



Woss Fire Lookout Tower
Photo: Tyson Mackay



BC Forest Discovery Centre



Sayward Working Waterfront Trail

TRENDS WE'RE SEEING: RESOURCE SECTOR HERITAGE FUELING NEW VISITOR EXPERIENCES

The history of Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast is anchored in the natural resources of the region. Fishing, mining, and especially forestry are the industries that helped to give rise to the villages, towns, and cities of today.

And while the importance of those industries as sole economic drivers is changing, communities are embracing their industrial past as an avenue to share their history with visitors. It's also a new source of tourism activity, as forestry roads are transformed into mountain bike trails, fire lookouts become points-of-interest, and historic forestry trains become heritage tourism attractions.

The BC Forest Discovery Centre has educated visitors about the history of forestry in the region for over half a century. Last year the Centre received a major infusion of funding – including \$400,000 from ICET - to create new immersive, interactive exhibits, focused on the sector's innovative practices.

The new interpretive displays promote understanding and showcase the importance of working forests, economic partnerships and community access. The **'Forests Forever: Innovations in Modern Forestry' exhibit** tells the story of modern-day forestry practices and the positive influence that coastal forestry has on BC's economy, environment and social fabric.

Tourism is changing, and the evolution to include resource-industries as part of the tourism mix, is evidence of that. On Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast, experiential tourism is a growing segment of the market, with forestry-related attractions and local historical and heritage assets leading the way.

"Heritage tourism is a significant element of the Regional District's marketing plan," explained Pat English, Economic Development Manager for Regional District of Mount Waddington. "It provides a story for visitors coming into the community. More opportunities to stop and stay,

translate into more dollars coming into the community, and better services and amenities for visitors and residents."

ICET supported projects such as the **Woss Fire Lookout Restoration** or the rejuvenation of the BC Forest Discovery Centre help to bring awareness of the resource sector's past and present, while at the same time adding value to the emerging tourism economy.

"There is increasing interest in our region's resource-based history," explained Pat English. "Together, these projects complement a growing network of heritage tourism attractions on the North Island, such as the Woss Heritage Park and other heritage sites in development."

The support for building a new form of regional tourism experience comes from both the private and public sector.

"Wide involvement of the private partners in the BC Forest Discovery Centre speak to how valuable of a resource it is," explained Kindry

Mercer, Community Outreach Facilitator for Western Forest Products. "For us, it is one of the ways we support our educational mandate to communicate how our forests are sustainably managed and harvested."

According to Kindry, forestry tourism is an untapped opportunity to offer the public a more informed, tactile experience with the industry.

Megan Hanacek, CEO of the Private Forest Landowners Association, agrees.

"It's important to look at the sector that built the province," explained Hanacek. "Today sustainable forestry practices mean balancing the environment and community interest, and forestry-related tourism is another way to celebrate that history while moving the industry forward."

A great example of the hand-in-glove nature of experiential tourism is Sayward's revitalized 'working waterfront'.

The recently completed **Working Waterfront Destination Gateway Trail** connects point-of-interest lookouts such as the "Boom Ballet" - an intricate dance of boom boats - with other historical and resource industry assets along the harbour.

The project will allow visitors to experience Sayward in a modern-day context, highlighting current day commercial fisheries, forestry and coastal community life along with the rich Indigenous and settlers' history in fishing and forestry.

"We're seeing trail users already, and how its opening up the community's relationship with respect to industry," explained John MacDonald, Mayor of Sayward. "It's the different lens toward traditional industries that visitors appreciate."

This project is part of a broader tourism plan to develop an interpretive centre, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, to highlight the history of Indigenous communities in the region's traditional resource industries.

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- MEGAN HANACEK
CEO of the Private Forest
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But, whether its hiking to a restored fire lookout, immersing yourself in the history and future of forestry, or experiencing the world of a working waterfront - it is the connection through time and place that contribute collectively to a cohesive new tourism experience.