

Mackenzie Tourism Insights

December 2024



- December 2024, marking the first month of the summer season, delivered mixed results for tourism in Mackenzie. While international visitor card spending saw substantial growth, domestic spending declined. Despite this, tourism-related employment and earnings in the region increased, significantly outpacing the national average. The accommodation sector experienced growth in both domestic and international markets, though this did not translate into higher occupancy rates due to an increase in supply.
- International card spending (+9% YoY) rose in line with the growth in international guest nights. However, domestic guest nights (+9% YoY) far exceeded the growth in domestic visitor card spending (-7% YoY), indicating either a sharp decline in average card spending, a significant drop in day trip visitation, or a combination of both. Reflecting this trend, domestic card spending on accommodation products increased by +24% YoY—the only product category to see domestic spending growth. Meanwhile, domestic spending on retail fuel fell by -11% YoY, further reinforcing the decline in day trip visitation.
- International visitor card spending saw notable increases, particularly in the food and beverage sector. Spending on food and beverage services (+51% YoY) grew at a much faster rate than retail food and beverage (+36% YoY), highlighting Mackenzie's rising appeal as a culinary destination. This trend was largely driven by strong growth in spending from the 'Rest of Asia' market (+30% YoY, excluding China, Japan, and Korea) and the 'Rest of Europe' market (+17% YoY, excluding Germany and the UK), both of which have especially shown a growing preference for dining out over self-catering.
- Spending by US visitors increased by +19% YoY but remained well below the national average growth for this market (+35% YoY). This was partly due to sharp declines in card spending on recreation (-28% YoY), transport (-39% YoY), and 'other tourism' services (-89% YoY).
- The commercial accommodation sector maintained a stable occupancy rate compared to Dec '23, while the short-term rental sector saw a decline of -5%pt, though this was slightly better than the national average decline of -7%pt. Guest nights increased significantly by +8% YoY, driven by a +4% rise in guest arrivals and a +6% increase in average stay length. Despite guest night growth occupancy rates remained stable as the number of available stay units expanded by +5% YoY.
- Overall, guest nights increased at a similar rate in both visitor markets (domestic: +9%, international: +8%). However, significant variations were observed across different accommodation types. Small motels (fewer than 20 stay units) saw a sharp rise in domestic guest nights (+38% YoY), while international guest nights in this segment

dropped by -47% YoY. Conversely, lodges and boutique accommodations gained popularity among international visitors (+8% YoY) while experiencing a decline in domestic guest nights (-17% YoY).

- Despite slower growth in visitor card spending compared to the national average, employment in tourism-related industries saw strong gains, well ahead of national trends. The number of filled jobs increased by +4% YoY (vs. +1% nationally), while employment earnings surged by +31% YoY (vs. +19% nationally), a positive outcome for Mackenzie's communities. Even though visitor card spending on recreation and transport products declined this month, employment in both industries saw significant growth, with travel and tour services jobs up +17% YoY and recreation services jobs rising by +33% YoY.

Note: The monthly Tourism Data Insights are provided by Vistr who are contracted by Mackenzie Tourism (part of Mackenzie District Council).