Use destination assessment findings to guide experience development in priority areas; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Collaborate with partners to support the creation of new, market-aligned experiences; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Catalyst Project: Support investment readiness and capital attraction for the Adventure Base Camp in Peace River; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*

Strategy 2.3:
Communal Celebration experiences

Communal Celebration experiences invite visitors into the collective joy of festivals, ceremonies, and gatherings that honour both traditional and contemporary culture. These events create transformative spaces where barriers dissolve, friendships form, and community spirit thrives. By highlighting local traditions, food, music, and cultural expression, the corridor positions its celebrations as signature moments that unite residents and visitors alike.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support experience providers in enhancing and expanding existing offerings; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Collaborate with partners to support the creation of new, market-aligned experiences; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Support regional coordination and promotion of events through a Northern Sky Festival Calendar; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*
- Strengthen event delivery capacity through festival organizer training; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*

Strategy 2.4: Collaborative Experience Packages

By bundling complementary offerings into curated itineraries, Collaborative Experience Packages transform fragmented activities into comprehensive journeys. These packages encourage longer stays, increase visitor spending, and ensure economic benefits are shared across communities. They also help smaller operators access wider markets while presenting the corridor as a unified, multi-day destination.

Edmonton, Alberta © FOODBOOM GmbH

KEY ACTIONS

- Support DMOs and local operators in the development of collaborative experience packages that encourage regional exploration; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*



STRATEGIC PILLAR #3: FOUNDATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The success of tourism in the Northern Sky Corridor depends on well-planned infrastructure that meets both visitor expectations and community needs. Strategic investments in transportation networks, visitor amenities, and connectivity create the necessary conditions for tourism growth while enhancing the quality of life for residents who benefit the most from these resources. Natural area stewardship ensures the corridor's primary assets—its pristine wilderness and ecological integrity—remain protected while supporting sustainable experiences. Meanwhile, improved connectivity addresses a critical modern need, allowing visitors to share experiences in real-time and enable operators to implement digital business solutions.

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories



Strategy 3.1: Transportation access improvement

The Northern Sky Corridor's growth is currently limited by accessibility barriers. Many communities remain difficult to reach due to inconsistent air service, road conditions, and limited vehicle rental options. Addressing these challenges will open the corridor to new markets and help distribute visitation more evenly, alleviating pressure on hotspots and creating opportunities in underserved areas. Strategic investments in road infrastructure, regional air service, and alternative transportation solutions will ensure accessibility for visitors of all ages and abilities, advancing the corridor's commitment to inclusivity.

KEY ACTIONS

- Advocate to improve flight connectivity to key entry points; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Catalyst Project: Advocate for establishment of an RV terminus in Yellowknife; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*
- Immediate Opportunity: Working with Fraserway RV to develop a corridor-wide RV itinerary; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*
- Advocate for better car rental access through coordination with providers and local businesses; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Advocate for road infrastructure improvements in high-priority areas; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

Strategy 3.2:
Tourism amenities enhancement

Basic visitor amenities form the invisible backbone of successful tourism destinations. Strategically placed rest areas, comprehensive wayfinding signage, and informative visitor centers directly impact visitor satisfaction, length of stay, and likelihood of return visits. Investing in these fundamental services addresses critical pain points in the visitor journey while providing opportunities to showcase local character and stewardship values that define the Northern Sky experience. Critical safety information should be integrated into visitor resources, including emergency contact numbers, hospital locations, and STARS approved landing sites for businesses.

KEY ACTIONS

- Advocate for development of new or improved washrooms, rest stops, and amenities; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*
- Encourage consistent and informative signage across the corridor; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Support alignment of visitor information services across communities; *medium timeline 2–4 yrs.*
- Support the development and distribution of offline safety information for remote travel areas; *short timeline 1–2 yrs.*

Strategy 3.3:
Seasonal experience infrastructure

Currently, the Northern Sky Corridor is most active during the summer months, leaving winter and shoulder seasons underdeveloped. This imbalance restricts tourism revenue, limits employment stability, and diminishes the corridor’s potential as a true four-season destination. Strategic investment in seasonal infrastructure, such as winter-ready facilities, heated gathering spaces, and attractions that celebrate seasonal change, will unlock new opportunities for visitation outside the summer peak.

KEY ACTIONS

- Advocate for infrastructure that supports winter and shoulder season experience development; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

Strategy 3.4:
Natural area stewardship

The corridor’s natural beauty is its greatest strength, but also its most fragile resource. To sustain long-term growth, stewardship must remain at the heart of infrastructure development. This includes building designated viewing areas, investing in sustainable trail systems, and creating wildlife management corridors that safeguard ecosystems while allowing visitors to enjoy them responsibly. By working in partnership with nonprofits, trail groups, and parks agencies, the corridor can ensure that infrastructure not only enhances visitor experiences but also protects the ecological integrity that defines the Northern Sky.

KEY ACTIONS

- Collaborate with nonprofits, trail organizations, and parks agencies to support shared stewardship goals; *ongoing timeline.*

Strategy 3.5:
Internet and cellular coverage expansion

Modern travellers expect to be connected wherever they go, whether for navigation, safety, or sharing their journey in real time. For residents, digital connectivity is not just convenient but essential for education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Expanding internet and cellular service across the corridor addresses safety concerns, supports tourism operators, and enables businesses to function effectively. By collaborating with telecommunications providers to introduce infrastructure that blends with the natural environment, the corridor can maintain its wilderness character while meeting the digital needs of both visitors and residents.

KEY ACTIONS

- Advocate for improved cellular and Wi-Fi coverage in key tourism areas; *ongoing timeline*.

Strategy 3.6:
Resilient infrastructure and safe access

Building resilient infrastructure means applying hazard-aware design, upgrading visitor sites with consistent safety features, and ensuring clear emergency access. Strengthening transportation networks across road, air, and shuttle services provides dependable connectivity, creating an integrated safety system that protects people and supports the long-term viability of the visitor experience.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support partners in upgrading high-use visitor sites with safety signage, wayfinding, and offline emergency information. Promote consistency across the corridor; *short timeline 1-2 yrs*.
- Advocate for emergency access considerations (clear routes, cell boosters, call boxes) in tourism infrastructure development, highlighting their dual role in resident and visitor safety; *short timeline 1-2 yrs*.
- Advocate for resilient transportation access across road, air, and shuttle networks; *long timeline 4+ yrs*.

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada



STRATEGIC PILLAR #4: ACCOMMODATION DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH

Strategic diversification and expansion of lodging inventory forms a critical foundation for tourism growth, enabling longer visitor stays, encouraging regional dispersal, and capturing missed revenue opportunities. By developing a thoughtful mix of accommodation types—from immersive wilderness lodges to convenient urban options and distinctive glamping experiences—the corridor can attract new market segments, support year-round tourism employment, and create compelling reasons for visitors to fully experience the 1,500 km+ journey. This approach shifts travel patterns from concentrated stays in established hubs to a balanced distribution throughout the region.

Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada



Strategy 4.1: Accommodation inventory expansion

The first step in strengthening lodging capacity is a comprehensive assessment of current inventory, identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities across the corridor. This roadmap ensures new developments align with demand while addressing accessibility and inclusivity needs. By ensuring sufficient and appropriate accommodation options—including rooms for visitors with mobility needs—the corridor establishes the foundation to attract overnight visitors who might otherwise bypass the region.

KEY ACTIONS

- Promote the corridor as an investment-ready region for accommodation; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Assist communities and local developers in advancing accommodation projects by helping identify funding support and partnership opportunities; *medium timeline 2-4 yrs.*

Strategy 4.2: Lodging type diversification

A rich tapestry of lodging options allows the corridor to appeal to a broader range of visitors. Priorities include boutique wilderness lodges that showcase natural settings, modernized urban hotels that highlight Northern design, family-friendly resorts with four-season amenities, and B&Bs that celebrate local heritage. Diversification creates resilience, capturing varied market preferences while distributing demand across the region and stabilizing employment opportunities.

KEY ACTIONS

- Promote the corridor as an investment-ready region for accommodation; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Assist communities and local developers in advancing accommodation projects by helping identify funding support and partnership opportunities; *medium timeline 2-4 yrs.*
- Catalyst Project: Support investment readiness and capital attraction for the Signature Wellness Stay in Edmonton; *medium timeline 2-4 yrs.*

Strategy 4.3: Signature glamping development

Glamping represents a high-potential niche that combines comfort with authentic northern landscapes. Developing climate-appropriate, distinctive glamping sites supported by itineraries and campaigns positions the corridor as a global leader in immersive nature-based accommodation.

KEY ACTIONS

- Lead the identification of glamping development sites that align with natural assets and investor interest; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Support the development of a glamping-themed itinerary and marketing campaign to attract travellers; *medium timeline 2-4 yrs.*
- Catalyst Project: Support investment readiness and capital attraction for the High Level Boreal Retreat; *medium timeline 2-4 yrs.*

Strategy 4.4: Climate smart lodging development

As the corridor grows its accommodation supply, new and existing properties should integrate hazard-resilient design and adaptive site planning. Retrofitting existing lodgings, especially Indigenous-owned and community-based, will help businesses remain viable and competitive. Promoting climate-smart investment opportunities positions the corridor as a leader in sustainable northern hospitality, protecting visitor comfort and long-term business continuity.

KEY ACTIONS

- Share existing provincial and federal resources on climate-resilient design, adaptation, and emergency preparedness funding when appropriate; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Acknowledge climate resilience as a consideration in accommodation investment conversations; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Recognize climate-smart features (e.g., passive cooling, renewable energy) as positive attributes in investment and implementation discussions; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Acknowledge the value of collaboration among accommodations on supplier and contingency planning in related discussions; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Position climate-readiness strengths as a key criterion in promoting the corridor as "investment-ready"; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

STRATEGIC PILLAR #5: INDUSTRY ADVANCEMENT

Building awareness of business support resources, attracting strategic investment, and developing the tourism workforce enable the corridor to create a robust tourism ecosystem capable of meeting evolving visitor expectations. As travel trends and technological developments continue to transform travel patterns and visitor needs, a strong focus on these three areas of industry advancement positions the corridor to adapt, innovate, and maintain its competitiveness in the tourism marketplace.

Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories © Destination Canada



Strategy 5.1: Tourism workforce development

A resilient tourism economy depends on a skilled and motivated workforce. The Northern Sky Corridor faces critical labour challenges, from recruiting young people into tourism careers to helping current workers access meaningful pathways for advancement. This strategy addresses these issues through structured training, youth engagement initiatives, and accessible upskilling programs that make careers in tourism more viable and rewarding. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development, the corridor strengthens its human capital and builds the capacity needed to deliver consistently high-quality visitor experiences while creating meaningful employment for residents across the region.

KEY ACTIONS

- Advocate for youth engagement initiatives that promote tourism as a viable and meaningful career path; *ongoing timeline*.
- Advocate for more accessible upskilling programs tailored to current tourism and hospitality workers; *ongoing timeline*.

Strategy 5.2:
Tourism business support

Tourism businesses in the corridor operate in a complex and competitive environment where access to support and mentorship can make the difference between survival and success. Many small operators are not aware of the grants, loans, and advisory services available to them, while others face barriers in accessing these opportunities. By raising awareness and connecting businesses to the right tools and expertise, this strategy helps operators build resilience, adopt best practices, and deliver more consistent, high-quality visitor experiences. A stronger business ecosystem also enhances the overall competitiveness of the corridor, ensuring that local entrepreneurs and Indigenous tourism ventures have the resources they need to grow and thrive.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support economic development agencies, DMOs, and Indigenous business organizations to raise awareness of grants, loans, and advisory services available to tourism operators; *ongoing timeline*.

Strategy 5.3:
Investment attraction

The Northern Sky Corridor requires significant investment to unlock its potential, from expanding accommodation capacity to developing infrastructure and experience offerings. This strategy ensures the corridor is positioned as an investment-ready destination, able to attract outside capital while also stimulating new business formation locally. By packaging opportunities, working with communities to identify viable projects, and advocating for regional incentives, the corridor creates an enabling environment for growth. These efforts accelerate tourism development, distribute economic benefits across communities, and generate the momentum needed to realize the corridor's long-term vision.

KEY ACTIONS

- Promote the Northern Sky Corridor as an investment-ready region for tourism development; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Support communities in identifying and packaging tourism investment opportunities; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Advocate for regional investment incentives that support destination development; *ongoing timeline.*

Strategy 5.4:
Online business presence development

In today's digital marketplace, tourism operators without effective online presence are essentially invisible to potential visitors. This sub-pillar focuses on providing operators throughout the corridor with the skills, tools, and support needed to develop compelling websites, engage effectively on social media, and implement user-friendly booking systems. By elevating digital capabilities across the corridor, organizations ensure visitors can easily discover, evaluate, and purchase experiences at every point along their journey.

KEY ACTIONS

- Educate and train tourism businesses on building a strong online presence, providing support to add or enhance their digital profiles; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

Strategy 5.5:
Digital itinerary enhancement

The scale and remoteness of the Northern Sky Corridor can make travel planning intimidating, particularly for first-time visitors. Developing interactive itinerary builders and route-planning tools reduces friction, improves safety, and gives travellers the confidence to explore further. These digital tools also provide critical information about distances, available services, and seasonal considerations – enabling more responsible trip planning. By making the corridor easier to navigate, this strategy expands accessibility, encourages longer stays, and increases the likelihood of multi-community itineraries, ultimately dispersing economic benefits more widely across the region.

KEY ACTIONS

- Support the development and promotion of enhanced digital itineraries that guide regional travel; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

Strategy 5.6:
Building product awareness

The Northern Sky Tourism Corridor needs to raise awareness of its existing tourism products and experiences through strategic communications that highlight the unique experiences across the route. By implementing and leveraging local success stories and creating thematic content that connects visitor experiences from Edmonton to Yellowknife, the corridor can maximize visibility of current offerings.

KEY ACTIONS

- Increase awareness of corridor tourism products among visitors, residents, and travel trade; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*

Strategy 5.7:
Strengthening industry and climate readiness

Building resilience in the tourism sector means sharing climate resources, advocating for operator inclusion in emergency planning, and supporting workforce training in sustainability and crisis management. With relief mechanisms in place to help businesses recover from climate events, the corridor can foster a tourism industry that is informed, connected, and prepared to thrive under changing conditions.

KEY ACTIONS

- Share existing climate risk and adaptation resources through relevant partners and related corridor communications; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Advocate for inclusion of tourism operators in regional and provincial emergency response planning frameworks; *short timeline 1-2 yrs.*
- Support local colleges, Indigenous training centers, and tourism associations by sharing corridor priorities and examples that help embed climate change, sustainability, and crisis management into workforce development programs; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*
- Advocate for senior governments and funding bodies to consider relief funding mechanisms for tourism operators impacted by climate events; *long timeline 4+ yrs.*

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY APPROACH

To translate this investment strategy into action, the Northern Sky Corridor development team used a rigorous prioritization framework to identify projects with the strongest potential for corridor-wide impact. The prioritization framework drew on stakeholder input, destination data, industry research, and guiding principles established in the Northern Sky Destination Development Strategy. Each project was assessed based on the following criteria:

1. Strategic alignment

Projects were prioritized based on their alignment with the corridor's five strategic priorities, including Indigenous leadership, transformational experiences, infrastructure development, and accommodation diversification. Projects needed to advance the corridor's vision of regenerative, place-based, and transformative tourism.

2. Demand and market readiness

Initiatives were selected for their potential to meet demonstrated visitor demand, particularly from highly engaged segments such as Outdoor Explorers, Refined Globetrotters, and Cultural Seekers. Projects that addressed known experience gaps, such as winter product, cultural programming, or soft adventure received higher prioritization.

3. Seasonal and geographic dispersion

To combat seasonal concentration and uneven regional distribution, priority was given to projects that strengthen winter and shoulder season appeal and expand tourism beyond urban cores. Each recommended catalyst project contributes to spatial and temporal balance across the corridor.

4. Community and industry support

Each project reflects input from local operators, Indigenous partners, and regional stakeholders gathered through surveys, interviews, and consultations. Priority was placed on projects with clear local buy-in and potential to deliver shared community benefits.

5. Enabling conditions

Projects were evaluated for their practical feasibility, factoring in land readiness, potential partnerships, proximity to existing assets, and alignment with broader infrastructure improvements such as transportation and cellular connectivity. Projects that leveraged or catalyzed enabling conditions were considered strong candidates.

6. Competitive differentiation

Each catalyst project was designed to offer a distinctive visitor proposition not easily found elsewhere in Canada. This includes experience concepts grounded in cultural authenticity, ecological immersion, and high-quality design that can strengthen the region's competitive positioning.

7. Economic and social impact potential

The prioritization process emphasized investments that can generate meaningful economic benefits, including visitor spending, job creation, and small business opportunities, alongside social and cultural value.

8. Climate resilience

Projects were prioritized for their ability to adapt to changing climate conditions through hazard-resilient design, emergency preparedness measures, and weather-ready infrastructure. By embedding adaptation into development, these investments strengthen visitor and community safety while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the corridor.

This integrated evaluation approach ensures that catalyst projects are not only responsive to the corridor's current challenges, but also strategically positioned to drive long-term tourism growth that is inclusive, sustainable, and transformative.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY



Northern Rockies, Alberta © Jeff Bartlett @photojbartlett

Adventure Base Camp, Peace River

The Adventure Base Camp would serve as a four-season hub connecting travellers to the Mighty Peace region's vast natural playground. Anchored by 100 existing campsites and an expansion that could include 10 lodge-style Northern Lights cabins and future RV stays, the site would function as the launch point for guided paddling and hiking, jet boat tours, trail connections, and shuttle services to Misery Mountain. Guests would be able to access year-round recreation supported by a full suite of rentals—bikes, e-bikes, paddling gear, skis, and snowshoes—alongside family-friendly amenities such as an adventure playground, pool, and a potential nature wellness centre with saunas and cold plunges. With direct trail access to Peace River's downtown, riverfront, and surrounding valleys, the Base Camp would offer seamless entry into northern Alberta's most dynamic terrain.

Over time, the property could be expanded into a year-round destination anchored by dark sky and aurora-viewing lodges, complemented by upgraded guest facilities and online booking systems for a seamless visitor experience. This investment would be well-timed: in 2023, the region saw over 1.4 million visits, yet overnight infrastructure remained limited. As Alberta's domestic tourism recovery continues to be driven by outdoor recreation, the Base Camp would be positioned to capture growing demand from Canadian road-trippers, regional explorers, and Outdoor Explorers—a key traveller segment.

Northern Boreal Retreat, High Level

The Northern Boreal Retreat is envisioned as a premium, year-round nature escape in the heart of Alberta's boreal forest. This design-forward accommodation cluster will feature 12–15 architecturally distinct cabins, a central lodge with dining and wellness space, Nordic-style spa facilities, and guided nature-based activities. Amenities such as sauna and hydrotherapy installations, forest bathing, snowshoe trails, and curated wellness programming will provide guests with immersive, restorative experiences, while a dedicated reception centre will manage bookings, events, and visitor services.

Positioned at the intersection of rising demand for wellness and slow tourism, the retreat offers an elevated alternative to conventional rural lodging. It responds to post-pandemic travel trends showing increased interest in high-end, remote stays that connect visitors to meaningful nature encounters, targeting market segments such as Refined Globetrotters and Outdoor Explorers. The Northern Boreal Retreat leverages Alberta's underutilized boreal landscapes, positioning itself as one of the first destinations in the region to bring luxury lodging to this environment. By being early to market, the retreat can establish a strong reputation and capture demand ahead of potential competitors, while blending comfort, ecological stewardship, and cultural depth.

Northern RV Terminus, Yellowknife

The Northern RV Terminus would be envisioned as a full-service RV rental and servicing hub in Yellowknife, strategically designed to better support one-way, road-based travel through the Northern Sky Corridor. Together with an Edmonton hub, the project would make it simple for RV travellers to pick up in one city and drop off in the other. The terminus would provide essential services such as maintenance, cleaning, and provisioning, while powered RV stalls, sanitation facilities, vehicle drop-off and pick-up zones, dump stations, and basic repair and refueling services would ensure a seamless experience for travellers.

With road-based tourism surging post-pandemic and strong growth in RV and van life travel, establishing Yellowknife as a viable northern terminus would unlock new itineraries aligned with consumer interest in scenic drives and self-guided exploration. This facility would directly respond to the needs of Outdoor Explorers, a key market segment seeking immersive journeys that balance freedom, comfort, and authentic encounters along the way.

Wellness Stay, Edmonton

This project would propose the development of a high-end, nature-connected accommodation in Edmonton's River Valley, creating a flagship wellness destination within the city. Drawing inspiration from Nordic and Boreal spa resorts, the property would combine immersive architecture, forested seclusion, and luxury service tailored to wellness-seeking urban and international travellers. Key components would include boutique cabins and suites, spa-view lounges, yoga and meditation studios, nature-immersive meeting spaces, and on-site culinary services emphasizing health and local ingredients. The accommodation would complement the spa's day-use offerings by adding overnight stays and curated wellness experiences that extend visitor engagement and length of stay.

The timing for this project would be highly advantageous. Wellness tourism is already a \$900B+ global market, expanding at a faster rate than overall tourism, and Edmonton's first ScandinaVe Spa creates an anchor for a broader wellness district. By leveraging this momentum, the project would position the city to capture growing demand from Refined Globetrotters and urban wellness travellers seeking luxury experiences that blend nature, culture, and wellbeing. Establishing a design-forward wellness retreat would provide Edmonton with a signature offering capable of elevating its profile as a wellness destination in Canada and beyond.

Northern Creative Hub, Yellowknife

*After this project was identified in the strategy, it was determined that a similar initiative is already underway. The project has been retained to demonstrate alignment and the identified need; however, a full cost analysis will not be undertaken, and reference will instead be made to the work already in progress.

The Northern Creative Hub would be envisioned as a cultural anchor in downtown Yellowknife, designed to celebrate and elevate Indigenous creativity, foster community connection, and enable cultural exchange. Once realized, the Hub would operate year-round as a multipurpose centre featuring a visitor information hub, art gallery, artisan retail, event space, and studio workshops for resident makers and visiting learners. Key components would include a permanent gallery and curated retail space focused on northern Indigenous art, workshop rooms for beadwork and traditional crafts, a performance and event venue with catering kitchen, artist studios, and a linked visitor centre. The Hub would also provide immersive experiences such as cultural programming, live demonstrations, and hands-on workshops that invite visitors to engage directly with Indigenous knowledge and creativity.

This project would be uniquely positioned to capture the rapidly growing demand for authentic cultural tourism. Cultural travellers already spend up to 38% more per trip than average, and the Hub would allow Yellowknife to expand its appeal beyond aurora tourism, strengthening its year-round and shoulder-season visitation. By offering a distinctive, Indigenous-led cultural anchor in the Circumpolar North, the Northern Creative Hub would not only extend overnight stays but also elevate Yellowknife's role as a centre for cultural exchange and innovation. In doing so, it would attract high-yield traveller segments such as Refined Globetrotters and Culture Seekers, while generating lasting cultural and economic benefits for the community.

INVESTMENT SUMMARY TABLE

Project	Estimated Capital Investment (CAD)	Annual Revenue (Year 10)	Annual Operating Cost (Year 10)	Primary Cost Drivers	Payback Period	IRR	Financial Viability Signal
Adventure Base Camp (Peace River)	\$7.5M	\$2.55M	\$1.83M	Utilities (+15%), seasonal staffing (+5%), food supply costs (+10%)	9 years	7%	Consistent surplus; moderate payback period; attractive to regional investors
Northern Boreal Retreat (High Level)	\$9.0M	\$3.59M	\$2.48M	Utilities (+20%), spa supply freight (+15%), skilled staffing premiums (+10%)	7 years	10%	Healthy surplus; strong ROI in wellness niche
Yellowknife RV Terminus	\$4.5M	\$1.21M	\$0.82M	Utilities (+15%), maintenance (+10%), supplies freight (+10%)	5 years	12%	Reliable surplus with short payback; strong catalyst for corridor dispersal
Edmonton Wellness Stay	\$18.0M	\$6.70M	\$4.26M	Utilities (+5%), spa/guest services, no staffing premium	6 years	11%	High-margin urban wellness anchor; strong IRR and NPV potential

Grande Prairie, Alberta © Jeff Bartlett @photojbartlett

