

# A Guide to Outdoor Photography in Saskatchewan

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND:

This summary report compiles topline findings from four research projects conducted by Environics Research in 2022 and 2023.

This report is intended to guide the establishment of outdoor photography in Saskatchewan by informing target audiences, marketing communications, and infrastructure development.

There were four phases of research:

1. **Stakeholder interviews** with local tourism operators in Saskatchewan
2. **Expert interviews** with established tourism operators across Canada
3. **Online photography communities** were examined through a social listening approach to identify key themes in conversations
4. **Consumer interviews** with outdoor photographers who travel from CAN, US, UK

Similar reports are available for Birding, Astro-tourism, and Snowmobiling.



## PARTNER WITH PHOTOGRAPHY COMMUNITY TO DEVELOP INDUSTRY AND REPUTATION:

- **Demographics:** experienced photographers skew older, male, white; newcomers tend to be younger and more diverse
  - **Accessibility:** outdoor photography is growing in popularity as cameras become more accessible and smartphones take better pictures
  - **Online communities:** passive participation in multiple online groups (e.g., Facebook groups, forums); follow photographers on social media for travel inspiration (e.g., Instagram, YouTube)
  - **Photography clubs:** those more engaged in the community are part of local photography clubs to meet like-minded people and improve their photography skills
- ➔ Photographers spend a lot of time looking at photos on social media for travel inspiration. Encourage visitors to share their images and travel experiences with the photography community on social media, geotagging locations in Saskatchewan.

## ENGAGING COMMUNICATION SHOULD SPEAK TO WHAT DRAWS IN PHOTOGRAPHERS:

- **Passion for travel:** photography is intertwined with a passion for travelling and exploring the world; continuously looking for new places and inspiration
- **Spending time outdoors:** enjoy being outdoors in nature and always bring their camera; photograph subjects that are beautiful and distinctive
- **Capturing the moment:** photography is a way to capture unique perspectives and travel experiences that can be shared with family/friends or on social media



- ➔ Photographers have a deep appreciation for nature and conservation is top-of mind when travelling. They expect destinations to share their dedication to preserving natural habitats and ensuring the well-being of wildlife. Being known for conservation efforts and enforcing rules to not disturb animals will appeal to wildlife photographers especially.

## DEVELOPING MARKETING MATERIALS FOR OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHERS:



- **Strong visuals:** photographers are very visual; inspire visitation by highlighting images taken at the destination and sharing photographers' experiences
  - **Aesthetic design:** ensure marketing materials are aesthetically appealing, interspersing informative content with high quality images and artistic design
  - **Specific details:** photos should be accompanied by captions with specific locations they were taken; include maps of parks and attractions mentioned in marketing materials
  - **Calls-to-action:** make it easy for photographers to plan a trip with a clear call-to-action to access travel information
- ➔ Outdoor photographers are a diverse audience with different travel motivations depending on their preferred subject. Either showcase a wide variety of themes to appeal broadly, or target photography styles separately with tailored content that will inspire them to visit.

## HIGHLIGHT SASKATCHEWAN'S STRENGTHS AS A PHOTOGRAPHY DESTINATION:



### Untouched nature:

Build on a reputation of having pristine natural habitats and being a remote and undiscovered destination.



### Variety of subjects:

Showcase a diversity of subjects to demonstrate that Saskatchewan offers opportunities for a variety of outdoor photography styles (e.g., wildlife, birds, landscapes, skies).



- ➔ Photographers are drawn to off-the-beaten path destinations where they can photograph untouched nature and abundant wildlife, and they will avoid overcrowded destinations.
- ➔ Being remote is a strength for Saskatchewan to differentiate from over-marketed destinations by leveraging the appeal of “discovering” the next best photography destination.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTRACT PHOTOGRAPHERS TO SASKATCHEWAN:

- **Off-the-beaten path:** drawn to remote areas with untouched, beautiful natural scenery and an abundance of wildlife
  - **Rarity & volume:** highlight the likelihood to spot highly sought-after wildlife species and unique hidden gems, as well as a wide variety of species and breathtaking landscapes
  - **Overlap with niche areas:** promoting attractions for other niches like bird migrations, dark skies, and northern lights will appeal to photographers
  - **Complementary activities:** casual photographers, those travelling with family, and long-haul travellers are interested in outdoor activities, cultural experiences, urban attractions, etc.
- ➔ Build reputation by partnering with influencers who can reach the niche audience directly. Invite influential photographers and travel vloggers to take photos of Saskatchewan, share their experiences on social media, and enter photography competitions.



## ADDRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS' KEY TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Accommodations:** location is main criteria for accommodations as they want to be near photography spots; basic accommodations are adequate
- **Amenities:** expect food and fuel near accommodations; camping amenities include tent rentals, RV parking, and facilities to freshen up
  - Nice-to-have amenities: food options open late, cell service, electricity to charge camera gear, blinds in parks
- **Vehicle rentals:** prefer to rent a vehicle for independence; will consider an off-road vehicle if they anticipate driving on unpaved roads



- **Cost:** photographers are outcome-driven and will weigh the photos they anticipate to capture against the cost, time, and effort of the trip
  - **Timing:** photographers will research the best season or time of year to visit a destination based on weather and expected activity in natural areas (e.g., wildlife mating season, northern lights, etc.)
- ➔ Photographers of all styles generally prefer to travel alone at their own pace or with adult friends/family who share their passion for photography or tolerate their frequent stops.



- **Guided tours:** finding the best photography spots, accessing private land, socializing with like-minded photographers, learning photography skills
  - **Camera rentals:** nice-to-have for casual photographers who have not invested in expensive gear and to alleviate concerns about theft or damage during travel; online rental companies are more popular than rental shops at destinations
- ➔ In addition to camera equipment, there is an opportunity to rent camping supplies like warm clothing, sleeping bags, bear sprays, and food coolers.
- **Planning shots:** extensive research to get the best shots, including ideal locations, time of day, animal behaviours, and weather conditions
  - **Safety concerns:** take precautions to ensure they are safe in remote areas and prepared in case of close wildlife encounters
- ➔ There is always an element of unpredictability with photography. It's important to set travel expectations upfront and showcase a range of attractions that make Saskatchewan unique.



# Photographer Personas & Journey Summary



## COMMITTED CALVIN The Patient Tracker



Patience & Dedication



Extensive Planning



Photography Perfectionist

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| In a nutshell                  | Goal-driven, fixated on objectives they want to see/photograph, validation-seeking from peers   |
| About them                     | Middle-aged to older, skews men   |
| Motto                          | <i>I want to capture something that hasn't been photographed before – and I have the perseverance to get the shot.</i>  |
| Motivations for travelling     | Travel to find rare subjects on their list and capture unique photographs from new perspectives.  |
| What they have in common       | Travel to off-the-beaten path remote destinations, for photography trips they prefer to travel alone or with those who share their interests, always carry their camera, drawn to a specific photography style but also like to photograph other beautiful outdoor subjects |
| Shared social values           | <i>Attraction to Nature, Primacy of Environmental Protection, Personal Creativity, Social Intimacy, Importance of Aesthetics</i>  |
| Barriers for Saskatchewan      | Lack of awareness that Saskatchewan is a photography destination that has interesting subjects and offers a high likelihood to see hard-to-find wildlife.   |
| Opportunities for Saskatchewan | Differentiate by showcasing diverse landscapes and abundant wildlife. The opportunity to shoot different photography styles is a nice-to-have (e.g., dark skies and astrophotography).  |
| What they need to see and hear | See images by well-known photographers online. Hear from other photographers about their trip experiences. Know that there is a high probability to spot the subjects they are interested in and high success of taking the best photo.                                     |



## EXPLORER EMMA The Experience Seeker



Enjoys Exploring



Excited by Discovery



Learning Photography

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| In a nutshell                  | Exploring the outdoors, seeking adventurous experiences, looking to capture memories  |
| About them                     | Across all ages, skews women  |
| Motto                          | <i>I want my friends and family to experience what I felt - to be transported and awe-inspired by the moment of beauty</i>  |
| Motivations for travelling     | Passionate about travelling and experiencing everything a destination has to offer.   |
| What they have in common       | Travel to off-the-beaten path remote destinations, for photography trips they prefer to travel alone or with those who share their interests, always carry their camera, drawn to a specific photography style but also like to photograph other beautiful outdoor subjects |
| Shared social values           | <i>Attraction to Nature, Primacy of Environmental Protection, Personal Creativity, Social Intimacy, Importance of Aesthetics</i>  |
| Barriers for Saskatchewan      | Not feeling safe when they are alone in remote and isolated locations without adequate infrastructure, including assistance from park rangers. Guided tours are not available or too expensive.   |
| Opportunities for Saskatchewan | Besides photography, demonstrate that Saskatchewan offers a range of cultural experiences and outdoor activities.   |
| What they need to see and hear | General travel information about infrastructure, accessibility, complementary activities, and safety precautions (i.e., park rangers close-by).   |

PHASES

GOALS

TOUCHPOINTS / RESOURCES

BARRIERS

|  | 1 INSPIRATION / DISCOVERY  | 2 RESEARCH & CONSIDERATION  | 3 PURCHASE   | 4 PRE-TRIP  | 5 DURING TRIP  | 6 POST-TRIP  |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | <b>Learning / hearing about new destinations</b>   | <b>Researching a destination of interest</b>  | <b>Planning &amp; booking a trip</b>   | <b>Studying for the trip</b>  | <b>Enjoying the trip</b>   | <b>Sharing the trip</b>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discover new destinations to visit or add to their list</li> <li>Chase dream species (wildlife photographers)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the nature, scenery, and wildlife a destination has to offer</li> <li>Consider experiences of other photographers</li> <li>Research amenities &amp; accommodations</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Book transportation and accommodations</li> <li>Book guided tours, park access, and campsites (if needed)</li> <li>Consider reviews from other photographers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan trip itinerary</li> <li>Research the best photography spots</li> <li>Pack equipment kit, gear, safety equipment</li> <li>Plan for vehicle and equipment rentals (if needed)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoy being in nature</li> <li>Discover hidden gems</li> <li>Meet &amp; socialize with other photographers</li> <li>Plan shots in advance</li> <li>Take safety precautions when travelling remote</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome-driven –evaluate trip success based on quality and variety of photographs</li> <li>Share photographs and experiences with other photographers and family/friends</li> </ul> |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visuals are the greatest source of inspiration</li> <li>Look at other photographers' images</li> <li>Recommendations from online and in-person photography communities</li> <li>Follow photographers on social media (e.g., Instagram)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at photos and videos online to see what destination offers (e.g., travel vloggers, YouTube)</li> <li>Research using Google, tourism websites, photography groups, social media (e.g., YouTube, Reddit)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online booking (Trip Advisor, Expedia, tour companies, etc.)</li> <li>Word-of-mouth – check online reviews, ask online groups and family/friends for tips</li> <li>Guided tours – research the guide's reputation &amp; experience</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Google Maps to plan driving route / find nearby amenities (e.g., food, car rental, fuel)</li> <li>Study maps and Google Earth to find good spots for photography</li> <li>Ask community for advice on equipment kit (based on photo opportunities / subjects)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stops at parks, conservation areas, lakes, etc.</li> <li>Check apps for ideal timing &amp; photography conditions</li> <li>Guided tours – get a lay of the land, find good photography spots</li> <li>Enjoy complementary activities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share photos with family/friends and photography community (Instagram, Facebook groups)</li> <li>Offer travel advice to other photographers via word-of-mouth</li> </ul>            |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low awareness of destination</li> <li>More accessible competing destinations with unique offerings</li> <li>Distance, cost</li> <li>Work/family obligations (vs. photography time)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard to get to, long distances within the destination</li> <li>Lack of novelty / unique things to see</li> <li>Accommodate needs of partner/children who are not interested in photography</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive flights, hotels</li> <li>Lack of accommodations close to parks / photography spots</li> <li>Difficult to book campsites or RV parking</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long driving distance from major airport / no closer airports</li> <li>Expensive car rentals</li> <li>Not feeling well-prepared for the trip; unable to find information needed</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unpredictable factors, subjects are not visible</li> <li>Weather / photography conditions are not ideal (especially rain &amp; snow)</li> <li>Cannot access best spots (i.e., private land)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative experiences and destinations that don't deliver on expectations will gain a bad reputation</li> </ul>  |