

Industry Sector Profile

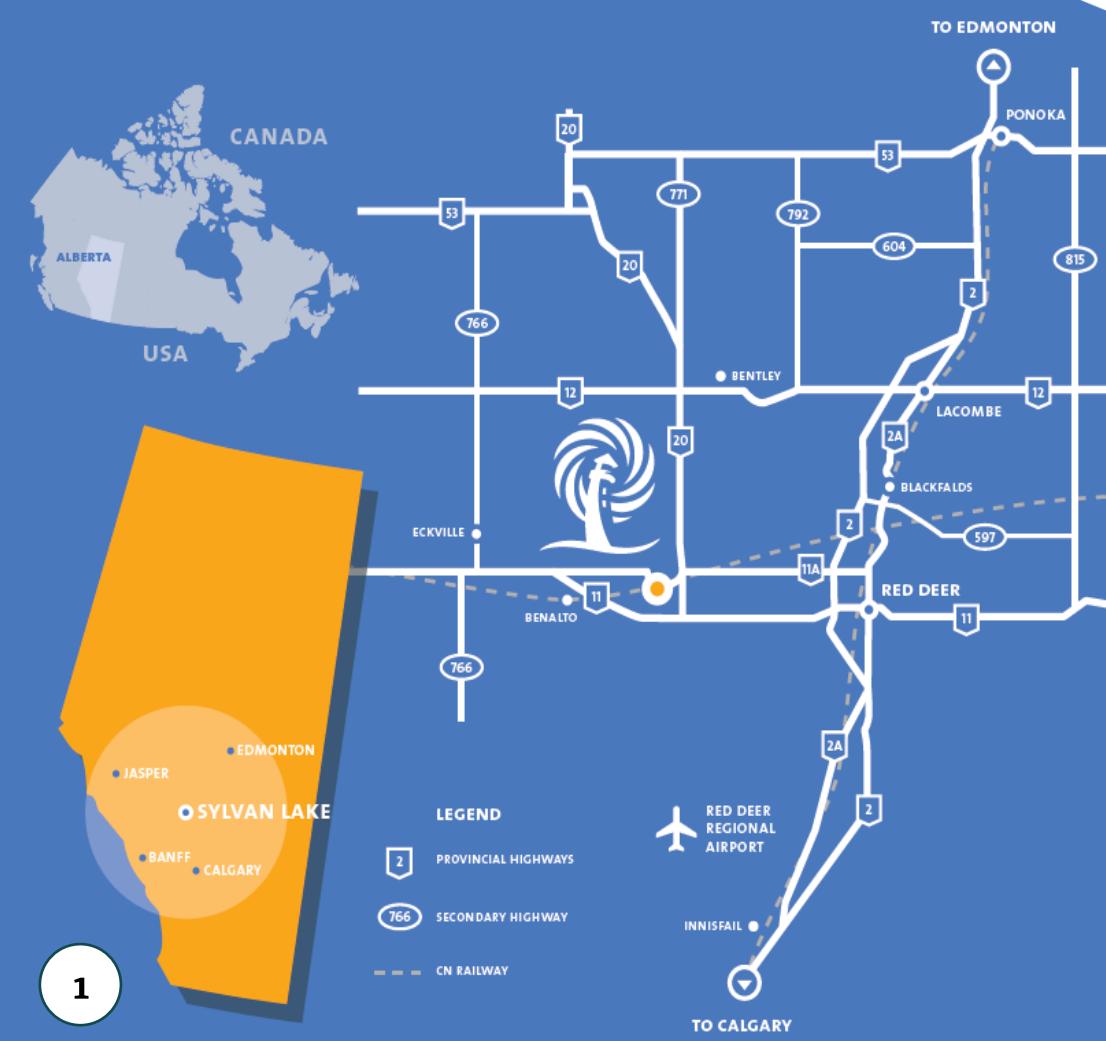
Tourism





Snapshot of Sylvan Lake

The town of Sylvan Lake is situated on the southeast edge of Sylvan Lake, a 15-kilometre-long freshwater lake in Red Deer County. Sylvan Lake is more than just a picturesque destination; it's a thriving community that combines lakeside charm with vibrant economic opportunities.



Location

The town of Sylvan Lake is centrally located within the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor, just 18 km west of Red Deer, the third largest city in the province, with access to all major highways, rail lines and airports, connecting it with national and international markets. The town has easy access to an immediate trading area of over 313,000 people and because of its close proximity to the QEII highway, is positioned to access a market of over 2.7 million.

About the Sector

Tourism encompasses a broad range of recreational activities undertaken by individuals away from the communities where they reside, work, or study.

The industry is commonly understood to consist of five primary sectors: transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, and travel services.

Sylvan Lake has become a favourite year-round vacationing spot for families from both Edmonton and Calgary. The lake is a popular destination for tourists from around Alberta, with over 1.5 million visitors each year. Sylvan Lake's tourism sector includes direct tourism operators (i.e., hotels/motels) as well as businesses who are supported by tourism but not solely tourism-related (i.e., restaurants).

Regional Approach

Central Alberta is home to a diverse and growing economy with a highly skilled workforce across a range of industries. With expertise in oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare, the region's talent pool brings technical proficiency, adaptability, and a strong work ethic.

The region offers a strong foundation for investors focused on stability, innovation, and success. This robust economic landscape draws businesses, supports job creation, and fosters steady population growth.



Competitive Advantage

Sylvan Lake is more than just a picturesque destination; it's a thriving community that combines lakeside charm with vibrant economic opportunities. Located in the heart of Alberta, Sylvan Lake provides businesses the opportunity to locate within a tight-knit rural community, with access to urban centres and services.

The municipality consistently ranks highly in terms of business friendliness, with local entrepreneurs noting a business-first mentality and ease of connection with municipal staff. Local businesses also rank available labour and their current labour force highly, suggesting the town is home to a highly skilled workforce.

Specific to the tourism sector, the town's lakefront location provides opportunities for visitor attraction unparalleled in many parts of Alberta. With ever increasing visitor numbers, opportunities abound for perspective businesses.

Demographic Advantage

The town of Sylvan Lake is situated on the southeast edge of Sylvan Lake, a 15-kilometre-long freshwater lake in Red Deer County.

Sylvan Lake's economy is thriving, having experienced remarkable growth since the early 2000s, with growth rates of 21.1% (from 2006 to 2011), 19.9% (2011-2016) and 7.9% (2016-2021) over the previous three Census periods. More recently, the town has had a growth rate of 13.4% over the past five years, one of the highest rates in Alberta. This rapid growth supports a forward-looking economy, with a diverse population seeking employment across a host of sectors.

The quality of life in Sylvan Lake is unmatched along the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor. Whether you're looking to invest, grow your business, or enjoy lakeside living, Sylvan Lake is ready to welcome you.



Business Supports

Bringing your business to our community offers a unique opportunity to tap into a vibrant ecosystem of support, collaboration, and innovation.



[Destination Canada](#) provides intelligence, tools and resources that help the Canadian tourism industry reach domestic and international markets. Destination Canada's approach focuses on markets where Canada's tourism brand leads and yields the highest return on investment.

[The Canadian Tourism Data Collective](#) is an award-winning data and insights platform powered by Destination Canada, in partnership with Statistics Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED). The Data Collective empowers tourism policy advisors, industry leadership, business owners, marketers, researchers and analysts, investors, and media to drive sustainable growth and set a global benchmark for innovation and leadership in data-driven tourism intelligence.

[Travel Alberta](#) drives the growth of the province's visitor economy, creating and promoting must-visit destinations throughout the province by helping businesses develop memorable products and experiences, marketing those products and experiences to the world, ensuring visitors have access to them, and driving alignment across the sector.

Travel Alberta's Destination Development Team supports tourism operators with strategies and mentorship to help take their businesses to new heights, from coaching to networking and investments.

[Indigenous Tourism Alberta \(ITA\)](#) encourages and promotes authentic Indigenous tourism that showcases the unique and immersive experiences offered by its members throughout our four regions; North, Central and Southern Alberta as well as the Rockies. ITA's goal is to enhance economic viability, further engage and support our Indigenous peoples, and nurture these partnerships throughout the province by sharing our stories, culture, and experiences with a global audience.

Incentives & Programs

Sylvan Lake is committed to fostering a business-friendly climate through a range of programs and partnerships designed to support businesses, developers, and investors.



Visit Sylvan Lake is the visitor services umbrella through which visitor information and destination marketing for Sylvan Lake are delivered. This includes the visitsylvanlake.ca website and social media [@visitsylvanlake](https://www.instagram.com/visitsylvanlake). Visit Sylvan Lake is operated by the Town of Sylvan Lake.

Opportunities to collaborate with the Town of Sylvan Lake on marketing campaigns and initiatives are a great way for businesses to leverage and find mutual benefit in ongoing campaigns. Visit Sylvan Lake regularly runs seasonal campaigns, hosts giveaways, and brings in influencers.

[The Tourism Industry Partnership Program](#) is an opportunity for local tourism businesses to be involved and actively participate in Town of Sylvan Lake tourism initiatives and strategies, collaborate, provide great visitor experiences, and be involved in the development of the destination. Participants in the Program must have a valid license with their jurisdiction and be operating in the tourism industry sector in Sylvan Lake. The program is free of cost to businesses within the Town of Sylvan Lake or \$65 for tourism businesses located in Lacombe or Red Deer Counties.

Together with the Town and local partners, the [Tourism Development Committee](#) is creating exciting strategies to grow tourism that benefits everyone. From new attractions and unique visitor experiences to strengthening our destination's appeal, we're building a thriving, vibrant place for residents and visitors alike. The Committee develops and implements strategies that will support community-beneficial tourism and contribute to the strong growth of the destination through tourism industry development, tourism product development, and destination development initiative.

Industry Data

Sylvan Lake Business Counts

	1-9 Employees	10-49	50+	Sole Proprietor	Total
Dec 2013	26	26	2	14	68
Dec 2024	21	22	2	29	74

Sylvan Lake Sales and Exports^{*}

Exports from Tourism Businesses, 2016 :
\$27.7 million

Exports from Tourism Businesses, 2022 :
\$31.5 million

2022 Tourism Sales : **\$58.0 million**



* Export and sales figures represent the sum of all subsector activity within this field. Exports are community-based; they reflect any dollars spent from outside Sylvan Lake. All economic impact data is from Lightcast Analyst 2024.3.

Wages

Average Tourism Wages

Alberta
\$34,339

Sylvan Lake
\$22,972

¹ Sylvan Lake, Red Deer, Red Deer County, Lacombe, Lacombe County.

² A location quotient (LQ) measures how concentrated an industry or activity is in a region compared to a larger reference area (like a province or country). An LQ above 1.0 means the industry is more concentrated locally (a local strength or specialization), while below 1.0 means it's less concentrated.

Job Counts

746
Sylvan Lake Tourism Jobs
(13% growth in the last decade)

9,090
Labour Recruitment Area Job Count¹



Sylvan Lake Location Quotient²
1.33





Tourism Vision

The Town's 2025–2035 Destination Leadership & Management Plan sets a concrete 10-year strategy and vision that signals Sylvan Lake's commitment to growing as a premier year-round destination.

The Town's 10-year Tourism Vision is below:

10-YEAR TOURISM VISION

Connect, Inspire and Be the Force of Good With and In the Community

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake emerges as a premier, **year-round** destination for **one-day and multi-day visits**, welcoming visitors of **all** ages, abilities, and origins from across the province and beyond. Visitors seek to experience the town's **unique blend of local lake town charm and vibrant culture**.

Harnessing its unique qualities and strategic location, Sylvan Lake continues to grow as the **magnet attraction for experiencing Central Alberta**'s local charms and tastes in one cohesive experience. It stands as a leader and trendsetter for tourism initiatives in the region.

Sylvan Lake's tourism leadership—Visit Sylvan Lake—has leveraged tourism as a catalyst for **sustainable community economic development** and has set a data-driven tourism development model. The Town incubates open **innovations and collaborations**, placing **community quality of life** and **leadership, environmental stewardship, and equitable sharing** of tourism's benefits at the forefront of tourism decision-making.

Tourism operations have established **a strong local industry**, collaborating **closely with the Town administration** to boost visitation and **public, private and community partnership and investment**. Offering **authentic and iconic experiences**, they provide unique ways to connect visitors to the lake and the natural surroundings that sustain the community, to places that define its charm, and to people and stories that **differentiate** Sylvan Lake as a place to visit and as a community to belong to. Sylvan Lake flourishes as an inclusive community for living, visiting, working, investing, creating, and playing.

Financial Outlook

The tourism sector is seen as volatile due to demand being heavily influenced by broad macroeconomic conditions (i.e., the overall performance of the economy) that lie beyond the control of individual operators.

Three macroeconomic trends impact tourism most noticeably:

- 1) Consumer Confidence Index
- 2) Per Capita Disposable Income
- 3) Available Leisure Time

Regarding the consumer confidence index, following a sustained period of lower consumer confidence between 2021 and 2025, projections indicate a gradual recovery through 2030. This is a positive, as high consumer confidence leads to increased spending on travel and occupancy rates. When confidence declines, households tend to reduce discretionary spending, including travel, resulting in decreased bookings and lower revenue for hotels and motels.

With respect to per capita disposable income, higher disposable incomes correlate with increased spending on leisure activities, including travel. While disposable income levels fell significantly during the pandemic, they are expected to stabilize and remain relatively steady over the next five years.

Finally, average leisure time among Canadians has historically remained relatively constant, at roughly five to six hours per day over several decades. However, there are indications that this is gradually increasing as more workers place greater value on work-life balance and vacation time. Of course, because tourism requires the visitor to have available leisure time, this is another net positive for the sector's outlook.



"This is a Town that shops local, and supports local. I can't imagine starting my business anywhere else."



Living in Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake offers an exceptional quality of life, blending small-town charm with modern amenities and year-round outdoor recreation.

A Lifestyle That Balances Work and Play

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake glows with crisp skies, golden leaves, and plenty to explore. Stroll the trails, browse local shops, or cozy up on a patio, experience the small town charm, lakeside leisure and big-time adventures.

The NexSource Centre provides state-of-the-art facilities, including NHL-sized arenas, an aquatic center, and spaces for community events. The town features excellent healthcare services, strong public and Catholic schools, and a vibrant arts and culture scene. Residents and visitors enjoy summer activities like boating and paddleboarding, while winter brings ice fishing and hockey. The revitalized waterfront and affordable housing make Sylvan Lake a premier destination for living and recreation.



Local Spotlight



Sylvan Lake's tourism sector is a cornerstone of the local economy, drawing over a million visitors annually with its blend of lakeside charm, family-friendly attractions, and unique entertainment experiences. From seasonal adventures to year-round recreation, the town offers something for every age and interest.

At the heart of Sylvan Lake's summer buzz is the [Sylvan Lake Gulls](#), a Western Canadian Baseball League team that has quickly become a local favorite. Their home games at Pogadl Park are more than just baseball—they're community events filled with energy, entertainment, and family fun.

For thrill-seekers and group outings, The [Wood Shed Axe Throwing](#) delivers a one-of-a-kind experience with interactive digital targets and a rustic atmosphere that pays homage to Alberta's logging heritage. Nearby, The [X Zone](#) offers indoor adventure with laser tag, arcade games, and obstacle courses, making it a go-to spot for rainy days or birthday parties.

Long-standing attractions continue to anchor Sylvan Lake's reputation as a top Alberta destination. [Aqua Splash](#), a floating water park on the lake, is a summer staple for families and youth. [Sunsport Recreation](#) provides rentals for pontoon boats, kayaks, and other watercraft, allowing visitors to explore the lake at their own pace. In the winter they also offer ice fishing and wood fired sauna experiences that contribute to Sylvan Lake's year-round appeal!

On land, [Lakeside Go-Karts and Mini Golf](#) has entertained generations with its classic mix of speed and skill, while the [Sylvan Lake Golf and Country Club](#) and [Meadowlands Golf Club](#) offer scenic fairways and relaxed atmospheres for golfers of all levels.

These businesses, along with dozens of restaurants, shops, and seasonal events, contribute to a dynamic tourism ecosystem. The Town's official tourism site, [Visit Sylvan Lake](#), and the [Invest Sylvan Lake](#) platform, provide valuable resources for entrepreneurs looking to enter or expand within the tourism sector.

Sylvan Lake's tourism industry thrives on its ability to blend tradition with innovation, offering both nostalgic experiences and fresh attractions. Whether it's a weekend getaway or a summer-long stay, Sylvan Lake continues to be a premier destination in Central Alberta.

consider yourself invited

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