

# SNOHOMISH COUNTY STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN - SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

—

RESONANCE   
**BERK**

January 18, 2017



---

# CONTENTS

---

January 18, 2017

---

**02** Introduction

---

**03** Key Issues & Opportunities

---

**9** Tourism Overview

---

**31** 2010 STP Review and Performance  
Measurement

---

**45** Funding Models Forecast

---

**49** Stakeholder Consultation

---

**57** Brand Assessment

---

**61** Visitor Survey

---

**64** Destination Assessment

---

# INTRODUCTION

---

The following document sets forth Resonance Consultancy's summary of travel and tourism related issues and opportunities for Snohomish County Washington to be explored, discussed, debated and prioritized in the development of the Tourism Strategic Plan update.

This document focuses attention on the research produced for Stages 1-5 of the Tourism Strategic Plan project and serves as a benchmark for the following Stages 6-8 of Visioning, Plan Development and Final Report.

This phase of the Tourism Strategic Plan has given the project team an opportunity to review and understand the history, current results, future plans and target market of Snohomish County tourism within the context of the broader economy, economic development and quality of life, and to embark on a detailed examination of its characteristics, visitor profile and market prospects.

This Situational Analysis is the first step in this effort. To produce it, we have interviewed / surveyed nearly 100 destination stakeholders to understand their issues and opportunities; surveyed nearly 200 visitors to understand their perspective on Snohomish County as a place to visit and how it compares to the competitive set; and dove-deep into all types of secondary research.

Specifically, this Situational Analysis Report of Snohomish County's tourism includes a(n):

- Overview of tourism nationally, in Washington State and in Snohomish County.
- Performance measurement examination of the 2010 Tourism Plan that identifies which actions have been completed, initiated, ignored or eliminated, and a comprehensive scorecard of implementation.
- Funding models analysis and forecast of county lodging tax funds and opportunities for optimal use and benefit.
- Stakeholder engagement (conversations and survey) report to understand their key issues and opportunities for Snohomish County tourism.
- Assessment of the current brand, Open Up, and determination of the effectiveness of brand collateral.
- Snohomish County visitor survey assessing levels of satisfaction and detailing a market segmentation analysis to profile the characteristics of the Snohomish County visitor.
- Supply-side assessment of Snohomish County's travel and tourism assets and experiences benchmarked against 14 competing destinations.

The results and information from this Situational Analysis Report will be used to gain broad input and vision/develop priorities on tourism opportunities and challenges.



# KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following list of Key Issues and Opportunities has been drawn from the individual pieces and collective body of research conducted for this Situational Analysis and suggests a number of emergent findings and potential directions with respect to the updated Tourism Strategic Plan for Snohomish County. The conclusions have not been prioritized, but have been grouped into two areas of responsibility (County Responsibilities and Snohomish County Tourism Board Responsibilities) around which the Tourism Strategic Plan could be organized. Please note that some issues and opportunities are included in both the County and SCTB list\*.

Snohomish County Responsibilities	SCTB Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Biking Trails, Facilities, Infrastructure, Amenities and Transport</li> <li>● Business Start Up and Permits</li> <li>● Capacity Building*</li> <li>● Event &amp; Festival Strategy</li> <li>● Institute of Flight and Boeing Tour</li> <li>● Mountain Loop Highway</li> <li>● New Developments / Parks</li> <li>● Outdoor Recreation</li> <li>● Outdoor Town or Resort Destination</li> <li>● Product Development</li> <li>● Regional Cooperation*</li> <li>● Rural Internet and Cell Phone Service</li> <li>● Seasonality*</li> <li>● Second Homes / Weekend Homes / Vacation Homes</li> <li>● Strategic Plan Programs</li> <li>● Tourism Bureau Funding</li> <li>● Tourism Cooperation*</li> <li>● Tourism Focus / Identity*</li> <li>● Tourism Research*</li> <li>● Tourism Trends</li> <li>● Trails and Trail Town Connectivity</li> <li>● Social Media Capacity Building*</li> <li>● Visitor Capacity Planning / Traffic / Transportation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brand and Branding</li> <li>● Brand Education and Cooperation</li> <li>● Breweries Promotion</li> <li>● Capacity Building*</li> <li>● Casinos and Gambling</li> <li>● Day Trippers</li> <li>● Harbor / Boating Tourism</li> <li>● Market Segmentation</li> <li>● Professional Marketing</li> <li>● Regional Cooperation*</li> <li>● Repeat Visitors</li> <li>● Seasonality*</li> <li>● Seattle’s Playground / Backyard</li> <li>● Tourism Cooperation*</li> <li>● Tourism Focus / Identity*</li> <li>● Tourism Research</li> <li>● Social Media Capacity Building*</li> <li>● Visitor Information Centers and Distribution</li> <li>● Visitor Itineraries</li> <li>● Website Design</li> </ul>

**Biking Trails, Facilities, Infrastructure, Amenities and Transport** – there may be an opportunity to significantly increase biking related visits thru the development and enhancement of signature bike trails (such as Centennial), new bike trails, biking facilities, infrastructure, amenities, transport and events / festivals.

**Brand and Branding** – The opportunities for the overarching brand identity of Snohomish County and the Open Up brand are many including the continuation and acceleration of SCTB efforts to refresh and reposition the brand look and feel and apply across the website, social media and print collateral, moving forward with a fresh focus on vivid imagery of the region, minimised copy content and immersive documentary and emotive narrative films.

**Brand Education and Cooperation** - there is an opportunity and need to educate / re-educate industry players about the brand (Open Up) and engage them to use and / or better implement the brand through cooperative programs or their own marketing efforts.

**Breweries Promotion** – there may be an opportunity to increase visitor attention, activities and promotional spending on Snohomish County breweries as well as provide / deliver a breweries map / tour / app that facilitates the breweries visitor experience.

**Business Start Up and Permits** – there may be a need to speed up or fast track the business start up and permitting process for new tourism activities, attractions, accommodations and food / beverage operators, especially in the eastern and northern parts of Snohomish County where tourism amenities are limited and tourism potential is high. The County may want to explore “Pop Up” business licensing / operations in certain sectors to accommodate seasonal visitor patterns and locations that may be difficult to support year round operations.

**Capacity Building** – there may be an opportunity for the County and the Tourism Bureau to provide tourism capacity building services to towns, cities, organizations and private sector operators, especially SMEs to help build, enhance and grow their tourism products and services. Hoteliers may also benefit from orientation to existing tourism activities that are available to their guests.

**Casinos and Gambling** - Snohomish County registers three quality establishments in the category of Casinos & Gambling (Tulalip Casino, Angel of the Winds Casino and Quil Ceda Creek Casino) putting it in 1st place (absolute) and 2nd place (relative) among its competitive set in this category. Without question, Snohomish County enjoys a competitive advantage in this category of visitor activities and as such should work closely with these establishments to promote and market their businesses to appropriate visitor markets. Snohomish County should also engage with these visitors to extend and expand their visit beyond the doors of the Casino to other outside activities and services.

**Day Trippers** – although overnight visitors and their higher per capita spending are a key priority for Snohomish County tourism, the spending by day-trippers, which total nearly 40% of all visitors, makes a significant contribution to total spending. There may be an opportunity to focus greater resources, effort, and marketing on this important market segment.

**Event & Festival Strategy** – Snohomish County should consider creating a countywide Event & Festival Strategy and organization / committee / stakeholder group that engages the County, towns, cities and the private sector to develop, schedule, enhance, incubate, direct, market, promote and manage a portfolio of events and festivals for residents and visitors alike.

**Harbor / Boating Tourism** – there may be an opportunity for greater focus on harbor visits in Everett and other Snohomish County ports / marinas as well as increasing boating / sailing tourism in general.

**Institute of Flight and Boeing Tour** – The Institute of Flight (an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization) manages the airport facility that contains the Future of Flight Aviation Center and is the front and back door to the Boeing Tour. The Future of Flight facility is partially funded by the Snohomish County Public Facilities District. Although the Boeing Tour and the Future of Flight Aviation Center co-habitate, their missions and objectives do not necessarily or always align. Based on conversations with stakeholders:

- The facility may require new / greater investment to keep up with traffic / parking growth and demand for exhibits that are up to date, attractive and engaging. Current standards for non-Boeing elements are not satisfactory.
- The county may need to engage a professional museum / retail / operations consultant to review existing facilities, operations, exhibits and shops to create a forward-looking strategy.
- The county may need to re-assess the PFD status of the Aviation Center to determine if the current management structure is the best use of resources.
- The Future of Flight Aviation Center may be confusing to visitors who are primarily there to take the Boeing Tour.
- The revenue sharing arrangement between the Institute of Flight and Boeing is confusing and may require clarification and greater transparency.
- Connectivity between the Future of Flight Aviation Center and the Historic Flight Foundation, Paul Allen's Flying Heritage Collection, and the Museum of Flight Restoration Center may require future assessment to fully realize the potential of all aviation attractions.

**Market Segmentation** - there is a significant opportunity for Snohomish County to focus its marketing, promotion and destination development resources on “Active Adventurers” and “Infrequent Convenience Travelers” which account for 84.2% of total visitors. Snohomish County visitors and residents are less likely to be Sophisticated Explorers, All-in-Enthusiasts or Family-Oriented Frugals.

**Mountain Loop Highway** – three of every 10 visitors come to Snohomish County for sightseeing and many do so from the comfort of their vehicles. As such, there may be a significant opportunity to increase Snohomish County tourism by paving the remainder of Mountain Loop Highway.

**New Developments / Parks** – there may be an opportunity to celebrate and facilitate new developments and parks in Snohomish County including, but not limited to, Japanese Gulch, where the City of Mukilteo has recently released a new Master Plan and the Port of Everett's Waterfront Place Central redevelopment project, which is set to unify the marina and surrounding property with a sustainable and unique commercial, recreation and residential community.

**Outdoor Recreation** – there may be a need to create and implement an outdoor recreation master plan for Snohomish County that creates significant opportunity for growing the tourism industry, addresses some of the limitations caused by diminishing access to US Forest Service lands and provides funding across city/town lines. One major area of focus should include review, analysis and recommendations on motorized recreational use. In addition, although Snohomish County does not score particularly high amongst its competitive set in Nature & Parks and Outdoor Activities, the competition assessment research only takes into consideration the number of visitor activities in these categories and not the size and scope of the individual activities themselves.

**Outdoor Town or Resort Destination** - Snohomish County has abundant outdoor recreation assets, but lacks a strong, vibrant anchor town with a range of accommodations and amenities to host and keep guests in the area. There may be an opportunity to develop an existing community situated in a stunning natural setting with a variety outdoor recreation opportunities nearby. Developing a destination resort in such a town or community may also help to bring more overnight visits and attract additional tourism businesses.

**Product Development** - previous visitors have told us that their key criteria for selecting Snohomish County for a visit were Outdoor Activities & Parks; Paid Places to Stay, Events, Festivals & Fairs, Places to Eat & Drink, Attractions and Amusements and Shopping. Snohomish County's tourism development efforts should focus on these areas. Specifically, visitors want to see: more Events/Festivals, Native American landmarks / history / sites, Beer and Wine tastings/festivals, Live Music, more Hiking and Biking Trails, Food Trucks, Farm to Table dining, and more Small Shops/Boutiques. Visitors also want to see improvements associated with: Family Friendly activities, better Wayfinding, Greater Access to wilderness areas, better Handicap Accessibility, improved Parking, more Winter activities/events, better Litter Removal and better visitor Information. Lastly, the Competitive Assessment also indicates that 10 out of 17 Snohomish County visitor activities fall into the bottom half of its competitive set of rankings, illustrating major weaknesses in the County's tourism offering which should be the focus of new efforts where appropriate.

**Professional Marketing** – if budget allows, there may be a need to engage a professional marketing firm to review and assess programs and activities of the Snohomish Tourism Bureau, and to offer constructive advice, enhance creativity and increase return on investment.

**Regional Cooperation** - there may be an opportunity to create cooperative regional marketing and promotional programs with the Greater Seattle Area tourism bureaus based on the fact that 60% of visitors to Snohomish County also visit Seattle.

**Repeat Visitors** - there is a significant opportunity to identify and market directly to 7 out of 10 Snohomish County visitors, since they are a regular or occasional visitors. Repeat visitors are looking for Discounts/Deals, More Dining options, More Information, Regular Information (about events, etc) and Special Information (about non-tourist things).

**Rural Internet and Cell Phone Service** – there may be an opportunity to improve rural internet and cell phone service in areas frequented by visitors that do not have adequate coverage in Snohomish County, which limits connectivity for visitors and business opportunities for operators.

**Seasonality** – Snohomish County does extremely well during the peak months of May through September, but has an even greater opportunity for growing tourism in the shoulder and off peak season of October through April. Product development and marketing efforts should be focused on building activities and events for these periods, while marketing and promotion spend should also be focused on these periods.

**Seattle’s Playground / Backyard** – there may be an opportunity to highlight and intensify Snohomish County marketing and promotion as “Seattle’s Playground / Backyard”, focusing on the rural, natural and recreational opportunities for Seattle residents and visitors.

**Second Homes / Weekend Homes / Vacation Homes** – the second / weekend / vacation home market in Snohomish County is not well understood: who owns what, how often they are used, how they are used and what they contribute to tourism. There may be an opportunity to learn important information about this market that could enhance tourism in the region.

**Strategic Plan Programs** – As an official County document, the Tourism Strategic Plan has been used by officials to monitor, measure and assess the performance of County programs, staff and the Tourism Bureau. Although there are a number of benefits to a strict assessment, the Strategic Plan was not designed to serve this specific purpose, so there is a need for the updated Strategic Plan to include greater flexibility of program timing, funding and responsibilities to allow for changing and unexpected circumstances.

**Tourism Bureau Funding** – there is a need for greater financial security and predictability of funding for the Snohomish Tourism Bureau to provide for better and more consistent planning and operations. The Bureau may also benefit from a longer-term contract, as a one-year contract is not conducive to long-term planning.

**Tourism Cooperation** – there is a strong need for greater coordination, collaboration and cooperative programs between Snohomish County, Snohomish Tourism Bureau and the tourism / chamber leaders from the individual towns, cities and Native American communities of Snohomish County including but not limited to regular communications, meetings, committees, working groups, roundtables etc. Cooperative efforts might focus on infrastructure development, festivals and events, marketing efforts, website design and functionality, itineraries, capacity building, etc. The same is true for greater coordination and collaboration with neighboring counties including King, Skagit and Winthrop Counties.

**Tourism Focus / Identity** – Snohomish County should consider the potential for greater tourism development and marketing / promotion focused on a short-list of key visitor activities such as: Outdoor Recreation, Seattle’s Playground, Aerospace Capital, etc.

**Tourism Research** - Snohomish County should maintain and communicate basic and detailed tourism statistics, research and information (nationally, statewide and countywide) on a regular basis to monitor, inform, identify opportunities / threats and educate industry stakeholders on recent trends, current results and future business outlook.

**Tourism Trends** - Snohomish County should monitor and communicate tourism trends (international and national) on a regular basis to identify and action important issues and opportunities that could be applicable for the County’s tourism product, services or marketing / promotion activities.

**Trails and Trail Town Connectivity** – there may be an opportunity to focus and apply greater resources and attention on recreational trails (land and water, hiking and biking, ocean, lakes and rivers) and trail town connectivity and development in Snohomish County to build tourism product in areas where Snohomish County is particularly attractive (Outdoor Recreation, Nature & Parks).

**Social Media Capacity Building** – there may be an opportunity to build capacity for use of TripAdvisor, Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Instagram and other social media to enhance and raise the level of visibility of Snohomish County tourism operators and opportunities with consumers.

**Visitor Capacity Planning / Traffic / Transportation Plan** – there may be an opportunity to better manage traffic, ease congestion, create more ride-sharing programs between urban and rural areas and carry out capacity planning on certain visitor routes / highways (ie US Route 2 from Everett to Leavenworth) or certain destinations (ie National Forest) during peak season, as well as promote alternative routes and lesser known destinations to distribute visitor traffic. This could be part of a broader Visitor Transportation Plan for Snohomish County.

**Visitor Information Centers and Distribution** – there may be an opportunity to enhance visitor information distribution thru alternative sources / additional locations (“North side of town”) as well as online applications and onsite locations (events / festivals).

**Visitor Itineraries** – there may be an opportunity to better promote “itineraries” to provide more options and ideas for people visiting Snohomish County. Itineraries might include: culinary, breweries, biking/hiking, antiquing, farms, arts, historical sites / assets, nightlife, etc.

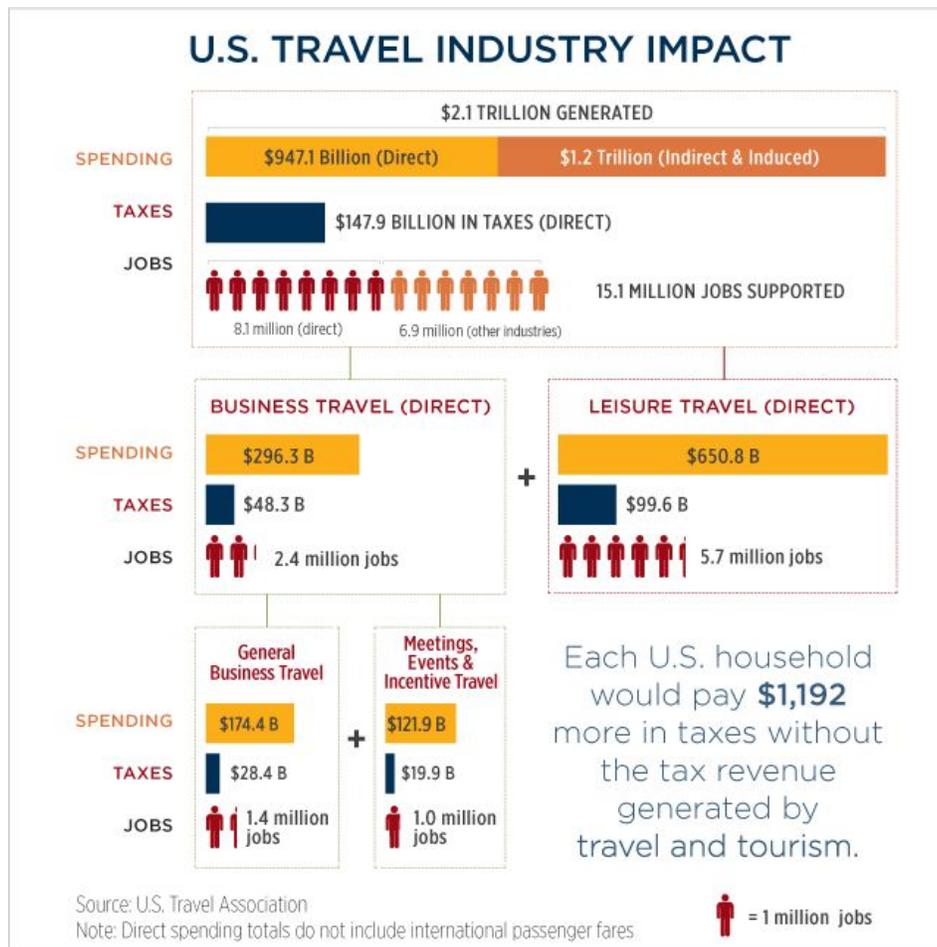
**Website Design** – there may be an opportunity to improve and enhance the Snohomish Tourism Bureau website to achieve greater visitor appeal, mobile functionality and real-time marketing/sales opportunities.

# TOURISM OVERVIEW

## U.S. Travel and Tourism Historical Trends and Results

U.S. Travel & Tourism is strong and has enjoyed a period of healthy growth post-Great Recession (starting in 2010).

According to U.S. Travel Association, direct spending by resident and international travelers in the U.S. averaged \$2.6 billion a day, \$108.1 million an hour, \$1.8 million a minute and \$30,033 a second.



U.S. Travel Association reports that U.S. Travel and Tourism makes a significant and growing contribution to the U.S. economy:

- \$2.1 trillion: Economic output generated by domestic and international visitors (includes \$947.1 billion in direct travel expenditures that spurred an additional \$1.2 trillion in other industries)
- 15.1 million: Jobs supported by travel expenditures (includes 8.1 million directly in the travel industry and 7.0 million in other industries)
- 231.6 billion: Wages shared by American workers directly employed by travel
- 147.9 billion: Tax revenue generated by travel spending for federal, state and local governments
- 2.7%: Percentage of nation's gross domestic product (GDP) attributed to travel and tourism
- 1 out of 9: U.S. jobs that depend on travel and tourism
- No. 7: Where travel ranks in terms of employment compared to other major private industry sectors
- 84%: Percentage of travel companies that are considered small businesses (2012)
- 2.2 billion: Number of person-trips\* that Americans took for business and leisure purposes
- 77.5 million: Number of international arrivals in the U.S. in 2015, including 38.4 million from overseas markets
- Top 10: Travel is among the 10 industries in 49 states and D.C. in terms of employment

## Leisure Travel

U.S. Travel Association reports that leisure travel is the largest component of U.S. Travel and Tourism:

- Direct spending on leisure travel by domestic and international travelers totaled \$650.8 billion in 2015.
- Spending on leisure travel generated \$99.6 billion in tax revenue.
- Nearly 4 out of 5 domestic trips taken are for leisure purposes (79%).
- U.S. residents logged 1.7 billion person-trips\* for leisure purposes in 2015
- Top leisure travel activities for U.S. domestic travelers: (1) visiting relatives; (2) shopping; (3) visiting friends; (4) fine dining; and (5) beaches.

Visa is predicting an optimistic future for global travel. "The consumer is alive and spending and not to be underestimated," Visa chief economist of business and economic insights, Wayne Best said. Visa estimates that the number of people making a cross-border trip will climb by 50 percent over the next 10 years, leaping from 2015's total of 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion in 2025.

The first of the three dynamics driving growth is the massive growth of the middle class in the developing world. Emerging markets will account for 45 percent of the \$1.5 trillion in annual spending globally on cross-border travel. In addition, increased competition and greater connectivity reducing the costs of travel will result in nearly half of the world's households having enough income to be part of what it calls the global traveling class by 2025. The second dynamic that will fuel travel in the next decade is the aging of the world's population. People in their golden years take longer and more expensive trips than their younger counterparts and data shows that they continue to travel until well into their 70s. Finally, Visa emphasized growing worldwide connectivity, both in a physical sense and a technological one. Travel has gotten faster and more convenient, Best said. Meanwhile, digital tools such as GPS-enabled mobile devices make traveling and booking travel easier, more convenient and more spontaneous.

## Business Travel

U.S. Travel Association reports that business travel is a lucrative component of U.S. Travel and Tourism:

- Direct spending on business travel by domestic and international travelers, including expenditures on meetings, events and incentive programs (ME&I), totaled \$296.3 billion in 2015
- ME&I travel accounted for \$121.9 billion of all business travel spending.
- U.S. residents logged 459 million person-trips\* for business purposes in 2015, with 37% for meetings and events.

\*Person-trip defined as one person on a trip away from home overnight in paid accommodations or on a day or overnight trip to places 50 miles or more [one-way] away from home.

STR reported that it expects corporate-rate growth to slow heading into 2017. Though hoteliers are still able to increase their corporate rates during negotiations with clients for 2017, growth has slipped a bit from this year. Corporate clients are looking to cut back on their expenses, and expect more value for what they do spend. Even though rate growth isn't as high moving into next year, hoteliers remain optimistic. Wendy Stevens, executive vice president at First Hospitality Group, said her company raised corporate rates by about 6 percent for 2016, but that amount wouldn't work again for 2017. "I think it'll probably be 4 to 4.5 percent," she said. "That's still a good increase. People forget that's a good increase."

## International Travel

U.S. Travel Association reports that international travel is an important and growing component of U.S. Travel and Tourism:

- In 2015, U.S. Travel Exports (includes general travel spending, international passenger fares, as well as international traveler spending on medical, educational and cross-border/ seasonal work-related activities) totaled \$246 billion. International Travel Imports totaled \$148 billion, creating a \$98 billion travel trade surplus.
- The U.S. received 77.5 million international arrivals in 2015. Of those, approximately 38.4 million came from overseas markets, and 39.1 million came from Canada and Mexico.
- The United States' share of total international arrivals is 6.5% (down from 7.5% in 2000).
- International travel spending directly supported about 1.1 million U.S. jobs and \$28.4 billion in wages in 2015.
- Each overseas traveler spends approximately \$4,400 when they visit the U.S. and stays an average of 18 nights.
- Overseas arrivals represent 49.5% of all international arrivals, yet account for 80.5% of total international travel spending.
- Top leisure activities for overseas visitors: (1) shopping, (2) sightseeing; (3) fine dining; (4) national parks/monuments and (5) amusement/theme parks.



\*Person-trip defined as one person on a trip away from home overnight in paid accommodations or on a day or overnight trip to places 50 miles or more [one-way] away from home

**TOP 5 INTERNATIONAL MARKETS TO THE U.S. (2015 ARRIVALS)**

ORIGIN OF VISITOR	2015
Canada	20.1 million
Mexico	18.4 million
United Kingdom	4.9 million
Japan	3.8 million
China	2.6 million

**TOP 5 HIGH-GROWTH TRAVEL MARKETS THRU 2020 (forecasted)**

ORIGIN OF VISITOR	ARRIVALS % CHANGE '20/'14
China	129.2%
India	47.0%
Taiwan	39.1%
South Korea	36.0%
Australia	26.5%

Source U.S. Travel estimates based on U.S. Department of Commerce - National Travel and Tourism Office

According to the latest U.S. Travel Barometer, the U.S. share of international searches in September continued to gain momentum, increasing to 16.8 percent. While interest in the U.S. remained strong, travel intentions to typical European destinations were tepid. The Southeast and Mideast remained the top two most-searched regions, capturing 27 and 25 percent of international searches, respectively. Interest in the Southwest region of the U.S. remains strong, capturing 13 percent of international searches. Canada, Germany, Mexico, the United Kingdom and France were the top countries searching for future travel to the Southwest.

## Lodging Industry

U.S. Travel Association reports that the U.S. lodging industry is healthy and growing:

According to STR, the hotel industry in August 2016 experienced an increase in demand by 1.3 percent and room revenue reached \$13.9 billion. The national supply growth rate jumped to 1.7 percent—last month it was 1.5 percent—and occupancy declined by 0.4 percent. This is the sixth month this year that occupancy declined. Luckily, average-daily-rate growth (2.5%) is still strong enough to make up for the occupancy declines, but the ADR growth in August was the second-lowest this year. That said, revenue-per-available-room (RevPAR) growth is positive for the 78th month in a row and STR forecast suggests that this will hold true for this year and most of next year. Independent hotels grew ADR 3.3 percent (to \$129), but really only economy hotels had a decent showing when it comes to branded rate growth.

The supply growth in the larger markets outpaces the nation and now stands firmly over 2, at 2.2 percent. August year-to-date (YTD) RevPAR growth was below 3 percent (+2.9%), the lowest YTD growth since 2009, and we see no sign of a stop to the slowing growth. Occupancy YTD is down 0.2 percent—virtually flat—and the absolute level of occupancy is still 66.9 percent, the second highest ever recorded, behind last year.

The number of rooms sold remains higher than ever at 816.8 million room-nights YTD, which is a 1.3-percent growth—nearly 100 million room-nights more than were sold during the same period in 2011.

YTD ADR growth is still 3.1 percent, which is exactly the long-run average. But the months toward the end of the year always record a bit slower ADR growth than average. Year-to-date, group occupancy is down across the board, declining 1.5 percent for the nation.

Preliminary lodging data from STR is largely positive for the month of September. Occupancy for the total U.S. hotel industry is expected to either stay flat or increase up to 2 percent. Average daily rate is expected to increase between 3 and 5 percent, and RevPAR is expected to increase between 4 and 6 percent. The luxury, upper upscale, upscale, midscale and economy segments are expected to have positive performance in all three key performance metrics for the month of September.

A recent lodging industry report from Moody's noted that Airbnb has been growing rapidly to more than 2 million listings worldwide from 300,000 listings in 2014. In comparison, the conventional lodging business offers 15.7 million hotel rooms around the globe. The report said, "Due to increasing supply, the likely toll from Airbnb competition and weak corporate profit growth," Moody's revised its outlook for the lodging and cruise industries to stable from positive, with occupancy declining as much as 1 percent in 2017.

Moody's and other analysts previously had been unable to discern an impact of short-term rentals on traditional hotels because the lodging industry has been flourishing since the recession ended in 2009, masking any harm from Airbnb and other rental sites. But now that the growth in the hotel industry has begun to slow down, Moody's report shows that hotel occupancy data and overnight rates are dropping faster in those cities with a high concentration of Airbnb rentals, such as New York and Miami. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, which have lower concentrations of short-term rentals compared with New York and Miami, occupancy and overnight rates have taken less of a hit.

## Air Travel

U.S. Travel Association reports that the U.S. air travel industry is healthy and growing:

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), August 2016 global passenger traffic climbed 4.6 percent compared to the year-ago period. This represented a slowing from the 6.4 percent increase recorded in July. August capacity increased by 5.8 percent, and load factor slipped 0.9 pp to 83.8 percent. North American airlines' international demand rose 1.8 percent compared to August a year ago. However, seasonally-adjusted traffic has risen at an annualized rate of 7 percent since March, supported by transpacific demand and leisure routes to Central America and the Caribbean. Capacity rose 3.8 percent, causing load factor to drop 1.7 pp to 85.3 percent.

A4A reported that revenue domestic passenger enplanements on U.S. carriers increased 1.4 percent, and revenue international passenger enplanements increased 0.1 percent in August 2016, respectively, over August 2015.

## Roads & Rails

U.S. Travel Association reports that the U.S. air travel industry is healthy and growing:

Motorists in the U.S. drove a record-breaking number of miles in the first half of 2016, according to data from the U.S. Department of Transportation. U.S. driving hit 1.58 trillion miles in the first six months of this year—up 3.3 percent from the same period in the previous year. More than 282.3 billion miles were driven this June alone, representing a slight increase from the previous June. A combination of factors has helped boost U.S. driving, including lower gas prices, a decrease in unemployment and the prevalence of more fuel-efficient vehicles. “The increase in driving highlights the growing demands facing the nation’s roads and reaffirms the importance of the ‘Fixing America’s Surface Transportation’ (FAST) Act, which is investing \$305 billion in America’s surface transportation infrastructure—including \$226 billion for roads and bridges—until 2020,” the Federal Highway Administration said.

AAA reported that as of the second week in October, the national average price for regular unleaded gasoline has increased for 12 of the past 14 days, reaching \$2.26 per gallon. The average price is 3 cents more than one week ago, 8 cents more than one month ago and 6 cents less than one year ago.

## U.S. Travel and Tourism Future Trends and Forecasts

U.S. Travel Association reports that U.S. Travel and Tourism is expected to grow at a slower rate in the near future:

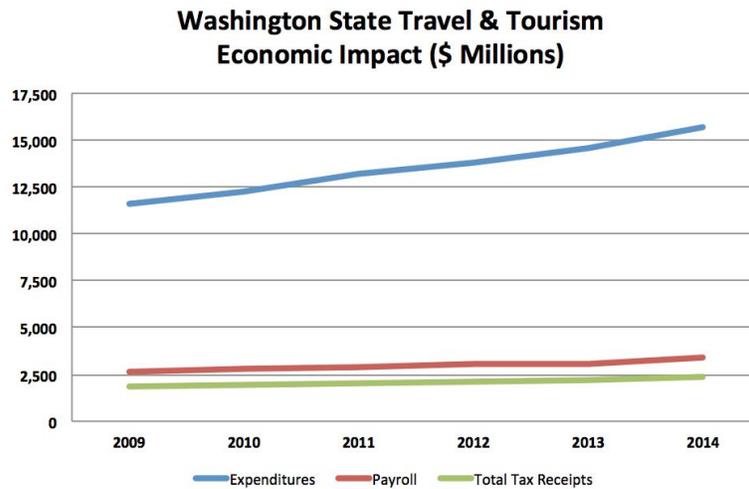
- Overall travel volume (person trips to or within the United States involving a hotel stay or air travel) grew at a slower year-over-year rate in September 2016 than in August. Domestic business travel accelerated in September, while domestic leisure travel slowed. Meanwhile, year-over-year growth in international inbound travel, while still in positive territory, also decelerated in September.
- The Current Travel Index (CTI) has registered at or above the 50 mark for 81 straight months, as the industry continues its six-year expansion.
- The CTI declined slightly in September, with a reading of 51.8, in line with the 6-month moving average of 51.9.
- International inbound travel continued to expand, albeit more slowly than in August. The Leading Travel Index (LTI) projects a weakened outlook for international inbound travel, which will trail the domestic market through early 2017.
- Domestic leisure travel grew at a slower pace in September, increasing at a rate similar to July, and trailed business travel for the first time in over a year. Domestic business travel grew significantly faster in September due in part to a shift of the Jewish holidays to October this year. That growth, too, will remain only marginally positive through year-end.
- The 3- and 6-month LTI readings of 50.8 and 50.7, respectively, indicate that U.S. travel volume is expected to grow at a year-over-year rate of around 1.5% through March 2017.

Following is the most recent U.S. Travel Forecast from U.S. Travel Association:

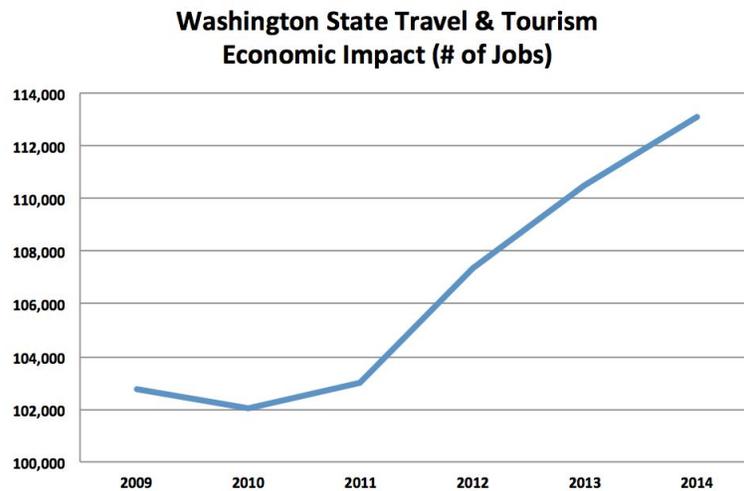
<b>U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION</b>		<b>U.S. Travel Forecast Updated 10/26/2016</b>				
<b>U.S. Travel Forecast</b>						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
GDP (Billions of current dollars)	18,036.6	18,673.9	19,653.2	20,658.3	21,522.8	22,350.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.3	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.8
Consumer Price Index (CPI)*	237.1	239.7	244.9	249.8	255.0	260.4
Travel Price Index (TPI)*	272.4	276.0	284.5	293.9	302.5	310.9
Total Travel Expenditures in U.S. (\$ Billions)	971.1	988.7	1,016.6	1,054.9	1,099.5	1,147.4
U.S. Residents	814.1	834.1	856.9	886.6	921.5	958.3
International Visitors**	157.0	154.6	159.7	168.4	178.0	189.2
Total International Visitors to the U.S. (Millions)	77.5	76.8	78.6	81.8	85.9	90.1
Overseas Arrivals to the U.S. (Millions)	38.4	38.6	40.0	41.9	44.2	46.5
Total Domestic Person-Trips*** (Millions)	2,178.7	2,205.1	2,234.6	2,266.9	2,303.4	2,342.5
Business	459.8	457.2	459.4	463.0	466.5	471.1
Leisure	1,718.9	1,747.9	1,775.2	1,804.0	1,836.9	1,871.4
<b>U.S. Travel Forecast (Growth)</b>						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Real GDP (chained 2005 dollars)	1.9%	2.3%	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%	
Consumer Price Index (CPI)*	1.1%	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%	
Travel Price Index (TPI)*	1.3%	3.1%	3.3%	2.9%	2.8%	
Total Travel Expenditures in U.S.	1.8%	2.8%	3.8%	4.2%	4.4%	
U.S. Residents	2.5%	2.7%	3.5%	3.9%	4.0%	
International Visitors**	-1.5%	3.3%	5.4%	5.7%	6.3%	
Total International Visitors to the U.S.	-0.9%	2.4%	4.1%	4.9%	4.9%	
Overseas Arrivals to the U.S.	0.5%	3.7%	4.7%	5.4%	5.3%	
Total Domestic Person-Trips***	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	
Business	-0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	0.8%	1.0%	
Leisure	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	
<small>*1982-84 = 100  **Excludes international visitors' spending on traveling to the U.S. via U.S. flag carriers and other miscellaneous transportation.  ***One person trip of 50 miles or more, one way, away from home or including one or more nights away from home.  Sources: U.S. Travel Association's Travel Forecast Model, BLS, Department of Labor; NTTO, BEA, Department of Commerce, Tourism Economics.</small>						

## Washington State Travel and Tourism Historical Trends and Results

Unfortunately, the State of Washington does not produce nor publish regular statistics on the state and forecast of Travel and Tourism in Washington State, so the best available information is from the U.S. Travel Association. U.S. Travel Association reports that Washington State Travel and Tourism is healthy and growing:

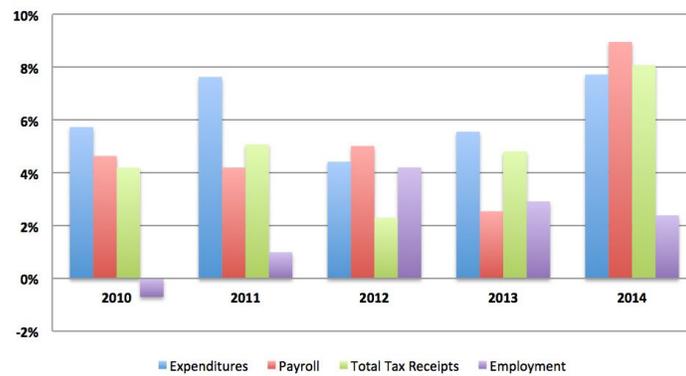


Source: US Travel Association



Source: US Travel Association

**Washington State Travel & Tourism  
Economic Impact (% Change)**



Source: US Travel Association

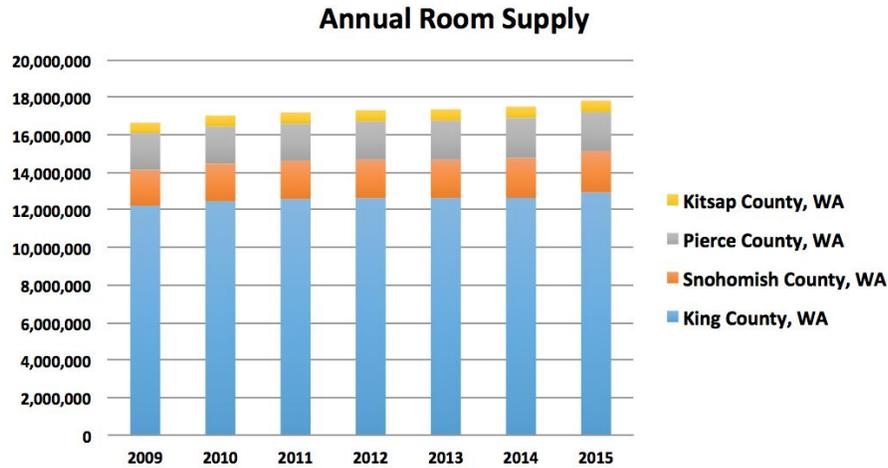
Washington State Travel & Tourism Economic Impact						
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Expenditures</b>	11,615	12,281	13,218	13,803	14,569	15,694
<b>Payroll</b>	2,642	2,764	2,880	3,025	3,102	3,380
<b>Total Tax Receipts</b>	1,857	1,934	2,033	2,079	2,179	2,356
<b>Federal Tax Receipts</b>	1,244	1,318	1,389	1,406	1,479	1,613
<b>State Tax Receipts</b>	416	409	425	440	454	479
<b>Local Tax Receipts</b>	197	208	219	234	246	264
<b>Employment (# of Jobs)</b>	102,740	102,020	103,030	107,360	110,490	113,130
<b>All amounts in Millions of \$</b>						

Source: US Travel Association



## State and Regional Hotel Supply, Occupancy, ADR and RevPAR

The following exhibit describes the supply of rooms in Snohomish County and other selected counties in the region. Supply is defined as the number of rooms available per year, or in other words: the total yearly room nights. Totals do not include bed and breakfasts and other small facilities.

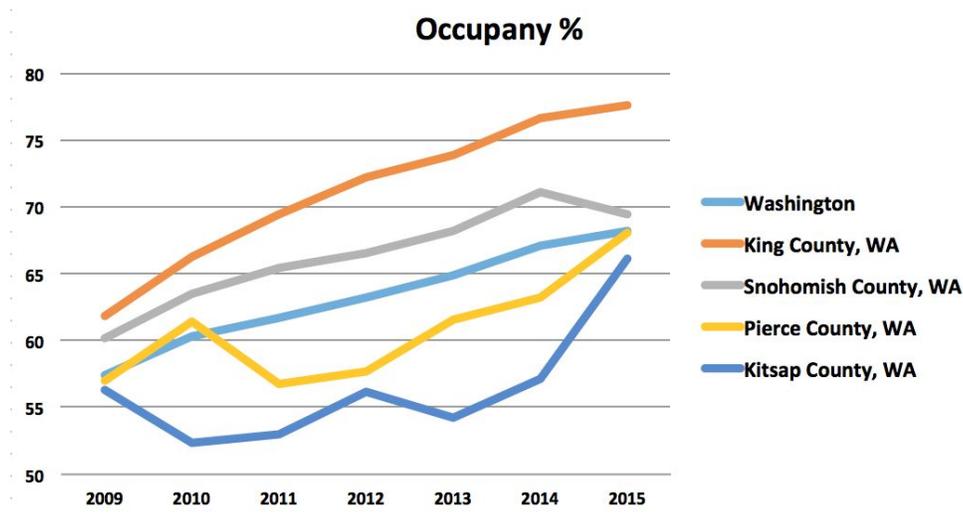


Source: Smith Travel Research; Resonance

### Findings

- The hotel/motel room supply across the four county region has increased every year for the last six years – the average annual increase is 196,874 rooms per year.
- Most of this growth between 2009 and 2015 (61% of all new rooms) has been in King County, while Snohomish County added 23% of all new rooms.
- Snohomish County grew its Room Supply on average 2.2% per year (2009-2015), while Kitsap grew 1.9% per year, Pierce County 1.1% per year and King County 1.0% per year.
- In 2015, Snohomish County rooms represented 12.3% of the total supply for the four-county region.
- The room supply in Snohomish County grew by 14.1% from 2009 to 2015.

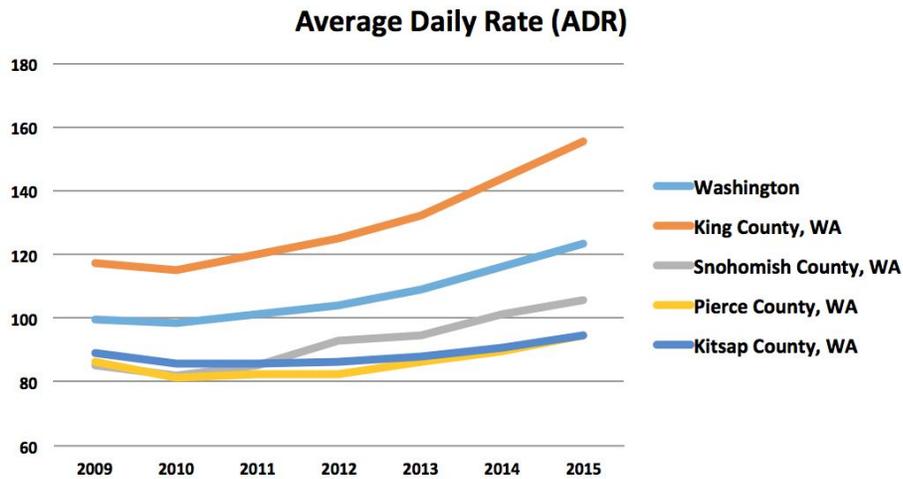
The following exhibits show occupancy, average daily rate and revenue per available room for hotels in the Puget Sound area and the State overall.



Source: Smith Travel Research; Resonance

**Findings**

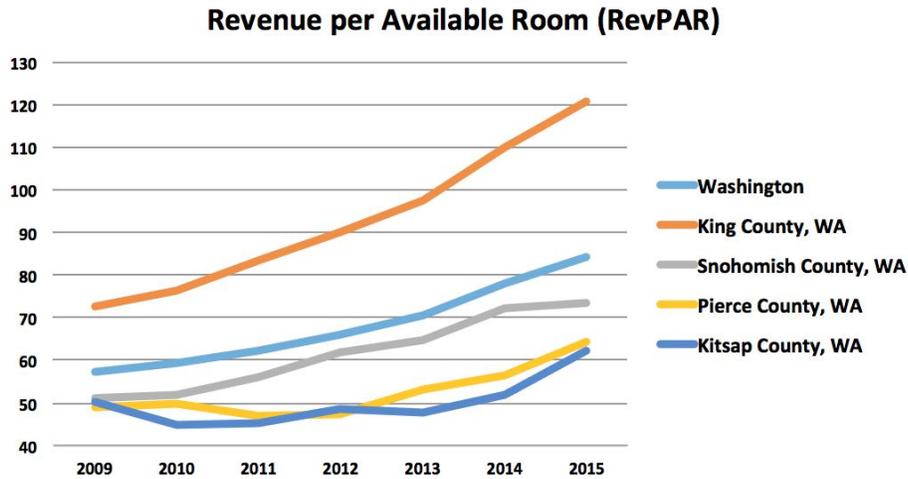
- In 2015, the occupancy rate in King County is higher than the State overall or any of the other counties in the four county region. Snohomish County has maintained second place ranking between 2009 and 2015.
- In 2015, the occupancy rate in Snohomish County dipped by 1.6% following the first increase in room supply in three years. Room supply increased by 4.0% in 2014.



Source: Smith Travel Research; Resonance

**Findings**

- The average daily rate for all hotels/motels in Snohomish County is lower than in King County and the State average, reflecting that Snohomish County lodging is a more “value” oriented hotel/motel market.
- Snohomish County’s average daily rate has measurably increased over Pierce and Kitsap Counties since 2011 and has maintained its premium for the past four years.
- Please note that Snohomish ADR increased in 2015 even though Occupancy slightly decreased.



Source: Smith Travel Research; Resonance

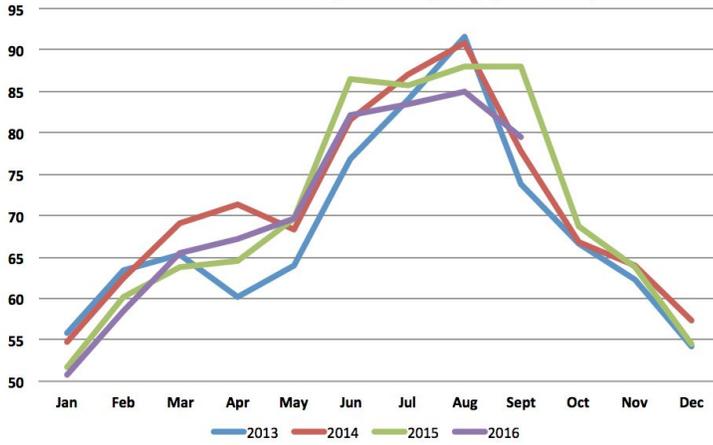
### Findings

- Snohomish County RevPAR has increased 6 out of the last 6 years, with 2015 showing slightly weaker growth as a result of new room supply in 2014.
- Snohomish County RevPAR is closely following the Washington State average, falling well short of King County RevPAR and nicely exceeding Pierce and Kitsap County RevPAR after starting at the same level in 2009.

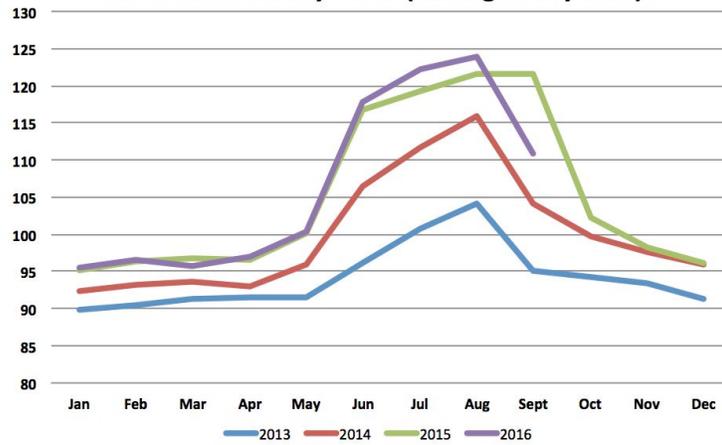
### Seasonality

The following three exhibits illustrates the occupancy, ADR and RevPAR for Snohomish County hotels by month. There is clearly a high season from June to September, shoulder seasons in May and October and an off-season from November to April.

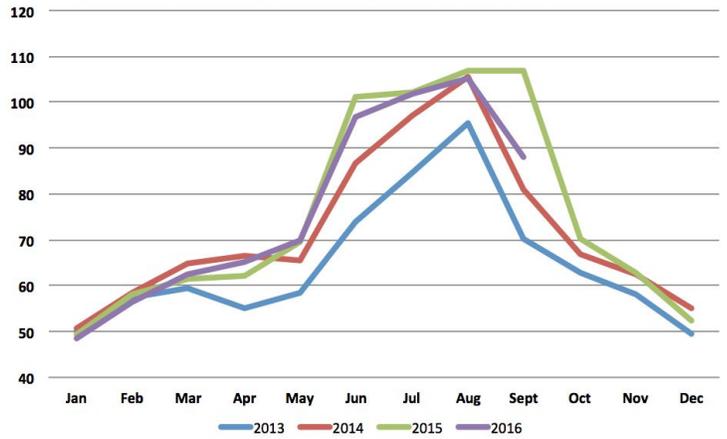
**Snohomish County - Occupany (Percent)**



**Snohomish County - ADR (Average Daily Rate)**



**Snohomish County - RevPAR(Revenue Per Available Room)**



Source: Smith Travel Research; Resonance

## Employment

### Location Quotients

[placeholder for updated Exhibit 5 Snohomish County Location Quotients by Sector, 2014 & 2015 - waiting for data from PSRC, should receive by 1/17/17]

[placeholder for updated Exhibit 6 Snohomish County Tourism Sector Employment Compared to Nation - waiting for data from PSRC, should receive by 1/17/17]

[placeholder for updated Exhibit 7 Snohomish County Tourism Sector Employment Compared to Region - waiting for data from PSRC, should receive by 1/17/17]

### Findings

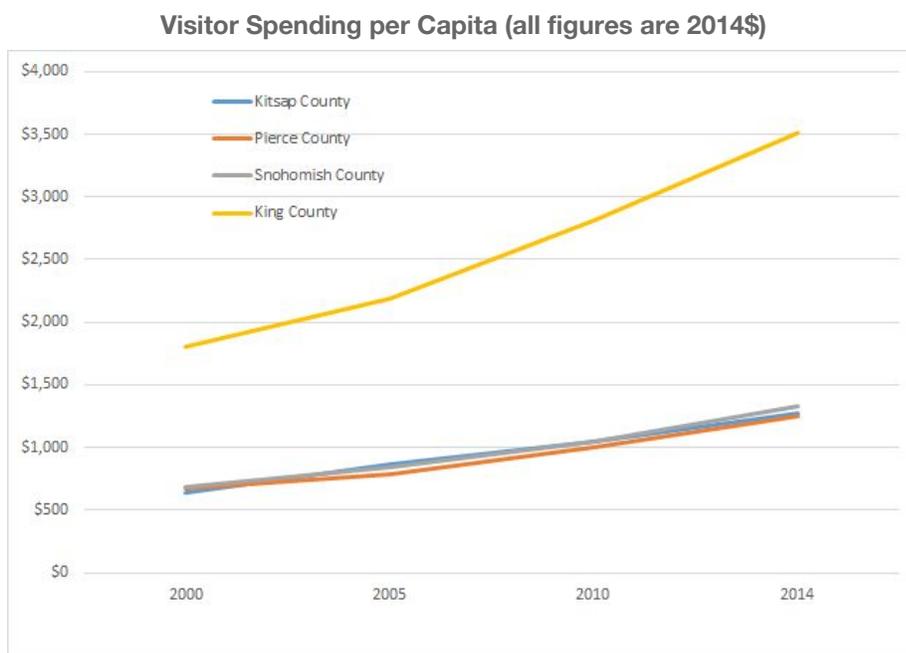
- Placeholder for location quotient findings



## Visitor Spending

### Spending per Capita

The chart below shows total spending by visitors on a per capita basis. Higher spending per capita indicates that the location is drawing more visitor dollars to the area relative to its population base.



Source: Dean Runyan, 2014; BERK, 2016

### Findings

- Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap show a similar trend over the last 14 years. These counties attract fewer visitors from outside the county compared to King County.
- Snohomish has slightly more visitors per capita than Kitsap and Pierce.

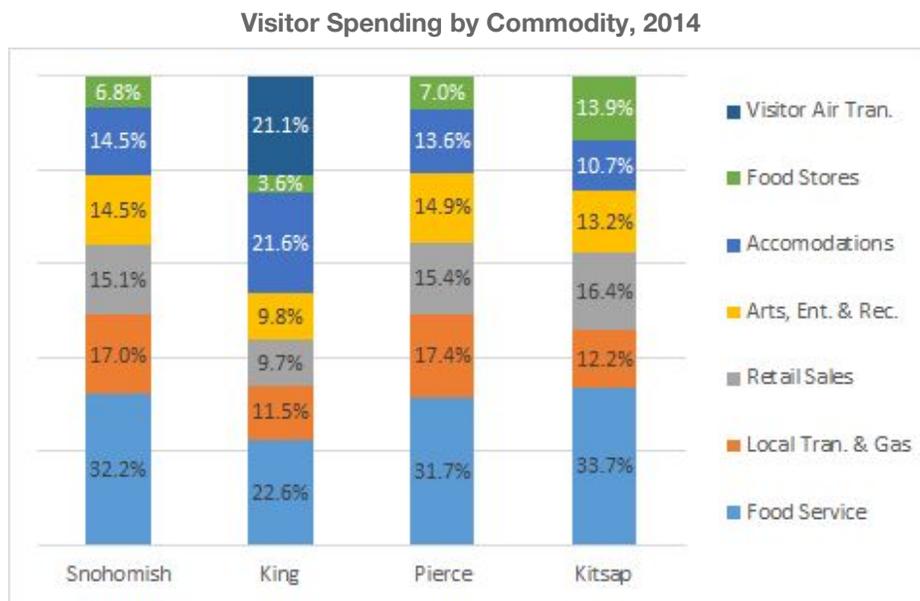
Note: The figures shown above are different than those reported in Appendix C of the 2010 Tourism Strategic Plan. These differences are solely attributed to differences in the approach to adjusting different years of spending for inflation.

### Spending by Commodity

The following exhibits present inflation-adjusted spending in visitor-related sectors by commodity type.

Commodity	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014	Percent of Total, 2014
Food Service	108.5	154.6	218.4	246.4	266.1	290.0	32%
Local Tran. & Gas	56.1	84.6	119.8	137.8	144.3	153.0	17%
Retail Sales	77.2	90.3	112.4	123.2	128.6	136.0	15%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	67.7	86.3	106.9	116.4	122.7	131.0	15%
Accommodations	48.1	60.2	83.9	103.8	111.9	131.0	15%
Food Stores	26.2	35.8	46.1	53.4	56.0	61.0	7%
Visitor Air Tran.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>383.9</b>	<b>511.9</b>	<b>687.4</b>	<b>780.9</b>	<b>829.7</b>	<b>902.0</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Dean Runyan, 2014; BERK, 2016



Source: Dean Runyan, 2014; BERK, 2016

### Findings

- Total visitor spending in Snohomish County in 2014 was \$902 million in 2014 dollars.
- Overall, visitor spending has been increasing in Snohomish County since 2000.
- Visitors to Snohomish spend most on food and transportation/gas, which total nearly half of all visitor spending.

- Visitor spending by commodity categories in Snohomish is similar to Pierce and Kitsap. These three counties differ from King County, where air transportation and accommodations combined equal 42.7% of total visitor spending.

## Travel and Tourism Trends

The following section highlights a series of some of the most important global and national consumer and tourism trends and their implications for Snohomish County tourism.

### Millennials

Millennial travel spending has grown 30% since 2007, and they now account for 20% of all travel spending around the globe. Millennials are far more interested in international travel than non-Millennials, and they are also more interested in urban destinations than resorts and countryside vacations. As they are marrying and having children later in life, Millennials are more likely to travel for leisure in organized groups, with extended family or with friends.

Implications for Snohomish County

U.S. Millennials will soon eclipse Baby Boomers in terms of total tourism-related spending and will be the largest demographic cohort. Snohomish County should evaluate its attractions and product offerings to identify resonant product and programming for this demographic and consider adjusting its market positioning accordingly.

### Unstoppable Elders

The “elders” target group is estimated between 1.3 and 1.6 billion worldwide, and 59% of 55+ U.S. affluent consumers define retirement as “a time to travel and explore new places.” It’s also typical that elders travel for rest and relaxation, staying 3 - 4 days and 9 - 10 days, with off-peak periods a favorable time to travel.

Seniors are the developed world’s wealthiest and most demanding visitors, and are looking for safe and secure destinations that are quieter and less congested.

Implications for Snohomish County

The Elders market is a natural target segment for Snohomish County, but the destination must deliver the product and services they are seeking.

### Millions of Millionaires

The number of U.S. millionaires is projected to grow from 10.5 million in 2011 to 20.5 million in 2020, according to Deloitte & Oxford Economics. At the same time, the top 9% of U.S. Households (Household Income \$150k+) account for 29% of all spending on air travel and lodging.

Implications for Snohomish County

Although Snohomish County may not be positioned as a “high cost” destination, it can and should cater to a high-spending visitor as an important component of its visitor market.

### **Conspicuous Leisure**

Consumers are now signaling their social status through consumption of experiences rather than material goods, and a bucket list destination is not a prerequisite, but unique experiences are. Wi-Fi access and social media are key vehicles for sharing and communicating these moments, which act as marketing vehicles for the destination.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County should be prepared to facilitate and deliver unique experiences and the social media / technology connectivity necessary to communicate to them.

### **LGBT Tourism**

LGBT spending on tourism will exceed US\$200 billion in 2014, with a growing number of destinations competing for their fair share. Out Now Global reports that 73% of LGBT travelers said that the situation of local LGBT people affected their choice of holiday destinations. This is a case of the customer choosing to take their business to a place where they know they will be equally respected – and welcomed.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County should be actively engaged in marketing and promoting to the LGBT market. Policies that inhibit LGBT tourism should be discouraged and special events that attract this market should be created and developed.

### **Multi-Generational Travel**

Fewer adults are traveling with children. In 2012, 26 percent of domestic leisure travelers travelled with children under the age of 18 (408.5 million trips) compared with 2008, when 31 percent of adults travelled with children (466.2 million trips). However, 40% of families went on a multigenerational vacation in the past year.

Today’s seniors are living longer, healthier and more mobile lives and are eager to make up for lost time and long distances away from their beloved grandchildren. In fact, grandparents travel almost 25% more than the average leisure traveler.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the multi-generational travel market.

### **Active Adventures**

The value of the global outbound adventure travel sector was more than \$345 billion in 2012, while growth in adventure travel has accelerated at a 65 percent yearly rate since 2009. More importantly, nearly 54% of travelers are planning an adventure activity on their next trip. Adventure travel includes two of three criteria: first, connection with nature; second, interaction with culture; and third, a physical activity. Soft adventure options include hiking, kayaking, rafting, snorkelling, volunteer tourism and archaeological expeditions, while hard adventure options include caving, climbing, heli-skiing, kite surfing, trekking and paragliding.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the active adventure travel market.

### **Bleisure**

According to a U.S. report published by Orbitz in 2012, 72% of business travelers said that they take extended executive trips that have a leisure component. Another study by Egencia reports that 54% of 18-30 year olds bring a significant other on a business trip, versus 36% of 31-45 year olds and 16% of 46-65 year olds.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the bleisure market.

### **Shopping Tourism**

Tourists spend approximately one-third of their total tourism expenditures on retail purchases, including add-on opportunities of the attraction / destination, general shopping experiences, and to experience local culture. Historic market towns and neighborhoods tend to attract boutique and independent shops, while larger cities tend to attract major chains.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, retail strategy, operations and marketing to target and attract the shopping visitors.

### **Creative Tourism**

Creative tourism is growing in many destinations around the world, propelled by visitors seeking an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It also provides a connection with those who reside in the place and who create a living culture.

The creative tourist is always a participant, someone who learns by doing, finds enjoyment and fulfillment in developing new abilities and wants to interact with local people. As a result, creative tourists get closer to the cultures of the destinations they visit.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the creative tourist.

## **Whole Living**

Whole Living is the idea of balancing work with play, indulgence with discipline, good living with wellness and luxury with simplicity. It's the notion, in travel, that all aspects of the experience contribute to well-being. A growing number of destinations around the U.S. and around the world are exploring and growing the concept of whole living as part of the visitor experience.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, product, services and marketing to target and attract the whole living visitor.

## **Culinary Tourism**

Culinary tourism is one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism today, with DMOs partnering with chefs, restaurants and food tours to build their business. Because \$12 billion is spent directly on culinary activities while traveling, 88% of destinations consider gastronomy strategic in defining their brand and image.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, product, services and marketing to target and attract the culinary visitor.

## **Athletic Events**

Major "spectator sports" and "participatory sports" events tend to shape the future of a place – it's about legacy. Sports can also deliver significant one-time visitation or a continuing stream of visitors and revenue from visiting amateur, collegiate and professional leagues and associations.

Implications for Snohomish County

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, product, services and marketing to target and attract the sports (spectator and participatory) visitor.



## **Walk 'n Roll**

Walking is one of the most popular vacation activities of U.S. travelers and the popularity of bike share programs is growing throughout the country. Cycling is growing the fastest with young consumers – 4.36 million young adults (18-24) participated in cycling in 2012 versus 2.8 million in 2008.

Implications for Snohomish County

Trails and pathway development should be considered a key priority not only for the benefit of Snohomish County residents, but as a major tourism development opportunity.

## **Collaborative Consumption**

The growth of consumer sharing applications such as Airbnb and Uber has been exponential in the last few years. Airbnb has grown from 50,000 listings in 2011 to 550,000 listings in 2013; Airbnb booked 4 million stays worldwide in 2012 and more than 11 million stays in 2013.

Implications for Snohomish County

Rather than view the growth of Airbnb as a threat, Snohomish County should identify opportunities to engage this audience as part of the destination's tourism industry.

# 2010 STP REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

---

## Introduction

The 2010 Snohomish County Tourism Strategic Plan was designed as a roadmap to guide development of the County's tourism industry and assets to reach its full potential. The plan outlined a course of action for five years from 2010 to 2015. Now that the plan's timeframe has passed, Snohomish County is undertaking a plan update to review and refresh its strategic direction for the next five years. This report presents a review of the 2010 Plan to evaluate how well it has served the County in meeting its tourism goals. Such reflection will also help inform the strategic direction of the 2016 Plan update.

## 2010 Plan Overview

### Methodology

This review is based on qualitative and quantitative information from staff at Snohomish County and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau who have been leading plan implementation. Methodologies for the plan review included several in-person meetings with key staff from these two organizations, reviewing documents and plan implementation update reports, and analyzing expenditure data provided by staff.

### Key Features

The 2010 Plan was written during challenging economic times in 2009, as the impact of the national economic recession was still being felt locally. The plan considered several key factors in crafting the strategic approach, goals and strategies, including the limited resources available, the size of the County, the diversity of tourism assets and attractions, and current tourism market conditions. The plan incorporated feedback and input from a wide range of stakeholders that was collected throughout the planning process.

### Strategic Approach

A tourism strategy established in 2000 set the goal of achieving \$1 billion in annual tourism spending by 2010. With this goal in mind, the strategic approach considered the County's diverse range of tourism assets, from urban destinations to thousands of acres of wilderness. The 2010 Plan set out to strengthen and coordinate these many assets, with the goal of continuing this spending growth. The crux of the strategic approach established in 2010 was organized around the following big idea:

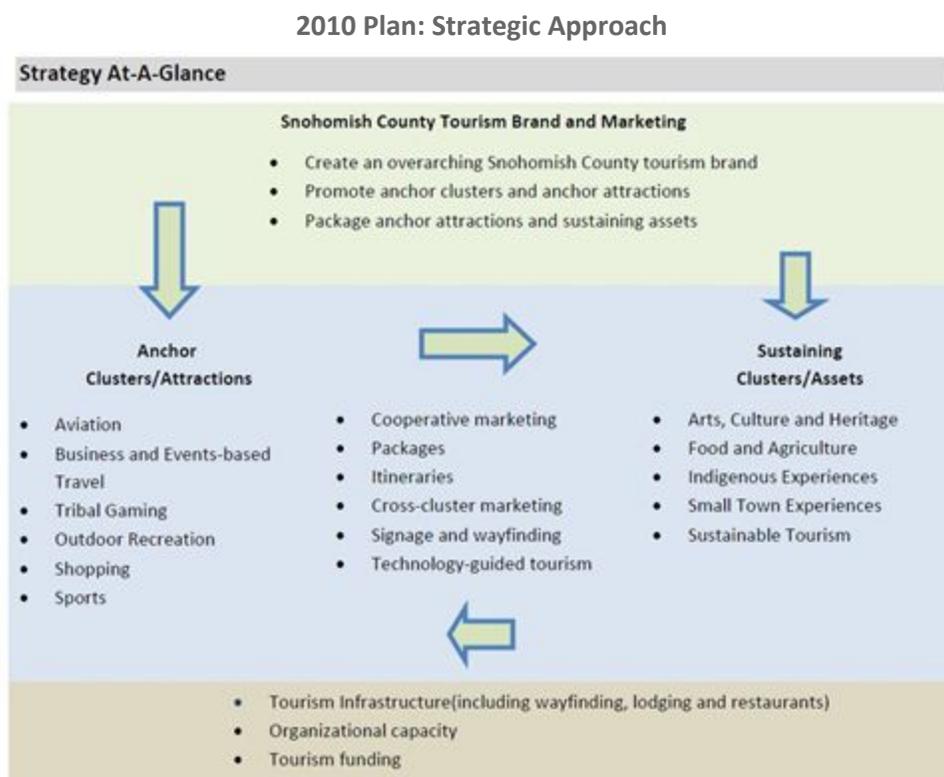
*"The foundational direction for the Plan is to focus visitor attention towards "anchor clusters" and "anchor attractions," while working to enhance – and extend – the visitor experience through "sustaining clusters" and "sustaining assets."*

The anchor clusters and attractions are defined as those that are strong enough to attract large numbers of visitors from outside the county and that have built-in marketing infrastructure programs. The anchor clusters identified include aviation, business, events-based travel, tribal gaming, outdoor recreation, shopping, and sports.

Sustaining clusters are defined as those assets and attractions that are compelling reasons for visitors to extend their stay in the county, but currently do not have the attractive power to bring visitors to Snohomish County on their own. Sustaining clusters include the arts, culture, and heritage; food and agriculture; indigenous experiences; and small town experiences.

Hidden assets are a third category of tourism assets that are not as well known as “tourism assets” and are associated with local communities. These could also be seen as new or emerging assets.

The strategic approach emphasized building the county’s tourism brand, promoting anchor clusters and sustaining assets, and strengthening tourism supports, such as building tourism infrastructure, organizational capacity, and funding. See Exhibit 1 for more details on the strategic approach.

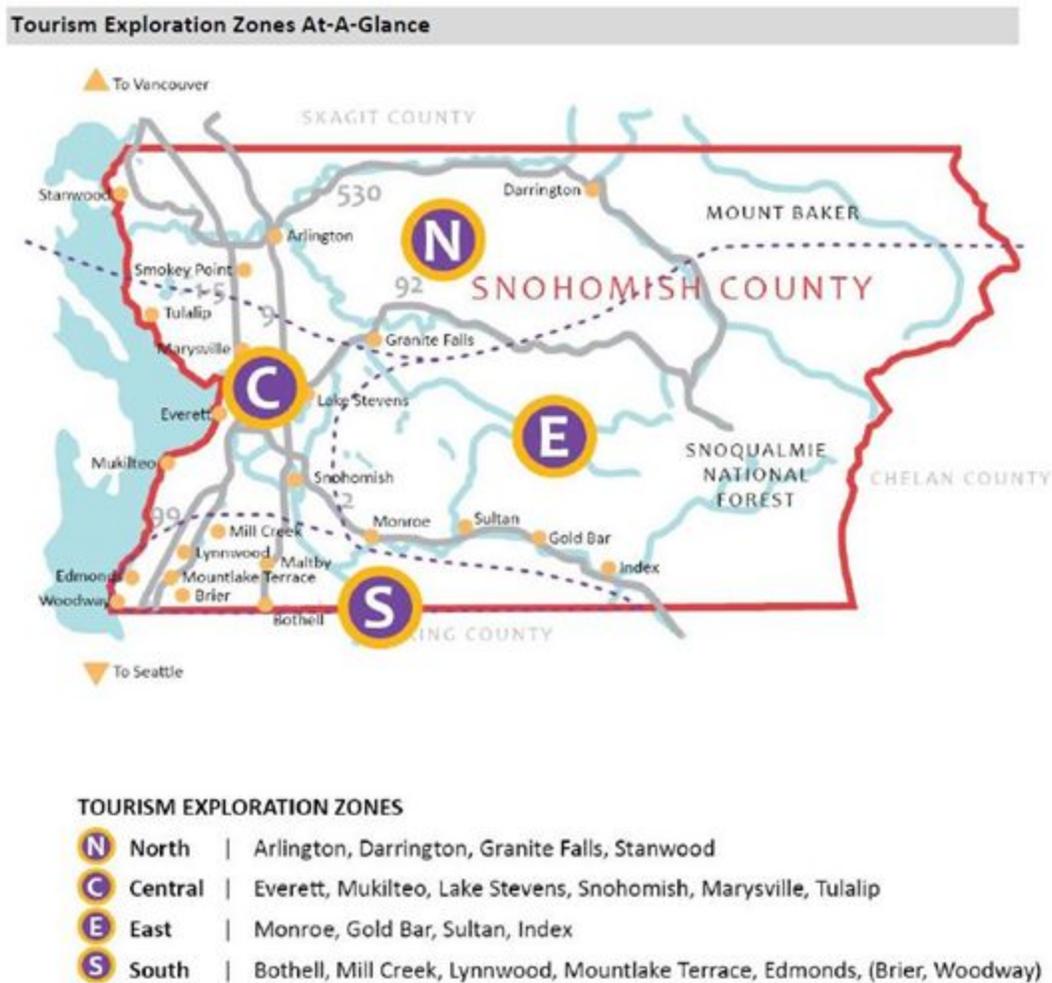


Source: Snohomish County Tourism Plan, 2010.

### Tourism Exploration Zones

Another key feature of the 2010 Plan’s strategic approach is the Tourism Exploration Zones. Four zones were created to organize the county’s communities and tourism assets geographically – North, Central, East, and South (see map below). The idea behind the Zones was to develop itineraries and promote attractions and assets within a Zone because of their geographic proximity. As Snohomish County is large, the Zones approach would help tourists cut down on travel time and explore more deeply the attractions within the particular Zone they were visiting.

2010 Plan: Tourism Exploration Zones Map



Source: Snohomish County Tourism Plan, 2010.



### Goals, Strategies, and Tasks

The 2010 Plan contained six Goals and 26 Strategies that further articulate the strategic approach. Each strategy contains a number of detailed tasks with lead organizations assigned, suggested timelines for completion, and estimated resources needed to complete the task.

#### 2010 Plan: Overview of Goals and Strategies

Overview of Goals and Strategies
<b>I. Stronger Tourism Brand and Marketing Strategy</b>
1. Repackage the County’s brand into an accessible adventure destination.
2. Develop strong cross-promotional marketing to encourage visitors to experience anchor clusters, anchor attractions, sustaining clusters, and sustaining assets.
3. Develop the capacity to better promote hidden assets.
4. Have fun and engage people in surprising ways.
<b>II. Anchor Clusters and Anchor Attractions Focus with Strong Cross-Promotional Efforts</b>
5. Expand the convention and meeting booking function of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau.
6. Strengthen the aviation cluster and knit it to the broader network of tourism assets.
7. Build on the County’s strengths in tribal gaming.
8. Leverage the County’s considerable outdoor recreation assets.
9. Promote and support the County’s diverse shopping options.
10. Continue to build the County’s organized sports market.
11. Promote adventure-focused day trip itineraries, maps, packages, and promotions.
12. Promote all itineraries, maps, packages, and promotions within target audience communities.
<b>III. Rich Network of Sustaining Clusters and Sustaining Assets</b>
13. Take a collaborative approach to strengthening the County’s sustaining tourism clusters.
14. Identify sustainable tourism opportunities.
<b>IV. Stronger County Tourism Infrastructure</b>
15. Improve the tourism information delivery system.
16. Update the approach to putting information in visitors’ hands.
17. Improve wayfinding and support the serendipity of discovery.
18. Improve public transportation options to enhance access to tourism assets.
19. Support the broadening of the County’s range of overnight options.
<b>V. Enhanced Organizational Capacity</b>
20. Strengthen the County’s ability to coordinate tourism efforts and implement the Plan.
21. Use data to strengthen tourism promotion and development efforts.
22. Broaden and enrich the conversation between the County and stakeholders.
23. Build stronger partnerships with the tribes and encourage indigenous tourism experiences.
24. Support professional development for the County’s tourism workforce.
<b>VI. Tourism Funding Resources Align with Strategic Goals</b>
25. Leverage the lodging tax effectively to advance tourism strategies.
26. Support the emerging Tourism Promotion Area.

Source: Snohomish County Tourism Plan, 2010.

## Implementation

### Support

The 2010 Plan outlined an implementation approach to meet the strategic goals over the five-year timeline. The 2010 Plan identified the Snohomish County Tourism Division and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau to lead and monitor implementation. Since that time, the County's Tourism Division has been moved under the Parks and Recreation Department, but this shift did not influence the approach to implementation. The County's role remains focused on service development. The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau is the designated, year-round, tourism and convention marketing and sales organization contracted by Snohomish County to promote the area as a desirable destination for visitors and meeting planners. The Bureau's role can be viewed as covering the public-facing service delivery aspects.

Strategy 20 in the 2010 Plan recommended the addition of a new, full-time tourism position to steward implementation. This role, the Strategic Tourism Coordinator, was not created until 2014. The delay in implementing this role should be considered when assessing the progress and impact of the plan's strategies. Many of the strategies and their subsequent tasks focused on outreach and development could not be started until this position was filled.

### Funding Resources

The plan provided estimates for funding resources at the task level that would be necessary to implement each strategy. The 2010 Plan anticipated the Snohomish County Lodging Tax "Large Fund" would be the primary funding source for most of the investments recommended within the plan. The Large Fund has traditionally been a source of funds for investments in capital projects that attract tourists to the county. More details on tourism funding resources can be found in the full 2010 Plan Review report.

### Tracking and Measuring

The 2010 Plan loosely suggested some tools for measuring success. It mentioned the Dean Runyan calculation of total tourism spending as an aggregate measure to track annual tourism spending. It also suggested several performance measures to track over time, including overnight stays, meetings and events, website visitors, downloaded materials, cross-promotional results, and involved stakeholders. However, it did not provide numeric metrics for these categories, as these were to be developed later by the lead organizations implementing the plan.

## Big Picture Summary Review

In November 2016, BERK Consulting met with several key staff from Snohomish County Parks and Recreation Tourism Division and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau to solicit feedback on the 2010 Plan – what worked well, and what could use improvement. The following provides a high-level overview of what these staff members thought were the plan’s strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement

### Strengths

- **Variety and specificity.** Staff appreciated the breadth of the plan and the variety of tourism assets addressed. The specificity of the plan at the strategy and task level gave County staff and County council the ability to approve proposed work when it was within the estimated resource expense numbers that the plan indicated was needed to complete it.
- **Including and elevating hidden assets.** Staff liked the strategic approach that called for including and elevating development of hidden assets and connecting them with to anchor clusters and attractions.
- **Supporting data.** The plan provided the data to support actions to move work forward, and it provided guidance and protection to decline other suggestions, as suggested tasks and strategies were already carefully considered to support the plan’s goals and strategic approach.
- **Engagement focus.** The engagement component was also seen as highly valuable, with some participants stating the most valuable aspect of the 2010 Plan was that it required members of the county’s different tourism sectors and geographies to work together. The plan provided opportunities for small town communities to join the conversation on tourism development through authorized workshops and trainings outlined in the plan’s strategies and tasks (see Strategies 13, 22, 23).

### Weaknesses

- **Too specific and inflexible.** While the specificity of the plan was helpful in some instances, it was problematic in others. The specific timeline outlined in the plan created inflexibility among decision-makers that took the plan verbatim and not as a structural framework. Some decision-makers felt if they did not follow the plan exactly as written, they would be held accountable.
- **Lack of narrative cohesion.** Staff members felt that the plan lacked a cohesive narrative voice, and that there was inconsistent direction, where some strategies conflicted with others.
- **Not user-friendly.** Staff thought the plan was difficult to report on because it was implemented by two different agencies with different focuses, and that it was not easily accessible or understandable to a broader audience.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- **Provide more flexibility through a framework.** Staff suggested that the plan update could provide more flexibility through general recommendations with language that it is suggested, but not mandatory. This could also be accomplished by providing a more general framework and less detail in the Goal-Strategy-Task organization employed in the 2010 Plan.



- **Improve Tourism Exploration Zones.** There were some thoughts on improving the Tourism Exploration Zones to break them into regions or potentially overlapping corridors, or based on interests.

### Goal and Strategy Summary Review

The 2010 Plan Strategies were reviewed with input and reflection from the Tourism Bureau and County Parks and Recreation, Tourism Division. The focus here is to look at how well the strategies served the County’s goals. The summary table below provides a high-level reflection on the progress of each strategy.

### Summary Findings

- Overall, progress has been made on the majority of strategies and their tasks over the past years with ongoing and continuing work.
- One strategy was determined not worthy of advancing (Strategy 4). Although the intent was worthy and important, it was too specific to be its own strategy.
- Only a few strategies and tasks have not been started. Strategy 18 has not been started due to the need for cooperation and interest of actors beyond the means and control of the Tourism Bureau and Snohomish County Parks and Recreation, Tourism Division.
- Most strategies were viewed as having a positive impact on tourism development in the county. Only a few strategies (Strategies 4, 13, 14, and 18) were viewed as having a neutral impact.
- It is estimated that 54% of the total planned budget was actually spent to implement the strategies and tasks. The total planned budget to implement the plan from 2011 - 2015 was \$2.2 million. Estimated actual expenditures for 2011 – 2016 was \$1.2 million.

### Strategy Review Summary

**Legend**

Complete	Task was started and completed. No more work is being done on the task
Ongoing	Task is recurring/ongoing, perhaps completed in years past and continuing
In progress	Discreet tasks that have been started but are not finished.
Not started	Task not yet started.
Dropped	Task has not been advanced for specific reasons.



Strategy	Status	Reflections on Impact	Summary Progress Notes
<b>Goal 1. Stronger Tourism Brand and Marketing Strategy</b>			
1. Repackage the Snohomish County brand into an accessible adventure destination.	Complete and Ongoing	Positive	Re-branding initiatives completed and had a positive impact overall. Work is ongoing to refine the brand and further market the county as a destination.
2. Develop strong cross-promotional marketing to encourage visitors to experience anchor clusters, anchor attractions, sustaining clusters, and sustaining assets.	Ongoing	Positive	Many accomplishments since 2013 to promote and market anchor and sustaining attraction through trainings, rural tourism workshops, mobile tours, collateral, and website improvements. There is a desire to revise the zone structure and tactics with a focus on regional networks.
3. Develop the capacity to better promote hidden assets.	Ongoing	Neutral / Positive	Also addressed through Strategy 2. Accomplishments include mobile tours, website enhancements, tourism maps, promotion collateral and sub-branding of river towns.
4. Have fun and engage people in surprising ways.	In progress / Dropped	Neutral	Task i was not recommended for implementation. This Strategy should focus on training and workshops for local communities to produce appropriate, quality events.



<b>Goal 2. Anchor Clusters and Anchor Attractions Focus with Strong Cross-Promotional Efforts</b>			
5. Expand the convention and meeting booking function of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau.	In progress	Positive	Additional SCTB staff was hired in 2015 to help implement this strategy. The meeting facility guide has also been updated in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Some tasks require the interest, approval and cooperation with local communities (to address infrastructure gaps), and with the Snohomish County Lodging Association.
6. Strengthen the aviation cluster and knit it to the broader network of tourism assets.	Ongoing	Positive	Much work has been completed and is ongoing to develop and strengthen the aviation cluster. However, this Strategy assumed that the broader network of hidden tourism assets was more robust than it is. The aviation attractions are not as well-known locally as they should be by the larger and smaller tourism assets, and need more stakeholder engagement and development work to connect.
7. Build on the County's strengths in tribal gaming.	Ongoing	Positive	Continue building relationships and partnerships with the tribes, particularly with the hotels and the shopping/retail. Don't limit engagement to gaming in the future.
8. Leverage the County's considerable outdoor recreation assets.	Ongoing	Positive	This Strategy has been a pillar of the plan. The work done to implement this Strategy produced new roundtables, rural tourism workshops, water trail planning, working with recreation and conservation organizations, and connecting hidden assets with outdoor recreation for tourism development.
9. Promote and support the County's diverse shopping options.	Ongoing	Positive	Shopping mobile tours and ads have been completed and ongoing since 2012.
10. Continue to build the County's organized sporting events market.	Ongoing	Positive	The sports program is earning excellent returns. However, funding the sports program could be improved by a more predictable funding model.



11. Promote adventure-focused day trip itineraries, maps, packages, and promotions.	Ongoing	Positive	Work has been ongoing since 2013. This should be combined with Strategy 12 into a more regional approach.
12. Promote all itineraries, maps, packages, and promotions within target audience communities.	Ongoing	Positive	Advertising campaign on adventure day trips has been completed and ongoing work since 2012. Should be combined with Strategy 11.
<b>Goal 3. Rich Network of Sustaining Clusters and Sustaining Assets</b>			
13. Take a collaborative approach to strengthening the County’s sustaining tourism clusters.	Ongoing	Neutral	This is a large and ongoing undertaking. These focus areas will always be a priority, and working with stakeholders on collaborative ways to connect, promote, and support them will always be ongoing.
14. Identify sustainable tourism opportunities.	Complete	Neutral	Sustainable features of some varied attractions are notable (green built structures – rain gardens, etc.) and are inventoried by the County Office of Sustainability. The term “sustainability” has changed over the years, and the intent of this strategy needs to be clarified.



<b>Goal 4. Stronger County Tourism Infrastructure</b>			
15. Improve the tourism information delivery system.	Complete and Ongoing	Positive	Tourism Bureau website has been improved and includes itinerary functions. More storytelling features will be added in 2016.
16. Update approach to putting information in visitors' hands.	Ongoing	Positive	There has been development of a variety of tools, particularly mobile and digital, for delivering information and tours.
17. Improve wayfinding and support the serendipity of discovery.	In progress	Positive	Many recreation and tourism wayfinding and signage projects have been installed on state and forest roads, and in municipalities and parks. However, much coordination is needed from cities, towns, and WSDOT.
18. Improve public transportation options to enhance access to tourism assets.	Not started	Neutral	Many regional needs have been identified, but access to public transportation is a shared problem for many areas of Snohomish County.
19. Support the broadening of the County's range of overnight options.	In progress	Positive	Several new hotels have opened in the county since 2010, and more hotels are coming online. Lodging options are still needed in rural areas. Recruitment of higher-end lodging options has not yet been implemented.



<b>Goal 5. Enhanced Organizational Capacity</b>			
20. Strengthen the County’s ability to coordinate tourism efforts and implement this Plan.	Complete and Ongoing	Positive	A single, full-time position was created in 2014 to implement the plan. Six-month temporary help was added 2016 to assist with projects. Additional staff is needed for ongoing plan implementation.
21. Use data to strengthen tourism promotion and development efforts.	Ongoing	Positive	Many tasks completed and ongoing for data collection, but there is room for improvement to help strengthen collaborative sharing capabilities.
22. Broaden and enrich the conversation between the County and stakeholders.	Ongoing	Positive	Many successes in reaching out to a broad range of tourism stakeholders. Since 2014, many newly involved organizations with a stake in Snohomish County tourism are regularly included and relied upon for guidance, planning resources and information on asset/product planning and development.
23. Build stronger partnerships with the tribes to enhance and encourage indigenous tourism experiences.	Ongoing	Positive	Ongoing engagement and discussions with tribal partners related to various aspects of tourism including trails and outdoor recreation can support indigenous experiences.
24. Support professional development for the County’s tourism workforce.	Ongoing	Positive	Many professional development workshops and trainings have been held and are ongoing.



<b>Goal 6. Tourism Funding Resources Align with Strategic Goals</b>			
25. Leverage the lodging tax effectively to advance the tourism strategies.	Complete and Ongoing	Neutral / Positive	Some tasks completed, but revised grant criteria could improve return-on-investment (ROI) in areas that have no lodging taxes available. Improvements to application process are needed (e.g. make applications more visible and available online and provide additional workshops for applicants).
26. Support the emerging Tourism Promotion Area.	Complete and Ongoing	Positive	Task completed. Additional improvements may help better connect the TPA funding applications with the Strategic Plan.



The following table compares the 2010 planned budget to actual expenditures at the strategy level. These numbers are best estimates, with the goal of understanding to what extent actual expenditures followed the plan’s guidance.

**2010 Strategic Plan Budget: Planned vs. Actual Expenditures**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Planned (2011-2015)</b>	<b>Actual (2011-2016)</b>	<b>Planned-Actual</b>
1	\$250,000	\$147,047	\$102,953
2	\$72,500	\$77,451	-\$4,951
3	\$80,000	\$4,000	\$76,000
4	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
5	\$30,000	\$69,925	-\$39,925
6	\$125,000	\$34,177	\$90,823
7	\$0	\$0	\$0
8	\$0	\$62,108	-\$62,108
9	\$200,000	\$41,063	\$158,937
10	\$0	\$9,740	-\$9,740
11	\$100,000	\$263,404	-\$163,404
12	\$0	\$0	\$0
13	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
14	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
15	\$225,000	\$193,890	\$31,110
16	\$170,000	\$19,771	\$150,229
17	\$225,000	\$0	\$225,000
18	\$0	\$0	\$0
19	\$0	\$0	\$0
20	\$510,000	\$250,000	\$260,000
21	\$90,000	\$9,000	\$81,000
22	\$0	\$500	-\$500
23	\$0	\$0	\$0
24	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
25	\$0	\$0	\$0
26	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,207,500</b>	<b>\$1,182,076</b>	<b>\$1,025,424</b>
		<b>% Spent of Budget</b>	<b>54%</b>

Source: Snohomish County Tourism Bureau 2016, Snohomish County Tourism Department, and BERK, 2016

\*Notes: Actual expenditures are best-guess estimates provided by the Tourism Bureau. It combines whole numbers for 2011-2015 and an estimate for the year 2016 of only STP funds that the Bureau invoiced the County for, although some strategies were accomplished through the use of both LTAC funds and STP funds. These numbers are not meant to be used for financial accounting, but to provide an estimate for comparison purposes.

# FUNDING MODELS FORECAST

---

## Introduction

This section presents a comparison of the 2010 forecast with actual revenue generated, and anticipated future revenues in the Small Fund, Large Fund, and TPA.

Future revenue amounts are presented as a range, based on actual revenues from 2009 to 2015. For each fund, the average annual growth rate over this period is used as the base for the projection, with the upper and lower bounds generated by applying a 95% confidence interval.

The effects of the recession are included in our base years (2009-2015) and so negatively impact the projected revenues. In this sense the projections are conservative. Future economic conditions are of course impossible to predict and future performance could be significantly stronger than projected, or significantly weaker if another economic downturn affects the tourism economy. Particularly given the number of foreign visitors to Snohomish County, lodging tax and TPA revenues are affected by both local and international economic conditions.

## Lodging Tax

The tables and graphs below estimate Snohomish County's future Small Fund and Large Fund revenues from 2016-2020. Actual revenues from 2009 to 2015 are included for comparison. The amounts in the table are total revenues, including both tax and interest revenues. Expected revenues are rounded, expressed in year-of-expenditure dollars, and not adjusted for inflation.

### Small Fund Revenues

- From 2009-2016, the small fund actual receipts were slightly lower than the 2010 Low Estimates, with an average annual growth rate of 1.86%.
- On the high end of the range, Small Fund revenues are estimated to grow to approximately \$451,700 by 2020.
- On the low end of the range, the fund may generate approximately \$367,900 in 2020.

### Large Fund Revenues

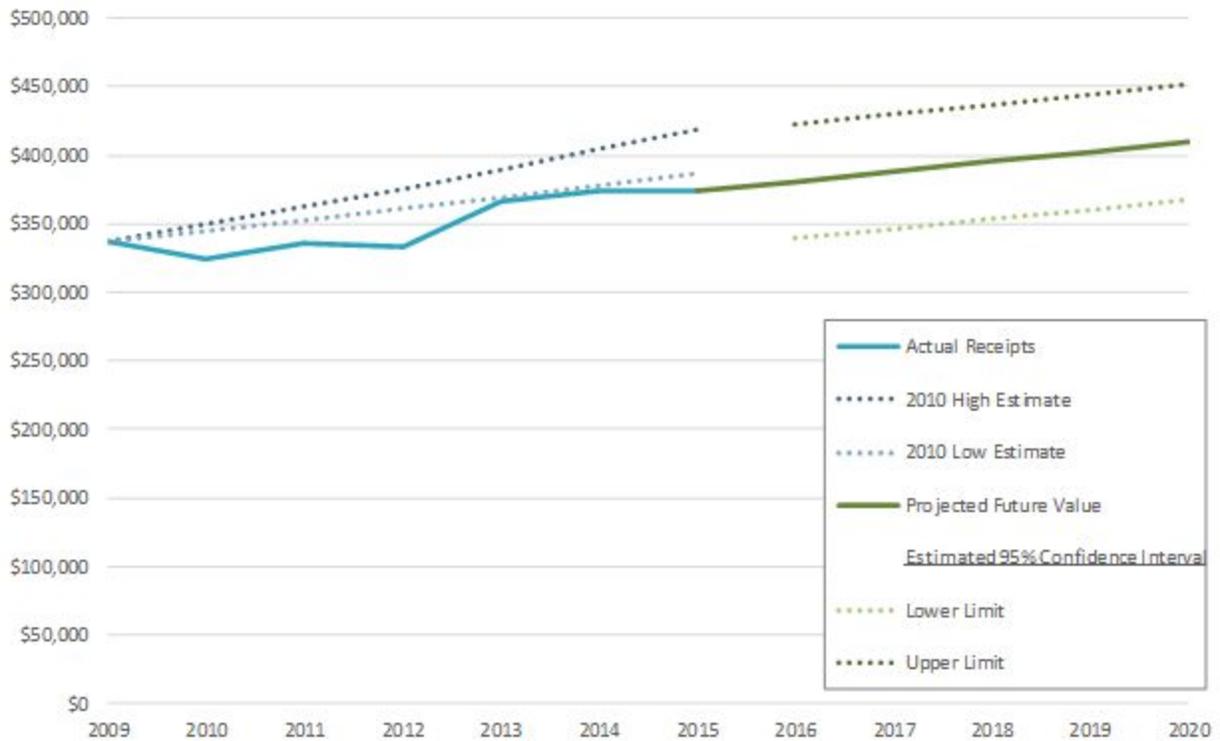
- The large fund performed within and above the 2010 high and low estimate range, and exceeding the 2010 high estimates in for 2014 and 2015. The average annual growth rate was 9.2%.
- On the high end of the range, Large Fund revenues are estimated to grow to approximately \$4.8 million by 2020.
- On the low end of the range, the fund may generate approximately \$3.3 million in 2020.

Small Fund Actual and Projected Revenue

	Actual							Projected				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Actual Receipts	\$336,866	\$324,383	\$335,922	\$332,726	\$366,697	\$373,833	\$373,990					
2010 Low Estimate	\$336,866	\$344,600	\$352,500	\$360,600	\$368,900	\$377,400	\$386,500					
2010 High Estimate	\$336,866	\$349,300	\$362,300	\$375,700	\$389,600	\$404,000	\$418,900					
Projected Future Value								\$380,900	\$387,900	\$395,100	\$402,400	\$409,800
Upper Limit								\$422,800	\$429,800	\$437,000	\$444,300	\$451,700
Lower Limit								\$339,000	\$346,000	\$353,200	\$360,500	\$367,900
Annual Growth Rate		-3.7%	3.6%	-1.0%	10.2%	1.9%	0.0%					
Average Annual Growth Rate	1.85%											
Standard Deviation	\$21,382											
Confidence Interval Range	1.96											

Source: BERK, 2016

Small Fund Actual and Projected Revenue



Source: BERK, 2016

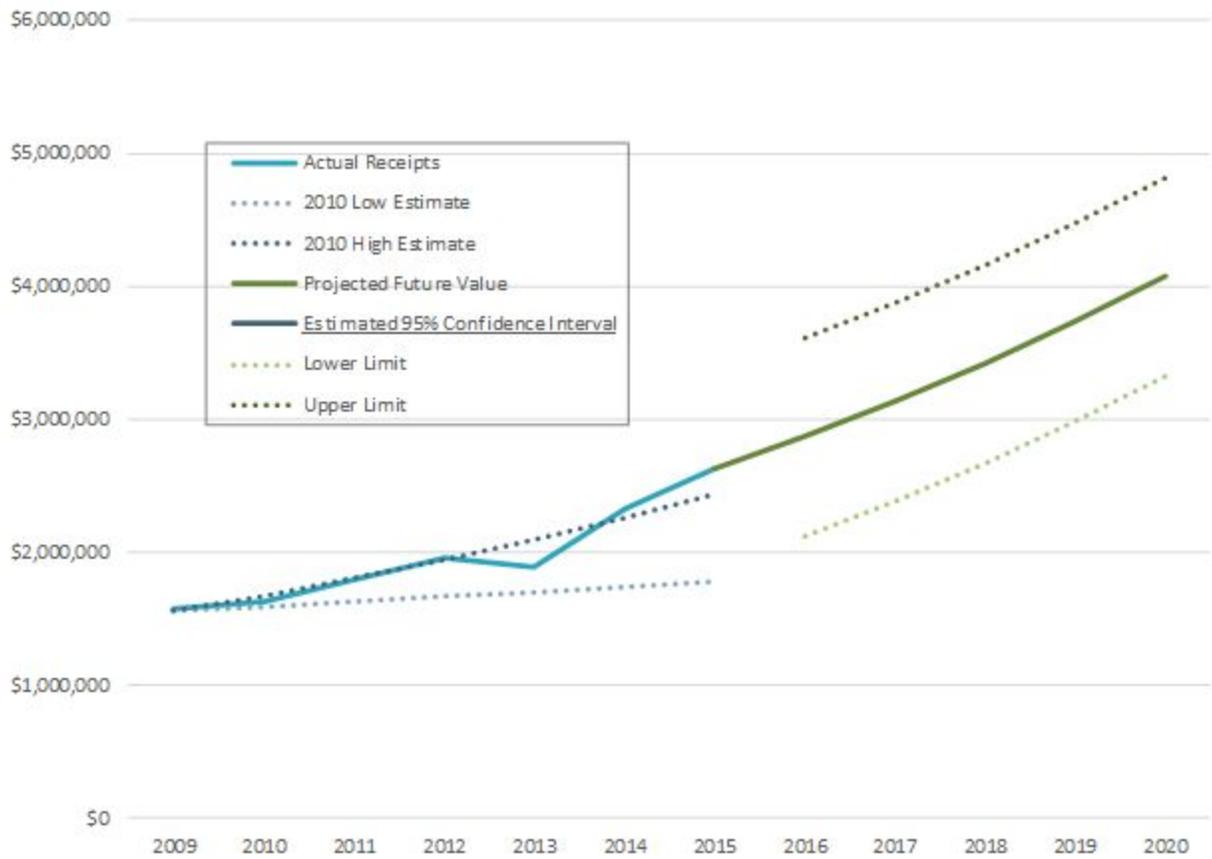


Large Fund Actual and Projected Revenue

	2009	2010	2011	Actual			2015	Projected				
				2012	2013	2014		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Actual Receipts	\$1,578,538	\$1,625,756	\$1,797,112	\$1,954,959	\$1,895,125	\$2,327,935	\$2,638,543					
2010 Low Estimate	\$1,557,978	\$1,593,800	\$1,630,500	\$1,668,000	\$1,706,300	\$1,745,600	\$1,785,700					
2010 High Estimate	\$1,557,978	\$1,677,900	\$1,807,300	\$1,946,300	\$2,096,200	\$2,257,600	\$2,431,400					
Projected Future Value								\$2,809,500	\$3,132,600	\$3,419,800	\$3,733,300	\$4,075,600
Upper Limit								\$3,615,900	\$3,878,600	\$4,165,800	\$4,479,300	\$4,821,600
Lower Limit								\$2,123,500	\$2,386,600	\$2,673,800	\$2,987,300	\$3,329,600
Annual Growth Rate		3%	11%	9%	-3%	23%	13%					
Average Annual Growth Rate		9.2%										
Standard Deviation	\$380,618											
Confidence Interval Range	1.96											

Source: BERK, 2016

Large Fund Actual and Projected Revenue



Source: BERK, 2016



### Tourism Promotion Area

Projections for TPA revenues are presented below. Actual revenues from 2012 to 2015 are included for comparison. The amounts in the table are total revenues, including both tax and interest revenues. Expected revenues are rounded, expressed in year-of-expenditure dollars, and not adjusted for inflation.

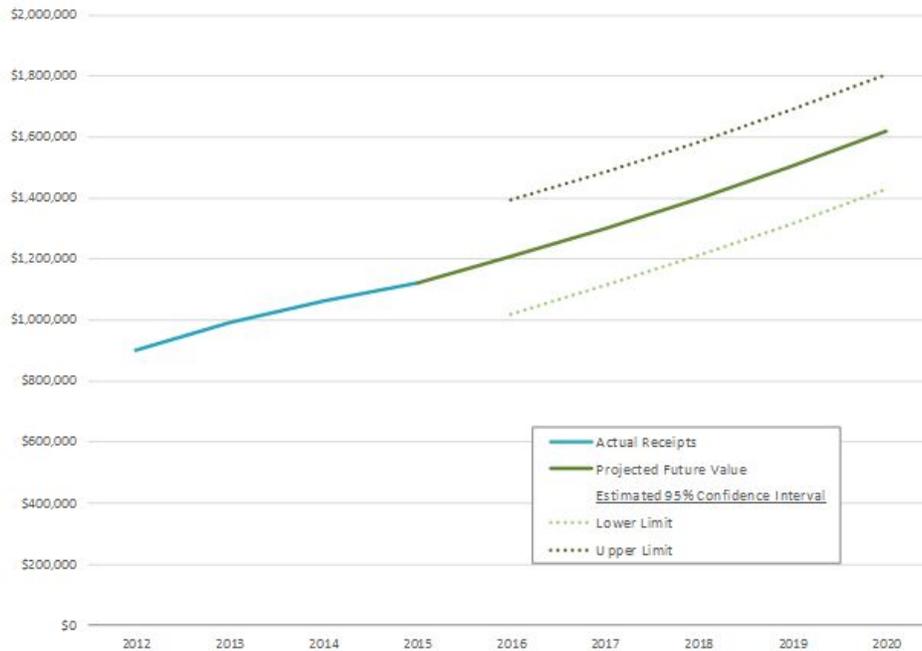
- TPA actual receipts from 2012-2015 had an average annual growth rate of 7.6%, generating on average \$1 million a year.
- On the high end of the range, TPA revenues are estimated to grow to approximately \$1.8 million by 2020.
- On the low end of the range, the fund may generate approximately \$1.4 million in 2020.

**TPA Actual and Projected Revenue**

	Actual				Projected				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Actual Receipts	\$902,053	\$991,915	\$1,063,345	\$1,122,735					
Projected Future Value					\$1,207,900	\$1,299,500	\$1,398,000	\$1,504,000	\$1,618,000
Upper Limit					\$1,394,300	\$1,485,900	\$1,584,400	\$1,690,400	\$1,804,400
Lower Limit					\$1,021,500	\$1,113,100	\$1,211,600	\$1,317,600	\$1,431,600
Annual Growth	NA	10.0%	7.2%	5.6%					
Average Annual Growth Rate		7.6%							
Standard Deviation		\$95,103							
Confidence Interval Range		1.96							

Source: BERK, 2016

**Exhibit 21 – TPA Actual and Projected Revenue**



Source: BERK, 2016

# STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Over the course of three days (Oct 19-21, 2016), Resonance Consultants Chris Fair and Richard Cutting-Miller met individually and in group sessions with approximately 50 stakeholders of the Snohomish County Travel & Tourism industry. Resonance also produced an online survey from Nov 11-18 for 43 stakeholders.

The primary purpose of these discussions and the survey was to identify high-level issues and opportunities critical to the success of the Strategic Tourism Plan project and to build an informal group of “champions”, which will be critical to the endorsement and implementation of the strategy upon completion.

The discussions lasted between 45 and 75 minutes each and tended to focus on:

1. Analyzing current market conditions and identify appropriate opportunities and targets for improvement.
2. Reviewing the current Strategic Tourism Plan and identifying significant results and any outstanding initiatives that should be continued.
3. Identifying any emerging / new opportunities as they relate to areas of marketing, product development and infrastructure development.
4. Assessing the current brand and effectiveness of brand collateral.

The results of these discussions have been recorded and summarized by Resonance to help identify, innovate, create and articulate unique products, amenities, programming and experiences – along with the policies and protocols required – to guide the long-term planning and design of Snohomish County as an important tourism destination.

To encourage an open and honest discussion, stakeholders agreed that all conversations would be confidential; and the only attribution of comments would be to the collective “stakeholders”.

Stakeholders’ individual comments were recorded and filtered based on the stakeholder’s knowledge, experience, involvement with Travel & Tourism in Snohomish County, insight, awareness, specificity and frequency, and summarized into issue area findings. Details for each topic follow in the next section of this report.

The process used to summarize the comments received and conclusions made by Resonance Consultancy was based on:

1. How often the feedback / comment was received from stakeholders.
2. The expertise of the stakeholder and / or the level of relationship between the stakeholder and the project partners and / or tourism industry in Snohomish County.



For example, if a stakeholder had a distant relationship to the project partners or tourism industry and made a comment that was not repeated by others, it was not included in the summary. However, if a stakeholder with a high level relationship to the project partners or the tourism industry made a comment that was not repeated by others, it was weighted as important and therefore included in the summary.

This feedback was then grouped together into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (see below).

These findings reflect the consultants' expert opinion of the overall messages being conveyed by the compiled comments. However, as with all qualitative research, alternative findings may result from different interpretations, different prioritization of the comments or a different consultant – and because this effort has been limited in scope to qualitative stakeholder analysis – the findings should not be considered absolute or definitive. Instead, they should be considered indicative of stakeholder opinions or general frame of mind.

## Strengths

Breweries  
Day Trippers

Outdoor Recreation  
Seattle's Playground / Backyard

## Weaknesses

Business Start Up and Permits  
Capital Improvement  
Everett Nightlife  
Infrastructure and Facilities  
Professional Marketing  
Rural Internet and Cell Phone Service  
Seasonality  
Second Homes / Weekend Homes / Vacation Homes  
Social Media Capacity Building  
Sports Facilities  
Sports Tourism

Strategic Plan Programs  
Tourism Bureau Funding  
Tourism Cooperation  
Tourism Funding Sources  
Tribal Engagement  
Visitor Capacity Planning / Traffic / Transportation Plan  
Visitor Research  
Wayfinding  
Website Design



## Opportunities

Biking Trails, Facilities, Infrastructure, Amenities and Transport  
Branding  
Capacity Building  
Cascade Loop (Signature Attraction)  
Commercial Air Service  
Event & Festival Strategy  
Food Trucks  
Harbor / Boating Tourism

International Visitors  
Information Centers and Distribution  
Institute of Flight and Boeing Tour  
Locally Made  
Mountain Loop Highway  
New Developments / Parks  
Tourism Focus / Identity  
Trails and Trail Town Connectivity  
Visitor Itineraries  
Water Trails / Biking Trails / Hiking Trails

## Threats

Exchange Rate  
Washington State Tourism Office

## Summary of Issues and Opportunities

In the interviews, group sessions and online survey, stakeholders have noted, suggested, or indicated that:

**Biking Trails, Facilities, Infrastructure, Amenities and Transport** – there may be an opportunity to significantly increase biking related visits thru the development and enhancement of signature bike trails (such as Centennial), new bike trails (such as The Sky Valley Trail), biking facilities, infrastructure, amenities and transport.

**Branding** – there is need to educate / re-educate industry players about the brand (Open Up) and engage them to use and / or better implement the brand. Also, Snohomish County needs to review the strengths and weaknesses of its branding association with Seattle. For example, several Snohomish County hotels carry Seattle in their name: “Hampton Inn Seattle/Everett” or “TownePlace Suites Seattle Everett/Mukilteo” or “Courtyard Seattle North/Everett”.

**Breweries** – there may be an opportunity to increase visitor focus, activities and spending on Snohomish County breweries as well as provide / deliver a breweries map / tour / app that facilitates the breweries visitor experience.

**Business Start Up and Permits** – there may be a need to speed up or fast track the business start up and permitting process for new tourism activities, attractions, accommodations and food / beverage operators, especially in the eastern part of Snohomish County where tourism amenities are limited and tourism potential is high.

**Capacity Building** – there may be an opportunity for the County and the Tourism Bureau to provide tourism capacity building services to towns, cities, organizations and private sector operators, especially SMEs to help build, enhance and grow their tourism products and services. Hoteliers may also benefit from orientation to existing tourism activities that are available to their guests.

**Capital Improvement** – a number of private tourism operators in Snohomish County could benefit from capital improvement incentives or programs.

**Cascade Loop (Signature Attraction)** – there may be an opportunity to enhance / highlight the Cascade Loop as a Signature Attraction that all visitors to the Pacific NW must take.

**Commercial Air Service** – there may be an opportunity to increase Snohomish County tourism as a result of direct air access to Paine Field. The connection and synergies between commercial air access and Snohomish County tourism needs to be better understood and planned.

**Day Trippers** – although overnight visitors and their higher per capita spending are a key priority for Snohomish County tourism, the spending by day-trippers makes a significant contribution to total spending. There may be an opportunity to focus greater resources, effort, and marketing on this important market segment.

**Event & Festival Strategy** – Snohomish County should consider creating a countywide Event & Festival Strategy that engages the County, towns, cities and stakeholder groups to develop, schedule, enhance, incubate, direct, market, promote and manage a portfolio of events and festivals for residents and visitors alike.

Everett Nightlife – there may be an opportunity to create a nightlife scene in downtown Everett, but it would require research, analysis, strategy and delivery.

Exchange Rate – there is a significant threat posed to Snohomish County tourism resulting from an unfavorable exchange rate with the Canadian dollar.

Food Trucks – there may be an opportunity to work with the Food Truck Association and Snohomish County Dept. of Health to increase the numbers of food trucks in Snohomish County - especially East County.

Harbor / Boating Tourism – there may be an opportunity for greater focus on harbor visits in Everett and other Snohomish County ports / marinas as well as increasing boating / sailing tourism in general.

International Visitors – the market for international visitors (Asia/Pacific, Europe, China etc.) is growing to regional destinations such as Seattle, Portland and Vancouver BC, as well as to local attractions / activities such as the Boeing Tour. Snohomish County needs to be prepared to deliver broader visitor opportunities and culturally sensitive service to these international visitors. There is a real opportunity for the STB to produce and distribute a foreign language friendly website and various marketing materials to this growing market.

Information Centers and Distribution – there may be an opportunity to enhance visitor information distribution thru alternative sources / locations as well as online and mobile applications.

Infrastructure and Facilities – there may be an opportunity to achieve greater synergies between Snohomish County infrastructure and facilities (funding and development) and tourism needs / demands.

Institute of Flight and Boeing Tour – The Institute of Flight (an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization) manages the airport facility that contains the Future of Flight Aviation Center and is the front and back door to the Boeing Tour. The Future of Flight facility is partially funded by the Snohomish County Public Facilities District. Although the Boeing Tour and the Future of Flight Aviation Center co-habitate, their missions and objectives do not necessarily or always align. Based on conversations with stakeholders:

- The facility may require new / greater investment to keep up with traffic / parking growth and demand for exhibits that are up to date, attractive and engaging. Current standards for non-Boeing elements are not satisfactory.
- The county may need to engage a professional museum / retail / operations consultant to review existing facilities, operations, exhibits and shops to create a forward-looking strategy.
- The county may need to re-assess the PFD status of the Aviation Center to determine if the current management structure is the best use of resources.
- The Future of Flight Aviation Center may be confusing to visitors who are primarily there to take the Boeing Tour.
- The revenue sharing arrangement between the Institute of Flight and Boeing is confusing and may require clarification and greater transparency.
- Connectivity between the Future of Flight Aviation Center and the Historic Flight Foundation, Paul Allen's Flying Heritage Collection, and the Museum of Flight Restoration Center may require future assessment to fully realize the potential of all aviation attractions.

Locally Made – there may be an opportunity to assist local artisans, SMEs, agritourism providers, breweries, distilleries, and other “local” businesses to create and market locally made products that attract and appeal to visitors.

Mountain Loop Highway – there may be a significant opportunity to increase Snohomish County tourism by paving the remainder of Mountain Loop Highway.

Outdoor Recreation – there may be an opportunity to create and implement an outdoor recreation master plan for Snohomish County that creates significant opportunity for growing the tourism industry, addresses some of the limitations caused by diminishing access to US Forest Service lands and provides funding across city/town lines. One major areas of focus should include review, analysis and recommendations on motorized recreational use.

New Developments / Parks – there may be an opportunity to celebrate and facilitate new developments and parks in Snohomish County including, but not limited to, Japanese Gulch, where the City of Mukilteo has recently released a new Master Plan and the Port of Everett's Waterfront Place Central redevelopment project, which is set to unify the marina and surrounding property with a sustainable and unique commercial, recreation and residential community.

Professional Marketing – there may be an opportunity to engage a professional marketing firm to review and assess programs and activities of Snohomish Tourism Bureau to offer constructive advice, enhance creativity and increase return on investment.

Rural Internet and Cell Phone Service – there are areas frequented by visitors that do not have internet and / or cell service in Snohomish County, which limits connectivity for visitors and business opportunities for operators.

Seasonality – Snohomish County does extremely well during the peak months of May through September, but has an even greater opportunity for growing tourism in the shoulder and off peak season of October through April.

Seattle's Playground / Backyard – there may be an opportunity to highlight and intensify Snohomish County as “Seattle's Playground / Backyard”, focusing on the rural, natural and recreational opportunities for Seattle residents and visitors.

Second Homes / Weekend Homes / Vacation Homes – the second / weekend / vacation home market in Snohomish County is not well understood, who owns, how often they are used, how they are used and what they contribute to tourism. There may be an opportunity to learn important information about this market that could enhance tourism in the region.

Sports Facilities – there may be an opportunity to achieve greater synergies between Snohomish County tourism, especially sports tourism, and Snohomish County sport facilities. The County should consider the creation of a sports facilities master plan.

Sports Tourism – there may be an opportunity to achieve greater synergies between Snohomish County Sports Commission and the Snohomish Tourism Board. Snohomish County should review the potential for athletic events that may present a competitive advantage such as a Boston Marathon qualifying race, race on a “live air strip” or creating a Snohomish version of the Vancouver to Whistler GranFondo.

Strategic Plan Programs – there is a need for greater flexibility of Strategic Plan program timing, funding and responsibility to allow for changing and unexpected circumstances.

Tourism Bureau Funding – there is a need for greater financial security and predictability of funding for the Snohomish Tourism Bureau to provide for better and more consistent planning and operations. The Bureau may also benefit from a longer-term contract, as a one-year contract is not conducive to long-term planning.

Tourism Cooperation – there is a strong need for greater coordination, collaboration and cooperative programs between Snohomish County, Snohomish Tourism Bureau and the tourism / chamber leaders from the individual towns, cities and Native American communities of Snohomish County including but not limited to regular communications, meetings, committees, working groups, roundtables etc. Cooperative efforts might focus on infrastructure development, festivals and events, marketing efforts, website design and functionality, itineraries, capacity building, etc. The same is true for greater coordination and collaboration with neighboring counties including Skagit and Winthrop Counties.

Tourism Focus / Identity – Snohomish County should consider the potential for greater tourism development focused on a short-list of activities / identities such as: Outdoor Recreation, Seattle’s Playground, Aerospace Capital, etc.

Tourism Funding Sources – there may be an opportunity to rationalize and coordinate the various tourism funding sources (Small Fund, Large Fund, LTAC, TPA, etc.) and / or processes to achieve greater overall synergies and results for the County.

Trails and Trail Town Connectivity – there may be an opportunity to focus and apply greater resources and attention on recreational trails (land and water) and trail town connectivity and development in Snohomish County to realize even greater return on investment.

Tribal Engagement – there may be an opportunity to engage and deepen the tourism business relationship with tribal officials, communities and businesses to increase the levels of communication and cooperation.

Social Media Capacity Building – there may be an opportunity to build capacity for use of TripAdvisor and other social media to enhance and raise the level of visibility of Snohomish County tourism operators and opportunities with consumers.

Visitor Capacity Planning / Traffic / Transportation Plan – there may be an opportunity to better manage traffic, ease congestion, create more ride-sharing programs between urban and rural areas and carry out capacity planning on certain visitor routes / highways (ie US Route 2 from Everett to Leavenworth) or certain destinations (ie National Forest) during peak season, as well as promote alternative routes and lesser known destinations to distribute visitor traffic. This could be part of a broader Visitor Transportation Plan for Snohomish County.

Visitor Itineraries – there may be an opportunity to better promote “itineraries” to provide more options and ideas for people visiting Snohomish County. Itineraries might include: culinary, breweries, biking/hiking, antiquing, farms, arts, historical sites / assets, nightlife, etc.



Visitor Research – there is a need to better understand Snohomish County visitors such as: who they are, where they come from, what they do here, etc. Stakeholders could benefit from detailed visitor tracking research, which shows how visitors consume Snohomish County, especially off the I-5 corridor.

Washington State Tourism Office – although Snohomish County does not have influence over the Washington State government agenda, agencies or funding, the closure of the Washington state Tourism Office in 2011 has created a competitive weakness for Snohomish County tourism vis-à-vis other counties in other states that do have a statewide tourism office.

Water Trails / Biking Trails / Hiking Trails – there may be an opportunity for greater development, utilization and tourism impact from Snohomish County recreational trails such as The Sky to Sound Water Trail, Whitehorse Trail and others.

Wayfinding – there may be an opportunity to increase and improve wayfinding that is authentic to the “rural experience”.

Website Design – there may be an opportunity to improve and enhance the Snohomish Tourism Bureau website to achieve greater visitor appeal, mobile functionality and real-time marketing/sales opportunities.

# BRAND ASSESSMENT

As part of the process to update the Strategic Tourism Plan, it was important to review the current Snohomish County travel and tourism brand standing and its relevant applications in digital, social and print arenas to determine opportunities for positioning the brand and the region to meet the goals for the future.

To serve this purpose, Resonance undertook a Brand Assessment, which included a high-level review and analysis of marketing and communications channels and published / online material provided by Snohomish Tourism Bureau.

Please note that the Brand Assessment did NOT provide for a comprehensive assessment of ALL marketing materials, strategies or activities. As such, there may be activities and marketing collateral already in process or circulation which may address some of the findings of the Brand Assessment.

In addition, the findings reflect the consultants' expert opinion based on extensive experience working with a wide variety of destinations around the world. And, as with all qualitative research, alternative findings may result from different interpretations, a review of alternative materials or a different consultant.

As a result, the findings should not be considered absolute or definitive. Instead, they should only be considered indicative of the Snohomish County brand standing or its relevant applications. The full results from the Brand Assessment can be found in the Brand Review and Analysis Report (November 29, 2016).

## Situation

As a result of the 2010 Snohomish Tourism Plan, investment was made into the development of a cohesive tourism brand for the region, branded as Open Up.

Formally rolled out in 2013, Open Up identified the target audience for the county tourism brand as “those wanting to explore and pursue, (extreme recreation, a great buy, a big casino win)”. Indirect target audiences also included tourism partners, local businesses, residents, convention customers and more.

This brand has been successful in aligning messaging for the region and day-to-day implementation and improvements have been actioned across partners and regions. The Brand Assessment incorporated the following research:

- Review of online and printed materials provided by Snohomish County
- Review of plans, strategies, brand documents and guidelines provided by Snohomish County including: Magazines, Email Newsletters & Blasts, Strategic Plan, Operating Plan, Brand Manual, Languages for Online Listings, Social Media Platforms, Logos, Typography, Typefaces, Brochures and Flyers

The Brand Assessment helps to lay a framework for the Snohomish County Tourism Plan update and will form a basis for program and positioning recommendations and outlines:

- What works
- What doesn't and how it can be improved
- Gaps, areas of duplicated effort and potential opportunities
- Findings to effect Snohomish County's brand and marketing priorities

## Findings

The Snohomish County brand and supporting collateral contains a wealth of information for visitors about the region. Notwithstanding, many of the brand and marketing assets explored during the review process showed scope for improvement. The following recommendations are given to better position the Open Up brand for success in the future:

1. Refresh Open Up Brand Platform
  - 1.1. Refresh Open Up typeface, logo and graphic assets to be used in all marketing applications
  - 1.2. Refine messaging and application of brand pillars with clear positioning features that highlight the anchor attractions of Snohomish County
  - 1.3. Consider logo refresh and expansion with visual iconography to mark anchor attributes
  - 1.4. Refresh Brand Style Guide accordingly outlining brand colors, reducing the number of colors used, font choices, text treatments, iconography, image-use guidelines and quality control and tone of voice
2. Refresh and Refine Brand Messaging
  - 2.1. Clarify naming and key messages for each brand pillar to be used consistently across brand applications of Snohomish County becomes known for these anchor pillars.
3. Refresh Open Up Digital and Design Assets Across Platforms
  - 3.1. Develop Immersive Short Films: Given the importance of digital marketing and emotive film, it is recommended that a digital film strategy be created to better portray the beauty, attractions and intriguing story of the region.
  - 3.2. Develop or Utilize Existing Alluring Photography Assets: New, original lifestyle photography, outdoor photography, event photography and anchor location photography for use across all relevant collateral
4. Refresh and Expand Interactive Website
  - 4.1. Expand Interactivity: We believe that the website has a far larger role to play than it does at the moment, and could easily be the portal for information for many stakeholder groups. We also acknowledge that some visitors will not utilize a web based service, so we recommend

- centralization of available documentation through visitor bureaus airports partner venues etc.  
Consider expanded Media Portal, Conference and Events Portal, Itinerary Portal, etc.
- 4.2. Expand Travel and Transportation pages to integrate interactive resources such as Roadtrippers.com, or interactive local transportation maps via Google maps to improve
  - 4.3. Develop second and third tier travel itinerary pages to be more easily accessible and searchable with immersive films, itineraries and images interactively embedded in the website.
  - 4.4. Improve User Experience: minimize page clicks to get to pertinent information, refresh design look, feel, usability, and navigation.
  - 4.5. Improve Mobile Experience: Current website does not translate well to mobile, which is a significant weakness for the site. More users now use mobile than desktop computers for research planning and information. It is recommended that the refreshed website be designed for mobile first as a priority then adapted for desktop.
5. Develop International Visitor Content
    - 5.1. The Pacific Northwest is fast becoming a well frequented destination for international and Asian visitors. International visitors need access to translated website content, translators and dedicated international travel guides in their language of choice. Consider partnering with local international groups to co-produce visitor guides and digital content for key audiences in Japan, China, Korea, and European Countries. At minimum design refreshed website with multi-lingual options.
6. Create Multi-year Outdoor Adventure Campaign
    - 6.1. Capitalize on targeted messaging and itineraries for the “Where Seattle gets outside (escapes, gets outdoors, where Seattle meets the outdoors, go out socially, go out shopping, get outside of yourself)” messaging
7. Expand Consistent Social Media Campaign Strategy and Implementation: utilizing new digital assets or alluring photography and emotive films.
    - 7.1. Content should be directed with brand standards on postings, photography and messaging
    - 7.2. Social user generated content should be encouraged through competitions, partner promotions, hashtag campaigns and live event social media integration
8. Simplify Copy Content and Language Across Platforms: making it simple and clear / aspirational yet reduce overall quantity of type content using active links, interactive digital tools such as maps, search functions etc.
9. Develop Digital Portal for Partners and Media: Centralize imagery, film and messaging resources and access through web based platform
    - 9.1. Groups & Conventions: Could be expanded with an interactive convention planner tool, destination marketing toolkit, and more image and film content to draw planners into the possibilities of hosting their event in Snohomish County.



- 10. Strategy Application. Recommendations were made in the 2013 Brand Roll out which were unable to be verified including extent of partner branding, “cross-promotional marketing to encourage visitors to experience anchor clusters, anchor attractions, sustaining clusters and sustaining assets.”

We recommend revisiting these recommendations with a particular focus on giving partners the tools and strategies to support the Open Up brand in their endeavors.

## Summary

Snohomish County clearly has a wealth of adventure, nature and diverse assets to offer and has come a long way since the implementation of the new Open Up brand in 2013.

The opportunities for the overarching brand identity of Snohomish County and the Open Up brand are many. It is recommended that a refreshed and repositioned brand look and feel and applications across the website, social media and print collateral move forward with a fresh focus on vivid imagery of the region, minimised copy content and immersive documentary and emotive narrative films. As seen in the table below, there is great value in the ad hoc, planned and executed brand assets to move toward optimization through the recommendations above. We believe the efficient and effective implementation of the above recommendations adapted for the new Strategic Tourism Plan will add great value to positioning Snohomish County and the Open Up brand to those “wanting to explore and pursue, (extreme recreation, a great buy, a big casino win)” as well as key secondary target audiences of conference planners, media and regional travelers in the years to come.

5. Optimized				
4. Evaluated				
3. Executed	X		X	X
2. Planned	X	X		
1. Ad Hoc		X		X
0. Not Performed				
	Website	Social Media	Advertisements	Marketing Collateral

Notations are defined as follows:

1. Ad Hoc (implemented with varying degrees of planning, evaluation and results)
2. Planned (marketing platform planned or operational to some degree but is not fully executed across the board)
3. Executed (marketing platform operational, would benefit from further evaluation (possible new strategy, human resource or project budget allocation and optimization)
4. Evaluated (marketing platform operational, and evaluated with clear new strategy, human resource or project budget allocation noted)
5. Optimized (marketing platform operational, and operating at a high level of effectiveness in terms of market comparison, connection to brand platform and integration with other marketing tactics)

# VISITOR SURVEY

---

For many tourism destinations it's difficult to market to age groups on a generational basis because they're so big. More effective, then, is to identify psychographic segments, types of travelers who – regardless of age or gender – share similar travel, interest and spending patterns. By approaching marketing from a psychological profile, destinations can focus on types of marketing that appeal to these segments. These also help destinations determine which segment is the best match for their product.

Consumer research for this project included past visitor profiling and segmentation analysis utilizing Resonance's proprietary segmentation modeling tool building on a Resonance survey of over 4,000 active U.S. and Canadian travelers.

The segmentation analysis used is both a behavioral and attitudinal segmentation. Three main inputs are used in our segmentation modeling:

1. Most important factors taken into account when deciding on a vacation destination;
2. Activities enjoyed while on vacation; and
3. General attitudes towards vacations.

The resulting segmentation solution identifies five key segments of varying sizes with distinct behaviors and attitudes resulting in different demographic profiles and trip characteristics. Key segments of U.S. travelers in our modeling are:

- Sophisticated Explorers
- All-In Enthusiasts
- Active Adventurers
- Occasional Convenience Travelers
- Family-Oriented Frugals

To better understand who the current Snohomish County customer is, how they compare to U.S. travelers in general and what types of travelers might be attracted to the destination in the future, Resonance created, programed and distributed an online survey between November 17 and December 10, 2016 to engage Snohomish County's past guests. Objectives of the survey included:

- Conduct a segmentation analysis of respondents to better understand the Snohomish County visitor and how they differ from U.S. and Canadian travelers in general.
- Assess the quality and satisfaction with current destination services, accommodation and amenities, and suggestions for improvement and enhancement.

The total number of respondents was 217. A full Report of results is included in the Visitor Survey Report (December 22, 2016).

## Summary

The results of from the Snohomish County Visitor Survey for the Tourism Strategic Plan are satisfactory, reflecting a small but acceptable sample size (N=217). Highlights of the survey follow:

- Respondents tended to live within driving distance of Snohomish County, with a smaller number throughout the U.S. and BC, Canada.
- Respondents tended to be white and older with more than half 55+ years old and nearly half with an annual income exceeding \$60k per year.
- Respondents tended to be “Active Adventurers” and “Infrequent Convenience Travelers” more so than the average US visitor. Snohomish County visitors and residents are less likely to be Sophisticated Explorers, All-in-Enthusiasts or Family-Oriented Frugals.
- Four of 10 respondents identified as friends/family as the inspiration of their visit to Snohomish County. Also registering very well for inspiration were printed visitor guides, online visitor guides and destination websites.
- Seven out of 10 respondents used a laptop/desktop computer to plan / research their visit to Snohomish County, while more than two-thirds used printed materials.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents researched their trips using the internet, while nearly half used travel books / guides and the SnohomishCounty.org website.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents have previously used the SnohomishCounty.org website.
- Respondents generally “Agree” that the SnohomishCounty.org website “Information was easily available” and that they “Found what I was looking for”. Similarly, they said the website was “Easy to navigate”, “The site loaded quickly” and “I like the design”.
- Respondents generally liked the Snohomish County Visitors Guide, the 2015 Hiking Guide and the Mobile Tour - Mountain Loop Highway. The Sky Valley (East County) Backroad Attractions and Package Travel Guides also scored well.
- Only a small percentage of visitors have visited one of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau VICs.
- Two thirds of those who did visit one of the VICs picked up “Maps of the Area”, while about half collected “Information on Attractions”, “Information on Activities” and “Information on Local Restaurants”.
- Overall Satisfaction of the VICs and the “Range of Information” was high. Respondents also liked the Facilities and said that Information was Up-to-Date and liked the Range of Information.
- Respondents said they would like a visitor center on the “north side of town”, which can be interpreted as north Snohomish County.
- Visitors usually visit Snohomish County as a single person, couples, family or small group.
- More than one third of visitors came to Snohomish County for a day trip, while short trips of 2-4 nights was strong at 22.7%, followed by 15+ nights at 14.3%. One-night trips accounted for only 13.6% of visits.
- Nearly 3 out of 10 respondents came to Snohomish County for Sightseeing, followed by Nature and Outdoor Activities and Hiking.
- Snohomish County visitors nearly always came to Washington State by automobile.
- For those visitors that stayed overnight, one-third stayed in a Hotel / Motel, while 1 in 10 stayed at a Campground or RV Park. 12.2% stayed with Family or Friends, while 2.0% stayed in their second home and 1.4% used Airbnb.
- Respondents told us that on their last visit they also visited Seattle (60.0%), followed by Bellingham (21.8%), Bellevue/Kirkland (19.1%), Portland OR (17.3%) and Stephens Pass (15.5%).



- Respondents told us that on their last visit they specifically visited Central - Snohomish (40.6%), followed by Central - Everett (34.6%), South - Mukilteo (22.6%) and North - Marysville / Tulalip (21.1%).
- 7 out of 10 respondents told us that on they are a regular or occasional visitor. Only 20.3% of visitors were first time visitors.
- The perception of Snohomish County as a place to visit definitely improves after the visit.
- Respondents indicated that they found that Snohomish County's Scenery, Beauty, People, Friendliness, Hiking, Restaurants/Dining, Shopping, Variety and Trails are excellent or outstanding.
- In terms of what they found negative, disappointing or like the least about Snohomish County, they said Traffic (in town and at parks/trails), Parking, Weather/Rain, Dirty Washrooms, Homeless People and Closed Restaurants.
- Their suggestions for improving the quality of Snohomish County as a place to visit included Fix the Traffic, provide Better/More Parking, Better Policing/Security (especially at parks/trails), More Tourism Info (online and hardcopy), and More Public Transport options.
- To bring visitors back more often, respondents suggested make it Less Expensive (which is always a top result for this question), Offer Discounts/Deals, More Dining options, provide More Information, Send Regular Information (about events, etc) and Send Special Information (about non-tourist things).
- When asked what Snohomish County can do to extend their visit by a day or more, they said Lodging Deals/Rewards (very loudly), offer Deals / Discounts / Coupons, host more Festivals / Events and make Campsite Rates more Affordable.
- When survey participants think about Snohomish County they think about about Beautiful, Friendly, Green, Mountains, Scenic, Relaxing, Peaceful, Traffic, Nature, Fun, Hiking and Small Town.
- These same visitors to Snohomish County also tend to like visiting Port Townsend (Jefferson County WA) and Bend (Deschutes County OR) for their Variety of things to do, Walkable destinations, not better just Different destinations, better choices of Accommodations, Dining, Big Cities and Less Homelessness.
- Respondents told us that the most important criteria for visiting Snohomish County were: Outdoor Activities & Parks; followed by Paid Places to Stay, Events, Festivals & Fairs, Places to Eat & Drink, Attractions and Amusements and Shopping. The least important aspects for visiting Snohomish County were Nightlife and Spectator Sports.
- In terms of Range and number of activities, respondents said Snohomish County does well in the categories of Outdoor Activities & Parks, Sports & Recreation (Participatory) and Places to Eat & Drink and Shopping. Snohomish County does not do very well in terms of Nightlife or Attractions and Amusements
- In terms of Quality of Service, Snohomish County does well in the categories of Culture & Performing Arts, Outdoor Activities & Parks, Places to Eat & Drink and Paid Places to Stay. It does poorly in the category of Nightlife.
- In terms of Value for Money, Snohomish County does best in Outdoor Activities & Parks and Sports & Recreation (Participatory). It does poorly in the categories of Nightlife and Attractions and Amusements.
- Among the most interesting responses to additional things visitors would like to see in Snohomish County are: more Events/Festivals, Native American landmarks / history / sites, Beer and Wine tastings/festivals, Live Music, more Hiking and Biking Trails, Food Trucks, Farm to Table dining, and more Small Shops/Boutiques.
- Among the most frequent responses to what aspects of Snohomish County's tourism products can be improved are: more Affordable, Family Friendly, better Wayfinding, Greater Access to wilderness areas, better Handicap Accessibility, improved Parking, more Winter activities/events, better Litter Removal and better visitor Information.

# DESTINATION ASSESSMENT

---

—

Resonance Consultancy has undertaken Destination Assessments for a wide range of destinations, cities, states and countries. Through our work, we've learned that traditional performance indicators – economic output, spending and visitors – don't tell destinations and their tourism and economic development agencies the whole story.

In our experience, Destination Marketing Organizations focus primarily on growing visitor numbers, but there is relatively scant attention paid to the product development and programming required to maintain and improve the quality of the visitor experience.

As a growing number of visitors base their judgment about destinations on overall experiential quality rather than just the number of must-see attractions, growth in demand must be matched by expansion and improvement in supply to ensure the viability and sustainability of a destination's tourism industry over the long term.

From a demand side perspective, it's generally straightforward to assess a destination's performance using standardized measures of visitor traffic, spending or hotel occupancy rates. But when it comes to evaluating the supply side of a destination, no standardized measures exist to benchmark the experiential quality of one destination to the next. Traditional visitor intercept surveys provide destinations with insight into what visitors find appealing or lacking, but there is no efficient or standardized way to compare and benchmark these results with those of other destinations.

To solve this problem, Resonance Consultancy has analyzed social media channels from increasingly influential websites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp. We've identified how many quality experiences cities offer from one product and experience category to the next as rated by locals and visitors themselves. With more than 270 million combined reviews, these sites are both powerful marketing channels for destinations, and can also provide new insight and intelligence into the experiential quality and differentiating characteristics of destinations themselves.

We think you'll find that this approach to examining the quality of destinations from the visitors' point of view is both an effective and efficient method to measure supply side performance from one destination to the next and a valuable tool to better understand the competitive advantages – and weaknesses – of your destination.

Please note, Quality Experiences are those with an overall rating of "very good" or "excellent".

## Methodology

The Destination Assessment for Snohomish County measured tourism’s supply-side performance and competitiveness based on both absolute and indexed scales: the absolute scale measures the total number of quality experiences; the indexed scale evaluates performance in terms of how many quality experiences are delivered per visitor (i.e. the number of quality experiences per 100,000 visitors).

Visitor estimates for all Washington Counties have been gathered from Dean Runyan Associates. Estimates for Metro Vancouver have been constructed using publicly available data. Changes to visitor estimates will have an inverse impact on the index results.

The rankings that follow are based on an analysis of the number of products or experiences rated as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ in 17 different areas using TripAdvisor and YELP data.

We have grouped the seventeen areas into six core categories:

### 1. Culture

The arts and culture in a city

- Major Events
- Museums
- Theaters & Concerts

### 2. Entertainment

Fun attractions and experiences

- Shopping
- Nightlife
- Amusement Parks
- Zoos & Aquariums
- Casinos & Gambling
- Fun & Games

### 3. Sightseeing

The natural and built environment of a city

- Sights & Landmarks
- Nature & Parks
- Sightseeing Tours

### 4. Sports & Adventure

A destination’s outdoor activities and adventures

- Outdoor Activities
- Boat Tours & Water Sports



## 5. Culinary

The food experiences in a destination

- Food & Drink
- Restaurants

## 6. Lodging

Accommodations in a city

- Hotels

In the creation of the Destination Assessment, Resonance worked with Snohomish County to select 14 “competing” destinations based on locale, well known alternative destinations from previous visitor studies, and aspirational destinations that Snohomish County may seek to emulate.

The competitive set that was selected for Snohomish County included:

- Chelan County, WA (Wenatchee)
- Clallam County, WA (Port Angeles)
- Deschutes County, OR (Bend)
- Jefferson County, WA (Port Townsend)
- King County, WA (Seattle)
- Kitsap County, WA (Port Orchard / Bremerton)
- Lane County, OR (Eugene)
- Metro Vancouver, BC (Vancouver)
- Multnomah County, OR (Portland)
- Pierce County, WA (Tacoma)
- Skagit County, WA (Mount Vernon)
- Spokane County, WA (Spokane)
- Thurston County, WA (Olympia)
- Whatcom County, WA (Bellingham)



## Summary

Generally speaking, Snohomish County scores in the top half (1st-8th place) of its competitive set in 15 of the 17 areas of analysis on the absolute scale. This is a reflection of Snohomish County’s modest strength as a tourism destination.

In comparison and in contrast, on a relative basis (ie quality experiences per 100k visitors), Snohomish County only maintains top half rankings in 7 of the 17 categories.

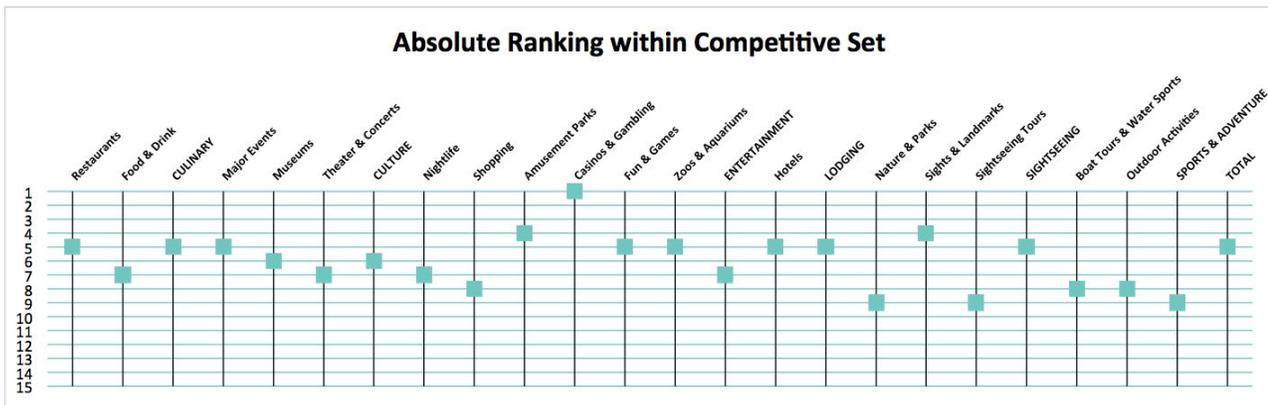
Overall, Snohomish County is ranked in 5th place within its competitive set on the absolute scale and 4th place on the indexed scale.

In absolute terms, Snohomish County scores best in regard to Restaurants (819 quality establishments), Hotels (50), Outdoor Activities (32 quality establishments) and Nature & Parks (31 quality establishments).

In relative terms (ie quality experiences per 100k visitors), Snohomish County scores best in regard to Casinos & Gambling (2nd place) and Restaurants (4th place).

Full results for the Destination Assessment (Charts & Tables) are included in the Destination Assessment Report (January 6, 2017)

Snohomish County Category	Absolute		Indexed	
	Quality Experiences (QE)	Ranking of 15	QE per 100k Visitors	Ranking of 15
Restaurants	819	5	10.7	4
Food & Drink	19	7	0.2	12
<b>CULINARY</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>4</b>
Major Events	0	5	0.0	5
Museums	16	6	0.2	10
Theater & Concerts	8	7	0.1	10
<b>CULTURE</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>10</b>
Nightlife	14	7	0.2	12
Shopping	26	8	0.3	14
Amusement Parks	1	4	0.0	5
Casinos & Gambling	3	1	0.0	2
Fun & Games	18	5	0.2	8
Zoos & Aquariums	1	5	0.0	7
<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>13</b>
Hotels	50	5	0.7	11
<b>LODGING</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>11</b>
Nature & Parks	31	9	0.4	13
Sights & Landmarks	21	4	0.3	6
Sightseeing Tours	19	9	0.2	11
<b>SIGHTSEEING</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>11</b>
Boat Tours & Water Sports	10	8	0.1	10
Outdoor Activities	32	8	0.4	11
<b>SPORTS &amp; ADVENTURE</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1088</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>4</b>



## Restaurants

For Restaurants, Snohomish County’s 819 quality establishments translate into 10.7 establishments per 100k visitors or 4th place among its competitive set. Only Metro Vancouver, Multnomah County and King County have more quality restaurants per 100k visitors. Metro Vancouver holds a significant margin for Restaurants per 100k visitors.

## Food & Drink

For Food & Drink experiences, TripAdvisor lists 19 quality establishments in Snohomish County placing it in the middle of the pack (7th place) among its competitive set of 15 counties.

On a relative basis (Quality Experiences per 100k visitors) for Food & Drink, Chelan County is 1st by a wide margin over the rest of the field including Metro Vancouver. Snohomish County is 12th on the indexed scale in a mid-tier grouping of 7 counties.

## Culinary

The Culinary grouping is an aggregate of Restaurants and Food & Drink experiences. Snohomish County is 5th on the absolute scale and 4th on the relative scale due to its strength in quality Restaurants.

## Major Events

Snohomish County is at the bottom of the list (tie for 5<sup>th</sup> in absolute and relative terms) in the category of Major Events as a result of no postings with qualifying scores in this category.

In absolute terms, King County is the winner in this category (Major Events), while Skagit County and Metro Vancouver do very well on the indexed scale.

## Museums

Snohomish County registers 16 quality experiences for Museums, putting it in 6th place on the absolute scale and 10th place on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver and King County are the first and second place finishers (absolute terms) in this category with 71 and 66 quality establishments respectively. In relative terms, Metro Vancouver is the top destination on the relative scale, while Jefferson County's 11 quality establishments for Museums and a lower visitor count puts it in second place just shy of Metro Vancouver.

## Theaters & Concerts

Snohomish County has registered 8 quality experiences for Theaters & Concerts putting it in 7th place on the absolute scale and 10th place on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver, King County and Multnomah County score very well on the absolute scale, while Metro Vancouver and Multnomah County also score very well on the relative scale.

## Culture

Culture is an aggregate of Major Events, Museums and Theaters & Concerts, and as such Snohomish County scores 6th place on the absolute scale and 10th and relative scale.

## Nightlife

Snohomish County scores only 14 quality Nightlife establishments putting it in 7th place on the absolute scale and 12th place on the relative scale. King County, Multnomah County and Metro Vancouver do quite well in absolute terms, while Multnomah County, Metro Vancouver, Spokane County and King County are stronger for Nightlife on the indexed scale per 100k visitors.

## Shopping

For Shopping, Snohomish County registers 26 quality establishments placing it in 8th position among its competitive set (absolute terms) and in 14th place among its competitive set (relative terms). The counties of King, Metro Vancouver and Multnomah are the clear winners in absolute terms with 160, 111 and 95 quality establishments respectively. In relative terms (adjusted for 100k visitors), Jefferson County and Metro Vancouver are the top shopping destinations by a clear margin. Please note, this result may be somewhat misleading since Seattle Premium Outlets in Marysville only counts as one quality establishment even though it includes 131 individual brands. If counted separately, this collection of shops

would significantly move Snohomish County up the ranking. Of course this would also be true for other counties in the competitive set with their own “malls”.

## Amusement Parks

Snohomish County registers one quality establishment in the category of Amusement Parks (Whirly Ball in Edmonds) putting it in a tie for 4th place (absolute and relative) with 3 other destinations, while King County and Metro Vancouver are the absolute winners with 5 and 4 quality establishments respectively in this area. On a relative basis, Metro Vancouver is 1st for Amusement Parks.

## Casinos & Gambling

Snohomish County registers three quality establishment in the category of Casinos & Gambling (Tulip Casino, Angel of the Winds Casino and Quil Ceda Creek Casino) putting it in 1st place (absolute) and 2nd place (relative) among its competitive set in this category. Three Counties each register 2 quality Casinos & Gambling establishments, while 4 others register a single establishment.

## Fun & Games

TripAdvisor reports that Snohomish County has 18 quality Fun & Games establishments ranking it 5th out of its competitive set in absolute terms and 8th out of its competitive set in relative terms. Metro Vancouver and King County top the absolute list by a wide margin, while Metro Vancouver tops the relative list by a wide margin.

## Zoos & Aquariums

For Zoos & Aquariums, Snohomish County is tied for 5th with 1 quality establishment (The Reptile Zoo in Monroe), while Pierce County leads the competitive set with 6 quality establishments in this category. On the relative scale, Pierce County and Jefferson County do very well in first and second position. Snohomish County is 7th on the relative scale.

## Entertainment

Entertainment is the aggregate grouping of Nightlife, Shopping, Amusement Parks, Casinos & Gambling and Zoos & Aquariums. In total, Snohomish County has 63 quality Entertainment establishments putting it in 7th place among its competitive set (absolute scale) or 13th, near the bottom of the scale on a relative basis (per 100k visitors).

## Hotels

Snohomish County registers 50 quality Hotels according to TripAdvisor, putting it in 5th place in absolute terms and 11th place in relative terms among the competitive set of 15 destinations. King County and Metro Vancouver lead the list of total quality establishments for Hotels (absolute), while Metro Vancouver and Clallam County lead the relative list of Hotels per 100k visitors.

Lodging is a duplicate of the results for Hotels.

## Nature & Parks

For Nature & Parks, Snohomish County's 31 establishments rank it 9th out of 15 (absolute scale) and 13th out of 15 (relative scale). King County, Metro Vancouver and Multnomah County lead the absolute scale, while Metro Vancouver, Clallam County and Whatcom County lead the group on the index scale. Please note that this category does not take into consideration the size or scope of individual Nature & Parks establishments, only the number of establishments.

## Sights & Landmarks

Snohomish County's 21 quality Sights & Landmarks put it in 4th place on the absolute scale and 6th place on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver is the 1st place finisher (absolute scale) with 101 quality Sights & Landmarks followed by King County (84) and Multnomah (77). Metro Vancouver is also the big winner for Sights & Landmarks on the relative scale (adjusted for visitor counts).

## Sightseeing Tours

Metro Vancouver and King County are particularly strong (absolute terms) in the area of Sightseeing Tours with 149 and 142 quality establishments respectively. Snohomish County's 19 quality establishments in this category place it in 9th position on the absolute scale and 11th position on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver places first by a wide margin on the relative scale.

## Sightseeing

In the aggregate grouping of Sightseeing, Snohomish County's 71 quality establishments place it in 5th position on the absolute scale and 11th place on the relative scale.

## Boat Tours & Water Sports

For a County defined by the coast on its western side, Snohomish County registers 10 quality Boat Tours & Water Sports establishments, putting it in 8th place out of 15 on the absolute scale and 10th place on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver and King County are the major players in this area with 62 and 47 establishments respectively. Metro Vancouver and Clallam County are the leaders on the relative scale by a good margin.

## Outdoor Activities

Outdoor Activities is dominated by Metro Vancouver with a first place ranking on the absolute scale and relative scales. Snohomish County's 32 quality establishments (8th place absolute) puts it in 11th place on the relative scale.

## Sports & Adventure

Sports & Adventure is the aggregate grouping of Boat Tours & Water Sports and Outdoor Activities. Snohomish County's total of 42 establishments places it 9th of 15 on the absolute scale and 11th of 15 on the relative scale. Metro Vancouver is the leader of both absolute and relative rankings.

## Total

The Total rankings for quality tourism within this customized competitive set shows Snohomish County in the top tier of the absolute scale (5th place ) and relative scales (4th place). King County and Metro Vancouver lead in absolute terms, while Metro Vancouver and Multnomah County lead in relative terms.

## Spider Web Charts

Based on the relative scale, the spider web charts show Snohomish County is generally strongest in Lodging, followed by Culinary (due to Restaurants) and Entertainment (due to Casinos), moderately strong in the aggregate groupings of Sports & Adventure, Sightseeing and Culture.

## Snohomish County vs Chelan

On the absolute scale, Snohomish County tourism is about the same size as Chelan County tourism, except for Culinary where Snohomish does very well. In looking at the one-to-one comparisons on the relative scale, Snohomish County does less well against Chelan County in the categories of Shopping, Nature & Parks, Sightseeing Tours and Outdoor Activities.

## Snohomish County vs Clallam County

On the absolute scale, Snohomish County tourism is about the same size as Clallam County tourism, except for Culinary where Snohomish does very well. Comparing Snohomish County against Clallam County on the indexed scale shows Clallam catching up in most categories as a result of lower visitor numbers.

## Snohomish County vs Deschutes County

In Snohomish County vs Deschutes County, Deschutes County is slightly better in the categories (absolute and indexed) of Nature & Parks, Sightseeing Tours and Outdoor Activities.

## Snohomish County vs Jefferson County

On an absolute basis, Snohomish and Jefferson County are about the same in all categories except Restaurants and Hotels. On a relative basis, the table is turned in favor of Jefferson County now doing better in Museums, Shopping, Sightseeing Tours and Outdoor Activities.

## Snohomish County vs King County

In comparing Snohomish County to King County on a relative basis, many categories are about even except in Restaurants where King County leads. In absolute terms, King County is a larger tourism destination.

## Snohomish County vs Kitsap County

Snohomish County is about even with Kitsap County (absolute and relative terms) in almost all categories. The exception to the rule is Restaurants where Snohomish County excels.

## Snohomish County vs Lane County

Snohomish County is about even with Lane County (absolute and relative terms) in almost all categories. The exception to the rule is Restaurants where Snohomish County excels.

## Snohomish County vs Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver tourism beats Snohomish County tourism (absolute and relative terms) in all categories.

## Snohomish County vs Multnomah County

Multnomah County tourism beats Snohomish County tourism (absolute and relative terms) in all categories.

## Snohomish County vs Pierce County

Snohomish County is about even with Pierce County (absolute and relative terms) in almost all categories.

## Snohomish County vs Skagit County

Generally speaking, Snohomish County is even with Skagit County across most categories on the absolute scale except for Hotels and Restaurants where Snohomish is stronger. On the relative scale adjusted for visitor counts, Skagit is stronger in all categories except Restaurants.

## Snohomish County vs Spokane County

Snohomish County is about even with Spokane County (absolute and relative terms) in almost all categories. The exception to the rule is Restaurants where Snohomish County excels.

## Snohomish County vs Thurston County

Generally speaking, Snohomish County is even against Thurston County across most categories on the absolute scale except in Restaurants and Hotels where Snohomish excels. On the relative scale Thurston does well especially in Nature & Parks.

## Snohomish County vs Whatcom County

Generally speaking, Snohomish County is even against Whatcom County across most categories on the absolute scale except in Restaurants where Snohomish excels. On the relative scale Whatcom does well especially in Nature & Parks.