



# CORTES ISLAND COMMUNITY TOURISM PLAN

## ***Acknowledgements***

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### **Land Acknowledgement**

All involved in the execution of this project respectfully acknowledge the traditional, unceded, ancestral lands of the Klahoose, Tla'amin and Homalco First Nations. We acknowledge Cortes Island and the surrounding region has been and continues to be home to Indigenous peoples of the area since time immemorial, and we recognize the vital contributions of Indigenous culture, history, and perspectives in our shared past and present and into the future.

# ***Executive Summary***

## **Introduction**

The Cortes Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA), with support from Destination British Columbia and Pacific Economic Development Canada, embarked on a refresh of its 2014 Community Tourism Plan from September 2023 to March 2024. The Community Tourism Plan presents a vision for tourism on Cortes Island, highlights the characteristics of the visitors who best align with the island's values and assets, outlines guiding principles to support decision-making, and identifies 17 recommendations, with tactical actions, to advance in the next three to five years.

## **Process**

A document review informed the plan to ensure the priorities and recommendations aligned with current government goals and objectives. The community engagement was extensive, including ten interviews with targeted individuals, four in-community and two online community sessions, and a survey that generated 50 responses. Two advisory group meetings were held to review the findings and recommendations prior to finalizing the report.

The plan aims to cultivate regenerative tourism practices and help Cortes attract visitors who share similar values to the island's residents and appreciate the beauty, authenticity, natural environment and unique vibe of the island's culture. Tying Cortes Island's tourism development priorities to a broader global perspective, each of the recommendations identified in the plan has been aligned to one, or more, of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>1</sup>

## **Destination Overview and Findings**

Seven key findings emerged from the research and community engagement:

1. Cortes is a beautiful destination that many people want to visit, but it's reaching the limits of its ability to welcome more visitors.
2. Tourism's potential economic benefits are not currently being optimized – opportunities exist to increase the spend per visitor through targeted investments and development.
3. Key developments are taking place that will support the growth of the visitor economy. Still, collaborative investments, planning and management are needed to optimize these opportunities and mitigate negative community impacts.
4. There are a variety of creative, affordable staff housing solutions that could be explored to enable a thriving visitor economy, with the new hotel tax contributing a portion of funding to advance ideas.
5. The current infrastructure, services, and communications are not staged to foster responsible visitor behaviours that align with the island's value for maintaining its pristine natural environment and unique way of life.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

6. A collaborative destination management structure is needed for long-term success.
7. Cortes is an ideal gateway to Desolation Sound, but infrastructure and services to support the development of recreational boating and water sports are needed to realize this potential.

### Vision, Values and Guiding Principles

The community engagement sessions and input led to the development of the following vision statement:

*Cortes Island is a remote destination welcoming visitors who value its natural beauty, diversity, and way of life to help preserve its natural environment and contribute positively to the island's economy and residents.*

The following guiding principles were identified to support decision-making:

- Creates net positive impacts
- Fosters a thriving, local, circular economy
- Supports reconciliation by respecting Indigenous culture, rights and interests
- Climate-conscious lens guides development
- Maximizes the use of what exists before building new
- Educates and empowers desired visitor behaviours
- Supports Cortes Island's values, culture and way of life

The ideal guest for Cortes Island was identified as:

*Cortes Island is a place for nature lovers who are adventurous, low-impact and respectful. They value community, support local businesses, engage in ecologically and socially conscious activities that create deep connections and encourage them to contribute positively to the community.*

### Recommendations and Actions

Cortes Island is a beautiful destination that needs to right-size tourism to optimize the economic contribution of the visitor economy while staying within the limits of its environmental carrying capacity.

Five strategic pillars that support tourism were identified: transportation, visitor experience, well-being, environment, and destination management. Seventeen recommendations with associated actions were outlined and evaluated using a priority-setting framework that assigned each one as a quick win, medium, a longer-term action, set aside until resources allow, or re-evaluate in the future.

Pillar	Recommendations	Actions	SDG Alignment
<b>Transportation</b>	1. Create a Transportation Task Force (TTF) to address climate-friendly transportation options.	1.1 – 1.5	10, 11, 13
	2. Improve road quality and safety.	2.1 – 2.5	3, 11, 15
	3. Support safe, active transportation solutions that improve the ability for visitors to travel to, and around, the island without a vehicle.	3.1 – 3.4	3, 11, 13
	4. Increase the availability of e-vehicle and e-bike charging locations.	4.1 – 4.3	7, 11, 13

Pillar	Recommendations	Actions	SDG Alignment
<b>Visitor Experience</b>	5. Increase awareness of existing food services and attract new ones.	5.1 – 5.4	8, 9
	6. Increase awareness of existing and expand the availability of new, year-round visitor experiences.	6.1 – 6.6	4, 8
	7. Increase the availability of needed visitor services.	7.1 – 7.3	8
	8. Improve visitor signage.	8.1 – 8.4	8, 10, 17
	9. Develop and promote new sites to disperse visitors.	9.1 – 9.2	11, 15
<b>Well-Being</b>	10. Explore opportunities for affordable staff housing.	10.1 – 10.5	1, 3, 10, 17
	11. Monitor and measure resident sentiment towards tourism.	11.1	3, 11
	12. Ensure visitors are considered in emergency management planning.	12.1 – 12.2	3, 11
<b>Environment</b>	13. Understand visitor impacts on the island’s water health and supply and carrying capacity.	13.1 – 13.2	6, 11, 12
	14. Increase waste and sewage disposal services to support and facilitate responsible visitor behaviours.	14.1 – 14.4	3, 11, 15
<b>Destination Management</b>	15. Create a cross-organization working group to advance the Community Tourism Plan recommendations.	15.1 – 15.3	17
	16. Educate visitors to support preparedness and manage expectations.	16.1 – 16.5	11, 12, 14, 15
	17. Explore revenue-generating opportunities to fund implementation.	17.1 – 17.2	3,11

### Summary Priorities

In the next five years, a strategic approach is needed, given that Cortes is a destination with little capacity to increase visitation in peak season. Quick wins in the short term should focus on educating and connecting visitors to existing paid activities, services and experiences that will increase yield/spending per visitor, grow the visitor economy, and foster responsible behaviours. As the short-term priorities advance, the medium and long-term priorities focus on strengthening foundations that enable tourism's success while building capacity for regenerative practices.

Quick Wins	Medium and Longer-Term Actions
→ Communicate existing vehicle-free transportation options (1.1-1.3, 3.1-3.2)	→ Increase affordable housing (10.1 – 10.5) → Enhance climate-friendly transportation infrastructure options (1.4. – 1.5, 3.3 – 3.4) → Water supply and waste disposal (13.1 – 13.2, 14.1 – 14.3)
→ Increase awareness of existing visitor services and experiences (5.1, 6.1-6.3, 8.1)	
→ Grow shoulder and off-season visitor opportunities (6.4-6.6)	
→ Enhance visitor communication (16.1-16.3)	
→ Stewardship fees (17.1-17.2)	

## ACCYRNOMS

CCEDA	Cortes Community Economic Development Association
DBC	Destination British Columbia
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Federal Government)
DMO	Destination Management Organization
EMCR	Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (Provincial)
MOTI	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (Provincial)
MRDT	Municipal Regional District Tax (commonly referred to as the 'Hotel Tax')
OCP	Official Community Plan
QXMC	Klahoose First Nation's Economic Development Corporation
RDMO	Regional Destination Management Organization
SRD	Strathcona Regional District
STR	Short-term Rental
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis
4VI	Vancouver Island's destination management and marketing organization

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Cortes Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA), with support from Destination British Columbia and Pacific Economic Development Canada, embarked on a refresh of its 2014 Community Tourism Plan from September 2023 to March 2024. As the world emerges from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the timing is well-positioned to set Cortes Island up for the future, responding to shifts in visitor demand and staging tourism to be a force for good going forward. With the interest in nature-based destinations and outdoor activities fueling increases in visitation to places, such as Cortes Island, that offer pristine nature in beautiful surroundings away from the crowds and noise of the city, the timing for a tourism plan refresh could not be better.

**GOAL / A tourism industry that supports our local economy and our island way of life, and respects our natural environment.**

Source: Cortes Island Local Economic Action Plan

CCEDA's 2018 Local Economic Action Plan identifies tourism as one of six focus areas supporting the local economy and the development of the Island's assets. As part of restaging tourism in a post-COVID world, this project engaged the community in a process of collectively identifying opportunities to manage tourism's impacts so it can benefit both visitors and residents alike in the future.

This plan offers a roadmap to align future private, public, and not-for-profit investments to deliver economic growth while ensuring that tourism supports the community's environmental, cultural, and social values and respects the Cortes way of life. The Community Tourism Plans presents a vision for tourism on Cortes Island, highlights the characteristics of the visitors who best align with the island's values and assets, outlines guiding principles to support decision-making, and defines 17 recommendations, with tactical actions, to advance in the next three to five years.

A tourism plan should not be static but a living document that is reviewed and updated periodically to reflect changing objectives, priorities and market conditions that continuously evolve over time.

### 1.1.2 WHY A TOURISM PLAN?

Preparing a tourism plan for a destination is paramount for fostering a sustainable future for tourism. A plan provides a structured framework for managing tourism development and growth. It helps focus government, businesses, and the community around a common set of priorities that advance tourism's economic goals while addressing tourism's environmental, social, and cultural impacts.

Visitor numbers to Cortes continue to increase as travel rebounds after COVID-19 pandemic. Both international travel and domestic travel spending surpassed 2019 levels for the first time in the third

quarter of 2023.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of a plan to guide investments in time, money, human and technical resources, unchecked tourism growth can lead to a myriad of negative consequences in a destination and impact the resident sentiment towards guests. Infrastructure may become strained as increased visitor numbers overwhelm local resources, resulting in undesirable visitor behaviours, environmental degradation, strain on public services, displacement of residents, erosion of resident sentiment towards visitors and the loss of cultural authenticity and identity as communities cater to tourist demands.

This plan will help manage tourism on Cortes Island and forecast or mitigate any risks of losing control over the growth trajectory of its visitor economy<sup>3</sup>, jeopardizing residents' quality of life and the long-term sustainability of the economic benefits that tourism offers as part of the Island economy.

## 1.2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The project involved 5 phases from September 2023 through March 2024. Figure 1 outlines the key activities included in each of the phases.

FIGURE 1 PROJECT PHASES AND TIMELINE FROM SEPTEMBER 2023 THROUGH MARCH 2024



The approach aimed to optimize input through in-community and online engagement to gather insights from a wide variety of participants and perspectives that included tourism operators, local businesses,

<sup>2</sup> Destination Canada. (2023, Q3). Quarterly tourism snapshot.

<sup>3</sup> The visitor economy looks beyond the traditional definition of tourism as people who are travelling for a holiday to include a broader range of visitor activity including visiting friends and relatives, business, work, events, education, etc. The visitor economy refers to the full value generated by visitors through the direct, indirect, and induced economic activity resulting from visitor spending including revenue, jobs, contribution to GDP and taxes.

and organizations, interested community residents and Klahoose First Nation members about their vision for the future of tourism on Cortes Island.

### **1.1.1 BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

This plan was informed by background research that reviewed the many Federal, Provincial, Regional Government and local plans that impact tourism on Cortes Island. The Cortes Island Community Tourism Plan aligns with the current goals and objectives by identified these government plans (Figure 2), where relevant, to leverage resources and funding opportunities that may be available to advance the tourism plan’s priorities and their implementation.

The bibliography in Appendix 1 lists the documents reviewed as part of the destination research.

**FIGURE 2 ALIGNMENT WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

<b>FEDERAL</b>	<b>PROVINCIAL</b>	<b>REGIONAL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support reconciliation</li> <li>• Grow Indigenous tourism</li> <li>• Reduce carbon emissions</li> <li>• Align with the SDGs</li> <li>• Support regenerative tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow the economic, social and cultural benefits from tourism for residents</li> <li>• Increase visitation and revenue across all seasons</li> <li>• Support reconciliation</li> <li>• Grow Indigenous tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand active transportation options</li> <li>• Improve transportation connectivity to/from and on Cortes</li> <li>• Support a resilient, circular economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster economic stability and self-reliance</li> <li>• Maintain and support the island’s way of life</li> <li>• Minimize tourism’s environmental impacts</li> <li>• Leverage existing assets</li> <li>• Support partnership with Klahoose FN</li> <li>• Enhance seasonal dispersion of visitors</li> </ul>

### ***INTERVIEWS***

Ten interviews were conducted with targeted individuals who represent key interested parties with an active role in managing or supporting tourism assets, services, products and/or development (Appendix 2). Together with the desk research, these interviews and meetings with the CCEDA, informed the development of the materials and engagement activities for the first in-community visit.

## **1.1.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### ***IN-PERSON AND ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS***

Six community engagement opportunities were offered – four in-person sessions and two online – with a total of 56 participants whose input helped inform the plan. A list of session participants can be found in Appendix 3.



Six community engagement sessions were held:

- Oct. 23, 2023, 5 – 8 pm: Manson’s Landing
- Oct. 24, 2023, 10am – 12 pm: Gorge Hall
- Nov. 4, 2023, 10am – 12 pm: online via Zoom
- Jan. 17, 2024, 10am – 12 pm: Gorge Hall
- Jan. 17, 2024, 4 – 6 pm: Manson’s Landing
- Jan. 31, 2024, 4 – 5:30 pm: online via Zoom

The first community engagement sessions focused on providing background on the project, setting a foundation of understanding about tourism and introduced the concept of applying a regenerative lens on tourism that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. Plenary and small group roundtable discussions gathered input from participants that was used to draft preliminary findings.

The second series of in-community and online engagement sessions focused on sharing the preliminary discoveries, gathering feedback, inviting additional input on gaps, and beginning to identify strategic priorities.

An online Zoom session after each in-community visit provided an opportunity for those unable to attend, to hear what was shared and provide their input and feedback.

### ***ADVISORY GROUP***

An Advisory Group provided additional input and feedback throughout the project to ensure:

- The strategic and tactical directions in the plan optimize the economic contribution of tourism while delivering the appropriate benefits to businesses and communities, as well as consider the needs and desires of the Island’s residents;

- To have a group of project ambassadors who can help foster understanding of and support for the Community Tourism Planning Process; and
- Ensure a broad base of perspectives, expertise and knowledge were considered throughout the project.

The list of Advisory Group members is located in Appendix 4.

## **SURVEY**

Insights from the community engagement sessions were used to prepare a draft vision statement, ideal guest statement, guiding principles, and strategic priorities. Residents were then invited to review and share their feedback on the preliminary ideas through an eight-question survey that invited input between February 1-12, 2024. Fifty participants responded. A copy of the survey is in Appendix 5.

### **1.1.3 DESTINATION ASSET INVENTORY**

A destination asset inventory was created as part of the project to help identify the core and secondary demand generators<sup>4</sup> and current gaps in infrastructure, paid and unpaid activities, services and experiences that represent potential for development to enhance the visitor experience, extend the season, increase visitor spending, and create new reasons to come or stay longer.

## **1.3 A REGENERATIVE LENS**

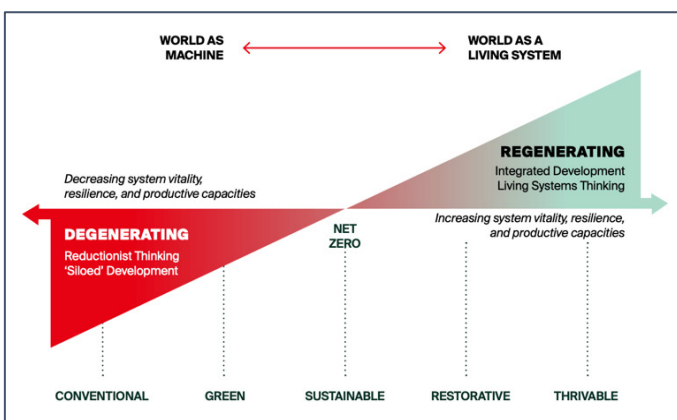
Worldwide, tourism continues to emerge as a significant and growing economic sector. However, there is increasing recognition that its growth and development have been accompanied by negative impacts on the environment, communities, and residents.

As in many destinations, resident sentiment towards tourism on Cortes Island is mixed. Tourism represents an important revenue-generating sector for many residents and businesses whose livelihood relies on, or is supplemented by, visitor spending. But growing environmental issues, pressure on the Island's water supply, overcrowding in the summer at popular sites such as Hague Lake and challenges managing the needs of both residents and visitors for limited access to ferry space, paint a picture of a destination that has already reached its maximum capacity during the peak summer season.

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<sup>4</sup> Core demand generators are the key activities, events, businesses, features, etc. that represent the primary reasons that visitors come to a destination. The secondary demand generators are complementary activities, events, businesses, features, etc. contribute to the visitor's experience, extend their stay, and enhance their experience but aren't the main reasons for visiting.

FIGURE 3 REGENERATIVE TOURISM



Source: Destination Canada, A Regenerative Approach to Tourism

Post-COVID, as part of the discussion on how to ‘build back better’, there has been greater emphasis on a new approach to development that focuses on regeneration (Figure 3) – an approach that goes beyond sustainability, where tourism contributes to revitalizing, restoring, and improving a destination. Regeneration involves a shift in thinking and a holistic approach to solving environmental, social, and economic problems that doesn’t just lead to zero damage, but to healing what has already been harmed.

### THE BENEFITS OF A REGENERATIVE APPROACH

Cortesians love where they live and they want their home to remain a natural paradise. By fostering regenerative tourism practices, Cortes can better attract the types of visitors who share similar values to the Island’s residents and appreciate the beauty, authenticity, natural environment, and unique cultural vibe.

As interest in meaningful travel experiences continues to grow, and visitor bookings and purchases are increasingly influenced by the availability of responsible, sustainable experiences and destinations, Cortes Island has an opportunity to be a leader in destination management using a regenerative lens, emphasizing a balance between economic vitality, community social and cultural well-being, and environmental stewardship.

## ALIGNING WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SGDS)

The recommendations and actions in this plan have been aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to foster peace and prosperity for people and planet, now and into the future<sup>5</sup> (Figure 4).

This global perspective is being embraced by destinations around the world. Each priority in the plan aligns to one or more, of the SDGs. This alignment fosters a more holistic and responsible approach to tourism development in guiding initiatives that promote economic growth, protect the natural resources, support the local community, foster cultural preservation and enhance destination competitiveness. It also communicates to conscientious travellers who are seeking destinations committed to responsible and ethical tourism practices, that Cortes Island cares about fostering tourism that is a force for good.

FIGURE 4 UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UNWTO, <https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

## 2. THE TOURISM CONTEXT

Tourism on Cortes Island is intricately connected to broader visitor trends across Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver Island. Cortes Island's tourism sector reflects and is influenced by larger trends, such as a growing interest in nature-based experiences, wellness, and immersive cultural encounters, as well as similar constraints experienced by the industry as a whole. Understanding the tourism context influencing the situation on Cortes Island helps understand the outlook where rising demand will likely continue to strain resources and outstrip capacity.

### 2.1 TOURISM IN CANADA<sup>6</sup>

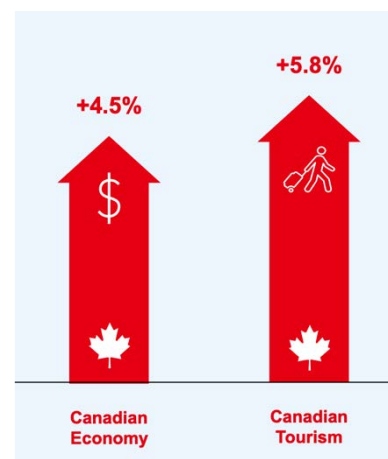
Tourism in Canada is anticipated to grow 5.8% per year from 2024 through 2030 (Figure 5). Despite a volatile global environment, tourism continues to be resilient, with consumers prioritizing travel over other categories of discretionary spending.

Domestic travel by Canadians within Canada led tourism's rebound post-pandemic. Even with the current challenges in Canada's economic climate, 48% of Canadians are prioritizing travel at the expense of other spending.

International visitation to Canada is rising rapidly, with a 47% increase in tourism visits year-over-year from 2022 to 2023 and a predicted 13% increase in 2024. The US will remain the leading international market for visitors and spending. Canada has a strong reputation with international travellers and is a top, long-haul destination for consideration in France, the UK, Germany, Mexico, and the US.

Supply constraints on Cortes Island are similar to those experienced in the rest of Canada. These include insufficient accommodation supply to meet peak season demand, shortages of available workers to service visitors, and transportation access that lacks enough capacity and frequency to meet visitor and resident needs.

FIGURE 5 ANTICIPATED ANNUAL GROWTH OF TOURISM IN CANADA 2024 TO 2030



Source: Destination Canada

### 2.2 TOURISM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA<sup>7</sup>

Visitor trends within British Columbia mirror the strong rebound in travel across Canada. Destination BC's international visitor arrivals year-to-date for November 2023 show a 69.2% increase in arrivals over the same period in 2022, with US overnight arrivals showing a 65.4% increase.

<sup>6</sup> Data in this section is from Destination Canada's 2023 Fall Tourism Outlook.

<sup>7</sup> Data in this section is from Destination British Columbia's 2023 Tourism Industry Dashboard and 2023 Domestic Market Profiles.



Passenger volumes to Vancouver International Airport show strong year-over-year performance from 2022 to 2023, with domestic traffic up 27%, US traffic up 58.6% and European traffic up 19%.

BC Ferries passenger volumes between Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo, likewise, show strong growth, increasing by 9.7% in 2023 (over 2022), with January - May passenger volumes showing the largest increases.

British Columbians, Albertans, and Ontarians represent the three largest domestic origin markets for visitors in BC. Figure 6 outlines the visitor characteristics of these markets.

**FIGURE 6 VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS OF BC'S LARGEST DOMESTIC VISITOR MARKETS**

Market Rank	Average Trip Length for VI Visits (nights)	Average Trip Spend	Average Trip Party Size	Share of Nights in the VI Region	Top Trip Activities Relevant to Cortes Island
1 – BC	3.0	\$341	1.5	27%	Visiting friends and relatives, beaches, sampling local foods
2 – Alberta	4.2	\$461	1.5	20%	Trying local cuisine, hiking/walking in nature, natural attractions, viewing wildlife and marine life
3 – Ontario	4.4	\$734	1.3	11%	Trying local cuisine, hiking/walking in nature, natural attractions, viewing wildlife and marine life

Recreational ocean boating in BC is also showing signs of a strong rebound. Website traffic on AhoyBC, the British Columbia Ocean Boating Tourism Association’s website dedicated to promoting BC as a world class boating destination, parallels the growing interest in tourism in the rest of the province, is exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Desolation Sound is the most popular boating region on BC’s coast. If the advantageous US dollar exchange rate persists into 2024 and beyond, it is likely to contribute to increased interest in Americans travelling north to BC for recreational boating in the Salish Sea, Desolation Sound, and the Cortes Island area.

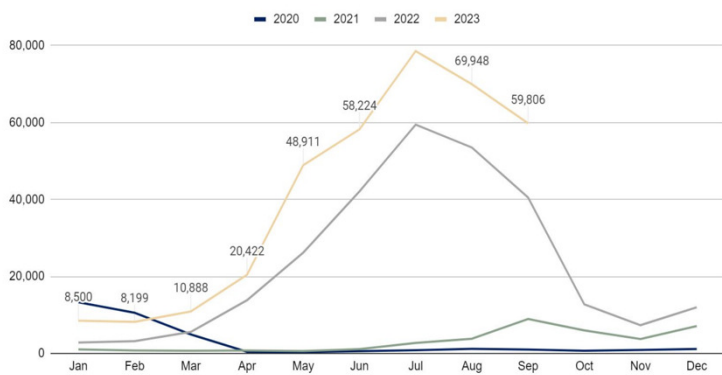
### 2.3 TOURISM ON VANCOUVER ISLAND<sup>8</sup>

As in BC, travel to Vancouver Island parallels broader trends showing strong post-pandemic growth. International travellers ' trips to Vancouver Island in July, August, and September 2023 saw a 32%, 31%, and 486% increase, respectively, compared to 2022 (Figure 7). The average trip length for international visitors to Vancouver Island in 2023 was 8.4 nights. The top five international markets showing the

<sup>8</sup> Data in this section is from the British Columbia Regional Tourism Secretariat’s 2023 International Yearly Visitor Highlights for Vancouver Island, September update and information provided by BC Ferries.

strongest rebound in travel to Canada include the UK, Germany, Australia, Mexico, and France, which are all target international markets where Destination Canada and Destination British Columbia focus their marketing and promotional activities.

**FIGURE 7 INTERNATIONAL TRIPS TO VANCOUVER ISLAND BY MONTH**



Source: 4VI. Yearly Visitor Highlights, 2023. Vancouver Island – September Update

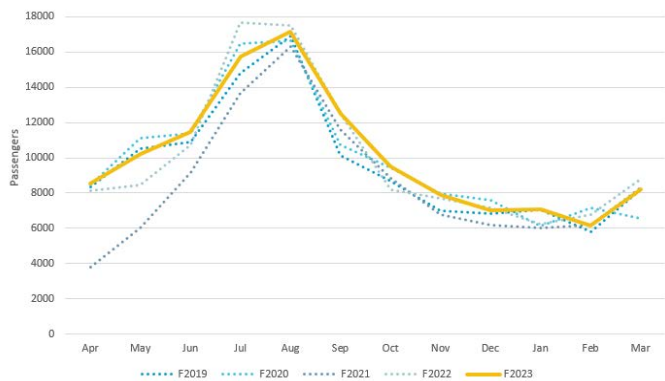
Passenger volumes at Campbell River, Comox and Nanaimo airports likewise showed strong increases with traffic up 43.1%, 29.6% and 17.8% respectively from 2022 to 2023.

Visitor statistics specifically for travellers to Cortes Island are not currently available. Capturing this data would require conducting an intercept survey of visitor traffic arriving by ferry, private boat, water taxi and commercial air service. BC

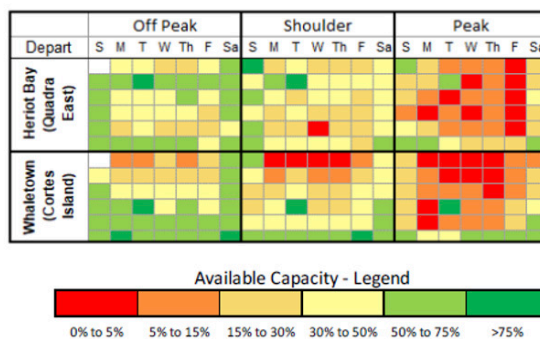
Ferries’ route 24 travels between Quadra and Cortes Islands. Passenger volumes from 2019 to 2023 are shown in Figure 8.

While tourism is poised to grow, based on forecasts for rising volumes of international, US and domestic visitors, Cortes Island is not currently able to take advantage of this growth during the peak visitor season. Figure 8 illustrates that despite growing passenger volumes on BC Ferries in general from 2022 to 2023, little to no growth was seen on the Cortes routes. Vehicle traffic on Route 24 is already essentially at its maximum, exceeding 75-85% vehicle capacity utilization on most peak season, and many shoulder season sailings (Figure 9). In summer 2023, BC Ferries expanded its regular service from six round trips to seven round trips, five days a week to try to support growing passenger volumes and is exploring options and solutions in the interim until a new, larger ferry comes into service in 2027.

**FIGURE 8 ROUTE 24 (HERIOT BAY - WHALETOWN) TOTAL PASSENGERS 2019 TO 2023**



**FIGURE 9 ROUTE 24 AVERAGE AVAILABLE CAPACITY BY SEASON AND DAY OF WEEK**



## 2.4 TOURISM TRENDS

While Cortes is an island, its tourism industry isn't isolated from broader societal and economic trends that are influencing travel demand. These trends were explored to support identified strategies and actions and to help ensure that those strategies and actions would be resilient in a changing world.

There is optimism in the tourism industry, with global travel projected to grow at an average of 5.8% annually until 2032—more than double the expected overall economic growth rate of 2.7% annually.<sup>9</sup> Recognizing that Cortes Island's capacity to welcome more visitors in summer is already at its maximum, growing global demand can still create new opportunities for Cortes to respond to evolving visitor values and interest and capitalize on emerging trends. A few of the trends most relevant to Cortes Island are identified below.

### 2.4.1 TOURISM AS A FORCE FOR GOOD

As post-pandemic visitation rebounds, exceeding 2019 levels, tourism needs to be a force for good, with development focused not just on the needs of visitors, but also on engaging and empowering the local community, contributing to improved quality of life, and striving to repair harm associated with visitation (Figure 10). Cortes has an opportunity to engage visitors in paid experiences that foster an understanding of the unique natural and cultural environments on the island and offer a chance for visitors to give back to the community in positive and meaningful ways during their stay.

### 2.4.1 SUSTAINABLE, LOW CARBON TRAVEL

Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; it's a fundamental consideration influencing today's travellers. With increased awareness of environmental issues and a growing desire to minimize their carbon footprint, visitors are seeking differentiated eco-friendly destinations, itineraries and visitor experiences that minimize their ecological footprint.

The desire for low-carbon travel options is spurring interest in e-vehicle and e-bike itineraries and ride-sharing options. This trend can be tapped into through targeted investments to support the needs of these visitors.

### 2.4.2. EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL

Today's travellers are looking for authentic and immersive experiences that allow them to connect deeply with the destination, its people, landscapes, and culture. Inviting visitors to actively participate in

FIGURE 10 EXAMPLE: BANFF LAKE LOUISE  
TOURISM STRATEGY



In 2022 Banff Lake Louise Tourism set out its new vision for tourism with a long-term focus to build a sustainable visitor economy that contributes to the health of the natural environment and the wellbeing and prosperity of the communities within the park.

<sup>9</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council, 2023.

unique Cortes visitor experiences that can't be had in any other destination makes it possible to create meaningful connections and foster a deeper appreciation for the island and its way of life.

### **2.4.3. WELLNESS TRAVEL**

In today's fast-paced world, the demand for wellness tourism is exploding as travellers prioritize self-care and holistic well-being. Cortes Island's serene, natural surroundings provide the perfect backdrop for wellness experiences – complementing those offered at Hollyhock – connecting the many, local, outdoor activities together with services offered by local bodyworkers, culinary providers, and artisans to nourish the body, mind, and soul.

### **2.4.4. PET-FRIENDLY TRAVEL**

With an increasing number of travellers seeking pet-friendly accommodations and activities, tapping into the pet tourism market can be a lucrative opportunity. Travellers are seeking pet-friendly itineraries and experiences – both paid and unpaid – offering a welcoming environment where visitors and their four-legged companions can spend time together.

### **2.4.5. RV & VAN TRAVEL – ESPECIALLY BY YOUNGER GENERATIONS**

Particularly popular with younger travellers, RV and van travel is growing rapidly. While it's recognized that the RV traveller is not the most highly desired visitor market for Cortes Island, given the additional strain it puts on limited ferry capacity, investments are being made that will increase RV capacity at Gorge Harbour and Squirrel Cove. This opens new, targeted opportunities to connect these visitors to retail, services, amenities, and experiences on the island that can enhance the benefits tourism brings.



### 3. CORTES ISLAND DESTINATION OVERVIEW

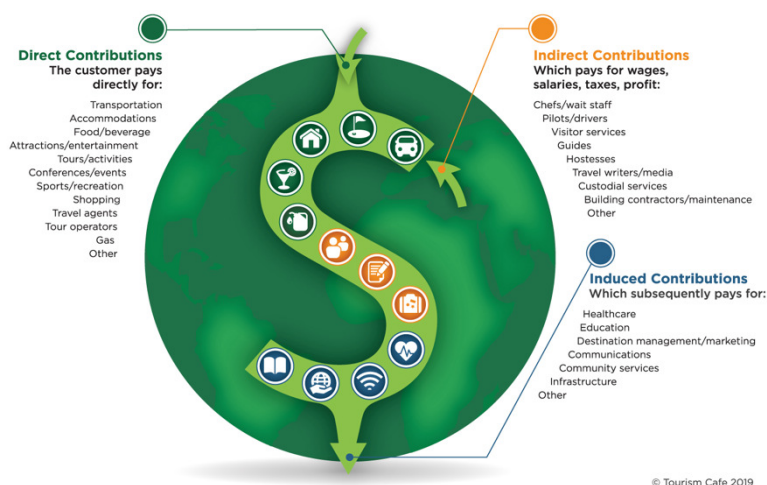
#### 3.1 THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Both the current (2013) Strathcona Regional District Official Community Plan for Cortes Island and the Cortes Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA) Local Economic Action Plan acknowledge tourism as one of the key economic development opportunities to foster a diverse and sustainable island economy.

Cortes Island’s ‘visitor economy’ extends beyond what has traditionally been understood as the ‘tourism economy’. The tourism economy primarily viewed tourism as the revenue generated by leisure travellers from their spending in the destination.

The visitor economy is more comprehensive, taking a broader view of all economic activity generated by different markets that trickles through the economy – this includes the direct, indirect, and induced contributions to the economy through visitor spending (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 THE VISITOR ECONOMY



On Cortes, a significant portion of visitors are leisure travellers coming for vacation. But there are several other market segments that contribute to the visitor economy, including those coming to visit friends and relatives, for business and meetings, educational purposes, events, and workshops (e.g. Hollyhock), recreational boating, and paddling tour companies who transit through with their guests, using Cortes as a launching point on their way to Desolation Sound. Each of these markets contributes to the visitor economy and represents a market of opportunity to explore when considering how to increase the economic benefits of tourism.

Efforts to grow the visitor economy and optimize the economic benefits from tourism, development must be strategic due to limitations in its hosting capacity, particularly in peak season. With limited to no ability to bring more visitors onto the island in summer, other opportunities need to be considered to grow revenue per visitor by expanding visitation in the shoulder season or creating targeted reasons to visit in the off-season.

### 3.2 A COLLABORATIVE TOURISM DELIVERY NETWORK

CCEDA is the organization dedicated to fostering a sustainable economy for Cortes Island. However, while CCEDA is responsible for providing overall direction related to tourism and fostering a vibrant visitor economy on Cortes Island, many of the island’s not-for-profit organizations (Figure 12) play a role in supporting the management and delivery of the visitor experience, along with Federal and Provincial Government entities, the Klahoose First Nation and its Economic Development branch, the Qathen Xwegus Management Corporation (QXMC).

Cortes Island has a complex network of organizations responsible for capital investment and/or maintenance of key tourism assets and infrastructure (e.g. docks, trails, natural areas), the delivery of tourism products and services (e.g. attraction management, visitor information services, retail services, visitor communication and destination promotion). In the absence of a municipality and an official local destination management organization, collaboration and a common vision amongst those who play a role in tourism delivery is critical.

FIGURE 12 CORTES ISLAND'S SOCIAL PROFIT NETWORK



### 3.3 LIMITED HOSTING CAPACITY AND SERVICES

Cortes is a destination with limited hosting capacity that is constrained in various ways. Additional growth in the peak season is not feasible. A lack of available accommodation, food services and activities outside of peak season impacts the island’s ability to welcome more visitors from October to May, and much of the public infrastructure is not set up to service the growing number of visitors coming by car, RV, and boat.

Note: The asset inventory in Appendix 6 outlines the private, public, and not-for-profit run operations that offer the infrastructure, activities, products, and services that support the Cortes Island visitor experience.

#### 3.3.1. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation creates a variety of hosting capacity challenges for Cortes, both to and from the island and for getting around the island.

The primary limiting capacity factor for Cortes is BC Ferries, which currently operates over vehicle capacity during the peak summer season. The current issues are addressed in section 2.3 and future planned ferry service expansion is addressed in 3.5.3. Despite the planned increase in BC Ferries' capacity, this will remain a significant limitation in the foreseeable future, requiring a strategic approach

to tourism development that addresses the ferry needs of both visitors and residents while not further straining the system.

Three float plane operators offer charter and regularly scheduled flight service to Cortes Island, and four water taxi companies. The key challenge for visitors arriving at any private or public docks is the absence of transportation options connecting the arrival points to the main visitor services and amenities.

### **3.3.2. ACCOMMODATION**

There are limited traditional accommodation options on Cortes. With only the Cortes Motel, Hollyhock and three B&Bs, the island relies heavily on short-term rentals (STR), such as Airbnb and VRBO, for most of its accommodation inventory. Insights obtained from AirDNA<sup>10</sup>, for the 12 months from October 2022 to 2023 indicate that 86 listings were available, offering 10,204 available room nights, increases of 26% and 23%, respectively, year-over-year.

Most STRs are only available during the summer, limiting the opportunity to disperse visitors over an extended tourism season, as accommodation options become restricted once the STRs are removed from inventory.

The challenges that STRs bring to communities has been well documented in recent years, negatively impacting the availability and affordability of housing for local residents. On Cortes, the issue has become significant, with community residents citing that tenants are required to leave, and residents move into alternative accommodations such as campsites, in order for the houses to be offered as STRs during peak season.

While the STRs are needed to support and generate economic benefits from tourism, an extreme shortage of employee housing has resulted, negatively impacting the ability of local businesses to recruit needed staff during the summer season. Businesses are unable to expand or optimize their operations due to the inability to attract staff from off-island.

### **3.3.3. FOOD SERVICES**

Food services on the island are limited, with no restaurant available for dinner service once Hollyhock closes for the season. There is an excellent bakery and café at the Natural Foods Coop, the catering company offering a limited selection of tasty meals and snacks at Manson’s Hall a few days a week, and some pre-made foods are available at the grocery stores. Still visitors generally need to be prepared to bring, or purchase, supplies to prepare meals on their own. At least one new, year-round restaurant was identified as important to for the future during the community engagement sessions.



Gorge Harbour store

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<sup>10</sup> AirDNA is a paid platform offering intelligence and data insights on short-term rentals.

### **3.3.3. PAID ACTIVITIES**

There are five Cortes-based private tour operators offering paid, single to multi-day water-based adventures during the summer. Gorge Harbour offers rental services of stand-up paddleboards and kayaks for visitors who are prepared to do self-guided activities, and SUP Cortes offers paddleboard rentals for pickup or delivery. Hollyhock’s multi-day retreat programs are a major draw for visitors to Cortes. The lack of staff was identified as a significant barrier to the growth or expansion of existing operations.



SUP Cortes

A variety of other experiences, workshops and activities were mentioned as being offered through various organizations on the island, such as FOCI, Linnaea Farm, the museum, and local artisans, but finding the information proved to be challenging, suggesting that most of these activities are targeted towards locals, and not necessarily actively promoted to attract visitors. An opportunity exists to increase the breadth of paid visitor experiences available. In particular, experiences that engage travellers with local residents, the natural environments, the island’s stories, and the way of life can foster deep connections while offering ways for visitors to contribute positively to the community during their stay.

### **3.3.4. FESTIVALS AND EVENTS**



There are four main festivals – Cortes Days, Seafest, Lovefest and Sandcastle Day – most of which occur during summer. With the island already at visitor capacity in summer, these events enhance the visitor experience for those who are already on the island but can’t serve as a draw during a period of time when there’s no capacity to welcome more people. Festivals and events are an effective strategy often used by destinations to extend the tourism season and draw visitors during the less busy months. An effective approach could be for small clusters of people and organizations to work together to coordinate targeted, paid events (e.g. a Writer’s Festival, Artist or Writer-in-Residence programs) where accommodation, food services and

activities are packaged together.

### **3.3.5. RECREATIONAL BOATING**

The federal Government harbour authority operates five docks on Cortes. These docks have a primary mandate to support commercial operations, not recreational boating. The Harbour Authority, through an application and registration process, is working to offer its available dock space to recreational boaters, where it can, but demand far exceeds the available space. Gorge Harbour is critical, as it’s the only private operation on Cortes focused on servicing the recreational boater market.

Dock space is a constraining factor for Cortes’ recreational boater hosting capacity, along with a lack of services, amenities, and transportation options. Garbage and recycling facilities, access to fresh water and sewage pump-out locations are all needed, but are not currently available, to mitigate the negative



environmental impacts from overboard dumping, that result when boaters aren't able access these services when in port.

To optimize the potential of this market, transportation services are needed to connect boaters from their arrival points to local activities, experiences, retail and other services. Boaters arriving at Gorge Harbour, the public docks, the Seattle and Vancouver Yacht Clubs, want to explore Cortes Island. However, the economic opportunity is not being optimized and represents a strategic, long-term revenue-generating growth opportunity that has limited impact and footprint on the island.



### 3.4 CURRENT AND UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT IMPACTING TOURISM

#### 3.5.1. KLAHOOSE FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT

The Klahoose First Nation is making the most significant tourism-related development on the island through its Economic Development Corporation, QXMC. They are actively working to build more capacity to invite visitors, increasing the number of RV and camping sites, accommodations, services, and amenities at both Gorge Harbour Marina and Resort and Squirrel Cove. QXMC indicated that the future goal is to transition Squirrel Cove into a campground and evolve Gorge Harbour Resort into a more upscale visitor destination.

Gorge Harbour	Squirrel Cove
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ 7 new RV sites and 6 new tent sites</li> <li>→ 6 accommodation 'domes'</li> <li>→ 1 poolside cottage</li> <li>→ Renovation to 4 lodge rooms</li> <li>→ 3 new wells to provide water to the facilities</li> </ul>	<p><i>Phase 1 - 2024</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ A 4500 ft sq grocery store with 3-4 apartments on the upper floor for staff housing</li> <li>→ Chevron gas station offering three types of fuel and diesel</li> <li>→ New septic wastewater facility to service the campground</li> </ul>

Gorge Harbour	Squirrel Cove
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Exploring installation of e-vehicle charging through a partnership with Flo <i>Phase 2 – TBC, target 2025-2026</i></li> <li>→ 20 RV sites, possibly adding tenting platforms and a couple of ocean-view cabins</li> <li>→ Bathroom, shower, laundry, and ice facility to service the campground</li> </ul>

### 3.5.2. BC PARKS INVESTMENTS

BC Parks has plans to develop a small parking lot on the southeast side of Seaford Road to provide safer parking and access to Hague Lake in the 2024 – 2025 timeframe.

There is a project to formalize the overflow RV camping at Smelt Bay Provincial Park, possibly including the addition of electrical hookups to some upgraded RV sites. This project will not add capacity, as the sites are currently there in the overflow area, but it will make these spots more attractive to RVers.



### 3.5.3. NEW FERRY IN 2027

The main vessels currently operating on the Quadra – Cortes ferry route have a capacity of 26 automobile equivalents (AEQ), 150 passengers and crew for the Tachek and 200 passengers and crew for the Quadra Queen II. Based on the current capacity constraints (Figure 9), BC Ferries has plans to introduce a new Island Class vessel that will accommodate 47 AEQ and up to 450 passengers and crew in 2027 once berth replacements are complete at Heriot Bay and Whaletown.

With the introduction of the new vessel, BC Ferries intends to return to operating six round-trip sailings daily, eliminating the extra sailing deployed to expand capacity during peak season while the small vessel is still in service. Even with the larger ferry starting in 2027 and the addition of new and upgraded RV sites and lodging from 2024 - 2026, the potential exists for the supplementary capacity to be consumed by the extra RV traffic, leaving Cortes with the same ferry situation despite the upgrades.

It will be important for the Ferry Committee to collaborate with QXMC and BC Ferries to discuss options to help mitigate future capacity challenges and explore solutions that support resident and visitor needs.

### **3.5.4. HOTEL-TAX FUNDED AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The new hotel tax, implemented in July 2023, is being used to fund much-needed affordable housing, constructed through the Cortes Housing Society. Current staffing shortages are acute due to the lack of available, and affordable, housing. While some of the new units may be occupied by staff working for businesses that support visitors, there are no units dedicated, nor guaranteed, for this specific need at this time. While the introduction of a hotel tax to support affordable housing is a positive move that delivers direct benefits to the community because of tourism, greater benefits will be realized in the long-term if the hotel tax enables a viable tourism industry by ensuring it supports solutions that specifically address staff housing for those working in tourism-related services.

### **3.5.5. ENHANCED CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE**

A new cell tower has been erected in Manson's Landing, extending the island's cell service. Upgraded fibre optic cable was being installed in 2023. Optimizing these new services to offer greater access for visitors to information while on the island, connecting them to paid visitor activities, events, retail, etc., can be realized if WIFI locations are set up strategically where visitors need them most.

## **3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL AND DESTINATION REALITIES**

The Island's environmental carrying capacity<sup>11</sup> is being strained as more people visit and is potentially poised to worsen with the tourism developments underway. Several concerns emerged during the community engagement, including:

- Water supply – As the climate warms and there is less precipitation, there is concern about the availability and quality of the water supply.
- Wildfire Safety – As the climate warms and dries, wildfire risk increases, threatening the safety of both visitors and residents. Emergency management plans have been made and communicated to islanders, but the plans do not account for visitors' safety, communication, and evacuation.
- Environmental Impacts – Visitors arrive on the Island without pre-booked accommodations, only to find that none are available. Vehicles are parking down quiet roads, where visitors are dumping garbage and leaving excrement in the absence of appropriate facilities.
- Power supply – Occasionally, the power demand exceeds the available supply, and brownouts occur. There is concern that the power grid will be unable to support more visitors in the shoulder and off-season when home heating and air conditioning can strain the power supply.

Wayfinding signage is inconsistent and can be confusing. Visitors would benefit from consistent signage that clearly directs them to the main communities and points of interest. Informational signage at popular trails and beaches, that offers tips on appropriate etiquette (e.g. leave no trace), could support greater environmental and social consciousness and nudge visitors towards desired behaviours. Additional interpretive signage about the local culture, history, flora, Indigenous place names, and

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<sup>11</sup> Carrying capacity is the maximum number of people that a specific environment can sustain based on the available natural resources.

stories would not only be informative but could also help visitors connect more deeply to the unique attributes of Cortes.

### 3.6 SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis (Figure 13) in tourism planning evaluates the destination’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats. It has been crafted from community input to help Cortes capitalize on its strengths, address weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate potential threats, ultimately enhancing long-term success.

FIGURE 13 TOURISM SWOT ANALYSIS FOR CORTES ISLAND

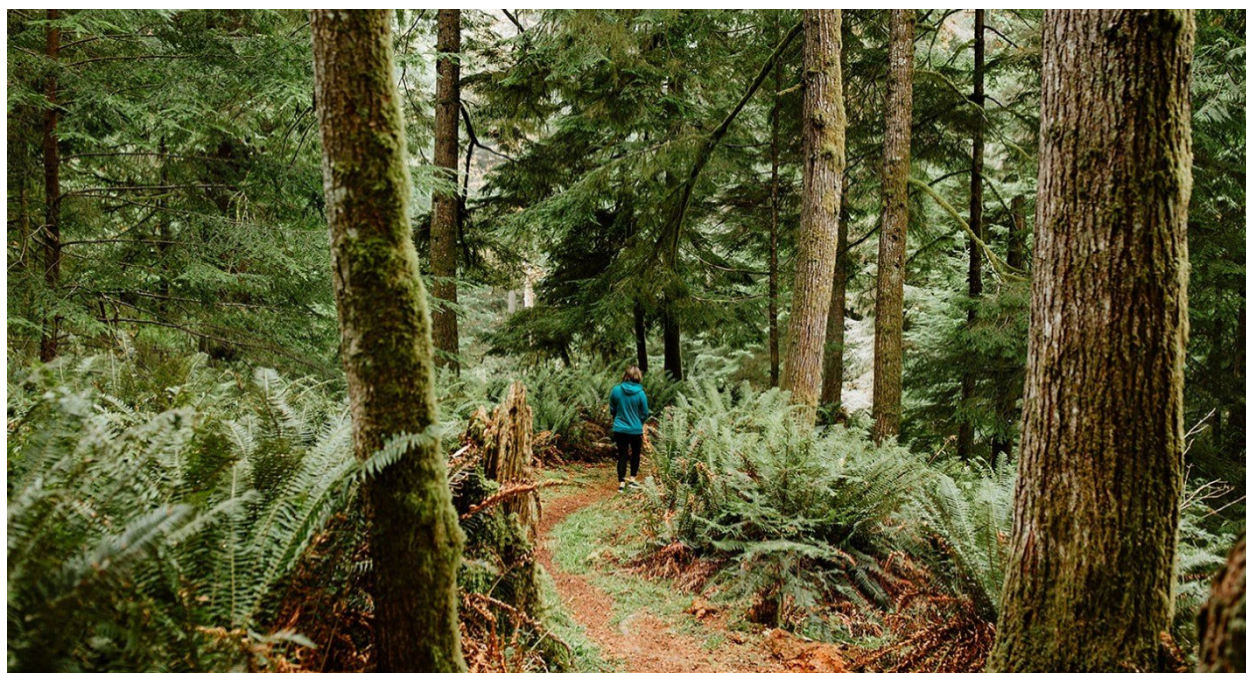


### 3.7 SUMMARY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Seven key findings and opportunities emerged from the background research, interviews and consultation activities summarized below:

1. Cortes is a beautiful destination that many people want to visit, but it's reaching the limits of its ability to welcome more visitors.
  - As a small island destination, there is a limit to the number of visitors that can be welcomed. An understanding of carrying capacity – mainly related to the availability and health of the water supply – is critical in planning for a sustainable future.
2. Tourism's potential economic benefits are not currently being optimized. Opportunities exist to increase visitor spending through targeted investments and development.
  - Visitors need transportation connectivity options at key entry points to better connect them to the island's businesses to purchase products, experiences and services.
  - Expansion and enhanced marketing of available purchasable products and experiences could increase visitor spending, while cultivating meaningful connections between visitors and the destination, offering opportunities for to give back to the community.
  - Exploring ways to extend the tourism season and create targeted events in the off-season when capacity exists, could support visitor economy growth.
3. Key developments are taking place that will support growth of the visitor economy, but collaborative investments, planning and management are needed to optimize these opportunities and mitigate negative community impacts.
  - As more visitors arrive, collaborative discussions and planning around impacts on road quality, safety, parking, ferry impacts, etc., particularly related to the expansion of RV capacity on the island, will be needed, along with exploring opportunities to help connect visitors with the island's businesses, events and activities.
4. There are a variety of creative affordable staff housing solutions to that could be explored to enable a thriving visitor economy, with the new hotel tax contributing a portion of funding to advance ideas.
  - Discussions with the Cortes Housing Society on how the hotel tax can be directed towards initiatives specifically related to staff housing for businesses supporting the delivery of visitor services to enable greater long-term success.
5. The current infrastructure, services and communications are not staged to foster desired visitor behaviours that align with the island's value for maintaining its pristine, natural environment.
  - Enhanced visitor communication is needed to ensure that visitors arrive prepared and understand appropriate etiquette and behaviour on the island.
  - Improved communication is needed to educate visitors on desired behaviours and etiquette, as well as manage expectations so they arrive prepared.

- Investments are needed at key visitor sites to ensure waste can be disposed of in an appropriate manner that aligns with Cortes Island’s environmental values.
6. A collaborative destination management structure is needed to for long-term success.
- Many people and organizations impact, influence and control the assets, amenities and services that contribute to the visitor experience. Collaboration will be needed to ensure that everyone is ‘rowing the boat in the same direction’ and that the impacts of diverse developments and investments are both optimized and monitored for impacts on residents.
  - Other aspects of destination management such as visitor safety in emergencies, signage planning, carrying capacity, etc. require that tourism’s voice and lens are brought into planning discussions. A cross-functional, collaborative destination management structure can support improved communication and a broader understanding of tourism issues.
7. Cortes is an ideal gateway to Desolation Sound but supporting infrastructure and services to support the development of recreational boating and water sports are needed to realize this potential.
- The Klahoose First Nation are pursuing this market with their investment and enhancement of Gorge Harbour, but a broader opportunity to position Cortes as the gateway to Desolation Sound exists. A strategic discussion involving many interested parties would be needed to realize this opportunity and collaboration around investments in infrastructure, services and marketing.



## **4. VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND IDEAL GUEST**

The Cortes Tourism Plan defines a future vision for tourism supported by a series of guiding principles. It sets high-level goals to help realize the vision.

### **4.1 VISION STATEMENT**

Cortes Island is a remote destination welcoming visitors who value its natural beauty, diversity, and way of life to help preserve its natural environment and contribute positively to its economy and residents.

### **4.2 VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Guiding principles provide a clear framework and reference point to support strategic decision-making towards realizing Cortes Island's tourism vision. They help assess opportunities, prioritize actions, and steer towards positive impacts that are aligned with the community's values. The following guiding principles emerged from the community engagement process.

- Creates net positive impacts
- Climate-conscious lens guides development
- Fosters a thriving, local, circular economy
- Maximizes the use of what exists before building new
- Supports Cortes Island's values, culture, and way of life
- Educates and empowers desired visitor behaviours
- Supports reconciliation by respecting Indigenous culture, rights and interests

### **4.3 THE IDEAL GUEST**

The key to Cortes Island's vision and a regenerative future for tourism is a strong understanding of the ideal visitor who best aligns with what the island offers and embodies the desired characteristics, values and behaviours the destination seeks.

Cortes Island is a place for adventurous, low-impact, and respectful nature lovers. These people value community, support local businesses, engage in ecologically and socially conscious activities that create deep connections, and encourage them to contribute positively to the community.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

### 5.1 STRATEGIC PILLARS

Five strategic pillars support tourism on Cortes Island (Figure 14). They focus on a regenerative approach that considers the needs and benefits of visitors and residents. Cortes Island is a destination that needs to right-size tourism in a way that optimizes the economic contributions of the visitor economy while staying within the limits of its environmental carrying capacity.

FIGURE 14 STRATEGIC PILLARS

Transportation	Visitor Experience	Well-Being	Environment	Destination Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access / ferry</li> <li>• Road safety</li> <li>• Active transportation</li> <li>• EV/E-bike infrastructure</li> <li>• Foot passenger transportation connectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food services</li> <li>• Development and promotion of visitor experiences</li> <li>• Shoulder and off-season opportunities</li> <li>• Visitor amenities and services</li> <li>• Signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable staff housing</li> <li>• Resident sentiment</li> <li>• Emergency management planning for visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carrying capacity</li> <li>• Waste services and disposal</li> <li>• Water supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-organization collaboration</li> <li>• Managing visitor expectations and visitor education</li> <li>• First Nations land acknowledgement</li> <li>• Land use management</li> </ul>

### 5.2 SETTING PRIORITIES

Each recommendation and action was examined using the framework in Figure 15 to set priorities.

- Quick wins are priorities with a high impact and are relatively easy to advance in the next one to two years.
- Medium- and long-term actions have a high impact but require longer (3-5 years) to advance and achieve results. They are strategic in nature, although some tactics may be able to start within one to two years.
- Easy-to-action opportunities that have a lower impact on visitors and the community are designated to be set aside until resources allow.
- Complex, of lower value, and cannot be achieved within the next five years, are included for future consideration but are designated as the lowest priority at this time.







FIGURE 15 PRIORITY SETTING FRAMEWORK











## 5.3 TRANSPORTATION

**Opportunity:** Invest in climate-conscious transportation infrastructure, access and connectivity solutions that support passenger and active travel options to and around Cortes Island.

Recommendations and Actions	Priority / Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>1. Create a dedicated Transportation Task Force (TTF) /Group to advance the recommendations from existing reports<sup>12</sup>, which address Cortes Island’s transportation needs related to supporting climate-friendly connectivity solutions.</b>			
<p>1.1 Explore opportunities to partner on expanding Hollyhock’s rideshare board to extend use to other island visitors.</p> <p>1.2 Discuss ways to promote and grow awareness of FOCI’s Room for Rider program to visitors.</p> <p>1.3 Discuss opportunities with Klahoose First Nation to leverage or expand their existing Tues / Thurs shuttle service to Campbell River to accommodate paid visitors.</p> <p>1.4 Collaborate with Quadra Island to explore opportunities to establish a shuttle service connecting Quathiaski Cove to Heriot Bay.</p> <p>1.5 Meet with the Gabriola Community Bus Foundation to learn what was involved in getting the GERTIE bus service running. Determine the next steps needed to advance the service for Cortes.</p>	<p>Quick wins 1.1 – 1.3</p> <p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 1.4 – 1.5</p>	<p>Transportation Task Force (CCEDA to advise who should be part of the group), Quadra ICAN, Quadra Circle, FOCI, KFN</p>	  
<b>2. Improve road quality and safety.</b>			
<p>2.1 Increase safe access and the availability of parking at the main entrance to Hague Lake.</p> <p>2.2 Advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to get upgrades completed for priority locations needing road quality and safety upgrades that have been identified.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>2.3 Collaborate with QXMC and Klahoose First Nation to monitor road quality conditions as RV traffic increases as their development plans are completed. Integrate and prioritize emerging issues with those already identified and communicate them to MOTI.</p>	<p>Quick win 2.1 (BC Parks planned for 2024)</p> <p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 2.2 – 2.5</p>	<p>TTF, KFN, BC Parks, MOTI, QXMC</p>	  

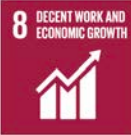


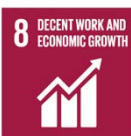
<sup>12</sup> For example, the 2017 Cortes Island Transportation Demand Study and the 2023 Island Coastal Inter-Community Transportation Study.

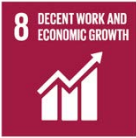
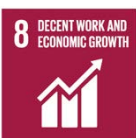


<sup>13</sup> The project Advisory Group indicated that identifying and prioritizing locations benefitting from safety upgrades was done as part of the 2017 Transportation Demand Study and the 2022 Active Transportation Conditions Report.



Recommendations and Actions	Priority / Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<p>2.4 Increase safe access and available parking at the main entrance to the Kw'as Trail system.</p> <p>2.5 Install pedestrian safety mechanisms that increase visibility and warn vehicles that pedestrians are crossing the road.</p>			
<p><b>3. Support safe, active transportation solutions that enhance the appeal and feasibility for visitors to come to and get around Cortes without a vehicle.</b></p>			
<p>3.1 Assess the existing trail infrastructure from Manson's Landing to Smelt Bay Provincial Park to identify and prioritize enhancements (e.g., signage) that can increase visitor/user-friendliness.</p> <p>3.2 Seek capital and/or grant funding to support needed trail enhancements between Manson's Landing to Smelt Bay Provincial Park.</p> <p>3.3 Identify desired foot passenger and cycling enhancements at BC Ferries terminals and onboard the vessels servicing Route 24 to enhance non-vehicle travel. Communicate and advocate for enhancements in the planned facility and vessel upgrades launching in 2027.</p> <p>3.4 Seek funding for a feasibility study to develop a multi-use trail to connect the Whaletown ferry terminal to Manson's Landing.</p>	<p>Quick wins 3.1 – 3.2</p> <p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 3.3 – 3.4</p>	<p>Transportation task force, local organization(s) responsible for trail maintenance and enhancement, Ferry Committee, CCEDA, FOCI</p>	  
<p><b>4. Increase the availability of E-vehicle and E-bike charging locations on the island.</b></p>			
<p>4.1 Meet with QXMC to learn about their plans for an e-vehicle partnership with e-charging stations at Gorge Harbour and/or Squirrel Cove. Explore opportunities for collaboration to expand the partnership to offer locations in other parts of the island.</p> <p>4.2 Explore funding opportunities for a multi-car, e-vehicle charging station in Manson's Landing.</p> <p>4.3 Explore funding and partnership opportunities for e-bike charging stations at key points around the island – Smelt Bay, Manson's, Whaletown, and Squirrel Cove.</p>	<p>Quick win 4.1</p> <p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 4.2 – 4.3</p>	<p>TTF, QXMC, e-vehicle charging partner, land owners of potential charging locations</p>	  

## 5.4 VISITOR EXPERIENCE

**Opportunity:** Focus on visitor experience enhancements that create new revenue-generating opportunities and grow average visitor spend.





Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>5. Increase the awareness of existing food services and grow the availability of food services on the island.</b>			
5.1 Increase promotion and communication to visitors about existing food service options (e.g. prepared meal options at grocery stores, Manson’s Hall café), hours and availability.	Quick wins 5.1 – 5.2	Cortes Museum / Visitor info centre, Short-term rental & accommodation operators, tour companies, CCEDA, QXMC, Hollyhock, and other businesses offering food services	 
5.2 Host a food services forum to brainstorm ideas with community residents and businesses about creative food service options, including delivery options for prepared meals/meal boxes, e.g., to campgrounds and yacht clubs.	Medium & longer-term actions 5.3 – 5.4		
5.3 Collaborate and communicate with QXMC on creative opportunities for additional food services as they explore investing in opening a new restaurant at Gorge Harbour.			
5.4 Seek funding to develop an RFP to identify and kickstart establishing a new restaurant(s) on the island.			
<b>6. Expand the breadth and availability of visitor experiences throughout the year and increase awareness of existing opportunities.</b>			
6.1 Bring organizations that run activities, events, and workshops together to align and strengthen collaboration and explore ideas to improve visitor communications and promotions about what’s happening on the island to visitors.	Quick wins 6.1 – 6.3	Visitor info centre, FOCI, event operators, CCEDA, Short-term rental and accommodation providers, Art Gallery	 
6.2 Develop an events calendar to promote festivals, events, and activities to visitors.	Medium & longer-term actions 6.4 – 6.6		
6.3 Explore ways to increase the availability of purchasable visitor experiences by offering existing or expanding community-oriented activities and programs (e.g. FOCI) to visitors.			
6.4 Identify new experience development opportunities and seek funding to offer visitor experience development training as needed.			
6.5 Discuss opportunities to move an existing festival to a new timeframe outside the peak summer season, or create a new festival (e.g. Nature Festival, Seed			

Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<p>Festival), to draw visitors at a time of year when there’s more capacity. Seek inspiration and spark ideas from other festivals such as Hornby’s Herring Fest and Tofino Whale Festival.</p> <p>6.6 Bring together a cluster of people/business owners with a desire to create new visitor offers (e.g. Artist-in-Residents, Writer’s Festival) and/or packages in the shoulder and winter season, including accommodation, food services and activities, to attract visitors to the island at a new time of year.</p>			
<b>7. Increase the availability of needed visitor services and amenities.</b>			
<p>7.1 Take advantage of new, high-speed WIFI to create a 24/7 visitor Wi-Fi hot spot in the new market pavilion area in Manson’s.</p> <p>7.2 Once built, communicate the availability of laundry and other facilities as QXMC expands its Squirrel Cove development.</p> <p>7.3 Explore the opportunity to add laundry facilities in Manson’s.</p>	<p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions</p> <p>7.1 – 7.3</p>	<p>CCEDA, Twin Island Communications, QXMC, private businesses</p>	
<b>8. Improve visitor signage.</b>			
<p>8.1 Conduct a signage audit around the island to identify and prioritize locations for visitor signage improvements that can be upgraded as funding becomes available. These should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ wayfinding signage to communities and businesses</li> <li>○ informational signage promoting leave-no-trace behaviour at key visitor sites/trails</li> <li>○ interpretive signage sharing the history and stories of the island and its residents</li> <li>○ land acknowledgement and Indigenous place names</li> </ul> <p>8.2 Develop signage guidelines that can be used to create consistent, recognizable, standard visitor signage around the island over time.</p> <p>8.3 Consult the Klahoose First Nation to identify priority locations for signage related to land acknowledgement, Indigenous place names, and history, which will be installed as funding is available.</p> <p>8.4 Seek funding to update and develop new, harmonized signage around the island.</p>	<p>Quick win</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions</p> <p>8.2 – 8.4</p>	<p>Cortes Museum, FOCI, Cortes Island Community Forest, BC Parks, Klahoose First Nation, QXMC</p>	  

Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>9. Develop and promote new sites to better disperse visitors and reduce pressure on over-visited locations.</b>			
9.1 Consult with the community to discuss the challenges of over-visited locations and the opportunity to disperse visitors to new sites. Identify potentially acceptable sites that could be developed.	Medium & longer-term actions 9.1	BC Parks, Cortes Island Community Forest, Community Residents, CCEDA	
9.2 Seek funding for visitor site assessments to identify needed enhancements (e.g. trail development, parking, signage, mapping) and development costs.	Set aside until resources allow 9.2		

## 5.5 WELL-BEING



**Opportunity:** Invest in initiatives that create benefits for and support the health and well-being of residents and visitors alike.

Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>10. Explore opportunities for creative solutions to affordable staff housing.</b>			
10.1 Explore the creation of an employee–landlord matching service that facilitates connections and encourages homeowners to rent to reliable tenants.	Quick wins 10.1 – 10.2	SRD, Cortes Housing Society, QXMC, tourism and other businesses	
10.2 Facilitate local partnerships between companies for shared-staff housing solutions, encouraging pilot-testing of alternative worker's housing facilities, such as temporary pods or tiny houses, to provide interim housing options for tourism staff while long-term affordable housing developments are underway.	Medium & long-term actions 10.3 – 10.5	servicing visitor needs	
10.3 Explore home share programs being utilized on other Gulf Islands, such as the Home Sharing Registry <sup>14</sup> , where similar housing challenges are being experienced.			
10.4 Explore the introduction of a vacancy tax for empty houses that could be used to fund various affordable housing solutions.			





<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sgicommunityresources.ca/housing-registry/>

Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
10.5 Discuss ideas and opportunities for directing hotel tax funding to support housing solutions that directly benefit staff and businesses that enable and support the visitor economy.			

**11. Monitor and measure resident sentiment towards tourism.**

11.1 Use Destination BC’s Resident Perceptions Research Toolkit <sup>15</sup> to benchmark and regularly measure and communicate local perceptions towards tourism’s economic, environmental, social/cultural, job and Indigenous impacts.	Quick win	CCEDA, Cortes Museum / VIC	 
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**12. Ensure visitors are considered in Cortes Island’s emergency management plans.**







12.1 Update visitor communication channels and create communication materials to educate visitors about emergency preparedness on Cortes. <sup>16</sup>	Quick win 12.1	SRD, EMCR, Discovery Island Chamber of Commerce, 4VI,	 
12.2 Review the Cortes Island emergency management plans, update them to ensure visitors are considered in all aspects of emergency planning, communication, support services and evacuation planning and share the plans with Emergency Management and Climate Readiness BC (EMCR).	Medium & long-term actions 12.2	Destination BC Visitor Centre network, CCEDA, Cortes Museum / VIC, QXMC, BC Ferries, STRs, tourism businesses, accommodators	 

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.destinationbc.ca/learning-centre/resident-perceptions-research-toolkit/>

<sup>16</sup> Destination BC offers emergency preparedness messaging, toolkits and additional links and resources at <https://www.destinationbc.ca/what-we-do/destination-management/emergency-preparedness/> that may be helpful in implementing this action.






## 5.6 ENVIRONMENT

**Opportunity:** Monitor, manage and mitigate visitor impacts on the natural environment.

Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>13. Understand the impacts on Cortes Island’s water health, supply and environmental carrying capacity as visitor numbers grow.</b>			
<p>13.1 I support funding applications for an aquifer health and water supply report, ensuring recommendations account for planned tourism developments and growth in shoulder and off-season visitation.</p> <p>13.2 Bring a tourism perspective to meetings and discussions about monitoring the supply and health of Cortes’ water supply and environmental carrying capacity.</p>	<p>Quick win 13.1</p> <p>Medium &amp; long-term 13.2</p>	<p>Cortes Museum / VIC, BC Parks, STRs, accommodators, SRD, QXMC, CCEDA</p>	  
<b>14. Increase the availability of waste disposal at key visitor arrival points and attractions to facilitate and support desired visitor behaviours.</b>			
<p>14.1 Invest in garbage and recycling at docks and popular trailheads that visitors frequent.</p> <p>14.2 Install porta-potty washroom facilities at popular trailheads and beaches that visitors frequent.</p> <p>14.3 Collaborate with QXMC and BC Parks to explore the feasibility of creating an RV sani-dump on the island.</p> <p>14.4 Collaborate with Klahoose First Nation, the Harbour Authority, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to explore the feasibility of a sewage pump-out station for recreational boaters that could also benefit the residents of Cortes Island.</p>	<p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 14.1 – 14.3</p> <p>Set aside until resources allow 14.4</p>	<p>SRD, Harbour Authority, BC Parks, FOCI, QXMC, DFO</p>	  

## 5.7 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

**Opportunity:** Enable tourism’s success through effective collaboration, communication, and advocacy.



Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<b>15. Create a cross-organization tourism working group to enhance communications related to tourism needs, opportunities and challenges and to support effective destination management.</b>			
15.1 Identify and invite key people with a role and interest in the success of Cortes Island's tourism sector to join a working group. Create Terms of Reference and meet regularly to advance the recommendations of the Community Tourism Plan.	Quick wins 15.1 – 15.2	CCEDA, Cortes Museum / VIC, FOCI, Hollyhock, SRD, BC Parks, Community Forest, Harbour Authority, QXMC, tourism businesses	
15.2 Engage with Klahoose First Nation to discuss the Community Tourism Plan and invite them to share their thoughts and how their perspective could be integrated into a future update to the plan as their opportunities unfold.			
15.3 Revisit and update the tourism plan annually.			
<b>16. Increase the availability and accessibility of information for visitors to help them arrive prepared and understand expectations.</b>			
16.1 Seek funding for a visitor communications audit and communications plan to identify key communications gaps, channels, and opportunities.	Quick wins 16.1 – 16.3	Destination Management Working Group, Cortes Museum / VIC, OurCortes, Discovery Islands visitor information, Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce, 4VI	   
16.2 Invest in refreshing the OurCortes website.	Medium & longer-term actions 16.4 – 16.5		
16.3 Create and offer the opportunity for visitors to sign a visitor pledge (e.g. Hawaii’s Pono Pledge <sup>17</sup> or Sonoma County’s Pledge <sup>18</sup> ) and offer regenerative focused visitor information to encourage desired behaviours. <sup>19</sup>			
16.4 Create a series of short ‘Travel like a Cortesian’ videos and/or brochure to communicate desired visitor behaviours in a fun manner related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Road/cycling safety and driving etiquette</li> <li>○ Ferry lineups/waits</li> <li>○ Wildfire safety</li> <li>○ Emergency preparedness</li> <li>○ Behaviour around wildlife</li> <li>○ Leave no trace principles and waste disposal</li> </ul>			

<sup>17</sup> <https://ponopledge.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.sonomacounty.com/pledge/>

<sup>19</sup> As an example, the Southern Gulf Islands has a webpage sharing information on how to be a regenerative traveller at <https://southerngulfislands.com/plan/>



Recommendations and Actions	Timeframe	Implementation Network	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental conservation behaviours</li> <li>○ Respectful behaviour</li> </ul> <p>16.5 Identify key digital channels and in-destination locations (e.g. Airbnbs, ferry, museum) to distribute visitor education materials.</p>			
<p><b>17. Explore new revenue-generating opportunities to help fund regenerative initiatives that benefit the community and visitors.</b></p>			
<p>17.1 Research examples of tourist/stewardship fees from other destinations for ideas and collection mechanisms that could be implemented on Cortes Island. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vancouver has levied an extra 2.5% on the hotel tax to support FIFA 2026</li> <li>○ Venice is introducing a pilot project in 2024 to charge a new visitor fee<sup>20</sup></li> <li>○ New Zealand charges an international visitor conservation and tourism levy of \$35<sup>21</sup></li> <li>○ The San Juan Islands are looking at requiring the purchase of a pass for bikes, boats, and cars at a fee of \$10-15 annually<sup>22</sup></li> </ul> <p>17.2 Explore options for parking fees, trail use fees and/or other optional visitor conservation/destination stewardship donations.</p>	<p>Medium &amp; longer-term actions 17.1 – 17.2</p>	<p>Destination Management Working Group</p>	 

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.visit-venice-italy.com/venice-paid-access-tax-for-tourists-regulations-terms-price-exemptions.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-funding/international-visitor-conservation-and-tourism-levy/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/san-juan-islands-consider-annual-tourism-fee-for-residents-visitors/>

## 6. NEXT STEPS

Cortes Island is a beautiful destination that will continue to attract visitors from near and far. Already at peak capacity in summer, and with several key tourism developments set to increase visitation to the island, the next five years will be critical in staging for the future. A purposeful approach to managing the destination must balance the desire to increase tourism's economic contribution to the island's economy while ensuring that the Cortes way of life and its pristine, natural environment stays intact, and growing numbers of visitors don't stress the island's resources beyond its carrying capacity.

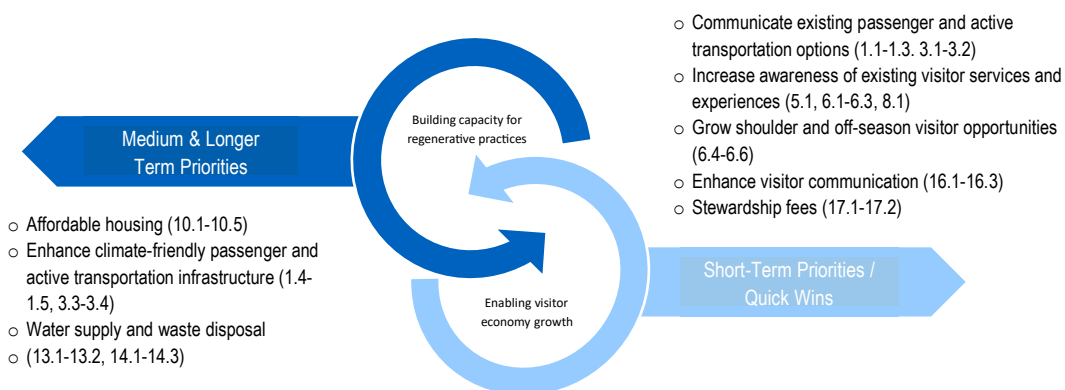
To ensure Cortes Island enjoys a future where tourism is a force for good, investments must be carefully targeted to ensure the local economy prospers while any potential negative environmental, cultural, and social impacts are mitigated.

### 6.1 SUMMARY KEY PRIORITIES

A strategic, interconnected approach is needed in the next five years (Figure 16). Given that Cortes is a destination with little capacity to increase visitation in peak season, quick wins in the short term should focus on educating and connecting visitors to existing paid activities, services, and experiences that will increase yield/spending per visitor, grow the visitor economy, and foster responsible behaviours.

As the short-term priorities advance, the medium and long-term priorities focus on strengthening foundations that enable tourism's success while building regenerative practices. This includes increasing the availability of affordable housing for staff, building infrastructure to support climate-friendly passenger and active transportation options, providing the needed visitor services to properly dispose of waste and sewage, and monitoring visitor impacts on Cortes' water health and supply.

FIGURE 16 SHORT, MEDIUM, AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTERCONNECTED



Establishing a cross-organization tourism working group to implement the priorities and recommendations from the Community Tourism Plan will be critical to success, along with engagement with Klahoose First Nation and QXMC. In addition to grant funding that is accessed to advance specific recommendations and actions, the establishment of a destination stewardship fee or other sources of revenue from visitors would be beneficial in providing stable, ongoing financial resources to implement the recommendations of the plan.

## 6.2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

A wide variety of potential funding sources could be tapped to advance recommendations and actions within this plan. Figure 17 provides a summary table of grant funds relevant to initiatives outlined within this plan, but it is not a comprehensive list of all grant funding opportunities available at the various levels of government.

The BC Government offers an online economic development funding and grant search tool that may provide access to more opportunities.<sup>23</sup>

Clean BC also offers a new community climate funding guide to provide a 'comprehensive list of funding opportunities for Indigenous communities and local governments to reach their climate action goals.'<sup>24</sup>



The programs currently open for applications or will be accepting applications at some point in 2024 are listed first. Where it's clear that programs offer funding on an annual basis, this has been indicated.

FIGURE 17 POTENTIAL GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

Fund	Funding Body	Intake	Intake / Description
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC – Outdoor Recreation Fund	Provincial	Late March – April 2024	Supports community-based initiatives that create and shape meaningful outdoor recreational and nature-based experiences
British Columbia Arts Council – Arts Impact Grant (annual)	Provincial	Due April 2, 2024	funding for arts and culture organizations for specific projects or activities that will provide a meaningful impact for their community
Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP)	Provincial	July – Oct 2024	Economic diversification and capacity building

<sup>23</sup> <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants>

<sup>24</sup> <https://communityclimatefunding.gov.bc.ca/>

Fund	Funding Body	Intake	Intake / Description
Rural Transit Solutions Fund	Federal	Planning & Design stream open	Supports transit planning activities toward the development of new or expanded transit solutions
Community Gaming Grants (annual)	Provincial	Various	Categories include Arts & Culture, Sport, Public Safety, Environment, Human & Social Services
Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET)	Regional	Various	Categories that may apply to tourism include Capital and innovation, Community Placemaking
Cooperative Marketing Program (annual)	Destination BC	Fall 2024	Requires a cluster of at least 3 communities collaborating to apply together
Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant	Provincial	Currently closed	The rolling intake for Indigenous applicants or partnership applications between Indigenous and local governments remains open.
Canada Community Building Fund (annual)	Federal	Twice annually	Supports public and active transportation, tourism, culture, sport, recreation and more
Heritage Legacy Fund (annual)	Provincial	March 8 – April 26, 2024	Supports conservation and awareness of heritage in BC
Active Transportation Fund (currently closed except for Indigenous communities)	Federal - PacificAN		Supports the development of active transportation infrastructure
Tourism Growth Program	Federal - PacificAN		Not currently accepting applications in BC

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## Appendix 2: Interviews

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Jenny Hartwick	Harbour Authority
Bryan McKinnon	Farmer's Market
Sandra Wood	Cortes Housing Society
Bertha Jeffery	Cortes Market
Joanne Doyle, Rae Acton	BC Ferries
David Mailloux	Ahoy BC
Sadhu Johnston	Cortes Housing Society
Marco Bedetti	QXMC
Duane Hanson	Klahoose Community Advocate
Mark Vonesch	SRD Representative for Cortes Island



## Appendix 3: Community Engagement Participants

### 1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION: IN-COMMUNITY, OCTOBER 23, 2023, AT MANSON'S LANDING - 23 PARTICIPANTS IN TOTAL<sup>25</sup>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Andrea Fisher	Cortes Island Community Foundation
Carolyn Howson	President Cortes Island Seniors Society
Chris Dragseth	Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island Society Board
Colin Funk	Board Director Cortes Community Economic Development Assn.
Constance Brill	Brilliant by the Bay Bed & Breakfast
Debbie Dragseth	Cortes Island Museum & Archives Board
Grazyna Trzesicka	Cortes Island Information Book editor
Jasmine Hillier	Cortes Kayaks
Jemma Hickson	Folk U - Cortes Radio
Kai Harvey	Cortes Kayaks
Kevin Peacey	Klahoose First Nation
Lori Frankin	Cortes Motel
Lorne Jacobson	Friends of Cortes Island Society
Martha Abelson	Realtor Royal Lepage
Nikita Ingle	4VI
Rod Lee	Bird house maker
Suzanne Fletcher	Project Manager of Cortes Housing Society

### 2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION IN-COMMUNITY: OCTOBER 24, 2023, AT GORGE HARBOUR – 9 PARTICIPANTS

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Amy Bockner	Owner Misty Isles Adventures and
Bruce & Lynn Partridge	Cortes Community Housing Society
Carol London	Museum / CHS
Karen Lee	Whaletown Resident
Mark Vonesch	Regional Director Strathcona Regional District
Christine Robinson	Stream Stewardship Coordinator Friends of Cortes Island Society

<sup>25</sup> Total participant numbers do not necessarily match the names listed, as some prefer their names not to appear in the report.

**3<sup>RD</sup> SESSION ONLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 2023 – 3 PARTICIPANTS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Romina Jones	Manson’s Landing Resident
Marco Bedetti	General Manager, QXMC
Ester Strijbos	Freelance Graphic / Web Design

**4<sup>TH</sup> SESSION: IN -IN-COMMUNITY: JANUARY 16, 2024, AT MANSON'S LANDING – 7 PARTICIPANTS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Caleb McIntyre	4VI
Chris Good	Cortes Island Resident
Finn Vonesch	Cortes Island Resident
Fiona Gormican	Hollyhock
Mark Vonesch	Regional Director Strathcona Regional District
Martha Abelson	Realtor Royal Lepage
Tammy Collingwood	CCEDA
Tecwana Clifton-Wooldridge	Hollyhock

**5<sup>TH</sup> SESSION: IN-COMMUNITY: JANUARY 17, 2024, AT GORGE HARBOUR – 4 PARTICIPANTS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Caleb McIntyre	4VI
Mike Brown	Whaletown Resident
Jasmine Barrera	Whaletown Resident
Mike Moore	Friends of Cortes Island Resident

**6<sup>TH</sup> SESSION: ONLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2024 – 11 PARTICIPANTS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Thomas Porsborg	BC Parks, Parks Area Superintendent
Gypsy Mama	Cortes Island Resident, Board Member SCCA and CKTZ
Mary Lavelle	Cortes Natural Food Co-op
Lisa Ferentinos	CCEDA Board
Loni Taylor	Journalist CKTZ, Former Airbnb operator
Romina Jones	Manson’s Landing Resident, Guesthouse Manager
Carol London	Whaletown Resident, Board Member Cortes Island Museum & Archives
Rebeka Carpenter	Cortes Island Resident
Sue V	Cortes Island Resident
Chris Dragseth	Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island Society Board
Lisa Jackson	Cortes Island Resident

## **Appendix 4: Advisory Group Members**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Tecwana Clifton-Wooldridge	Hollyhock
Helen Hall	Friends of Cortes Island Society
Mary Lavelle / Amy Robertson	Natural Foods Coop & Café/Bakery
Melanie Boyle	Cortes Island Museum and Archives (CIMAS)
Martha Abelson	Realtor, Airbnb Operator
Amy Bockener / Jonas Fineman	Misty Isles
Jenny Hartwick	Harbour Authority
Mario Bedetti	QXMC
Sadhu Johnston	Cortes Housing Society

## Appendix 5: Community Validation Survey

### Cortes Tourism Plan - Community Input Survey


Thank you for taking the time to provide your input on a vision, ideal guest, guiding principles and priorities for the Cortes Island tourism plan. The survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Responses are confidential and all input will be aggregated to help create a draft version of the plan that will be reviewed by the advisory group and the CCEDA. We appreciate your time and insights!

#### A VISION FOR TOURISM ON CORTES ISLAND

"A vision statement describes a future state that is idealistic and aspirational. It doesn't represent the situation today, but rather, where you want to be in the future."

1. Review the following vision statement. Share your thoughts on what would make it better.

Cortes Island is a remote destination inviting visitors who value the island's natural beauty and way of life, to engage in meaningful experiences that help preserve its natural environment and contribute positively to the community.



#### IDENTIFYING DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The research and community input to date has revealed a wide variety of development opportunities that would contribute to enhancing tourism and the visitor experience. As you consider which priorities you feel should be advanced, think about which will have the greatest impact on increasing visitor spending, lengthening stay, dispersing visitors over a longer season, creating net positive benefits for the community, and are easier to action.

2. Put a check in the box beside the top THREE infrastructure opportunities from the list below that you feel should be advanced for the long-term success of Cortes Island as a tourism destination. \*

- Improving road quality and safety
- Adding shoulders to the main road between the ferry and Manson's Landing
- Creating a multi-use trails to facilitate walking & cycling
- Enhancing water quality and security
- More staff housing
- E-vehicle charging
- Adding sidewalks in key visitor areas
- Adding more power generation capacity

3. Put a check in the box beside the top THREE services and amenity opportunities from the list below, that you feel should be advanced. \*

- Sewage pump-out (RV, boat)
- Garbage and recycling at key visitor locations
- Wifi at key visitor points
- More laundry locations
- Bike parking
- More food services
- Increase fire safety education
- Visitor bathrooms
- Water bottle filling stationss

4. Put a check in the box beside the top THREE transportation opportunities from the list below, that you feel should be advanced. \*

- Public transit to/from communities and key visitor points
- Active transportation options (e.g. bike trails)
- Develop car sharing (e.g. EVO, Modo)
- Develop ride sharing (e.g. electronic ride board where people driving somewhere can offer a ride to others)
- Car-free arrival options: water, taxi, float plane

5. Put a check in the box beside the top THREE visitor experience opportunities from the list below, that you feel should be advanced. \*

- Interpretive signage
- Wayfinding / directional signage
- Signage indicating Indigenous place names
- Develop new purchasable products & experiences
- Increase visitor education
- Develop targeted year-round visitor opportunities (e.g. fall / winter workshops)
- Create a comprehensive visitor guidebook
- Strengthen resident sentiment towards tourism

6. Please provide any ideas you have related to the priorities selected such as specific locations where development is needed (e.g. If you identified multi-use trails, where is a trail needed most? If you identified signage, where is signage most needed.

## CORTES ISLAND'S IDEAL GUEST

An ideal guest is a visitor who best aligns with what a destination has to offer and whose values and behaviours match with those of the community's. The ideal guest is the visitor you'd like to see on Cortes Island.

7. Review the following ideal guest statement and share your thoughts on what would make it better.

Cortes Island is a place for respectful, adventurous, low-impact visitors who value time spent in nature, engaging in ecologically and socially-conscious activities that create deep connections, and contributing positively to the community during their stay.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION-MAKING

Guiding principles are ideas that influence decision-making and help identify priorities and actions that are aligned with your values. For example, an action that aligns with 4 of your guiding principles would, ideally, be prioritized above an action that aligns with only 1 or 2 of your guiding principles

8. What changes, additions or deletions are needed to the following guiding principles that have been identified to guide decision-making on Cortes Island?

1. Low, no or net positive impact
2. Fosters a self-sufficient local economy
3. Leverages existing assets (e.g. trails, buildings, etc.) before building new
4. Aligns with existing plans and recommendations
5. Supports Cortes Island's values, culture and ways of life
6. Helps educate visitors
7. Encourages visitors to connect with locals and give back to community

## Appendix 6: Asset Inventory

<b>Primary and Secondary Demand Generators</b>		<b>Supporting Visitor Services and Activities</b>	
Tour Operator / Activities	Calma Sailing	Health & Wellness Services	Cortes Island RMT Sean Lymworth, RMT
Tour Operator / Activities	Misty Isles Adventures	Health & Wellness Services	Happy Feet, Isabelle Laplante, RN
Tour Operator / Activities	Cortes Kayaks	Health & Wellness Services	Jocelan Coty
Tour Operator / Activities	Cortes Fishing Adventures	Health & Wellness Services	Maureen Williams, Naturopathic Doctor
Tour Operator / Activities	Sutil Charters	Health & Wellness Services	Rites of Spirit, Massage & Integrative Wellness
Tour Operator / Activities	Hollyhock	Health & Wellness Services	Rebecca Lynn
Tour Operator / Activities	Gorge Harbour Marina - SUP, kayak rentals	Retail / Food Services	Natural Foods Co-op
Tour Operator / Activities	SUP Cortes - SUP rentals	Retail / Food Services	Squirrel Cove Trading Co
Attraction	Cortes Museum & Archives	Retail / Food Services	Cortes Market
Attraction	Linnaea Farm	Retail	Free store
Attraction	Old Schoolhouse Art Gallery	Retail	Hollyhock Gift Shop
Festivals and Events	Friday Market - Manson's Hall	Retail	Marnie's Books
Festivals and Events	Saturday Market (summer) - Gorge Harbour	Retail	Cortes Craft Shop Co-op
Festivals and Events	Cortes Days	Retail	Squirrel Cove gas station and store (Klahoose)
Festivals and Events	Seafest	Transportation - Water Taxi	Terracentric Adventures
Festivals and Events	Lovefest	Transportation - Water Taxi	Sutil Charters
Festivals and Events	Sandcastle Day	Transportation - Water Taxi	Discovery Launch Water Taxi
<b>Visitor Accommodation</b>		Transportation - Water Taxi	Lund Water Taxi
Accommodation	Cortes Island Motel	Transportation - Float Plane	Kenmore Air
Accommodation	Nanagumps Berry Farm and Guest House	Transportation - Float Plane	CorilAir
Accommodation	Brilliant by the Bay B&B	Transportation - Float Plane	Van City Seaplanes
Accommodation	Juniper Bluffs B&B	Laundry / Showers	Gorge Harbour
Accommodation	Hollyhock	Laundry / Showers	Squirrel Cove Trading Co
Accommodation	Gorge Harbour Marina Resort		
Accommodation - Camping / RV	Smelt Bay Provincial Park	<b>Public Infrastructure - Parks, Trails and Beaches</b>	
Accommodation - Camping / RV	Gorge Harbour Marina Resort	Easter Bluff	Trail
Accommodation - Camping / RV	Squirrel Cove (Klahoose)	Hank's Beach Forest Loop	Trail
<b>Marine Infrastructure</b>		Carrington Lagoon	Trail
Dock	Whaletown Government Dock		
	Gorge Harbour Government Dock -	Grandmother Grove	Trail
Dock	Commercial Only	Whaletown Commons	Trail
Dock	Manson's Landing Dock	Kw'as Trails	Trail
Small craft launch	Smelt Bay Provincial Park	Squirrel Cove	Trail
Small craft launch	Manson's Landing Provincial Park	Hollyhock Beach	Beach
Small craft launch	Hollyhock Beach	Brigitte's Beach	Beach
Private access only marina	Seattle Yacht Club	Hank's Beach	Beach
Private access only marina	Royal Vancouver Yacht Club	Manson's Landing Beach	Beach
		Hague Lake Beach	Beach
		Smelt Bay Provincial Park	Beach / Provincial park
		Von Donop Marine Park	Provincial Park