

Passion, Performance, and Profits:  
Employment Opportunities in Eco and Adventure Tourism

By Rod Burns

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**About the Author**

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## **Objectives:**

1. To outline the Employment Opportunities in Eco and Adventure Tourism (page 3)
2. To identify adventure skills applied in the Tourism Industry (page 5)
3. To outline the skills and knowledge, which a person will need to be a successful EcoInterpreter Guide (page 7)
4. To give solid direction and leads as where to start exploring for Eco and Heritage Interpreter career opportunities, within the Tourism Industry (page 9)
5. Learn before you leap! A few brief thoughts and realities of private business (page 11)
6. Question Period

## 1. Employment Opportunities in Eco and Adventure Tourism

Facts:

a) Canada is heading into a Baby Boomer employment crisis / shortage. The shortage will be felt quite significantly in the area of Tourism, as owners wish to retire at the same time as retirees wish a relaxing place to visit, with soft adventures to participate in.<sup>1</sup>

There is a projected shortfall in all sectors and at all levels from job entry to senior management.

2) The Ecotourist is the most highly educated of all clients, having 3 + years of university with a long list of global travel experiences. They have the highest disposable and discretionary incomes expecting the highest level of service, knowledge, and product for their dollar spent.

Eco / Adventure Tourism Employment	Government Employment / Min. of Tourism
Financing: needs 5 years to establish a positive cash flow. Global and local events determine final cash flow, Owners need a line of credit between seasons.	Ministry of Finance / Secretary finance: annual budgets - money comes from the public purse.
Industry and government compliance manager	Manager overseeing Governance / inter and intra- government agreements
Airlines, train, cruise ships, vehicle, small craft, personal craft, leases, rentals - Use until they depreciate	Transportation: Agency vehicle, leases, rentals. Replacements in budget.
Restaurants, catering, inclusive, self catered	Self catered Food / Beverages / Cafeteria
Personal Education / training: - High school, college, university, in-house private industry, association workshops	Personal Education / training: - High school, college, university, in-house workshops. Government funded
Marketing / Sales: In-house / off season, - press releases, brochures, hard copy advertizing, fliers, internet, - trained sales / marketing person (owner) - Budget based on return on investment on previous experiences (10% of budget)	Marketing, public relations: Site specific, influenced by budget, perceived need, services by separate office - Media Coverage. - budget can be limited to open-ended.
Employment Basics: Wages & Salaries, (FT / PT / Seasonal / Contract) - Rate of pay is market sensitive / competition sensitive	Employment Basics: - Wages & Salaries, (FT / PT / Seasonal / Contract) - wages / salary grid on experience - Unionized

<sup>1</sup> Adventure Tourism: an industry profile, CTC, CTHRC, 2001.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-union.</li> <li>- tips, gratuities, prices on equipment</li> <li>- medical benefits are personal</li> <li>- clothing allowance</li>   <li>- Hours: irregular, seasonal, as needed, influenced by storms, conditions.</li> <li>- Work holidays as a regular day.</li> <li>- As a business owner: do not count on any holidays for the first 5 years.</li> <li>- You are always on-call.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pension plans,</li> <li>- health benefits</li>   <li>- clothing allowance</li>   <li>Hours: overtime, schedules, holidays,</li> </ul>
<p>Customer Service / Staff Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff / staff resolution of conflicts</li> </ul>	<p>Human Resources Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conflict resolution / grievance office</li> </ul>
<p>Accommodations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can be provided, subsidized, personal preference</li> </ul>	<p>Accommodations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can be provided, subsidized, personal preference</li> </ul>

## 2. To Identify where Adventure skills are applied in the Tourism Industry

Hard Adventure Guide Skills*	Soft Adventure Guide Skills ++
Mountain climbing guide ( 4 season)	N/A
Bicycle touring: All Day, gear grinding	Sage wagon available: - <b>Interpreter Time!</b>
Kayaking / Canoeing (fresh / saltwater) day or multi-day trips: Lead Guide and Second Guide skills categories achieved.	½ day - Full day - use of a mother ship, lodge, resort, amenities - <b>Interpreter time at meals, evenings, in transit.</b>
White Water Rafting Guide and pick-up	Calmer waters, drifting, portage - interp time as you drift along!
Zodiac operation: - fun at full throttle - mechanical repair, radio, navigation	- avoided due to physical stress / body condition - <b>Interp time, when the engine is shut off!</b>
Dog sled driver - animal care, sled repairs, navigation,	- n/a: for the younger person - <b>Interp Time at rest points, evenings.</b>
Multi - day Hike / Trek leader	Day walks, long lunches. - <b>Interp Time from start of the trip</b>
Sport Fishing Guide (Fresh / Salt water)	- soft seats, washroom on vessel, coffee - <b>Interp Time</b> when fishing is slow - woman clients are DEMANDING more non-fishing time, while expecting <b>INTERP Time!</b>
Hunting Guide:	- Theme is marketed months in advance

- animal tracking, navigation, first aid, physically fit, mentally solid, weatherproof!	- <b>Interp time</b> setting up the trip - <b>photograph, sketch, binoculars.</b> - Interp must have significant natural / cultural history knowledge!
Guide -outfitter - horse rider, wrangler, hunting / fishing	- ½ day, full day perhaps. (40+) - <b>Interp Time during meals, breaks,</b>
Telemark Skiing / Heli Skiing / Snow Cat Guide - the vertical feet per day is key - multi-day, overnight snow camping is enjoyed.	Consider cross-country on groomed trails, leading back to a crackling fire in the lodge. - <b>Interp time during breaks, at the lodge, evenings.</b>

\* Hard Adventure Guiding, physical endurance and a very special mental attitude are key. Lead guide certification requires maintenance of a trip log, advanced skills training, advanced Wilderness First Aid, advanced Navigation, advanced Trip Planning. Adventure Guides earn their reputation by doing trips, overcoming the physical demands of the activity.

++ Soft Adventure: Guiding: clients are 40 years plus, thus have come to appreciate comforts, much less physically demanding activities, less endurance, longer breaks between activities, warm water / soft beds in the evenings.

All adventure guides need to have physical endurance to rescue clients from conditions, with a capacity to be softer in setting expectations of guests.

Heritage Interpretation / EcoInterpretation Training is critical for a Soft Adventure experience.

### **3a. Outline the skills, which a person will need to be a successful EcoInterpreter Guide.**

**Heritage Interpreter:** a person who works in a government facility, communicating natural or cultural history of the site to guests / participants. Work hours are generally on an 8-hour x 5-day cycle,

**EcoInterpreter:** a person who works in private industry, at a lodge, resort, or with an adventure tour company, communicating natural or cultural history to registered guests.

EcoInterpreter / Adventure Guide work hours ARE long: stopping only to sleep. (Last to bed - first to rise). Interpretations are impromptu and planned, lasting moments to extending themes over many days.

Superior Interpersonal Skills / Communication Skills are critical as you are with the same group of 1 - 15 people for hours, indeed days at a time.

The EI must have significant Adventure Guide Skills, listed above!

\* Personal EcoInterpretation programs run from impromptu experiences lasting a few minutes to many days, at all hours, under all climatic conditions. The EcoInterpreter's interpersonal skills will be pushed to the maximum, with always room to learn and improve. A set presentation schedule is planned for, however life's realities will influence the true outcomes.

Props are generally few! EcoInterpreters draw upon props found around them at the time ie. bones, rocks, feathers, location, known geological formations, historic sites etc.

++ Non-Personal Interpretation Skills

These are very much akin to those expected from a person working at a government site. Private sites are lodges, resort, conference centre, common room, waiting rooms, walls, tables. The Interpreter would have access to technology, such as video machines, CD players, overheads.

3B. The knowledge, which a person will need to be a successful EcoInterpreter Guide.

1) A well-rounded EcoInterpreter is knowledgeable in both the Natural and Cultural History, of their working area. They are capable of putting this knowledge into a global perspective.

2) The EcoInterpreter should be conversant in the natural and cultural history of 2 or more regions in the world, beyond their own work area. Over time, the EcoInterpreter will research and or visit the country and region which produces most of their clients e.g. Germany, United Kingdom, China, Japan, USA.

3) Communication Knowledge and Skills (SMR)

- Public Speaking, Speech and Debate
- Communications Psychology
- Learning Psychology for different age groups.
- Barriers to Communication (noise, personal agendas)

**Interpretation Skills Required of EcoInterpreters  
Provoke, Relate, Reveal**

<b>Personal*</b>	<b>Non-Personal++</b>
Planning, development, delivery	Planning, development, delivery
Impromptu talks / interactions	Brochure development and production
Guided Walks, water travel, motorized travel (Step-on Guide)	Themes put onto automated tapes, CD's, slide, video presentations.

Roving, Site	
Demonstration: Prop Talks	Demonstration tables: build and maintain
Lectures / scheduled talks	Research / Write / Produce articles
Media presentations.	Newsletters, computer publishing
Performance: song, dance, animation, visual,	Develop and maintain terrariums / aquariums.
	Puzzles: paper, computer,
<b>Inter-Personal Communications</b> - age considerations (youth, young adult, Parents, Seniors) - health and physical abilities - Education levels (University or self taught equivalent)	Inter-active programs - a litany of pop-up activities - engaging client in activities - suitable for general / specific group and their dynamics..

**4. Solid direction and leads as where to start exploring for Eco and Heritage Interpreter career opportunities, within the Tourism Industry**

- a. What are your personal adventure skills: kayaking, skiing, climbing, cycling, sailing, hiking? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Do you have certificates or completed courses in:
- Adventure or Wilderness First Aid: 24 hours - 10 days intensive
  - Sea Kayaking: day guide, level 2, level 1: 5 days training, 100 days logged trips.
  - Mountain Climbing: ACMG certification: Level 1 Level 2
    - Practical exam, logged hours at junior levels.
  - Community College Courses / Interpretation
    - Adventure Guide programs: 12 weeks - 8 months.
    - Natural History Interpretation: 45 hours.
  - Interpretation Canada Modules 1 and 2
    - 15 hours per module
  - Bold Point Centre Modules 1, 2, 3 (Natural History) Cultural History in progress.  
15 hours per module, based on CTHRC Occupational Standards
  - CTHRC national exams for Certified Professional Heritage Interpreter

- Correspondence to prepare, 4-hour exam, 1-hour performance video, 900 logged performance hours in the past 5 years.
- See other associations for their Standards and Certification requirements:
  - White Water Rafting, Guide Outfitter, Canoe and Kayak (Fresh Water), Sport Fishing Guide, Tour Guide, Tour Director, Snow-Cat Skiing Guide.

**c. What are your levels of EcoInterpreter Knowledge?  
(Best to be at a 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> year university level, either by courses or through personal passion and self-study equivalent)**

**A) Natural History Knowledge:**

1. Earth Sciences: Geology, Physical Geography, Social Geography, Astronomy)
2. Natural Sciences: Botany, Ecology, Zoology, Biology (with local knowledge, marine life, terrestrial life).
3. Current Events and Issues: local, provincial, national, inter-national

**B) Cultural History: Political structures, Myths and Religion, Trade, Ethnobotany, Technology, Art forms.**

1. History of Indigenous Peoples, pre-contact.
2. Contact between nations and peoples
3. Local history (100 + years in the area)
4. History of civilizations around the world (music, art, politics / religion, technology, conflicts, food, economics etc.)
5. Current Events and Issues: local, provincial, national, inter-national.

**d) Career Positions using EcoInterpreter / Heritage Interpreter Skills and Knowledge**

**Lodges, Resorts, Hotels / Motels, Resort Communities, Associations, Individual Companies, Cruise Ships, Tour Companies  
Newspapers, magazines, trade journals,**

- EcoInterpreter Guide + Adventure Guide: ½ day to multi day Personal Interpretation programs. Impromptu, demonstrations, prop talks, story telling, performance



- Designing in-house educational materials: 3 fold brochures for self guided walking tours; check-lists; flyers for events;
- Development of multi-media materials for in house use or broad based sales. Wildlife, Geology, Cultural Events,
- Writing of articles for trade magazines, newspapers.
- Instructor of Eco and Heritage Interpretation, contracted by industry, associations, Economic Development / Human Resources offices.

## 5. Learn before you leap! A few brief thoughts and realities of private business / self-employment.

1. Prepare to multi-task! The more flexible, creative, energetic, persevering, dynamic, the greater the number of opportunities available to an Interpreter.
2. Prepare to network, collaborating with others who have other skills / experience!
3. LEARN about / Take: Entrepreneurship seminars / Business Development /
4. Plan on NO HOLIDAYS for 5 years, while working 18-hour days!
5. Not all governments (local or provincial) are Tourism friendly! Traditional resource dependent communities are in economic stress and can either be helpful or very stressful, as you introduce your business initiatives.
6. Prepare to receive many negatives from Environment groups: Preservationists, lobby associations, friends and family included!
7. Plan time to work within the tourism industry to advocate, lobbying for the security of a land and marine base, so that your business can have a location for operation, year after year!
  - Other Natural Resource user groups will do legal and illegal things to keep you out of the wood and off the waters!
  - Allocate expense dollars to advocacy associations: as there is strength in numbers!
8. Eco-Entrepreneurship can be exceedingly stressful on your family relationships.
9. **Passion and Performance for EcoInterpretation is Addictive!**

Plant a P in your Pocket

**PROFITS GO WELL BEYOND DOLLARS!**

## **Bibliography:**

### **Key Publications (on line / pdf files)**

#### **Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism**

Canadian Tourism Commission, Pam Wright and Associates, 1999  
ISBN 0 662 27933 - 6

**Eco-Adventure Tourism: An Industry Profile and Resource Guide**, prepared by the Canadian Tourism Commission / CTHRC, Ottawa, 2001

This document is available on line, and should be available through your provincial TEC centres or through CTHRC, and Canadian Tourism Commission

#### **Integration of Biodiversity and Tourism: Canada Case Study**

United Nations Environment Program, Pam Wright and Associates, 2001

#### **Protecting Paradise: Certification Programs for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism**

Honey and Rome, Institute of Policy Studies, October 2001

#### **Tourism: putting ethics into practice**

A Report on Responsible Business Practices, TEARFUND, January 2001

#### **Worker Shortages in Accommodation, Food Services and Travel Agencies**

CTHRC, CS/Resors Consulting Ltd., Oct 2001,

### **Internet Links**

**Canadian Tourism Information Exchange:** 3 times per week, an email summary of press releases important to the tourism industry

Subscribe at: <http://www.canadatourism.com>

#### **Interpretation Australia**

<http://www.interpretationaustralia.asn.au/>

**ECOCLUB.com:** a network of EcoLodges, resorts, academics around the world, News, conferences, reports, and expert advice

<http://www.ecoclub.com/>

**Code of Practice:** Wilderness Tourism Association of British Columbia, includes clause 3:1, 3:2  
Commit members to training of staff and employment of people with appropriate training.

[www.wilderness-tourism.bc.ca](http://www.wilderness-tourism.bc.ca).

#### **Texas Nature Tourism Extension Program Site**

Texas Nature Tourism Task Force

<http://agfacts.tamu.edu/~mphilips/>

Miles D. Phillips, Extension Program Specialist - Ecotourism

Send email to: [mdphilips@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mdphilips@ag.tamu.edu)

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Fax: 361 265 9434

### **Personal phone calls / discussions**

Interpretation and Tourism in Alaska and the U.S.A., Conference Call: October 15, 2002: National Association of Interpretation / Section 10, Faith Duncan, Anchorage Alaska

Employment Opportunities for Heritage Interpreters in British Columbia and Canada, Marlene Morris, Education Programs Director, HIEAC, Surry B.C., October 09, 2002.

Tourism and Parks Employment Opportunities and Threats in British Columbia, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Scott Bailey Director of Resource Planning, British Columbia: October 11, 2002.

**P's for Profit EcoInterpreter Training** Canadian Adventure Tourism Conference, February 14 - 16 2001, Kamloops B.C. 6 - sessions were presented, 95% attendance. 85% of respondents agreed that EcoInterpreter training would be beneficial to their company, as an employee. In co-operation with the conference organizers, Government of B.C., Advanced Education.

**Personal research (3 years)** into the Code of Practice for the Wilderness Tourism Association of British Columbia: Training, Certification, Employment Opportunities, Barriers.

### **Miscellaneous Sources for Employment Opportunities**

- Go through specific provincial and regional tourist information booklets. Identify the lodges, resorts, and eco and adventure tourism companies. Write a proposal to them, which will outline what you can do for them:

Media development, training, staff person, personal / non-personal interpretation,

- Purchase regional / national / international magazines / newspapers: identify companies, which might use your skills! Email a proposal letter to them! FAX a copy of the letter / follow up the fax with a phone call! (Personal communications reach levels that print / E Communications do not!)

### **Tourism Training Resources:**

**Occupational Standards, Training Manuals for Adventure Guides, Heritage Interpreter, Tour Guides**

Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council ( CTHRC)

Email: [cthrc@cthrc.ca](mailto:cthrc@cthrc.ca)

Yukon Tourism Education Council (YTEC)

[ytec@hypertech.yk.ca](mailto:ytec@hypertech.yk.ca)      [www.ytec.yukon.net](http://www.ytec.yukon.net)

North West Territories

[www.gov.nt.ca](http://www.gov.nt.ca)

British Columbia

HIEAC: [mmorris@hieac.com](mailto:mmorris@hieac.com)      Note: the name will be changing in Jan. 03  
[www.hieac.com](http://www.hieac.com)

Alberta

Alberta Tourism Education Council (ATEC)  
[info@atec.ca](mailto:info@atec.ca)      no URL

Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council

[stec@sasktourism.com](mailto:stec@sasktourism.com)      [www.stec.com](http://www.stec.com)

Manitoba Tourism Education Council

[general@mtec.mb.ca](mailto:general@mtec.mb.ca)      [www.mtec.mb.ca](http://www.mtec.mb.ca)

Ontario Tourism Education Council

[info@otec.org](mailto:info@otec.org)      [www.otec.org](http://www.otec.org)

Societe des Etablissement de Plein Air Du Quebec

[Beaudoin.claude@sepaq.com](mailto:Beaudoin.claude@sepaq.com)      [www.sepaq.com](http://www.sepaq.com)

Tourism Industry of New Brunswick

[tianb@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:tianb@nbnet.nb.ca) no URL

Tourism Association of Nova Scotia Human Resources Council

[tians@tourism.ca](mailto:tians@tourism.ca)      [www.tians.org](http://www.tians.org)

Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island

[tiapei@peilsympatico.ca](mailto:tiapei@peilsympatico.ca)

Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (TEC)

[msmyth@hnl.nf.net](mailto:msmyth@hnl.nf.net)      [www.hnl.nf.net](http://www.hnl.nf.net)

Appendix 1:

No Guts

- No Glory!

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Passion

- Performance

- Profits

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If it is to be

- It is up to me!

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A ship is safe in the harbour

- but that is not what ships are for!

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Some people dream of climbing mountains

- Others are at the summit!

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The adventure begins with:

- MY first step!

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