

A Guide to Snowmobiling in Saskatchewan

RESEARCH BACKGROUND:

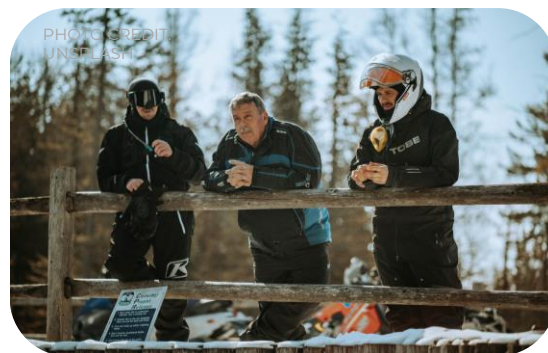
This summary report compiles topline findings from four research projects conducted by Environics Research in 2022 and 2023.

This report is intended to guide the establishment of snowmobiling 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 snowmobiling communities** were examined through a social listening approach to identify key themes in conversations
4. **Consumer interviews** with snowmobilers who travel from CAN and US

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



SUPPORT SNOWMOBILING CLUBS TO DEVELOP INDUSTRY AND BUILD REPUTATION:

- **Demographics:** hardcore snowmobilers skew older, male, white; newcomers tend to be younger and slightly more diverse
 - **Social activity:** spend quality time with group of family/friends, meeting other snowmobilers on the trail, eager to share their passion and support newcomers
 - **Tight-knit community:** appreciate the camaraderie and strong bonds they form with other snowmobilers
 - **Snowmobile clubs:** clubs play an important role in maintaining trail systems; snowmobilers support local clubs by volunteering their time and will donate to clubs in areas they visit
- Current model of trail maintenance relies on volunteers from snowmobile clubs to groom the trails. Funding is needed to upkeep the trail system to support a large increase in snowmobilers.

ENGAGING COMMUNICATION SHOULD SPEAK TO WHAT DRAWS IN SNOWMOBILERS:

- **Looking for adventure:** thrill seekers who enjoy the adrenaline rush and sense of freedom from snowmobiling; excited to discover hidden gems in remote areas
- **Spending time outdoors:** snowmobiling is a way to spend time in nature during the winter, relax and enjoy beautiful scenery and wildlife, and reach otherwise inaccessible areas
- **On-trail vs off-trail:** trails appeal to snowmobilers who prefer traveling long distances with stops along the way for scenic views (as well as speed); off-trail riding offers the exhilaration and challenge of exploring the backcountry



- Beyond quality trails and backcountry, snowmobilers are looking for that 'wow' factor. Highlight unique attractions that snowmobilers can expect to find on their adventure (e.g., scenic lookout points, wildlife to spot, opportunities to experience local culture and history).

HOW TO INSPIRE SNOWMOBILERS TO VISIT SASKATCHEWAN:



- **Variety to explore:** promote Saskatchewan as a remote undiscovered area with a variety of landscapes and terrains to explore; emphasize points of interest along the trail and on-trail and off-trail opportunities
 - **Encourage word-of-mouth:** snowmobilers rely on word-of-mouth when considering new travel destinations. Motivate visitors to post pictures/videos and share positive experiences on online groups/forums and social media. Partner with snowmobile retailers / repair shops and tour operators to spread awareness.
- In addition to inspiring snowmobilers to visit, provide a call-to-action to access detailed up-to-date trip planning information that addresses common questions (e.g., interactive trail maps, infrastructure availability).

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HIGHLIGHT SASKATCHEWAN'S STRENGTHS AS A SNOWMOBILING DESTINATION:



Wide Trail Network:

Saskatchewan has 11,000km of groomed trails across the province that offer a range of scenery from flat plains to dense forests.



Long Winters:

Weather conditions make Saskatchewan an ideal location for snowmobiling with long winters and plenty of snow.



PHOTO CREDIT:
MICROSOFT 365

- To compete with destinations known for snowmobiling, Saskatchewan should highlight the amount of snow it gets during its winter season.
- Inspire snowmobilers with images that showcase a variety of snow conditions, landscapes, trail types, and wildlife that can be seen from the trails.
- Building a reputation as a welcoming place to snowmobilers can also be a critical differentiator that will increase consideration.

ADDRESS SNOWMOBILERS' KEY TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Trail system:** well-groomed and extensive trail networks with adequate signage and plenty of snow are the deciding factors when choosing a travel destination
 - **Accommodations:** located near the trail system and offer safe storage of equipment; nice-to-have amenities to relax will entice visitors (e.g., hot tubs, fireplaces)
 - **Amenities:** snowmobilers expect regular gas stations with high octane non-oxygenated gas, accessible food options to socialize, and warm-up shelters along the trails
 - **Guided tours:** guided tours are uncommon; the goal when using them is to get a lay of the land before riding in unfamiliar areas
 - **Equipment rentals:** rentals of snowmobiles, riding gear, and warm clothing appeal to new riders looking to learn. Enthusiasts may rent a sled if destination is too far to drive or as a cost-effective alternative to purchasing equipment.
 - **Monitor forecasts:** provide real-time weather forecasts and trail status information online
 - **Safety Concerns:** snowmobilers may be concerned about trail safety, cold weather, running out of gas, and being stranded in remote areas
- Alleviate safety concerns by informing visitors how to prepare in advance and enforcing trail etiquette.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTRACT SNOWMOBILERS TO SASKATCHEWAN:

- **Snowmobile rentals:** high cost of snowmobiles can be a barrier to joining the sport; rentals can grow the audience in Saskatchewan, yet rental businesses are a risky investment for operators
 - **Winter activities:** snowmobiling is often marketed as part of the winter experience in Northern Lights tours, complementing other activities like snowboarding, skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, ice skating, and dog sledding
 - **Summer sports:** snowmobilers have a passion for high endurance sports to stay active year-round (e.g., ATVing, dirt biking, motorcycling, water skiing, hunting, fishing)
- Build reputation by marketing Saskatchewan as a 'snowmobiler friendly' destination. This includes having a welcoming environment, accommodations that cater to the needs of snowmobilers, and amenities that can make the trip memorable and pleasant. Ensure everything that a snowmobiler needs to feel comfortable and happy can be found there.



PHOTO CREDIT:
UNSPLASH

KEY CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING AS A SNOWMOBILING DESTINATION:



PHOTO CREDIT:
UNSPLASH

- **Low awareness:** Saskatchewan lacks awareness and reputation as a snowmobiling destination. In Canada, it competes with Ontario and Quebec that are well-established destinations
 - **Weather dependent:** snowmobiling requires specific weather conditions (i.e., fresh snow and no/little wind); unpredictable weather and diminishing snow can limit snowmobiling opportunities and require snowmobilers to travel longer distances
 - **Access to private land:** snowmobilers who prefer off-roading on pristine snow may have restricted access to private land outside the trails
- Opportunity to attract U.S. snowmobilers from border states that are facing warmer winters and are willing to travel longer distances to 'chase the snow'. Promote the amount of snow and quality of trails found in Saskatchewan.

Snowmobiling Personas & Journey Summary



EXTREME EVAN The Thrill Seeker



Likes Nature

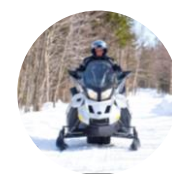


Enjoys Socializing & Camaraderie



Likes a Challenge

In a nutshell	Seeking thrills, adventure and excitement and looking to explore new places. For him it's all about confidence – he feels confident in his snowmobiling abilities and prepared for any situation.
About them	Across all ages, skews men
Motto	<i>Life is an adventure and I feel the need for speed!</i>
Motivations for travelling	Want to put milage on their machine and to do it with speed. Unique and thrilling experiences.
What they have in common	Enjoy nature and active in various nature-based activities/sports. Appreciate the scenery and wildlife viewing while snowmobiling. They want to see something they can't see at home. Value the social aspect of snowmobiling (group snowmobiling trips are favoured). Safety and being prepared is key to a good snowmobiling trip.
Shared social values	<i>Attraction to Nature, Need for Escape, Social Intimacy, Adaptive Navigation, Consumptivity, Enthusiasm For New Technology, Pursuit of Novelty</i>
Barriers for Saskatchewan	Showing enough variety in the terrain, off-roading opportunities, long runs to get speed.
Opportunities for Saskatchewan	Wildlife viewing, unique accommodations, and sites along the trail.
What they need to see and hear	Provide information on the type of scenery, views, and terrain that snowmobilers will encounter. Highlight any unique experiences.



LEISURELY LEWIS The Cautious Rider



Enjoys the Scenery



Safety is Top of Mind



Active in the Community

In a nutshell	Less driven by speed and thrills, his adventures are slower-paced – he'd rather do trail riding in the forest instead of mountain riding. He prefers travelling to familiar places but may be interested in visiting new destinations if they are conveniently located and have a good reputation.
About them	Middle-aged to older, skews men
Motto	<i>It's about the ride, not the destination.</i>
Motivations for travelling	Stay active during the winter months and enjoy a laid-back ride.
What they have in common	Enjoy nature and active in various nature-based activities/sports. Appreciate the scenery and wildlife viewing while snowmobiling. They want to see something they can't see at home. Value the social aspect of snowmobiling (group snowmobiling trips are favoured). Safety and being prepared is key to a good snowmobiling trip.
Shared social values	<i>Attraction to Nature, Need for Escape, Social Intimacy, Adaptive Navigation, Consumptivity, Enthusiasm For New Technology, Pursuit of Novelty</i>
Barriers for Saskatchewan	Mitigating the risks of going to a new destination. Distance and cost.
Opportunities for Saskatchewan	Nature-based activities – particularly ice fishing.
What they need to see and hear	Provide easily accessible information on the area – particularly about the ease of navigating trail systems, surrounding infrastructure, and amenities available.

PHASES

GOALS

TOUCHPOINTS / RESOURCES

BARRIERS

	1 INSPIRATION / DISCOVERY	2 RESEARCH & CONSIDERATION	3 PURCHASE	4 PRE-TRIP	5 DURING TRIP	6 POST-TRIP
	Learning / hearing about new destinations	Researching a destination of interest	Planning & booking a trip	Studying for the trip	Enjoying the trip	Sharing the trip
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find good snow Discover destinations where they can extend season Go long-distances Challenge themselves Connect with friends and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align group schedules When snow starts and ends / best months Research the accommodations along the trails, trail conditions, fuel and food options available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book accommodations Plan for equipment rentals if needed Purchase passes to access trails Book a guide (if needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check weather conditions, apps/websites for projected snow conditions Prepare/pack gear, safety equipment, tools Check status of trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover lots of ground Meet other snowmobilers Socialize Disconnect from everyday life Challenge themselves See beautiful scenery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing the experience with other snowmobilers in their circles: sharing photos, tips, experiences, recommendations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word of mouth: recommendations from other snowmobilers Social media: YouTube videos, Facebook groups Snowmobile clubs/associations Online resources → Google searches, blogs, forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram Internet searches for more detailed information Asking others in the snowmobiling community (online and in-person) about their experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet searches (i.e., Google) Online booking (Expedia, Trip Advisor, Airbnb, direct to operator, etc.) Guided trips for areas that are unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet searches for regulations, weather, local wildlife, general trail conditions, important info Monitoring weather Planning where they can get gas, food Mapping out routes & warm-up shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide (if using one) → getting the 'lay of the land' and advice for future trips Local snowmobile dealerships/rentals, repair shops, clubs Online resources and apps: maps (downloadable), Google searches, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing stories and photographs with friends, family, other snowmobilers, mainly in-person
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance (major factor when travelling with a trailer) Cost Work/family obligations Accommodating all of the group's schedules and budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preference for going earlier in the season (colder weather, denser/more snow) vs. later in the season when warmer Lack of infrastructure / amenities to support trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expensive accommodations Price of gas Long distance to travel Unable to find the information needed to plan their travel Uncertain weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not finding enough information about the location, trails, fuel options Concerns about information/maps not being updated with most recent information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough snow Closed / inaccessible trails / crowded trails Trails are too far (over 1-hour drive from base / along trail) Equipment breaks down or gets stolen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative experiences and destinations that don't deliver on expectations will gain a bad reputation