

3.3.3 Salmon Arm

As the central economic hub of the Shuswap region, Salmon Arm enjoys a diversified economy. This can be ascribed to its good strategic location on two major provincial highways and the CPR rail line, and its role as a service centre for the entire Shuswap. It is also the location of several important regional employers in the forest product, tourism, agriculture, and service sectors. Salmon Arm's attractive, bucolic setting is attracting more residents with valuable skills, including many who are retired, semi-retired or self-employed. A high proportion (19 percent) is dependent on investment income and pension plans for their basic income. This is comparable with south Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the Sunshine Coast.¹

A cluster analysis of the Shuswap region in 1996 indicated that "the [Salmon Arm tourism] business base consists of moderately priced hotel/motel and camping accommodation, family restaurants, some farmside produce sales, and sales of crafts and tourism needs. This profile has not changed much over the past decade."² The report cited the lack of destination activities such as beaches or striking attractions as a deterrent to investing in a local tourism destination resort at the time. The past few years have, however, seen tourism growth and investment, with golf course development, and three new hotels opening up in 2001. A five-year tourism development strategy for Salmon Arm was completed in 2001, based on extensive consultation with many interests in Salmon Arm, including businesses, recreation groups, government and community volunteer groups.³

Most tourism activity in Salmon Arm occurs during the summer months, as visitors are drawn to the attractions of the Shuswap Lake, and swimming, houseboating, and golfing. The season is extended into the fall and winter months, with events such as the Salmon Arm Fall Fair, the Roots and Blues Festival, a rodeo, the Adams River sockeye salmon run, and an annual cross country ski competition. During the winter, the local Larch Hills offers good cross country skiing, but this is not yet offered as a commercial activity. Competition is stiff from nearby Silver Star and Sun Peaks resorts, which also offer downhill skiing.

Table 3.3-3: Tourism SWOT Summary of Salmon Arm

STRENGTHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good infrastructure.• Public wharf and adjacent land brings potential for tourism activity along the shoreline.• Strong community support for tourism, and improving coordination.• Proximity to Vancouver and Alberta markets.• Regional retail/service sector.

¹ BC Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations. *BC Local Area Economic Dependencies and Impact Ratios - 1996*. May 1999.

² Impax Policy Services International. *Shuswap Clusters -- Economic Profiles: Shuswap Region of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District* (July 30, 1996).

³ Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce. *Tourism Development Strategy for Salmon Arm*. May 2001. Funded by Ministry of Community Development, Cooperative and Volunteers.

- Excellent highway access.
- Community tourism development strategy already in place.
- Skilled labour force.
- Salmon Arm foreshore delta breeding and migratory stops for numerous bird species.

WEAKNESSES

- Relatively few destination activities for visitors who stay in Salmon Arm.
- Slower tourism activity during shoulder and winter months.
- No strategy in place to attract through traffic into community.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Mary Thomas Interpretive Centre.
- Agri-tourism opportunities.
- Bird watching opportunities.
- Rock climbing areas.
- Mountain biking opportunities associated with the Canoe system of trails.
- Larch Hills has extensive trails for cross country skiing and summer activities.

CHALLENGES

- Little access opportunities to the alpine/sub-alpine, which is traditionally on forestry roads.
- Adjacency of the sewage treatment plant near the public wharf, and the shallowness of the bay.
- Competition from nearby resorts in Vernon and Kamloops.
- Rocky Mountaineer rail service passes through Salmon Arm, but does not stop there.