



Merritt Visitor Information @ Baillie House

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Executive Summary

The third quarter of 2019 was the busiest quarter that the Visitor Centre at the Baillie House has experienced. A total of 13,591 visitors stopped at our site in the third quarter of 2019.

A total of 26,472 visitors have stopped at the Baillie property over the first 9 months of 2019. This is 1,642 more visitors than the first 9 months of 2018 and 6,217 more than the same period in 2017.

New visitors to our downtown continue to arrive at our site to find out what Merritt has to offer. Short walks with their children and/or dogs continue to be popular attractions (as well as picnic areas and restaurants).

Dates and Hours of Operation

The Merritt Visitor Centre at the Baillie House was open from 10 am to 6 pm every day of the third quarter of 2019. We were open for a total of 736 hours over this period. The Visitor Centre was open for all statutory holidays.

Staffing

During July and August, the Visitor Centre at the Baillie House was staffed by Sandy Curnow, the on-site manager for 4 days each week. One staff member worked also worked 4 days each week. A part-time person worked two days per week. Two summer students each worked for 4 days per week. As a result, there were 2 people every Sunday, Monday and Tuesday each week. There were 3 staff on-site from Wednesday through Saturday (the busiest days). Beginning on September 2nd there was one staff member present every day with assistance from volunteers on busier days. Volunteers also helped to cover lunch hours from Sunday to Tuesday. They were also present every Wednesday to Saturday throughout this quarter.

The Nicola Valley Heritage Society provided 1528 person-hours of employment over this 3-month period.

Visitor Statistics

Visitor Stats Third Quarter 2019 vs Third Quarter 2018						
	July 2019	August 2019	September 2019	Third Quarter Total 2019	Third Quarter Total 2018	% Difference - / +
Visitor Parties	2,381	2,464	1,804	6,649	6,623	+0.4%
Visitors	4,946	4,870	3,775	13,591	13,294	+2.2%
Tour Buses	0	0	0	6	6	0.0%

The third quarter of 2019 saw a 2.2% increase in visitors when compared to the numbers in 2018. This is 30.5% more than the number of visitors for the third quarter of 2017. As soon as temperatures began to warm in the spring, the number of visitors to downtown Merritt began to increase.

The majority of visitors over this 3-month period were from B.C. Visitor Origin was distributed as follows:

B.C.	53%
Alberta	19%
Europe	11%
U.S.	6%
Rest of Canada	5%
Asia/Australia	5%
Other (mainly New Zealand)	1%

Nearly three quarters of the visitors were only in Merritt for part of a day:

Same day	69%
One night	20%
2 nights	7%
3 nights or more	4%


The majority of visitors utilized our site facilities:

Site Facilities (washroom, food, tour, etc)	47%
Maps/directions	19%
Food/Beverage	10%
Attractions	8%
Adventure Recreation	5%
Shopping	5%
Events	2%
Accommodation	2%
Community Services	1%
Parks	1%

The weather was variable over this 3-month period. Early in the summer the weather was warm but with rain about once every week. Then in August it became hot and dry until well into September. As a result, the number of visitors in July and August was very similar to the numbers in 2018. September saw a significant rise in visitors compared to 2018. There were numerous European visitors every day in their RV's . The Visitor Centre is still the number one rated attraction in Merritt on Trip Advisor. Reviews can be read under "Things To Do in Merritt". Our site is described as "great, friendly centre", "must visit" and "felt like we were visiting family and friends!". Our staff site tours and the Visitor Centre have also been getting great reviews on Google where our Google page had 5,930 views in September.

Trends in Visitor Traffic

Just over half the visitors to downtown Merritt were from B.C. The number of Asian and European visitors coming into the Visitor Centre increased in the third quarter of 2019 compared to the numbers in 2018. Most visitors are just stopping for a part of one day. Hopefully if the visitors that come downtown will explore and see what Merritt has to offer other than fast food restaurants. Visitors regularly ask about local food and eateries. We have many repeat visitors to our site every day. Downtown Merritt continues to benefit from the closure of the Visitor Centre at Exit 286. People have discovered restaurants in 2018 and returned in 2019 to the downtown. The electric car charging station has been busier than ever this year. Demand for the fast charger has greatly increased the number of people electric car owners coming downtown.



Building, Grounds and Stakeholder Relations

- The gardens at the Baillie property continue to receive great reviews. Visitors appreciate that children and pets are safe to explore our grounds. Many visitors stay for more than an hour.
- Posters are put in the front windows of the VIB to publicize upcoming events for any groups that drop posters at our site. Some of these groups include the Nicola Valley Naturalists, Head Start program, Film Society, Community Garden, Catholic Women's League and Trinity United Church.

Looking Ahead to the Next Quarter

During the final quarter of 2019, the Heritage Society volunteers will participate in Country Christmas activities. This is also our fundraising season for 2020 expenses.

The Heritage Society staff and volunteers are looking forward to meeting the challenge of continuing to host the Merritt Visitor Centre. We hope to see more visitors stopping at our downtown businesses to shop and eat.