

3.2.1 Tourism in the Thompson Okanagan

The Shuswap region lies within the **Thompson Okanagan Development Region**,¹ an area that encompasses roughly one eighth of the province, in southeastern BC. The Thompson Okanagan Development Region extends from Blue River at its northern end, to the US border, and from the Alberta border to Clinton and Lytton in the western reaches of the region. Total room revenues in the Thompson Okanagan have been rising steadily since 1995, from \$137.3 million in that year to \$190.6 million in 2001.² This is an overall increase of 35 percent, compared to a provincial increase of 44 percent during the same time period.

Between 1995 and 2000, the most significant growth occurred in revenues from hotels (44 percent), vacation rentals (43 percent) and miscellaneous accommodation (74 percent), while revenues from motels and fishing lodges increased at slower rates -- 48 percent and 33 percent respectively. It should be noted that this trend mirrors that of the province as a whole, where the most rapid revenue gains were in hotels (47 percent), vacation rentals (77 percent) and miscellaneous accommodation³ (108 percent). These results point to more business-related travel, an aging population that prefers the amenities of hotels, and a growing demand for unique accommodation.

Up-to-date and comprehensive tourism data is largely unavailable for sub-regions of the province. The best source of regional data is derived from a tourism survey conducted by Tourism BC in 1995 and 1996. The results are embodied in the *British Columbia Visitor Study*, a compendium of provincial and regional tourism data that characterizes the resident and non-resident components of the BC tourism market. The 1995/96 survey data is aggregated according to geographic areas of the province, including the **North Thompson Okanagan Tourism Region**. This area covers roughly the same area as the Thompson Okanagan Development Region, but *excludes* the southern Okanagan component.

The *British Columbia Visitor Study* provides some interesting facts about the nature of tourism in the North Thompson Okanagan Tourism Region. These include the following:

- Nearly 5 million visitors travelled to the North Thompson-Okanagan for a day or overnight in 1995/96, 60 percent of whom were non-residents of BC. This accounts for 16 percent of all BC visitors that year.
- Sixty three percent of visitors to the North Thompson Okanagan were from Regional Canada; remaining North Americans (Long Haul Canadians plus Regional and Long Haul US) accounted for a further 25 percent of non-resident visitors to the region.

¹ Development region maps are provided by BC Statistics at <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/maps/drmap.htm>

² Source: BC Statistics, January 2002.

³ Miscellaneous accommodation includes educational institutions, bed and breakfasts, camping services, outdoor adventure accommodations, and a few others that don't fit into any category.

- Visitors from the Greater Vancouver Regional District and southern BC accounted for 80 percent of BC resident visitors.
- Of those visiting the North Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Region in 1995/96, 29 percent of non-resident visitors visited the Shuswap, while 15 percent of BC residents visited the Shuswap. Kamloops and Revelstoke attracted many more visitors.

Table 3.2-1: Destinations Visited in the North Thompson Okanagan Tourism Region 1995-1996 (% of Total)						
	Non-Resident Total	Regional Canada	Overseas All	BC Resident Total	BC Resident GVRD	BC Resident South
North Thompson-Okanagan (Net)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Kamloops and area	53	53	53	48	47	47
Revelstoke and Eagle Valley	38	42	42	11	11	11
The Shuswap	29	36	21	15	13	19
Wells Gray/Mt. Robson	23	28	27	7	4	6
Merrit/Nicola Valley	21	22	14	12	16	11
Gold Country	14	8	17	10	13	9

- Outdoor activities constitute a big draw for non-BC resident visitors in the North Thompson Okanagan. In 1995/96, approximately one quarter of non-resident visitors engaged in activities such as hiking/backpacking, visiting parks and wildlife viewing.