

tourism
calgary



2020
Annual Report

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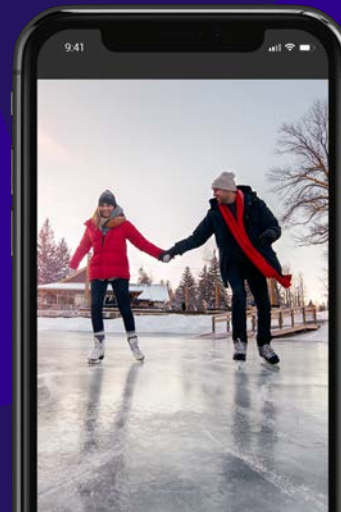
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Year in review

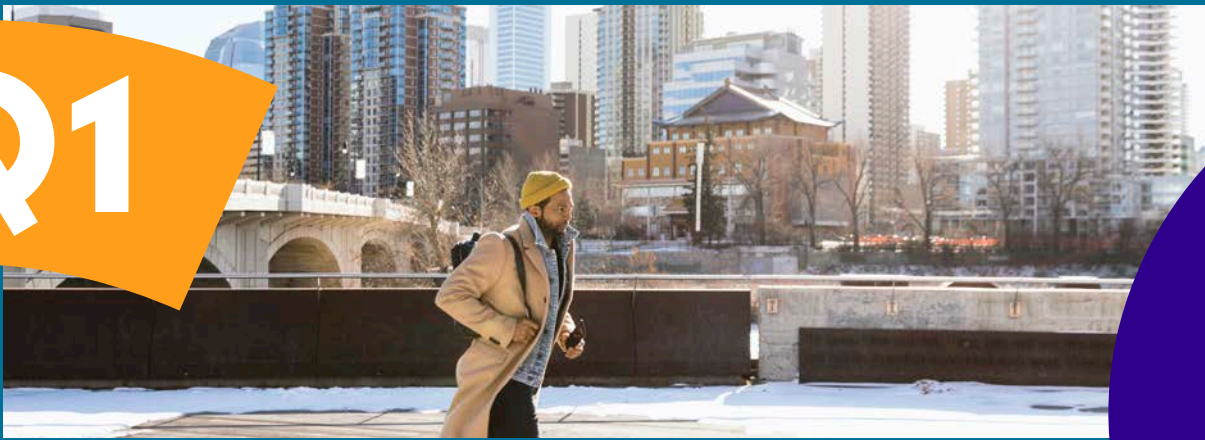
As we look back at 2020, it's clear the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected the tourism industry. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, here in Calgary, perseverance, collaboration and a positive spirit shone through our entire industry and we saw daily reflections in countless examples of support, innovation and adaptation.

Each quarter of 2020 told a different story; starting on a high note with sights set on another record year for tourism as a vital economic contributor for Calgary. Then the virus arrived, instigating fundamental change for all tourism-related businesses.

As champion for Calgary's tourism industry, Tourism Calgary led by example in developing and advancing an agile COVID-19 Response and Recovery plan. As the situation evolved and new challenges arose, Calgary's tourism industry remained resilient in pivoting to support and serve our community and each other; proving once again that our community spirit shines brightest when we work together.



Q1



It was business as usual for most of the first quarter of 2020 as Tourism Calgary continued to champion Calgary's stakeholder-led and endorsed Destination Strategy and grow our reputation as the Ultimate Host City. Here's what Tourism Calgary accomplished throughout the quarter:



- Supported **17 sport, cultural and major events** that generated **\$15 million in economic impact**, attracted **37,000+ attendees** and added to the city's vibrancy through participation opportunities and legacies.
- Hosted **3,485 delegates** at **8 meetings and conventions** that generated **\$7 million in economic impact**.
- Leveraged regional, national and international marketing campaigns to **drive high-intent travellers to visit Calgary**, exemplified by a **30 per cent increase** in sessions on visitcalgary.com and a **67 per cent increase** in social media engagements year-over-year.
- Interviewed and recognized **715 White Hat Award nominees** for their commitment to creating memorable experiences for visitors and Calgarians, while identifying potential winners.
- Hosted the annual open house at Contemporary Calgary where **325 partners and stakeholders** experienced one of our city's newest attractions and enjoyed a selection of local food and beverage offerings.
- Inspired **24 industry partners** to develop new and export-ready tourism products in partnership with Travel Alberta as part of the **SHiFT tourism experience and product development** program.



Amidst this work, Tourism Calgary actively monitored COVID-19 developments and worked closely with Calgary Emergency Management Agency, YYC Calgary International Airport, Calgary Hotel Association and others to share information about the evolving global situation and to prepare for the arrival of the virus to our city. Alberta's first presumptive case was identified on March 5, 2020. Here's how Tourism Calgary prepared our industry partners to navigate the evolving situation:

- **Hosted weekly online townhalls** for partners that provided **direct access to representatives** from Calgary Emergency Management Agency and Alberta Health Services.
- **Shared COVID-19 email updates** as new information, supports and resources became available.
- **Engaged partners through surveys** to better understand our industry's initial expectations and experiences related to the pandemic. Survey insights identified the critical need for timely and accurate information about the evolving situation, and access to business continuity resources.
- **Shifted marketing and partner supports** to help inform consumers about changes to partners' business operations including closures and new virtual or contact-free offerings.
- **Halted international marketing campaigns** and refocused efforts on hyper-local audiences.

Q2



By the second quarter of 2020, the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Calgary's critical tourism industry was abundantly clear. Tourism Calgary developed and began implementing the COVID-19 Response and Recovery plan early in the quarter, which focused efforts on driving business sustainability and community safety.

In activating the plan's response phase, Tourism Calgary quickly pivoted efforts to align with health and safety measures, and to support our stakeholders as they innovated and adapted operations.

That's the Spirit

- **Launched the *That's the Spirit* brand platform** to drive hyper-local awareness, business and support for industry partners. While partner referrals and engagements on social media and visitcalgary.com were noticeably lower through the quarter due to restrictions, the brand platform and newly launched **#LoveYYC from Home** program helped **18,000+ Calgarians** learn about our partners' virtual and contact-free offerings.



- **Announced temporary partnership fee relief** to support our industry's response and recovery efforts. This prompted a **program evaluation** to ensure partnership offerings continue to provide value in the changing environment.
- **Re-booked 49 per cent of the 37 sport, cultural and major events** Calgary was scheduled to host through the rest of 2020, which were **projected to generate over \$61 million** in economic impact for our city.
- **Deferred 45 per cent of the 60 meetings and conventions** Calgary was set to host between Q2 and Q4 2020.
- **Highlighted the resilience and importance of Calgary's tourism industry** during Tourism Week, with 30 attractions, landmarks and hotels joining the celebration as captured in the *Chapter of Hope* video.

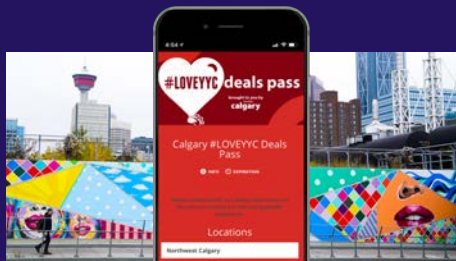


Q3



Emerging from a quarter marked by lockdowns and restrictions that fundamentally changed many businesses in Calgary's tourism industry, the third quarter brought tempered optimism. As case numbers lowered, the Government of Alberta launched a phased reopening strategy that permitted some businesses to reopen. Despite this, most of Calgary's tourism industry remained deeply impacted by restrictions including our partners at Calgary Stampede who were faced with the difficult decision to cancel the iconic and economically significant event for the first time in its 108-year history.

In responding to the needs of our industry, Tourism Calgary moved into the recovery phase of its [COVID-19 Response and Recovery plan](#).



- Incentivized Calgarians to explore their city and support local through **launching the #LoveYYC Deals Pass** pilot program. **11,100 users registered** from August through Dec. 2020 and accessed offers from **81 partners**.
- **Advocated on behalf of our industry** for a CEWS extension, a direct-to-tenant rent subsidy and dedicated supports for the tourism sector to all orders of government in collaboration with Travel Alberta, Destination Canada, TIAC and TIAA.
- **Ramped up and toned down destination promotion efforts** in regional markets under the *That's the Spirit* brand umbrella in alignment with provincial restrictions and consumer sentiment toward travel. **Referrals to industry partners and website sessions tripled** over the previous quarter, boosted by programs like the new **Calgary Curated consumer newsletter** that attracted almost **16,900 subscribers** between Sept. and Dec. 2020.
- Joined The City of Calgary and 55 other organizations in **announcing Chinook Blast**; Calgary's Midwinter Roundup - an annual event intended to foster excitement, energy, activity and an **economic injection during a needs period for our city**.
- Launched a new **meetings and conventions section on visitcalgary.com** to highlight our city's competitive advantages and **inspire planners to choose Calgary** as their next event destination.
- **Developed safe hosting guidelines** alongside event rights holders and all orders of government to prepare for the return of in-person meetings, conventions and events to Calgary.
- Celebrated a milestone for the award-winning White Hat Academy online learning platform, **with 1,000 graduates earning their Ultimate Host certification** and becoming better ambassadors and storytellers for our city.
- Launched the **Ask a Local Expert** online chat service on visitcalgary.com and Tourism Calgary's Facebook channel to advise regional visitors and those planning a trip to Calgary about things to see-and-do.
- **Reimagined the traditional Calgary White Hat Awards Gala** into a series of safe, in-person presentations where **20 winners were surprised** with a coveted Smithbilt White Hat.



 watch video

Q4



The final quarter of 2020 was full of ups and downs with cooler temperatures coinciding with a rise in case numbers that forced the re-introduction of restrictions. While many businesses had become proficient in pivoting to virtual and contact-free offerings, impacts to our industry were compounded by missed revenues typically generated throughout the busy summer months.

On a more positive note, vaccine distribution kicked off in the quarter and YYC Calgary International Airport became the first Canadian airport to trial the International Border Pilot Project. This marked an important step toward the safe return of air travel as science-based, data-driven COVID-19 testing was used to enable international travellers returning to Alberta to quarantine for less time.

Still operating within the recovery phase of its [COVID-19 response and recovery plan](#), Tourism Calgary advocated and drove business for our industry.



- Actively bid on and attracted bubble-format sporting events, resulting in Calgary being selected as the **host city for Curling Canada's 2021 event bubble** anticipated to generate more than **\$13 million in economic impact** over a four-month period.
- Advocated alongside TIAC for the **immediate roll out of the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program** to support our industry in overcoming barriers caused by COVID-19.
- Adapted marketing efforts under the *That's the Spirit* brand platform in response to new restrictions and drove demand for online and contact-free experiences through **81,000+ digital partner referrals and 545,000+ sessions on visitcalgary.com**.
- **Hosted #LoveYYC Month** – an extended virtual celebration that inspired community spirit and drove business for industry partners in November. Leveraged social media and worked with **14 Business Improvement Areas** to drive nearly **5,000 digital partner referrals**.
- Supported our partners **at Calgary TELUS Convention Centre and the BMO Centre at Stampede Park** by announcing both venues' achievement in earning the **Global Biorisk Advisory Council® STAR™ accreditation** and highlighting their dedication to maintaining the highest-level of cleanliness to support the **safe return of meeting and convention business**.
- Hosted four **Elevating Canadian Experiences workshops** alongside TIAC and Travel Alberta to help participating partners identify culinary and shoulder **season product and experience development opportunities**.
- Participated in **virtual travel trade marketplaces** to continue growing awareness about Calgary's compelling offerings among tour operators in international markets. These efforts **identified pent-up demand for travel to Canada** once borders open and vaccinations are wide-spread based on safety factors and the availability of wide open outdoor spaces.



2020 by the numbers

2020 was undoubtedly the most challenging year we've faced as an industry. Through it all, Calgary's tourism industry worked extremely hard to adjust to the constantly changing environment, safety protocols, restrictions and re-openings, financial challenges and unknowns. For that, Tourism Calgary tips our White Hats to each and every one of our partners. Your resilience, passion, determination, innovation, adaptability and optimism inspired us every day.

Tourism Calgary's commitment into 2021 remains that we will continue to support industry partners by safely and appropriately driving business, advocating and supporting partners' innovation efforts as guided by the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery plan](#).

443,518 referrals to industry partners through [visitcalgary.com](#) and virtual in-destination counselling services.

95 per cent of stakeholders believe Tourism Calgary is an effective champion for industry, up 2 per cent over 2019.

27 future sport, cultural and major events secured by Tourism Calgary including Curling Canada's event bubble estimated to generate \$13+ million in economic impact in 2021.

55 meetings and conventions secured for future years including 23 events for 2022 that are estimated to generate more than \$28 million in economic impact.

1,863,840 sessions on [visitcalgary.com](#).

1,776,725 social media engagements, up 20 per cent over 2019.

87,841,838 earned media impressions from consumer-focused coverage featuring Calgary as a destination of choice.

416,289,826 impressions from corporate media relations efforts that generated awareness about Calgary's critical tourism industry and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism.

A record **780** industry partners, up 6.4 per cent over 2019.
