

Visitor Travel Survey, 2019

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, February 25, 2021

Highlights

In 2019, international visitors made 32.4 million trips to Canada, up 3.7% from 2018.

This increase in foreign visitors to Canada translated into an estimated \$22.8 billion in traveller-related spending that same year.

This release completes a portrait of travel and spending by non-residents in 2019, which serves as an important benchmark to measure the full impact of COVID-19 on this behaviour in 2020 and beyond.

More recent data on international travel to Canada are available in [Travel between Canada and other countries, November 2020](#) and [Visitor Travel Survey, first quarter 2020](#).

Travel from the United States increases

The number of US travellers to Canada rose 2.2% from 2018 to 25.0 million in 2019.

Trips from the United States for pleasure and leisure edged up 0.9% to 11.1 million. In comparison, travel for visiting friends or relatives rose 7.2% to 5.3 million trips, while business-related travel increased by 3.8% year over year to 4.0 million trips.

Ontario (+2.9% to 12.9 million visits) and British Columbia (+3.5% to 6.4 million visits), which together accounted for more than 7 of every 10 (71.8%) visitors from the United States, had the largest absolute increases from 2018.

US residents spent an estimated \$11.1 billion in 2019, up 4.7% from \$10.6 billion a year earlier, with an average travel expenditure of about \$445 per trip to Canada.

Accommodation (39.6%) and food and beverages (26.8%) were the largest categories of expenses, followed by costs of transportation within Canada (15.0%) and recreation and entertainment (9.6%).

More arrivals from overseas countries

Arrivals from overseas countries (i.e., countries other than the United States) to Canada increased by 8.9% from 2018 to 7.5 million in 2019.

Large increases were reported from Mexico (up 23.4% to 510,000) and India (up 19.2% to 354,000 trips). Travel from the United Kingdom (up 11.7% to 909,000 trips) and France (up 11.2% to 680,000 trips) also increased compared with a year earlier.

Ontario recorded the largest absolute increase in visitors from overseas countries (up 15.0% to 3.7 million visits), followed by British Columbia (up 3.6% to 2.5 million visits) and Quebec (up 6.1% to 2.0 million visits).

In 2019, roughly three of every four overseas residents travelled to Canada to visit friends or relatives (up 18.2% to 3.0 million trips) or for holidays, leisure or recreation (up 7.2% to 2.6 million trips).

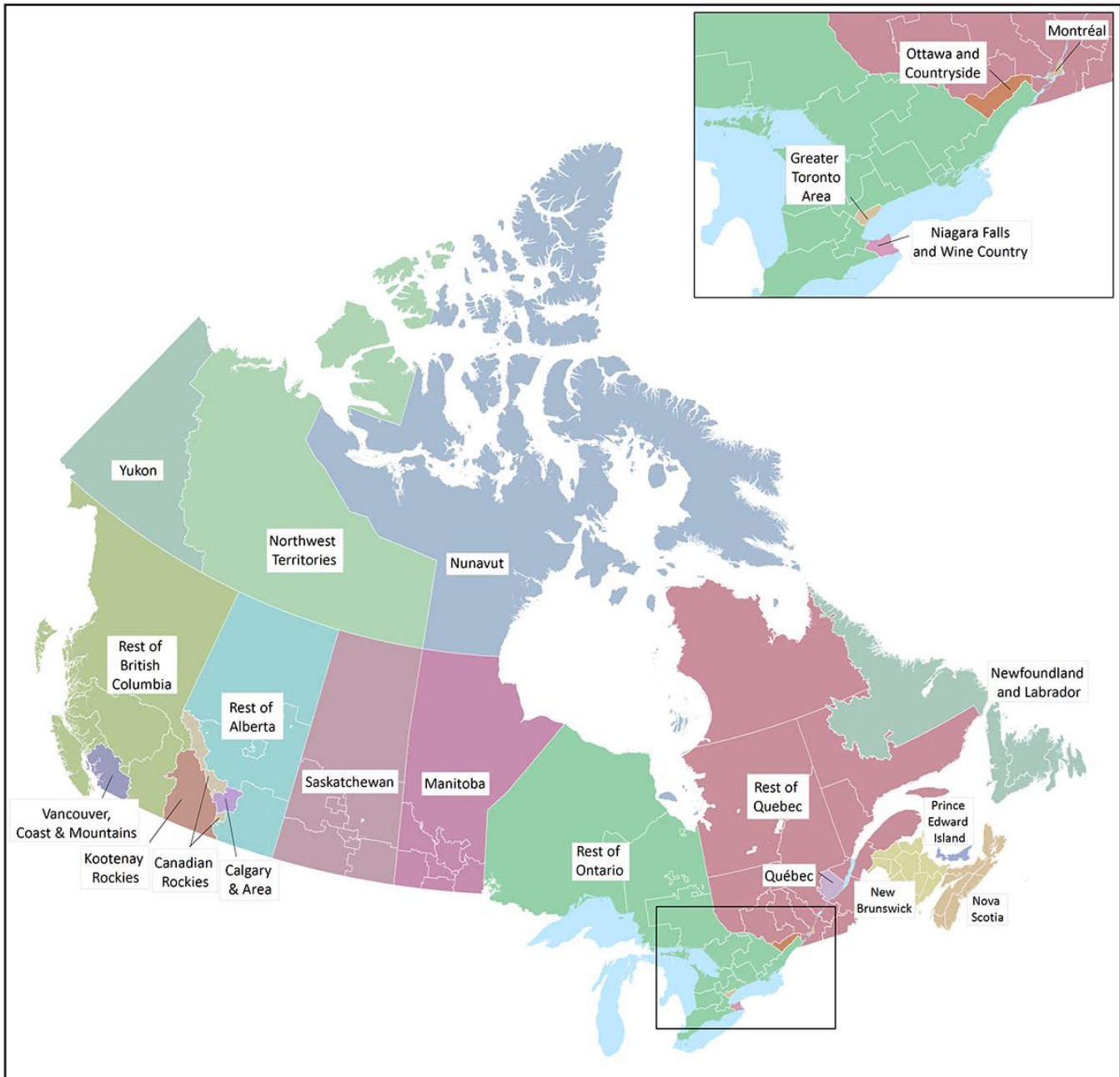
Visitors from India stayed the longest, averaging 44 nights per trip in Canada, followed by visitors from China (40 nights).

Overseas travellers spent an estimated \$11.7 billion in Canada in 2019, up 3.5% from 2018. This increase was led by higher spending by travellers from the United Kingdom (+12.6%) at \$1.4 billion.

Accommodation (34.2%) was the largest expense item, followed by food and beverages (26.4%), clothes and gifts (17.0%) and transportation within Canada (11.1%).



Map 1 – Tourism regions



Foreign spending increases in most regions

Foreign travellers spent \$22.8 billion in Canada in 2019, up from \$22.0 billion in 2018.

The Vancouver, coast and mountains region, Canada's top-earning region (\$4.9 billion), saw an estimated \$197.5 million increase in tourism revenue in 2019, up by 4.2% year over year.

Foreign travel spending in the Greater Toronto area amounted to \$3.7 billion in 2019, up 10.7% from 2018. Overseas travellers accounted for over half (57.7%) of this total.

Foreign spending in the Montréal area increased 6.3% year over year to \$2.3 billion in 2019.

Table 1
Travel to Canada, by trip purpose, 2019

	Trips
	thousands
Travel to Canada	32,430
From the United States	24,958
Business	4,049
Pleasure	11,147
Visiting friends or relatives	5,278
Other ¹	4,483
From other countries	7,472
Business	899
Pleasure	2,589
Visiting friends or relatives	3,005
Other ¹	979

1. The "other" category includes travel to shop, to go to school or study, for medical or health reasons, for religious reasons, or for other personal reasons.

Source(s): Visitor Travel Survey (5261).

Note to readers

The Visitor Travel Survey (VTS) collects information about international travel to Canada by US and overseas residents.

The VTS, developed to replace the inbound visitor component of the International Travel Survey (ITS), consists of two components: electronic questionnaires and the Air Exit Survey. Data from the VTS are historically comparable with data from the ITS.

The VTS uses Statistics Canada's Frontier Counts (see [Travel between Canada and other countries, November 2020](#)) as benchmarks to determine the number of travellers to Canada. These counts are produced using administrative data from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on all international travellers to Canada.

VTS estimates are based on a sample and estimates for smaller geographic areas and detailed categories have more variability. In such cases, users are advised to examine the coefficient of variation indicated by the letter quality indicators attached to each estimate.

For more information on methods, including data imputation, see the [Visitor Travel Survey](#) page.

Starting with the 2018 data release, VTS data include subprovincial estimates of tourism spending by international visitors to Canada. These estimates are modelled by combining VTS data (e.g., countries, length of stay, trip purpose) with aggregated payment processor or spending data provided by Destination Canada. Payment processor data include information on spending category, tourism region and country of origin for credit cards used by international visitors. Methodological information is available in the document [Small Area Estimation for Visitor Travel Survey](#).

The sum of spending data derived from the small area estimation (SAE) model will not equal the sum produced using VTS data alone. When analyzing spending data, it is recommended to use the estimates derived from the SAE model.

Overseas countries refer to countries other than the United States.

A **trip to Canada** is made by a resident of a country other than Canada who is cleared through a CBSA point of entry on a visit for a period of less than 12 months. A Canadian citizen residing outside Canada for more than 12 months who comes to Canada is included as a traveller from a country other than Canada.

A **trip to Canada for a person residing in a country other than Canada** starts when they are cleared through a CBSA point of entry to enter Canada and ends when they exit Canada.

Trips and visits: A trip can consist of one or more visits. A traveller from a country other than Canada may stay in several locations during a trip to Canada. Each stay at a Canadian location (e.g., a province) within a given trip represents a visit.

Available tables: table [24-10-0047-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5261](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).