

# TOURISM

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW



Revised: Aug 20, 2024

Cape Breton Island, also known as Unama'ki, meaning the "land of the fog" in Mi'kmaq - offers a unique tourism investment opportunity that blends richness of cultural diversity with the allure of world-class golf, breathtaking landscapes, and warm hospitality. This vibrant Island is not just a desired destination but home to a tourism sector that is a strong economic driver for the region. From natural attractions such as stunning yet secluded beaches and the Bras d'Or Lake, to the historic Fortress of Louisbourg and Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, there is a wealth of wonder here drawing in visitors and investors alike. Unama'ki - Cape Breton is ready to welcome you to the number one Island in North America, where investment meets adventure, culture, and unparalleled scenic beauty, making it an ideal locale for those looking to contribute to and benefit from its continued growth and vibrant future.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT AND INDUSTRY FACTS

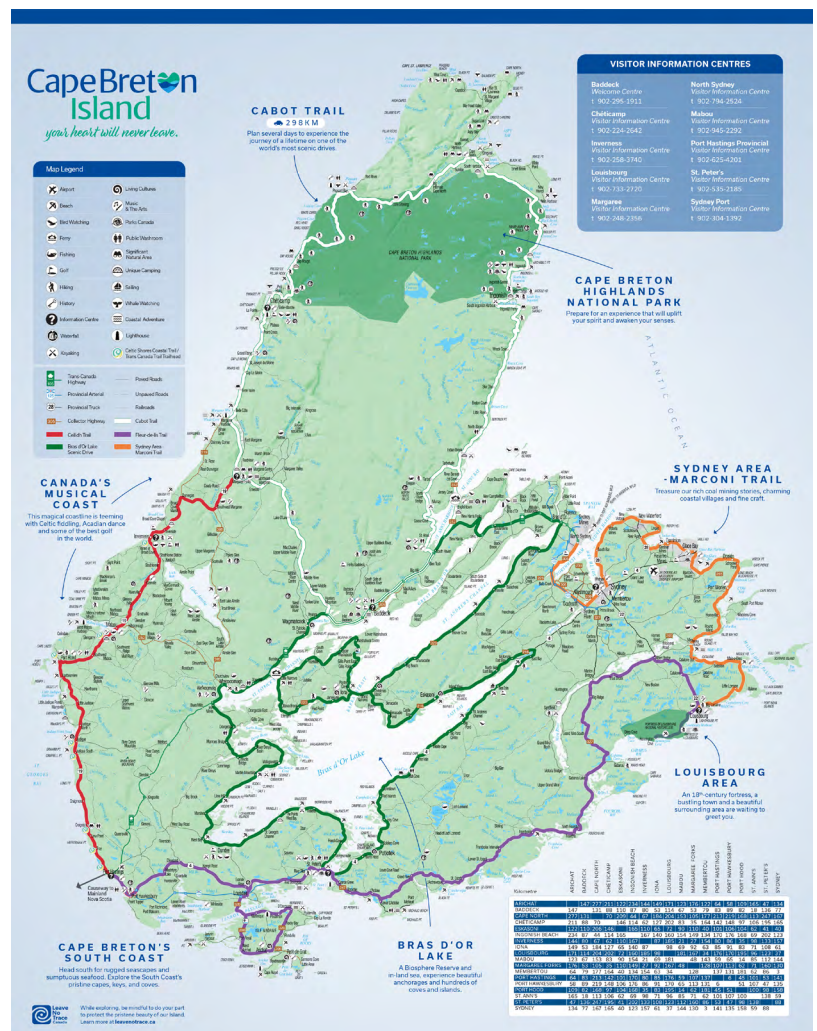
### Population and Visitor Dynamics:

Unama'ki - Cape Breton is home to 145,000 residents (13 per cent of Nova Scotia's population) but captures 20 per cent of Nova Scotia's tourism visits, underlining its significance in the provincial tourism landscape.

### Annual Visitor Statistics & GDP

**Contribution:** The Island attracts between 422,000 and 551,000 visitors annually by road, air, and sea, generating \$306 million to the region's GDP.

**Economic Significance:** The sector supports approximately 6,800 to 8,500 jobs on the Island annually.



Map: Compliments of Destination Cape Breton

## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Unama'ki - Cape Breton's tourism sector thrives on its natural beauty, diverse cultural experiences, and adventure opportunities within a short trip. The Island's commitment to sustainable tourism practices, along with its unique offerings like the stunning world-famous Cabot Trail, cultural festivals, vibrant restaurants, and historical sites, positions it as an attractive destination for travelers of all types and caters to diverse interests.

- › **Golf:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton is renowned for its world-class and scenic golf courses around the Island, including Bell Bay in Baddeck, Cabot Cape Breton in Inverness, Dundee Resort in Richmond County, Highland Links in Ingonish, and The Lakes at Ben Eoin in CBRM, as well as several more all around the Island.
- › **Cabot Trail:** The 300-kilometre-long Cabot Trail is one of Canada's most scenic and popular road trip destinations, taking travellers on a journey rich featuring scenic views, quaint and welcoming communities, friendly locals, and access to spectacular outdoor experiences.
- › **Creative Economy:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton is home to a rich mosaic of living cultures which contributes to a vibrant creative economy, characterized by lively music, arts, festivals, film, crafts and much more. This cultural vibrancy makes the Island attractive to tourists and cultural investors alike.
- › **Outdoor Adventures and Coastal Beauty:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton combines its adventure trails and pristine beaches into a comprehensive hub for adventure tourism. From the diverse trails of Cape Breton Highlands National Park to serene coastal retreats, the Island delivers to all who seek nature's wonders.
- › **Four-Season Tourism:** Major projects like Destination Cape Smokey are steering the Island towards becoming a year-round tourism destination, with Atlantic Canada's only gondola for snow sports and summer sightseeing, and year-round trails like the 92-kilometre Celtic Shores Coastal Trail on the western side of the Island. There are also many more multi-use trails enjoyed by bicyclists, multi-terrain vehicle enthusiasts, and pedestrians of all ages, snowmobile tours, snowshoeing locations, and so much more across the entire Island.
- › **Accessibility and Community:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton's strategic accessible location and warm, welcoming communities enhance its appeal to visitors and investors. This is one of the best places to visit and live in Canada - just ask a local. A diverse network of accommodations and local culinary delights provides a welcoming experience for every visitor, with a down-home atmosphere that makes Unama'ki - Cape Breton a premium destination for leisure and investment.

## LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

Unama'ki - Cape Breton's 10,000 square kilometres are home to vast and varied attractions in the Island's five Indigenous communities: Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q, as well as the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), the Municipalities of the Counties of Inverness, Richmond, Victoria, and the Town of Port Hawkesbury.

Each region has a unique history and culture, alongside engaging attractions, and plentiful opportunities for tourism development.



## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Unama'ki – Cape Breton is an island with a rich cultural heritage that can be explored through numerous cultural activities around the Island. Some of the highlights include the **Eskasoni** Cultural Journeys on Goat Island, the Highland Village Museum in Iona, the Centre de la Mi-Carême in **Grand Étang**, and the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in **Judique**.

## HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS

This Island has been the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq since time immemorial, and features more than 400 years of Acadian, Gaelic, and settler history from around the world. This makes Unama'ki – Cape Breton the perfect place to explore rich history, by visiting the Fortress of **Louisbourg**, the **Membertou** Heritage Park, the **St. Peters** Canal National Historic Site, the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site in **Baddeck**, or the Cape Breton Miners Museum in **Glace Bay**.

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Unama'ki – Cape Breton features diverse landscapes, from the highest point in Nova Scotia to thick forests, railway trails, National and Provincial Parks, and stunning beaches. Favourites for visitors and locals alike are hiking in the **Cape Breton Highlands National Park**, hiking, biking, or ATVing on the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail in **Inverness County**, snow sports at Destination Cape Smokey in **Ingonish**, surfing at **Point Michaud** Beach, or paddling, fishing, swimming, and boating in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve **Bras d'Or Lake**.





## BEACHES

Unama'ki – Cape Breton's coastline is incredibly varied, from towering rocky cliffs to sea glass hunters' havens to pristine sandy beaches – with the warmest waters north of the Carolinas in the Northumberland Strait. There are dozens of incredible beaches around the Island and on the Bras d'Or Lake, with some favourites including: the five beaches in **Port Hood**, **Pondville** Beach, Big **Glace Bay** Beach, and Black Brook Cove Beach in **Ingonish**.

## GOLF

The Island is home to some of the best golf courses in Canada, with golfers coming from all over the world to sample the fairways and greens here. Some of the top-rated courses include Cabot Cape Breton in **Inverness**, Cape Breton Highlands Links in **Ingonish**, **Dundee** Resort & Golf Club, Le Portage in **Chéticamp**, and The Lakes at **Ben Eoin**.





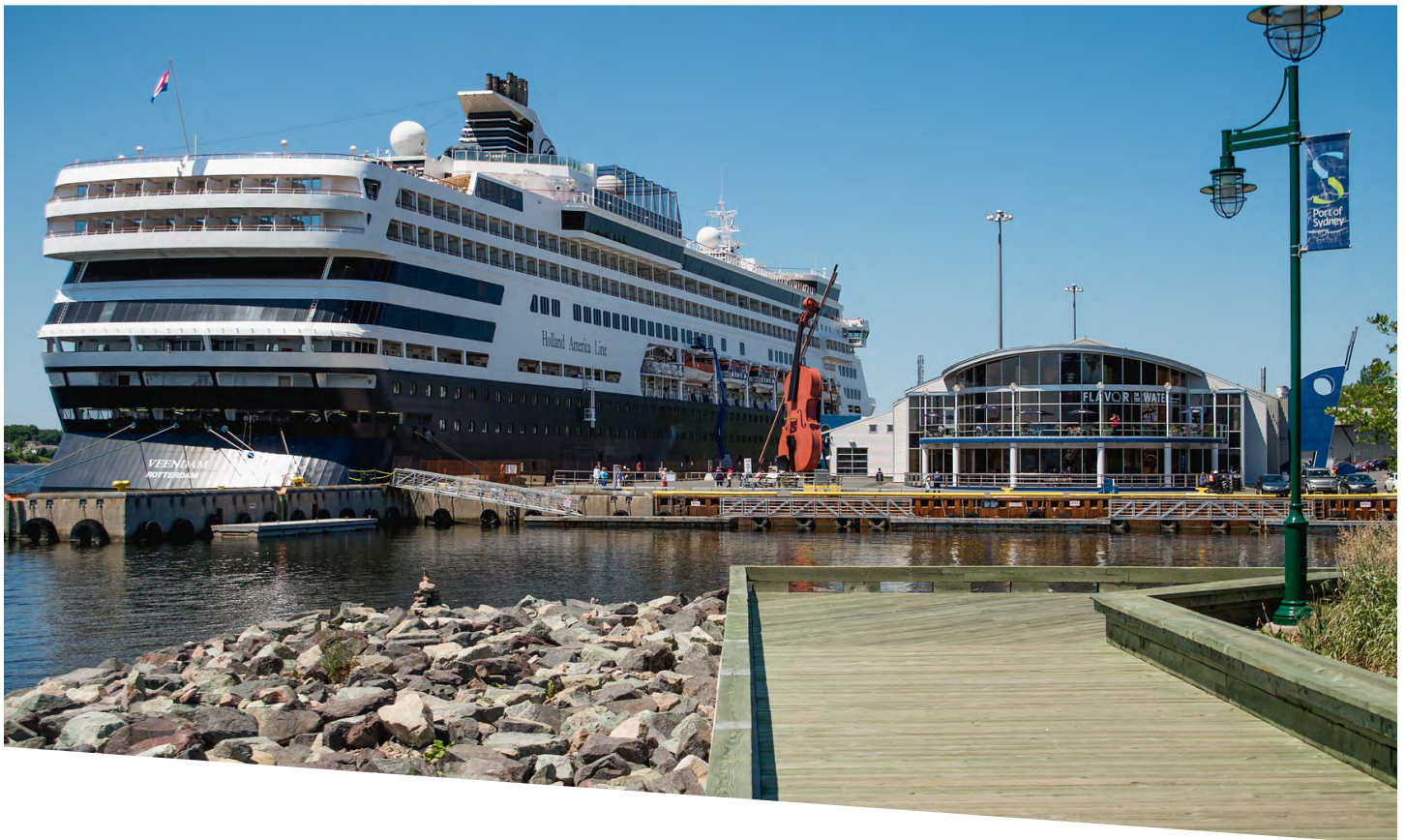
## PERFORMING ARTS

With a rich performing arts tradition ranging from Indigenous music, Acadian and Gaelic fiddling, and modern artists, a trip to Unama'ki – Cape Breton wouldn't be complete without taking in a show. There are some fantastic venues for the performing arts on the Island, including Royal Canadian Legions and community halls in almost every community, the Highland Arts Theatre in **Sydney**, Red Shoe Pub in **Mabou**, Theatre **Baddeck**, **Membertou** Trade & Convention Centre, and the **Port Hawkesbury** Civic Centre.

## INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are a variety of avenues for expansion in Unama'ki - Cape Breton's tourism sector, including:

- › **Hospitality and Accommodations:** Developing boutique hotels, resorts, and unique lodging options.
- › **Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism:** Creating sustainable, nature-based experiences and adventure activities that leverage the Island's natural landscapes. [Mountain biking experiences](#) are primed for development.
- › **Cultural and Heritage Projects:** Investing in projects that showcase Unama'ki - Cape Breton's rich cultural heritage and history.
- › **Food and Beverage:** The Island offers perfect access to premium seafood, locally grown produce, and excellent craft beer from Big Spruce and Breton Brewing to create unique dining experiences.



## SUPPORT FOR INVESTORS

As an Island with tourism at its heart, there is a large network of support locally for investors and entrepreneurs. [Destination Cape Breton](#) is the Island's destination tourism management organization, the [Cape Breton Partnership](#) offers support through Economic Development Officers and Immigration Services, Cape Breton University's [World Tourism Institute](#) provides research and support for the industry, the [Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network](#) empowers the Indigenous tourism sector, and [Tourism Nova Scotia](#) supports the sector through investment and development. All of these organizations work together to facilitate growth, innovation, and sustainability, ensuring investments not only succeed but also enrich the Island's unique cultural and environmental landscape.

By investing in Unama'ki - Cape Breton, you join a community that values sustainable development and cultural integrity. Our support framework ensures that your venture not only grows but also contributes positively to the Island's legacy and future.

## CONCLUSION

Unama'ki - Cape Breton's tourism sector represents a vibrant component of the local economy, with significant potential for growth and development. For investors, the Island offers a compelling mix of natural beauty, cultural richness, and economic vitality, supported by a community and ecosystem committed to fostering sustainable and profitable tourism ventures.

## CONTACT AND RESOURCES

For further information or to explore investment opportunities, please contact:

### Cape Breton Partnership

[info@capebretonpartnership.com](mailto:info@capebretonpartnership.com)

### Web Resources:

- › [Destination Cape Breton](#) - consumer-facing site
- › [Destination Cape Breton](#) - industry site
- › [Tourism Nova Scotia](#)
- › [Cape Breton University's World Tourism Institute](#)
- › [#RiseAgain2030 - Cape Breton Island Destination Development Strategy](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network](#)

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