



Bisbee Ecotourism Feasibility Study

Report Submitted to the Bisbee Science Exploration and Research Center (BSERC)
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Executive Summary

This feasibility study, prepared by Arizona State University in partnership with the Bisbee Science Exploration & Research Center (BSERC), evaluates whether ecotourism represents a viable pathway for Bisbee, Arizona to diversify its economy and for BSERC to develop new revenue-generating products and services.

Key Findings

- **Demand among current visitors for ecotourism-aligned experiences is strong, and the national market is growing:** Visitor surveys show high interest in sightseeing, hiking, birding, stargazing, and nature-based activities, all of which align with ecotourism offerings. Nationally, ecotourism is a growing niche within the broader tourism industry, creating a favorable market context.
- **Community priorities matter:** Residents and businesses value tourism as an economic driver but are wary of overtourism, rising costs, and cultural dilution. Across focus groups, participants stressed that any ecotourism effort must be designed to enhance resident quality of life and remain community-first, not extractive.
- **BSERC has a strong base of existing local users:** Through programs such as STEM Fridays, PIE & Sky astronomy events, and youth education initiatives, BSERC already engages schoolchildren, families, and community members. This base provides a ready audience for piloting ecotourism offerings and a platform for word-of-mouth promotion.
- **Limited infrastructure and expertise is a critical constraint:** Bisbee faces significant limits in parking, lodging capacity, and restaurant hours, which cap the ability to attract overnight visitors—the most valuable segment. In addition, BSERC lacks dedicated ecotourism expertise or tour operations infrastructure, creating a barrier to scaling without partnerships or new capacity-building.
- **Economic and environmental elements are looming threats:** Inflation and economic uncertainty could depress visitor spending and limit the viability of new revenue streams. Climate risks—rising heat, drought, wildfires, and the desertification of surrounding Sky Islands—threaten to shorten operating seasons and erode the natural assets that underpin ecotourism.

Strategic Considerations

- **Conditional opportunity:** Ecotourism can provide new revenue for BSERC, but only if approached as a long-term, incremental strategy with careful piloting, coalition building, and infrastructure advocacy.
- **Develop ecotourism expertise in-house and/or partner with an external expert:** BSERC must address its current gap in naturalist and tour operations knowledge to deliver credible, science-based visitor experiences. Without this capability, ecotourism offerings risk lacking authenticity, market appeal, and long-term sustainability.
- **Leverage low cost pilots and technologies:** The most immediate opportunity is to launch low-cost, one-year pilots (e.g., stargazing events, guided nature walks, self-guided digital tours). These should be treated as minimum viable products (MVPs) to test demand and refine based on feedback.

- **Coalition leadership:** A Bisbee Ecotourism Coalition should be established, with BSERC as convener, to align residents, businesses, and institutions. This body would sustain momentum, coordinate marketing, and advocate for infrastructure investment.
- **Destination image:** Ecotourism should not replace Bisbee’s strong cultural and historic brand but be added as a complementary layer. Messaging should emphasize Bisbee as a place where visitors can experience art, history, and nature together.
- **Long-term horizon:** Developing meaningful revenue streams will take years of piloting, learning, and scaling. Becoming a recognized regional ecotourism hub could require 20 years or more of sustained ecosystem-building, consistent with best practices in entrepreneurial ecosystem development.

Recommendations at a Glance

1. **Build ecotourism expertise** – either in-house or via partnerships.
2. **Convene an Ecotourism Coalition** – to coordinate, advocate, and engage.
3. **Pilot tours and events** – starting with stargazing, birding, and hybrid culture-nature experiences.
4. **Shape destination image** – integrate ecotourism into Bisbee’s branding alongside heritage and arts.
5. **Advocate for infrastructure and regional leadership** – ensure parking, lodging, and dining expansions center resident needs while engaging regional intuitions in leadership roles.
6. **Adopt a phased roadmap** – quick wins in 0–2 years, coalition-building in 2–7, regional hub building over 20.

Introduction

This report is the final product of a collaborative effort between the J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute (Edson E+I Institute), the ASU Center for Sustainable Tourism, and the Bisbee Science Exploration and Research Center (BSERC). The purpose of the study is to determine whether ecotourism represents a viable opportunity for Bisbee, Arizona, and if so, how BSERC might position itself within that market to generate new streams of revenue.

The study combines three layers of inquiry: demand-side analysis, which evaluates visitor markets, travel patterns, and preferences; supply-side analysis, which draws on the perspectives of residents, businesses, and community organizations; and industry analysis, which identifies the salient features of the broader ecotourism, nature institution, tour operator, and museum sectors.

Key questions guiding the study included: *What activities are visitors currently engaging in, and what motivates their travel? How do residents interact with and perceive tourism in Bisbee? How are businesses participating in tourism and what aspirations do they have for strengthening it? And how do Bisbee's assets align with best practices and success factors drawn from industry research?*

The research team for this study consisted of a senior program manager from the Edson E+I Institute as well as two faculty members and two graduate students from the Center for Sustainable Tourism. The research team made several visits to sites and attractions in and around Bisbee to collect primary data through surveys and focus groups. Findings from these primary sources were combined with insights from industry reports, secondary literature, and comparative case studies, enabling the team to assess not only the local context but also how Bisbee fits within larger national and regional ecotourism trends.

This report synthesizes those findings into a set of business analyses and strategic considerations, culminating in entrepreneurial recommendations for BSERC and its partners. Together, these insights provide both immediate pathways for piloting ecotourism initiatives and longer-term guidance for positioning Bisbee and BESRC as a distinctive and ecotourism hub.

Making the Report

This study presents findings from data collected with all three groups of stakeholders: residents, visitors, and business owners in Bisbee and surrounding areas in Cochise County, Arizona. Data were collected in several different ways with different stakeholder

groups. Qualitative data (focus groups and interviews) were conducted with local Bisbee residents and business owners. In order to get input from diverse resident groups, three focus group sessions were held, one virtual (using Zoom) and two in-person. Another virtual focus group session was held with local business owners. Two in-person focus group sessions followed a presentation by the ASU research team at BSERC. In addition to focus groups, online interviews were conducted with business owners who wished to contribute insight for the study but were not available to attend the business focus group. Interviews were also held with managers of other science and nature centers as a benchmarking activity to capture best practices regarding business operations and service delivery. In addition, we surveyed 292 visitors to understand the market better. Findings from these primary sources were combined with insights from industry reports, secondary literature, and comparative case studies.

Ecotourism Feasibility Considerations

Setting the Tourism Context for the City of Bisbee

Overview of tourism in the United States

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024, n.p.), the United States remains the “top tourist destination in the world.” In 2023, the combined economic impact of international and domestic tourists to and within the United States totalled \$2.4 trillion USD, which was about 8.8% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that year (WTTC, 2024). This impact supported 18 million jobs, exceeding pre-pandemic totals (WTTC, 2024). Of importance, domestic tourism totals also surpassed pre-pandemic totals with about \$1.4 trillion USD GDP contributions attributed to domestic tourists (Fox, 2024). Brand USA, the official travel site of the USA, markets the United States as a destination containing various beautiful experiences. Tourists are encouraged to take advantage of American national parks and highway systems, shopping centers and boutiques, important cities, and become immersed in unique local cultures while planning their “epic journeys” and adventures (Brand USA, 2025a, n.p.).

When it comes to international visitors to the United States, the forecast is trending upwards (Brand USA, 2025b). These travelers stated that visiting friends and family, needing a break from routines, and the expectation to return to the United States were the top three reasons for their international travel (Brand USA, 2025b). Their top motivation was to treat themselves and have fun, with couples being the highest percentage of travelers, and an expected average of 9.3 nights during their stay (Brand USA, 2025b). The top five reasons that international travelers are interested in visiting the United States are: shopping (47%), state and national parks (45%), history and heritage attractions (43%), movie and television landmarks (39%), and amusement and

water parks (36%) tied with art and history museums (36%) (Brand USA, 2025b). The perception of international travelers is that the United States has many attributes, including leisure attractions (dining, shopping, and nightlife); natural features, landscapes, and sightseeing options; and several accommodation options (Brand USA, 2025b).

Future Partners put together an article on the State of the American Traveler for 2025 (Future Partners, 2025). The average annual leisure travel budget for American travelers is projected to be \$5,898, which is up 3.3% from 2024 (Future Partners, 2025). This reflects an excitement to travel (8.3 on a scale from 0-10, up from 7.9 in 2024) and the average anticipated trips taken in 2025 (3.9 leisure trips, up from 3.5 in 2024). When it comes to trends, Future Partners (2025) broadly describes four categories: Buy Now, Pay Later; School Holidays; AI; and Politics. The Buy Now, Pay Later trend involves the financing of travel and is age-dependent with younger travelers opting for this trend. Families said that they will take their vacations during school holidays. Travelers said that they anticipate artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, will play a role in their travels. Finally, 52.3% of travelers said that they would avoid or select destinations based on the politics in those places. American Express Travel (2024) also announced travel trends for 2024, which included travel for sporting events, taking major trips, traveling solo, and traveling on a whim. Of the major trips, adventure travel and wellness retreats were two main types of travel trends. Of those traveling solo, the trips are seen as ways to treat oneself, reconnect with oneself, and take a break from daily life (American Express Travel, 2024). Finally, of the top ten trending destinations of 2025, American Express Travel (2025) listed Moab, Utah, showing that there is a desire to visit the American southwest, its scenery and outdoor activities, as well as its unique cultural excursions. This information is useful when considering the domestic traveler market.

Overview of tourism in Arizona

In 2024, Arizona received 41.16 million overnight visitors, which spent \$29.7 billion USD in the state that year, making tourism the most profitable export industry in Arizona (AOT, 2025a). These totals supported 193,856 jobs in the state in 2024 (AOT, 2025a). The average expenditure per night per trip in 2023 was \$282 (AOT, 2023b). Domestically, the overnight non-resident tourist comprises 71.6% of the visitors, while residents comprise the other 28.4% in 2023 (AOT, 2023a). In terms of length of stay, there was an average of 3.7 nights for non-residents and 2.4 nights for residents (AOT, 2023a). International travelers, most of which coming from Canada and Mexico in 2023, totalled 688,000 and spent \$2.9 million in that year (AOT, 2025b). In 2023, the top purpose for traveling to Arizona was to visit friends and relatives, followed by touring, outdoors, and special events in 2023 (AOT, 2023b), while specific top activities for

visitors included shopping, sightseeing, attending celebrations, landmark/historic sites, hiking/backpacking, museums, and casinos (AOT, 2023a).

Overview of tourism in the Southern Region of Arizona & Cochise County

The Arizona Office of Tourism divides the states into five regions: West Coast, Northern, North Central, Central, and Southern. The Southern Region is composed of Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, and Santa Cruz Counties. While this region received the fewest number of visitors in 2023, the 6.2 million tourists represented nearly a 7% increase in visitors from 2022 (AOT, 2023b). The average per person per trip total in 2023 was \$334, more than a 16% increase from 2022 and \$52 more than the same figure for the state average (AOT, 2023b). In 2022, the most frequent visitors to Cochise County were from Tucson and Phoenix (AOT, 2022). Respectively, 81% and 80% of these tourists from both cities were repeat visitors, staying 4.2 and 4.6 nights on average (AOT, 2022). While there were fewer visitors from other states (1-3% of the total), these tourists were frequently repeat visitors (between 38-73%) and stayed a longer amount of nights (between 4.9-7.5 nights) (AOT, 2022).

Cochise County advertises exploration, adventure, wide-open spaces, hiking, biking, birding, dining, wineries, and stargazing as key attractions to the county (CCTEC, 2025). Accordingly, the Arizona Office of Tourism and US Economic Research keep track of the visitation to Cochise Country, including the national and state parks in the counties across the state (AOT & USER, n.d.). Combining business and leisure travel, Cochise County “generated \$390 million in direct spending countywide in 2023, up 1.4% from the year prior, rebounding from a 40.1% COVID-related drop in 2020” (SAEDG, n.d., n.p.). For a ten-year view of travel spending in Cochise County, see Figure 1 (SAEDG, n.d.). In terms of accommodations, 37.3% of the total tourist spend was spent by visitors staying at hotels, motels, or short term vacation rentals; 35.4% was spent by day trippers, so did not stay overnight; 21.1% was spent by visitors staying at a private home; and the remaining 6.2% was spent by visitors who camped or stayed at their second homes (SAEDG, n.d., n.p.). These totals supported an estimated 3,500 jobs and \$103.5 million in household earnings in Cochise County (SAEDG, n.d., n.p.). One particular draw to Cochise County are the national and state parks (See Figure 2). The month with the highest number of visitors to the parks within the county was March with 51,329 visitors, while the month with the lowest number of visitors to the parks within the county was August with 18,358 visitors (AOT & USER, 2023). This is likely due to the weather conditions in the country during these months. Except for the Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park, all other national and state parks saw an increase in visitation during the first part of 2024, ranging from a 7.2% increase in visitation to Fort Bowie National Historic Site and a 35.2% increase in visitation to Coronado National Memorial.

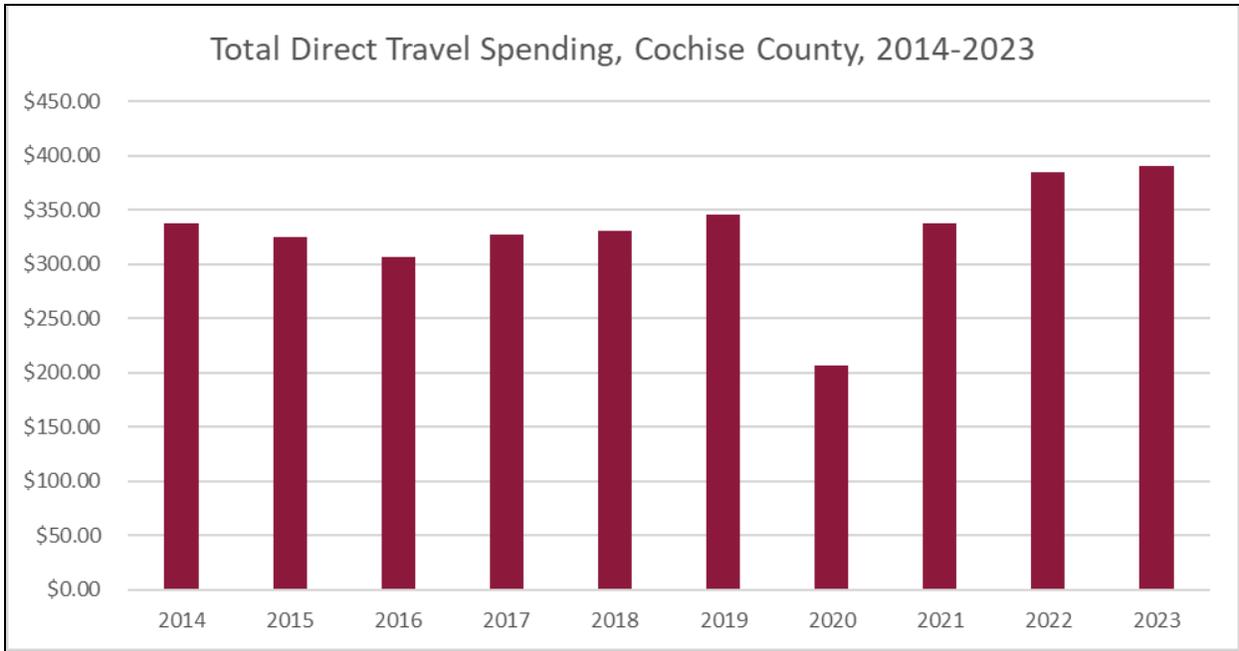


Figure 1: Total Direct Travel Spending, Cochise County, 2014-2023

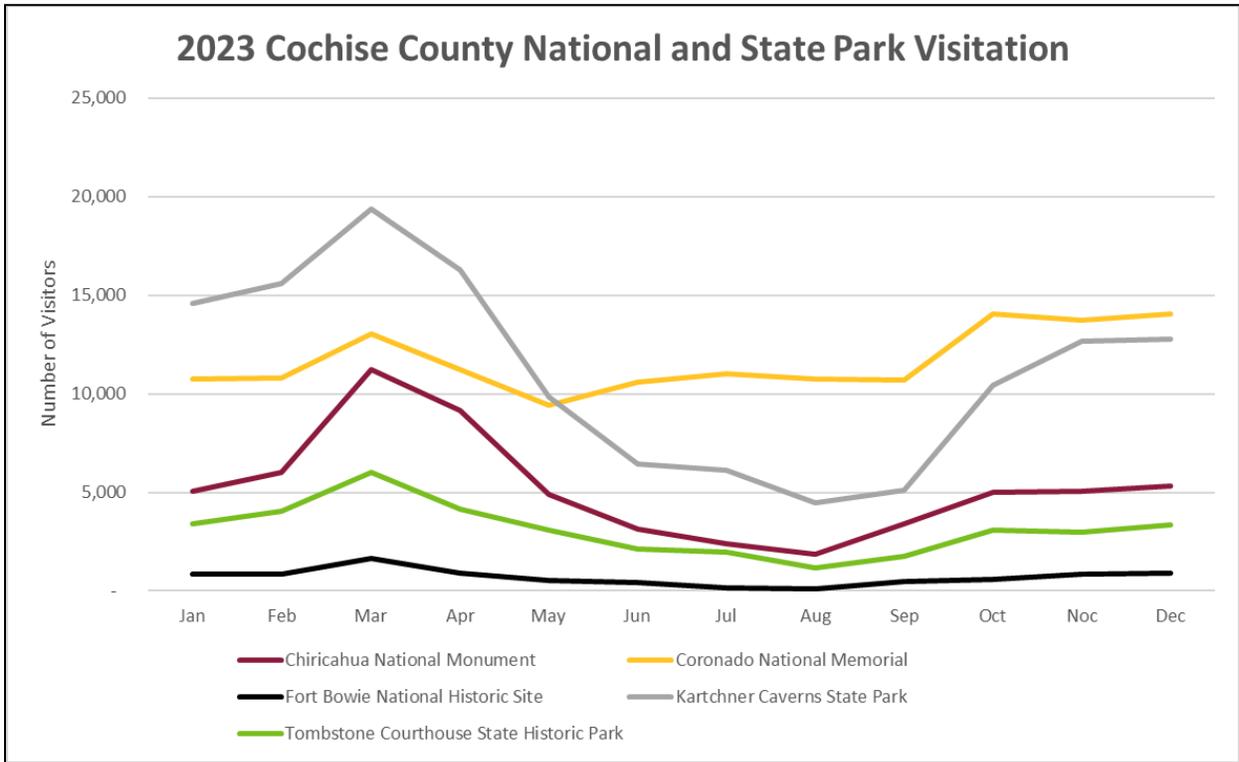


Figure 2: 2023 Cochise County National and State Park Visitation

Overview of tourism in City of Bisbee

The City of Bisbee is among the destinations advertised for tourism with Cochise County. While the tourist arrival figures are unclear, The City of Bisbee claims that it receives about 50,000 visitors to the Copper Queen Mine tour per year, which is one of the key attractions for the City (City of Bisbee, n.d.). According to the Cochise County Tourism and Economic Council (CCTEC, 2025, n.p.), Bisbee is the “Southernmost Mile-High City in the United States.” On their tourism website, “Explore Cochise”, the county states that Bisbee is attractive to visitors because of this well-preserved historic town, arts and antiques community, shops and galleries, the Copper Queen Mine tour and Mining Museum, and the Old Bisbee Brewery (CCTEC, 2025). There is also a visitor center in Bisbee and a website called “Discover Bisbee” that help tourists understand the attractions in and around the city.

The attractions for Bisbee are overwhelmingly geared towards cultural activities, such as culinary, shopping, mining, and museum experiences, on both the “Discover Bisbee” and “Explore Cochise” websites. These are important tourism attractions that likely benefit local communities and the Bisbee economy. However, there is a surprising lack of information on the nature-based experiences that tourists can visit while exploring Bisbee and the surrounding areas. This presents an opportunity for diversifying the economic activity to and within Bisbee, given that the City is based in the Mule Mountains. Drawing from the Cochise County initiatives, there are several types of tourism that could be added to the core Bisbee experiences, such as biking, bird and butterfly watching, camping and RV'ing, dark skies, and hiking. Pairing these nature-based activities with existing cultural activities could result in a highly adaptive, resilient, and immersive ecotourism experience for both tourists and locals.

In a 2020 study conducted from December 2019 through March 2020, CCTEC (2020) reported on the tourism overview for Cochise County with several details for specifically Bisbee. First, the average stay in Bisbee was four nights, the majority (55.8%) of which found out about Cochise County through word of mouth (CCTEC, 2020). The majority of visitors (53.8%) were domestic travelers from Arizona with a small representation of international travelers (CCTEC, 2020). The top three purposes for traveling to Bisbee were vacation/leisure, day trip, and visiting friends and relatives (CCTEC, 2020). The top activities included Old West history and ghost towns (80%); mining, minerals, and gemology (50%); visiting national and state parks (47.5%); Hiking (32.5%); Photography (30%); and Mexican Cultural Heritage (27.5%), followed by other activities, including wineries, bird watching, and other outdoor activities (CCTEC, 2020). Visitors spent an average of \$132 on lodging, \$102 on restaurants or groceries, \$82 on shopping and arts, and \$84 on recreation (CCTEC, 2020).

International trends to the United States, Arizona, and Cochise County

According to the United States Department of Commerce International Trade Administration (ITA, 2024), Canada and Mexico were the top two countries of residence for tourists to the United States. In 2023, there were just over 20.5 million Canadian visitors and close to 14.5 million Mexican visitors to the United States (ITA, 2024). Canadian travelers have surpassed Mexican travelers to the United States generally from 2014-2023, with a post-COVID-19 recovery not yet back to 2019 numbers (See Figure 3). In Arizona, however, Mexican visitors surpass Canadian visitors (See Figure 4; AOT, 2024a; AOT, 2024b). Yet, the national trends are the same for Arizona when it comes to pre- and post-COVID-19 recovery of tourist figures, meaning that tourist arrivals have not exceeded 2019 figures (AOT, 2024a; AOT, 2024b). In a 2020 report prepared for the Cochise County Tourism and Economic Council (CCTEC, 2020), researchers showed that Canadians “account for a majority [85%] of international visitors to Cochise County, [and] have an average age of 69 years” (p.7). The CCTEC (2020) report cautions readers that due to COVID-19, the research was only conducted during the winter months. Therefore, the disproportionate amount of Canadian tourists may be because they are snowbirds traveling to Cochise County for the winter (CCTEC, 2020). Only eight international visitors were surveyed in Bisbee, five of which were from Canada (CCTEC, 2020). These data show that both the Canadian and Mexican tourist markets are large enough to consider when planning for tourism in Cochise County and the City of Bisbee.

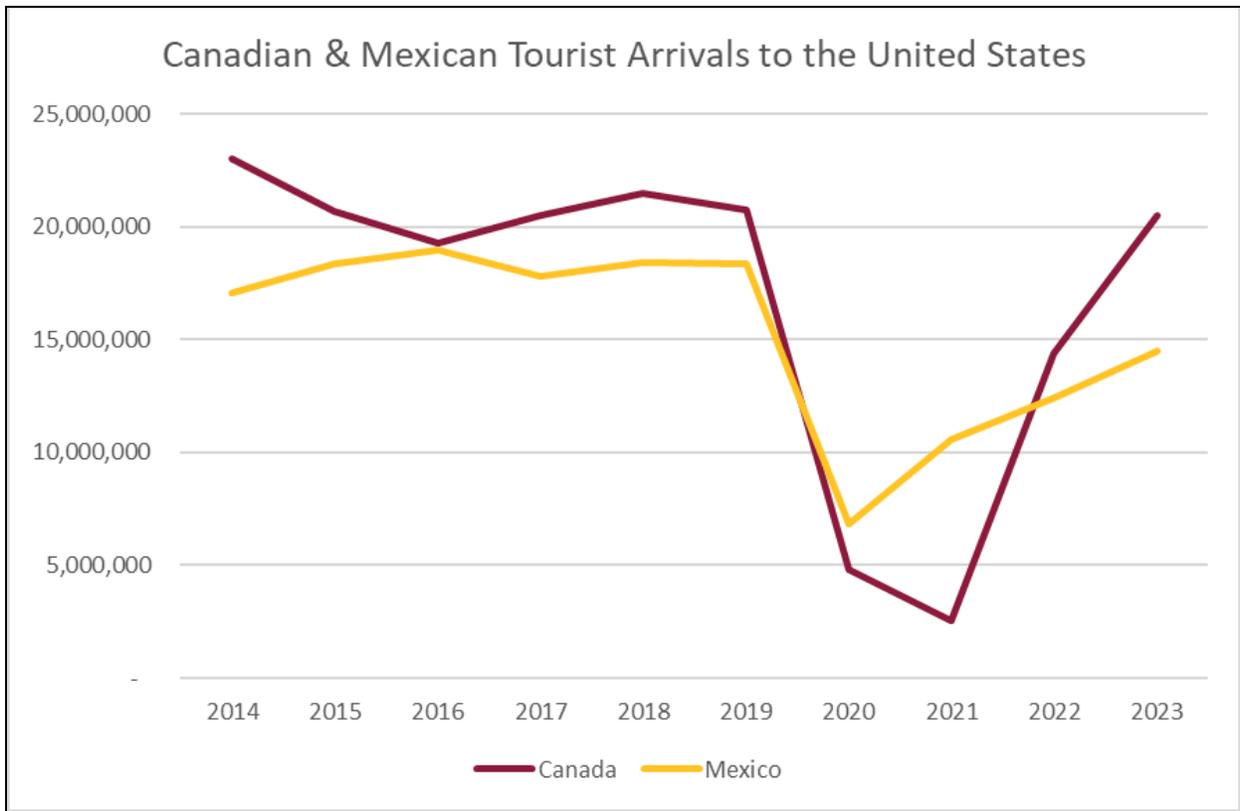


Figure 3: Canadian & Mexican Tourist Arrivals to the United States (2014-2023)

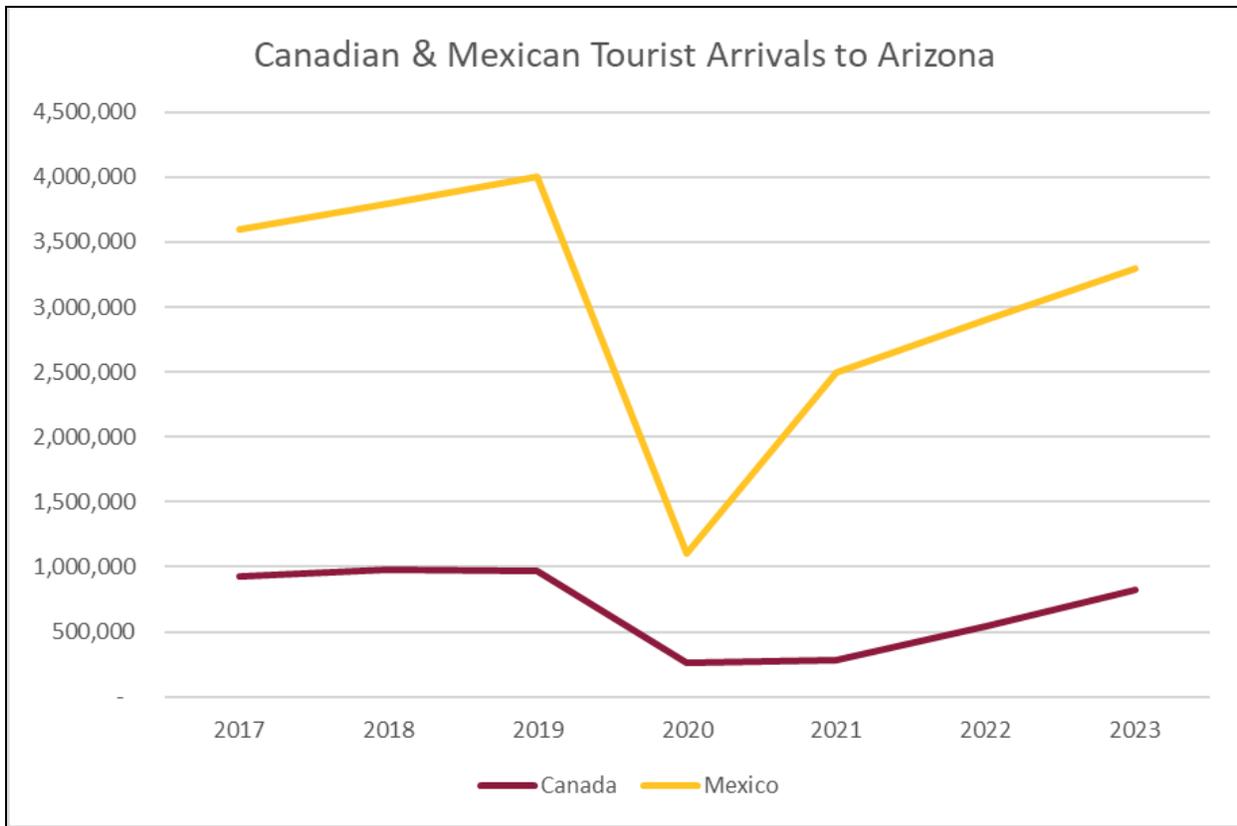


Figure 4: Canadian & Mexican Tourist Arrivals to Arizona (2017-2023)

Nature-based tourism and ecotourism

Nature-based tourism and ecotourism are two potential opportunities for Bisbee, given a) the national, state, and county trends; the preferences of both domestic and international tourists; and the wealth of tourism assets and activities within the City. Nature-based tourism is an umbrella term for tourism that involves outdoor activities, like biking, hiking, camping, bird watching, and backpacking, all of which are available within the City of Bisbee (Haukeland et al., 2023). While ecotourism requires natural environments, like nature-based tourism, there is an emphasis on conserving natural environments while supporting local communities and culture. Lee and Jan (2018) state that the goal of the ecotourist and of the infrastructure that supports this type of tourism is that “of acquiring knowledge of, appreciating, and enjoying natural settings and diverse wildlife in the ecosystem and learning the culture and history provided by the environmental settings, all of which can contribute to environmental conservation” (p.792; Fennell, 1999; Lee, 2007; Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Both types of tourism are avenues for possible development in Bisbee. However, when considering tourism development for the purposes of this report, we will focus on ecotourism, due to the desire to combine local community members, businesses, and existing cultural

activities, the preference to educate the tourist, as well as the natural environment in and around Bisbee.

According to Fortune Business Insights (FBI, 2025), the global ecotourism sector was valued just over \$215 billion USD in 2023 and expected to grow to over \$750 billion USD by 2032. There are several factors that are contributing to this projection, including rising levels of online bookings and digital marketing initiatives, the overall growth of tourism globally, growing disposable income for couples and groups, as well as millennials' travel preferences to include cultural and eco-friendly types of tourism (FBI, 2025). Bisbee may have an opportunity to capitalize on these trends, as well as the marketing efforts already underway at the national, state, and county levels.

Educating the tourist

A key component of ecotourism is educating the tourist about the destination, both socio-culturally and environmentally. The Backyard Project and Master Naturalist program through the BSERC are already pushing knowledge forward in innovative ways. By educating visitors on how the community and environment interact with each other, an appreciation of the human impact and our potential to regenerate ourselves, our communities, and the ecosystems is renewed.

There are other types of similar projects around the country from which BSERC can learn as they develop additional ecotourism initiatives.

- Shaver's Creek Environmental Center: This Center is located in Pennsylvania with the mission to “teach, model, and provide knowledge, values, skills, experiences, and dedication that enable individuals and communities to achieve and maintain harmony between human activities and the natural systems that support all living species” (SCEC, 2025, n.p.). The Center was established in 1976 for Pennsylvania State University students and the surrounding community. While tourism is not an explicit initiative, there are ecotourism activities, such as the Maple Harvest Festival, bird walks, and several other educational activities that connect humans and the environment.
- Outdoor Education Center at Jennings Park: This Center is located in North Carolina and has the mission “to further develop and enhance the character of participants through individual and group achievements in a variety of shared outdoor experiences” (OECJP, n.d., n.p.). The Center works with business and corporations, schools, the community, and families to teach personal development, teamwork, self-respect, and leadership skills through experiential processes. The Center has an ecotourism component, which includes a bird walk and an exploration of a local nature preserve.
- Willow Bend Environmental Education Center: This Center is located in Coconino County, Arizona, and has the mission “to provide educational outreach that

fosters environmental awareness and encourages responsible stewardship of our natural and cultural resources” (WBEEC, n.d., n.p.). The Center hosts several events throughout the year, both for adults and children. The Center also offers tours for the community and field trips for schools. Within these tours, participants can learn about the history of Flagstaff, the gardens at Willow Bend, sustainability, Indigenous cultures, and geology. These are all in clear alignment with ecotourism activities.

- Ogden Nature Center: This Center is located in Utah and has the mission “to unite people with nature, and create a community dedicated to environmental stewardship” (ONC, 2025, n.p.). The Center strives to be an educational center for the community as an outdoor classroom and living museum. The Center also offers community programs, which draw over 50,000 visitors for activities such as “visual and performing arts, photography, birding, wildlife in Utah, outdoor recreation, conservation, sustainable practices”, all of which are elements of ecotourism (ONC, 2025, n.p.).
- Pajarito Environmental Education Center: This Center is located in New Mexico and its mission is “enriching people’s lives by strengthening their connections to our canyons, mesas, mountains, and skies” (PEEC, 2025, n.p.). The Center invites tourists to see the Center as a destination in Northern New Mexico, and offers a variety of learning experiences, such as nature and bird walks, field trips for schools, and dark sky excursions. The 40,000 tourists and locals per year can explore the nature around the Center and take advantage of the wealth of knowledge in the Center.

Organizational and Schedule Considerations

Organizational Considerations

The following section of the report discusses how the Bisbee Science Exploration & Research Center (BSERC) may partner and collaborate with various entities to strengthen their position within the ecotourism space.

Board of Directors

Several considerations pertain to the ways the board of directors of BSERC may maintain and strengthen their pre-existing relationships with outside entities. Several board members have a connection to the University of Arizona, including Dr. Etta Kralovec, Sharon Christie, and Jen McBeth. There may be a potential to coordinate or facilitate a workshop, summer program, or coursework between the University of Arizona and BSERC. One efficient way to cultivate this partnership could be through the local chapters of national/international nature programs like The Nature Conservancy or



Audubon Society. Networking and marketing efforts through University of Arizona connections could drive enrollment for this training program and build awareness of the other programming and offerings of BSERC. In turn, participants living outside the Bisbee area may choose to schedule tours of the surrounding area, familiarizing themselves further with both the cultural and natural assets of the area. Other programs may choose to use the Arizona Master Naturalist curriculum as a guide for future programming development alongside the University of Arizona. Potential programs could be a course on ecotourism or sustainable tourism which could further strengthen partnerships between BSERC and the private sector tourism businesses in Bisbee.

The board of directors also has strong connections with museums and libraries, the partnerships of which already exist through the Copper Queen Library. Additional educational opportunities may exist through showcasing how and why Bisbee is a unique place geographically, culturally, and environmentally, sparked through literature and physical artefacts. For example, highlighting the importance of Bisbee as a border town may drive interest to utilize Bisbee as a hub for travel to Naco and Douglas. The relationship between these places may further build cultural and community connections, encouraging movement throughout the area. Dr. Etta Kralovec, Melanie Greene, Jason Macoviak, and Thora Colot may be well-suited for building these initiatives, given their connections with museums, the Copper Queen Library, and experience with cross-border research and transportation.

A final consideration through the connections and experiences of the board of directors comes from Melanie Greene's work with Indigenous communities. Given the history of colonization and its connections to both the displacement of Indigenous groups and environmental manipulation within the United States context, BSERC may consider collaborations with Tribal Nations around Cochise County. While there are no Tribal reservations within the county, this does not negate the opportunity for both students and adults to learn about the history of Bisbee and its surrounding areas through an Indigenous lens. Potential collaborations with the Chiricahua Apache, for example, could weave both Western and Indigenous historical contexts together with teachings of environment and cultural practices, providing both visitors and locals with a unique and enlightening educational opportunity. While Fort Bowie National Historic Site symbolizes the Chiricahua Apache's fight to defend their ancestral lands, there could be numerous other significant sites that can be explored and included to more fully teach their history and culture.

Partnerships

As highlighted within the Legal Considerations section, partnerships is one way to lower the risk of starting an ecotourism business. While marketing and advertising partnerships are of particular importance through the Arizona Office of Tourism, Visit



Tucson, and the United States Small Business Association, for example, a primary consideration for partnerships also relates to the private sector and nonprofit organizations in and around Bisbee. Partnerships with Be Active Bisbee, Bisbee Bikeways, and Echoing Hope Ranch may not only increase potential streams of revenue through BSERC ecotours, but also build community connections in the process. Providing an educational session at BSERC prior to taking a tour or having an experience through these organizations would garner a deeper appreciation of the tourist experience for both locals and visitors. In this way, BSERC becomes the hub for these educational tourist experiences, reducing carbon emissions through shared transportation to and from various locations around Bisbee in the process. When considering Echoing Hope Ranch, for example, a partnership could be built with Amanda Paddock. Visitors (including locals) could learn about the organization at BSERC in the morning, visit the Ranch, meet the residents, participate in the activities there, then return back to BSERC in the afternoon. This format could be replicated with various organizations in the Bisbee area and allow BSERC to be a key hub for educational and ecotourist activities in Bisbee.

Government

One primary theme amongst the focus groups and individual interviews is a lack of collaboration in Bisbee as it relates to tourism. Indeed, tourism requires a concerted effort between the private, nonprofit, and government sectors in order to function effectively. While tourism management and marketing could be strengthened from a city perspective, potentially through the creation of a chamber of commerce or destination management organization, other partnerships at the regional level can be pursued by creating a regional council to bring all surrounding cities together for ecotourism development and promotion. Private sector and nonprofit insights and initiatives are valued at these levels of governance because tourism increases tax revenues and promotes places like Bisbee as a destination. Regional partnerships at the government level could be built further through the City of Douglas, Naco, Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Benson, and Willcox.

Schedule Considerations

This section provides considerations for the development of tourism projects at BSERC. The first consideration is temporal while the other relates to the business lifecycle.

Seasonality

Both Bisbee and the State of Arizona present similar trends in terms of tourist arrivals. The peak month is March; October through May contain strong tourist arrivals; and the Summer months draw the fewest number of visitors. This evidence provides an opportunity for BSERC to begin planning any new tourist-related activities, including the

Backyard project or white-labeled tours, during the Spring and Summer months, in preparation for the Winter and Spring peak seasons. Another potential opportunity is to promote Bisbee as a favorable place to visit during the Summer months. When compared to other places in Arizona, particularly in the Phoenix area, Bisbee boasts a milder Summer season. This promotion would even out the economic income disparities generated from tourism throughout the year. Local businesses, specifically those partnering with BSERC to provide tourist activities, may benefit greatly from these efforts. In many destinations around the world, seasonality is one primary reason for unemployment due to tourism declines during certain times of the year. Balancing economic opportunities may assist in the planning of activities for not only BSERC, but also other businesses and local organizations. These businesses include not only those with the tourism and hospitality sector proper, such as hotels, but also those who are impacted by tourist arrivals in Bisbee, such as restaurants and art galleries.

Tourism Destination Lifecycle

Commonly, tourism enterprises and other for-profit businesses tend to push for continual economic growth. This means that they seek to maintain or increase their profits year-over-year. However, from a social science and a systems-thinking perspective, tourism entities may more appropriately think about their businesses in terms of cycles – just as people grow, mature, and contract, so do tourism enterprises. Also known as Tourism Area Life Cycle, a tourism destination goes through different stages as follows (Butler, 1980):

- Exploration: Few adventurous tourists discover a relatively untouched area with minimal infrastructure and little tourism impact.
- Involvement: Local communities start providing basic services and facilities, and tourism begins to shape the local economy and culture.
- Development: External investors and larger businesses enter, significantly expanding infrastructure, marketing, and tourist volume.
- Consolidation: Tourism becomes a central economic activity. Growth slows but remains steady; the destination starts to show signs of stress.
- Stagnation: Visitor numbers peak, but the destination may suffer from loss of authenticity, and environmental or social degradation.
- Decline or Rejuvenation: The area either declines due to loss of appeal or emergence of other competitive destinations or reinvents itself through innovation, investment, or diversification.

The tourism offerings for BSERC are within the involvement stage of the lifecycle. This is an excellent opportunity to forecast how these various products and offerings will change and grow over the next few years. Considerations at this stage include building and promoting BSERC products, and anticipating and hedging against the decline



phases for these products. Having this foresight at the beginning stages of the planning process may thwart potential dips in revenue by continually researching, evaluating, and incorporating new elements to BSERC's tourism offerings. Local community and environmental considerations are also important throughout this lifecycle, but particularly during the involvement and development phases. BSERC already has strong community connections, but it is important to include these voices during all phases. For example, as destinations grow and reach the maturity phase, the concept of overtourism becomes a key consideration. Overtourism is a phenomenon that is defined by not only overcrowding of a destination on a regular basis, but also by the environmental constraints and capacity to maintain the level of tourists. Strategizing within the introduction phase can help mitigate overtourism's impacts on Bisbee. Collaborations between local government, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations are also vital when considering the lifecycle of tourism. Mapping out the full lifecycle of these tourism-related products is an important consideration at these beginning stages of BSERC's planning process.

Legal Considerations

Overview of the sector

According to IBISWorld (2024), national parks and other protected and natural areas, through which ecotourists travel, generated 1 billion in revenue in 2024, and this revenue is set to increase by 1.9% over the next year. Day trippers to these sites account for around 75% of the revenue due to longer drives to these sites and costly or a lack of accommodation, guided tours, and events (IBISWorld, 2024). However, revenue is volatile due to funding streams at the governmental level, as well as the institutions' dependence on income generation from admission fees, on-site concessions, private donations, and grants, all of which have fluctuated over the last decade for various reasons, including COVID-19 and federal policies (IBISWorld, 2024). Over the last five years, businesses in this space have decreased 2.6% with a projected decrease of 0.1% over the next five years (IBISWorld, 2024). Other considerations include challenges associated with new technologies and other forms of entertainment, climate change, and conservation (IBISWorld, 2024). In response to these challenges, the IBISWorld (2024) recommends key success factors, such as: access to multiskilled and flexible workforce for tour guides; ability to educate the wider community; attract local support through volunteers; and availability of services and amenities, such as camping and other lodging options. This is the context through which BSERC may desire to operate their business and generate revenue.

Overview of legal and regulatory considerations

As BSERC decides to take steps towards operating ecotourism experiences on site and within other natural environments, the following considerations are important to heed, particularly as they pertain to legalities and regulations. Also drawing from IBISWorld (2024), there are four primary factors for nature-based businesses in the United States that cause this sector to have high barriers to entry. First, legalities around government regulations, licenses, permits, environmental laws, and safety standards can be a challenge. Second, start-up costs can be high in terms of initial investments for land acquisition, construction, and staffing. Third, differentiating the ecotourism experience from other nature-based activities in the area can take significant time and resources to market and brand. Fourth, maintenance costs can be high in order to keep the infrastructure, facilities, and programs running smoothly. To these challenges, IBISWorld (2024) recommends that businesses develop a skilled labor force to ensure effective management and conservation of the experience, such as specific personnel for wildlife management, habitat restoration, visitor education, and infrastructure. IBISWorld (2024) also suggests that businesses actively maintain the facilities, as degradation can lead to implications for visitor satisfaction, reputation, and the overall success of the enterprise.

For further insights on all of the following information, we recommend that BSERC contacts an attorney, accountant, and other business consultants that specialize in starting businesses within the ecotourism space. This will help with understanding permitting and liability coverage needed to operate in these spaces.

Land use & public health

In Arizona, there is a range of land designations, ranging from public, residential, commercial, and recreational land. Depending on where BSERC may want to operate tours, there are various types of permits required to operate on recreational lands to ensure the protection of these resources. For example, within National Parks, there are Commercial Use Authorizations, which grant operators the ability to guide tours within the parks (NPS, 2024). These Authorizations have insurance and licensing requirements and are issued for two years. Sites that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), such as Murray Springs Clovis Site, also require permits for commercial use, such as tour guiding (BLM, 2025). This process includes an application and the sharing of several items, such as an operating plan, a business plan, insurance, maps, other state or local licenses (BLM, 2025). Arizona State Parks may not allow for third party tours to be given by outside agencies. Kartchner Caverns is one such park (AZSP, 2025). These various regulations and procedures reflect how diverse land management is in Arizona when it comes to commercial use of these spaces.

There are also general considerations related to public health, as it pertains to businesses such as BSERC, who desire to operate tours and facilitate construction of



their property to do so. At the federal level, there are requirements to abide by the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, as well as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements. Within Arizona, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality issues permits and certifications for any facility that “discharges to the air, water and soil are within healthful standards established by law” (AZ Commerce, 2025, n.p.). These considerations would be particularly important for BSERC as they build out the Backyard Project. Additionally, when considering sustainability of the property, the BSERC may want to examine how the facility is managing its waste reduction initiatives, energy-efficient systems, and eco-friendly materials to minimize their environmental impact (SICCODE, 2025b). These considerations are driven both by regulations and consumer demand.

Legal, permit, and license considerations

At the federal level, one consideration for beginning to determine which permits and licenses may be necessary for BSERC is to look at the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS, 2023) Codes and the businesses that have completed profiles. For the BSERC, one recommendation could be Code 712190 for Nature Parks and Other Similar Institutions, such as: Nature centers or preserves. After the organization reaches an annual revenue of \$8 million, it will no longer be considered a small business, which may come with additional regulatory considerations (SICCODE, 2025a).

When considering the certifications and licenses for Code 712190, the United States may require the following (SICCODE, 2025b):

- Certified Interpretive Guide through the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).
- Certified Tour Professional through the National Tour Association (NTA).
- Certified Hospitality and Tourism Management Professional through the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI).
- Certified Park and Recreation Professional through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).
- Certified Interpretive Trainer through the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

For Arizona, a Arizona Transaction Privilege & Use Tax (TPT) license may be required. For this information, please contact the Arizona Department of Revenue (ADR, 2025). In the state, there is also the Arizona Recreational Use Statute, which outlines that the recreational facility is not liable for harm experienced by the recreational user, unless the facility is shown to be negligent (ARUS, 2025). This calls back to the importance of maintaining the facility and the costs associated with doing so, as well as the importance of insurance for the facility.



For Cochise County, we recommend contacting the Cochise County Development Services: Planning & Zoning Division (PZD, 2025) and Cochise County Health & Social Services: Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD, 2025) to ensure compliance with zoning and health permits, licenses, and regulation.

For Bisbee, we recommend contacting the City of Bisbee Finance Department (BFD, 2025) to ensure compliance with all city-level regulations and inspections. Additional permits and requirements associated with driving clients may be a consideration. These include daily and routine vehicle inspections, both by mechanics and by the drivers before each tour, as well as valid licenses and permits as it pertains to operating a motor vehicle and guiding tourist experiences within the site, county, state, and country.

Risk management

While the overall risk for NAICS Code 712190 is moderate, SICCODE (2025b) recommends to remain aware of quickly changing regulatory requirements and consumer trends. To work against these challenges, SICCODE (2025b) suggests that businesses diversify their products, invest in technology, and focus on sustainability and adaptability, including the adoption of digital and virtual experiences, the development of sustainability strategies, and strengthen supply chain relationships. A comprehensive risk management plan can be an effective way to ensure that all staff and contractors are aligned with their roles and responsibilities, especially during an emergency situation on site or elsewhere.

General Liability, Errors and Omissions, and Cyber insurance policies may help to thwart potential claims from both employees and visitors (SICCODE, 2025b). According to SICCODE (2025b), these regulations are expected to become more restrictive over time because of increased litigation and consumer protection advocacy. The top insurance carriers for NAICS Code 712190 institutions are: Hartford Fire & Casualty Group; AmTrust National General Holdings Group; and State Fund (IXD, 2025).

Businesses in this tour guided space, such as B Active Bisbee, require clients to complete a Release and Acknowledgement of Risk form (B Active, 2025). Other considerations for booking tours with clients directly include: a foundational cancellation policy, and forms that discuss challenges with weather and alcohol consumption.

Partnerships

Partnerships can be one way to hedge against the risk of operating tours outside of BSERC facilities. These partnerships can reduce both the upfront costs and the time associated with building a tour guiding arm of BSERC. An agency agreement with tour operators and tour guides can be one way to either sell tours with the Bisbee Science BSERC's branding, as they are operated by third party operators (white label), or to sell



tours for other organizations whose goals, missions, and values align with BSERC. For any white label tours, because the name of BSERC is associated with these tours, there is a higher degree of liability associated with these tours. However, the organizations running the tours will commonly have the general liability insurance policies to operate these tours. BSERC may seek to partner with educational institutions, however, there are additional risks and requirements with children under the age of 18 years old, such as the completion of a parental consent form.

Other types of partnerships may include those through the Arizona Office of Tourism and the US Small Business Association. These venues may assist BSERC with marketing, advertising, and overall networking within this space.

Technology Considerations

The following section of the report discusses how the Bisbee Science Exploration & Research Center (BSERC) may consider utilizing technologies to connect with potential visitors or disseminate knowledge. Technologies are used by tour operators or science centers to enhance engagement with visitors. Technology is also an important part of discovery and ultimately the visitor experience when at attractions or destinations. These technologies help to create more personalized, interactive, and accessible visitor experiences. Technology is commonly used in marketing. Digital marketing and social media platforms represent the front end of the visitor experience to help discover a product, attraction, or destination. Digitized products include immersive videos, interactive previews, and user-generated content. User-generated content and visitor reviews are important as future visitors consider comments and recommendations made by other visitors. In many instances, getting people to review services is just as important as traditional marketing techniques using social media and digital platforms as this is value added content to inform future visitors of what to expect. All play a central role in promoting experiences to future visitors. Tour information may involve showcasing highlights from guided tours (for instance via Instagram, AR filters, livestreams of special exhibits, or presenting behind-the-scenes research to generate interest. Such digital assets not only attract potential audiences but also shape expectations and deepen pre-visit engagement.

Online booking platforms are another important consideration to enhance convenience and decision-making. Online booking systems help create a seamless experience for the visitor as they integrate pricing, real-time availability, and additional recommendations of products or services depending on what someone selects to book. Virtual and online booking enables visitors to tailor their experiences in advance and these also help with collecting data to understand booking trends, peak times of the day,



or weeks/months where there are more visitors, demographics, and intended purchasing behaviors. Use of technology also helps with informing and offering extended engagement and learning more about an area when visitors are present. Tour guides are increasingly using GPS-enabled audio guides, AR apps, and real-time translation tools to enhance interpretation and accessibility. Using these in the field also helps with interpretations of nature, including flora and fauna. There are also apps that visitors use to interpret star constellations, which have proved beneficial at the pie-in-the-sky event in Bisbee at BSERC. Employing VR experiences, touchscreen exhibits, and gamified mobile apps also help with presenting scientific ideas in playful and interactive ways. Technology aids with adding value to products and services at attractions by offering multisensory and self-directed engagement. This helps with illustrating content to make the learning elements more relatable and memorable to visitors.

Technology also supports strategic decision-making and flow management. For example, a platform like Placer.ai offers location analytics. This allows those managing a product and visitors to understand foot traffic patterns in a given geographical area to assess the spatial behaviors of visitors. This data helps identify where visitors concentrate and pathways through an area or destination. This also includes where people go after they depart an attraction to understand how and where visitors spend. Such insights inform not only exhibit design, timing of activities, and staffing but also where to strategically place signage to market products to increase visibility.

Understanding Visitors

A survey was also conducted to capture visitors' participation in various activities, their information sources, their assessment of tourism infrastructure, travel motivation, spending, and preferences about the sites and the fees paid. The surveys were completed primarily by outside visitors but also by locals and residents from nearby communities. The survey was conducted between March 2025 and June 2025. During this time, the CST research team made periodic visits to Bisbee to collect completed surveys and distribute more surveys at sites as necessary. Survey participants could complete the survey in two ways. Participants could complete the survey by scanning a QR code and responding on their mobile device or by completing a paper copy. Some sites/attractions only had paper surveys, some only had QR codes, and a few had both paper surveys and QR codes to scan. Paper copies of the survey and QR codes were distributed with the assistance of local businesses and organizations. Paper surveys were left at: San Pedro House, Casa de San Pedro, Bisbee Coffee Co., Copper Queen Hotel, Hotel La Mor, Copper Queen Library, and Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum. QR codes were also distributed around Bisbee and the surrounding region in an attempt

to further interest and completion of the survey. QR codes were present at the Bisbee Visitor Center (where the Queen Mine Tour is also located), Eldorado Suites Hotel, Allen & Co Coffee Shop, B Active Bisbee, Warner Hotel, Bisbee Grand Hotel, Warren Peace Café, Bisbee Breakfast Club, and Sierra Vista Visitor Center. Distributing the survey widely was an attempt to spread awareness of the survey and represent visitors in different areas around Bisbee and Cochise County who engage in different activities. Attractions are places where visitors are actively engaged, and can capture day-trippers or those passing through. Hotels can capture overnight visitors in Bisbee and coffee shops, libraries, and restaurants are a chance to capture visitors while they are sitting and relaxing during their visit. In total, 292 surveys were collected during the survey timeframe.

Demographic and Geographic Characteristics of Visitors

Discussing the demographic characteristics of visitors in terms of their age distribution, educational level, gender identity, household income, and racial group identity. The result of the survey shows that the highest age of visitors is 87 years, and the lowest is 18 years, with an average age of 54 years from 203 participants who responded to this question. The age of the visitors was further categorised using 10 year intervals to show the distribution. Interestingly, half of the sample was over 60 years, while those from 18 to 59 years accounted for 49.3%, suggesting that more provisions should be made to accommodate the needs of the seniors to improve their experience. Another interesting finding from the study is that visitors to Bisbee are well educated. A little less than half of the sample consists of those with a Graduate /professional degree (45%), followed by a bachelor’s degree (31.3%), while associate degree and below accounted for 23.5%. There are slightly more female (60.6%) visitors who took part in the surveys than male (37.9%) visitors. Looking at the household income distribution, the majority of the visitors (64.5%) earn above \$75,000, while 35.5% earn below \$75,000. The racial identity of the visitors shows that the white racial group accounts for the majority (88%) of the visitors who participated in the survey, while other racial categories accounted for the remaining 11.9%. Among the participants, 66.7% are not Hispanic or Latino(a), while 33.3% are Hispanic or Latino(a) (See Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of responses on Demographic characteristics of visitors

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age Distribution	18 to 29	30	14.8
	30 to 39	23	11.3
	40 to 49	23	11.3
	50 to 59	24	11.8

	60+	103	50.7
	Total	203	100.0
Educational Level	Less than High School Graduate	26	14.6
	Bachelor's Degree	56	31.3
	Associate's degree	16	8.9
	Graduate/Professional Degree	81	45.3
	Total	179	100.0
What is your Gender	Male	77	37.9
	Female	123	60.6
	Non-Binary	1	.5
	None	1	.5
	V/F	1	.5
	Total	203	100.0
Total household income before taxes	Under \$50,000	27	14.3
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	40	21.2
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	33	17.5
	\$100,000 - \$149,999	39	20.6
	\$150,000 - \$199,999	21	11.1
	\$200,000+	29	15.3
	Total	189	100.0
Racial groups that visitors identify with	White	163	88.1
	Mixed race	7	3.8
	Asian American	3	1.6
	African American	2	1.1
	Others	10	5.4
	Total	185	100.0
Are you Hispanic or Latino(a)	Yes	33	33.3
	No	66	66.7
	Total	99	100.0

Geographic Information of the Visitors

Looking at the distribution of reported zip codes among respondents the majority are from Arizona (55.6%). Within Arizona, 50% of the visitors are from the Phoenix metro area, 28.4% from Cochise County, and 21.6% from the Tucson area. In addition to Arizona, zip codes from 34 other states within the United States are reported by visitors. States with the most participants included: California (7.2%), Colorado (3.4%), Washington (2.9%), Pennsylvania (2.9%) and Ohio (2.4%). Participants from five countries (Canada, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Netherlands, and Northern Ireland and Australia) accounted for 4.3%. 29.1% participants did not respond to this question in the survey (See Table 2, and Figure 1).

Table 2: Summary of responses on Geographic Information of the visitors

Geographical location	Countries, States, and Counties	Frequency	Percentage
Within the United States	Arizona: Phoenix Metro area (50%), Cochise County (28.4%), and Tucson (21.6%)	115	55.6
	California	15	7.2
	Colorado	7	3.4
	Washington	6	2.9
	Pennsylvania	6	2.9
	Ohio	5	2.4
	New Hampshire	4	1.9
	Minnesota	3	1.4
	Connecticut	3	1.4
	Montana	3	1.4
	New Mexico	3	1.4
	Oregon	3	1.4
	Louisiana	3	1.4
	Texas	2	1.0
	New York	2	1.0
	Wisconsin	2	1.0
South Carolina	2	1.0	

	Massachusetts	1	0.5
	Vermont	1	0.5
	Virginia	1	0.5
	Maryland	1	0.5
	Kentucky	1	0.5
	Michigan	1	0.5
	Iowa	1	0.5
	Illinois	1	0.5
	Missouri	1	0.5
	Idaho	1	0.5
	Utah	1	0.5
	Hawaii	1	0.5
	Nevada	1	0.5
	Alaska	1	0.5
International	(Canada, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, and Australia)	9	4.3
Total		207	100

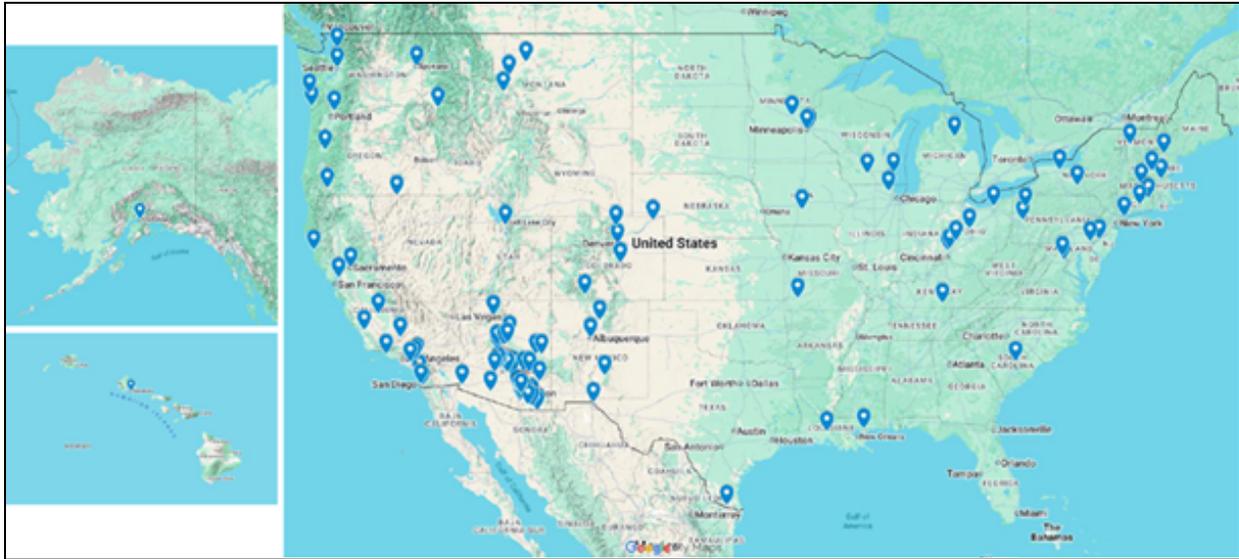


Figure 1: Geographic Information of the visitors (map prepared using Google Fusion Tables)

Participation in Various Activities

Visitors were asked to choose a list of leisure activities they have participated in or are likely to participate in during their visit or stay in Bisbee and the surrounding area. Overall, above 30% of the visitors show a high interest in participating in eight out of the 23 listed recreational activities. The visitors are highly interested in sightseeing (70.9%), hiking or walking (54.1%), visiting history/heritage museums (54.1%), visiting art galleries (42.1%), mine tour (39.4%), nature viewing (39%), nature experience (37.3%), and photography (36.6%) (Table 3). Additionally, 10 to 30% of the visitors showed moderate interest in participating in stargazing (18.2%), visiting the border (14.0%), and attending special events (such as festivals, concerts, sports, or school-related events) (12.3%). Less than 10% of the visitors are interested in activities as picnicking, visiting winery, RV camping, biking/mountain biking, tent camping, food& drink, rock climbing, shopping, hunting or fishing, target or recreational, shooting, golfing, visiting friends and family, and others (personal interest, anniversaries, and research).

Further observation from Table 3 revealed that some activities are popular among the visitors from Bisbee, and some are least popular. For instance, the most popular activities that Visitors from Bisbee engage in are hunting and fishing (60%), followed by target recreational shooting (40%), rock climbing (36.4%), tent camping (37.5%), Biking and mountain biking (30.3%), and picnicking (30.8%). Conversely, the least popular activities that they seldom participated in are visiting friends and family, and shopping with (0.0%), food and drinks (7.1%), and sightseeing (9.2%).

Table 3: Summary of responses on leisure activities participated in by the visitors

Leisure Activities	Overall Participation (N=292)		Comparison			
			Visitors from Outside Bisbee		Visitors from Bisbee	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Sightseeing	207	70.9	188	90.8	19	9.2
Hiking or Walking	158	54.1	138	87.3	20	12.7
Visiting History/Heritage Museums	158	54.1	139	88.0	19	12.0
Visiting Art Galleries	123	42.1	107	87.0	16	13.0
Mine tour	115	39.4	100	87.0	15	13.0
Nature Viewing	114	39.9	98	86.0	16	14.0
Nature Experience	109	37.3	94	86.2	15	13.8
Photography	107	36.6	95	88.8	12	11.2
Star Gazing	53	18.2	42	79.2	11	20.8
Visiting the Border	41	14.0	30	73.2	11	26.8
Special Event (incl. concert, sport, school-related)	36	12.3	26	72.2	10	27.8
Picnicking	26	8.9	18	69.2	8	30.8
Visiting Winery	25	8.6	19	70.0	6	24.0
RV Camping	21	7.2	16	76.2	5	23.8
Biking/Mountain Biking	18	6.2	12	66.7	6	33.3
Tent Camping	16	5.5	10	62.5	6	37.5
Food& Drink	14	4.8	13	92.9	1	7.1
Rock Climbing	11	3.8	7	63.6	4	36.4
Shopping	11	3.8	11	100	0	0.0
Hunting or Fishing	10	3.4	4	40.0	6	60.0
Target or Recreational Shooting	10	3.4	6	60.0	4	40.0
Golfing	7	2.4	6	85.7	1	14.3
Visiting Friends and Family	2	.7	2	100	0	0.0
Others (Personal Interest, Anniversaries, Research)	3	1.0	3	100	0	0.0

Please note that the summation in the table does not equal 100% because visitors are allowed to select multiple activities in the question. The percentages in the "Visitors from outside Bisbee" and "Visitors from Bisbee" columns reflect the percent within each of those categories that answered affirmatively to the corresponding "Leisure Activities" row.

Primary Activities that align with the purpose of the visitor's trip

Most visitors (52.1%, N = 152) identified 14 out of the 23 listed leisure activities as their primary activities that aligned with their trip purpose. The visitors also listed a few additional primary activities (5.8%) that were not listed in the survey, such as work, shopping, and vacation, among others (Table 4). Primary activities with the most response are sightseeing (9.6%), followed by Mine tour (7.5%), Nature viewing (6.2%), Hiking and walking (5.5%), and Nature experience (4.5%). Primary activities with low responses are visiting history/heritage museums, food/drink, visiting art galleries, visiting family and friends, special events, target or recreational shooting, RV camping, photography, and biking/mountain biking, with their percentages below (3.0%). The findings suggest that a large percentage of visitors are drawn to Bisbee for nature-oriented experiences.

Table 4: Summary of responses on primary activities that align with the visitor's trip purpose

Leisure Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Sightseeing	28	9.6
Mine Tour	22	7.5
Nature Viewing	18	6.2
Hiking or Walking	16	5.5
Nature Experience	13	4.5
Visiting History/Heritage Museums	8	2.7
Food/Drink	7	2.4
Visiting Art Galleries	7	2.4
Visiting Family and Friends	5	1.7
Special Event	5	1.7
Target or Recreational Shooting	2	.7
RV Camping	2	.7
Photography	1	.3
Biking/Mountain Biking	1	.3
Other Categories	17	5.8

Please note: (a) Total response (N) for this category is 152 (52.1%); (b) The other categories are the activities not included in the survey, but specified by some visitors as their primary (e.g. Work, shopping, vacation, etc)

Source of information about Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Most visitors (58.9%, N = 172) learned about Bisbee and Southeast Arizona through word-of-mouth, and internet searches (43.8%, N=128). Between 10% and 20% of visitors learned about Bisbee and Southeast Arizona through social media, online mapping, and travel magazines or books. Less than 10% of visitors got their information from brochures, local knowledge, past experience, destination marketing organizations, travel agencies or tour guides, media, and signage (Table 5, and Figure 2). This result suggests that destination marketing organizations (DMOs), travel agencies, and media outlets should be actively engaged through collaborations to promote various recreation and tourism sites around Southeast Arizona.

Table 5: Summary of the response on how visitors learned about Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Categories	N	Percentage
Word-of-mouth	172	58.9
Internet search	128	43.8
Social media	47	16.1
Online maps	40	13.7
Travel magazines or guidebooks	31	10.6
Brochure	25	8.6
Local Knowledge	9	3.1
Past Experience	6	2.1
Destination Marketing Organizations	4	1.4
Travel agencies or tour guides	3	1.0
Media	2	.7
Signage	1	.3

Please note that the summation in the table does not equal 100% because visitors are allowed to select multiple activities in the question.

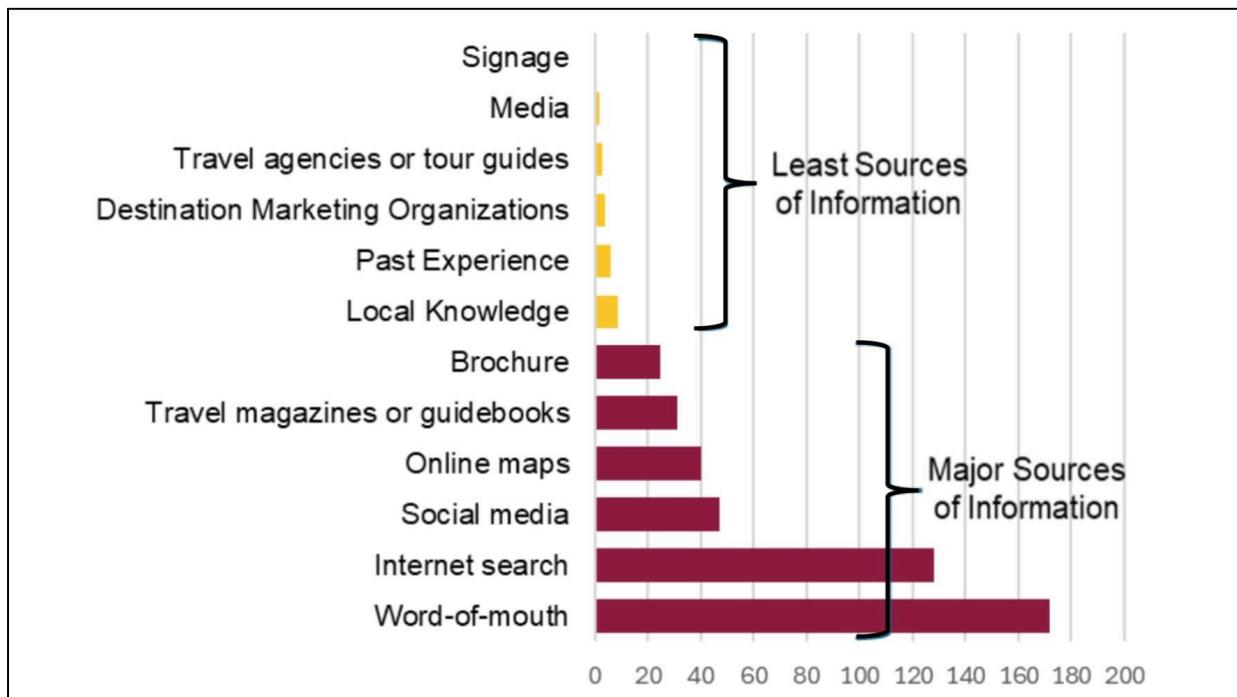


Figure 2: Summary of the response on how visitors learned about Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Visitors Opinion about Tourism Infrastructure around Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Visitors were asked to indicate their opinion about the current tourism related features and conditions on a five points scale (1-want less, 3 keep as is, 5-want more). Visitors overall attest that they want more facilities and infrastructure in Bisbee and around Southeast Arizona for a better experience. The table shows while restrooms (Mean=3.80, SD=0.819) parking lots (Mean=3.79, SD=0.979) are on the top of the list for “Want More” noise (mean=2.55, SD=0.793) and roads (mean=3.8, SD=.682) are on the bottom. Specifically, visitors want more restrooms , parking lots , disability access (Mean = 3.71, SD=0.991), restaurants (Mean = 3.70, SD=0.758), trails (Mean = 3.86, SD=0.848), direction signs (Mean = 3.61, SD=0.845), and Public Transportation (Mean = 3.60, SD=1.1014). Visitors, from their response, prefer to keep as it is or improve on interaction with local residents (Mean=3.56, SD=0.768)), walking space in town (Mean=3.54, SD=0.805), bike lanes (Mean=3.53, SD=0.913), variety of attractions (Mean=3.48, SD=0.779), accommodations (Mean=3.39, SD=0.740), and shopping (Mean=3.39, SD=0.722) for a better experience (Table 6 and Figure 3). Other notable areas where visitors want less are noise (Mean = 2.55, SD = 0.793), roads (Mean = 3.08, SD = 0.682), and the built environment (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.784). This finding suggests that more infrastructure and facilities are required in Bisbee and around

Southeast Arizona to enhance visitors' experience. Specifically, the provision of more restrooms, parking lots, disability access, restaurants, trails, direction signs, and public transportation should be prioritized.

Table 6: Summary of Visitors Opinion about Tourism Infrastructure around Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Tourism Infrastructure	Want More		Slightly More		Keep as Is		Slightly Less		Want Less		Mean Index	Std. Dev.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Restrooms	49	16.8	68	23.3	87	29.8	0	0.0	1	0.3	3.80	.819
Parking lots	67	22.9	55	18.8	89	30.5	5	1.7	5	1.7	3.79	.979
Disability Access	51	17.5	43	14.7	82	28.1	2	0.7	6	1.1	3.71	.991
Restaurants	39	13.4	73	25.0	104	35.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.70	.758
Trails	42	14.4	55	18.8	97	33.2	1	0.3	2	0.7	3.68	.848
Direction Signs	37	12.7	59	20.2	100	34.2	5	1.7	2	0.7	3.61	.845
Public Transportation	48	16.4	36	12.3	95	32.5	2	0.7	8	2.7	3.60	1.014
Local Resident Interactions	34	11.6	52	17.8	123	42.1	2	0.7	0	0.0	3.56	.768
Walking space in town	38	13.0	42	14.4	130	44.5	1	0.3	1	0.3	3.54	.805
Bike Lanes	37	12.7	40	13.7	97	33.2	8	2.7	4	1.4	3.53	.931
Variety of Attractions	27	9.2	53	18.2	125	42.8	1	0.3	3	1.0	3.48	.779
Accommodations	20	6.8	48	16.4	130	44.5	2	0.7	3	1.0	3.39	.740
Shopping	24	8.2	37	12.7	143	49.0	2	0.7	1	0.3	3.39	.722
Built Environment	16	5.5	16	5.5	139	47.6	10	3.4	7	2.4	3.13	.784
Roads	8	2.7	23	7.9	158	54.1	4	1.4	9	3.1	3.08	.682
Noise	1	0.3	4	1.4	135	46.2	34	11.6	32	11.0	2.55	.793

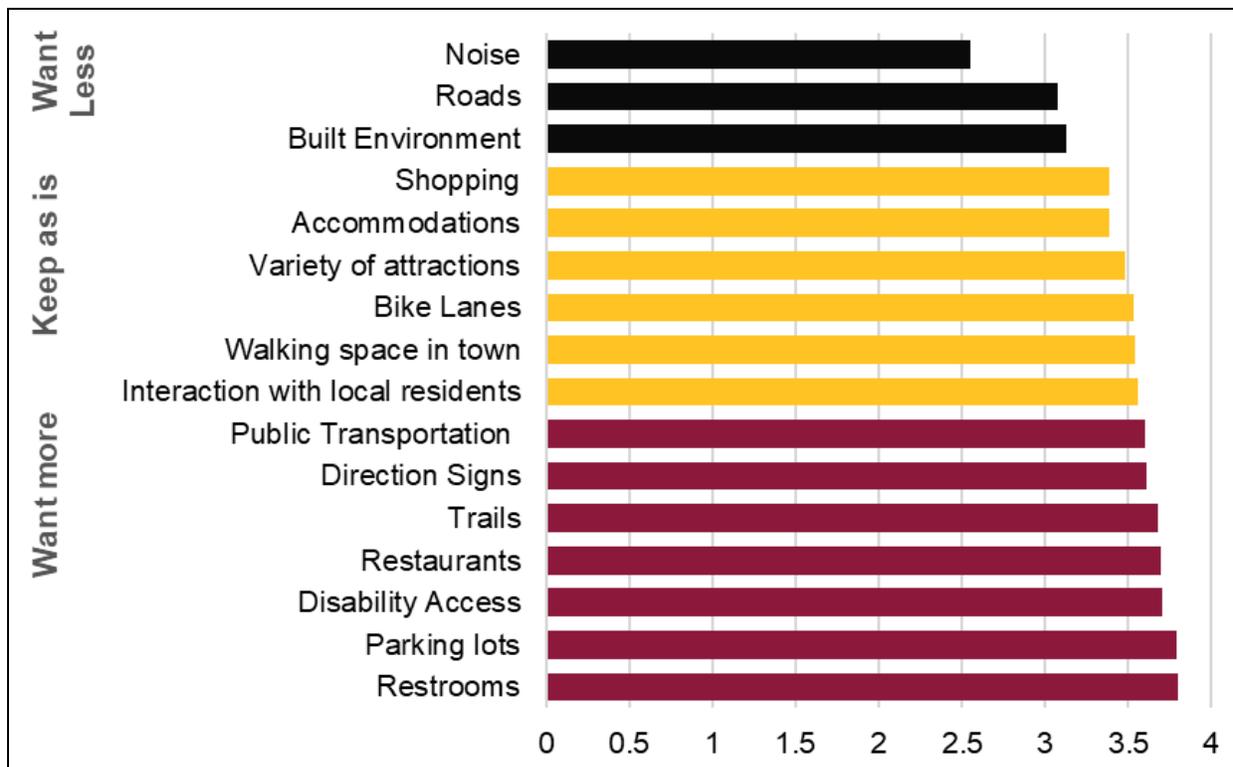


Figure 3: Summary of features and conditions around Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Visitors' Reasons for Travel

The result of the mean ranking on a scale of 1.00 (Strongly disagree) to 5.00 (Strongly agree) ranged from a high of 4.53 (N= 209) for creating good memories, and not getting discouraged in the face of failure, to a low of 2.61 (N= 196), shows that visitors most important reason for their trips is to create good memories, while the least important reason is not to get discouraged in the face of failure. Among the important reasons for visitors trips are being in landscapes with scenic beauty (4.34, N=205), learn about the history of this region (4.32, N=217), having a break from my daily routine (4.32, N=203), experiencing the culture of the region (4.19, N=215), wanting to visit somewhere new (4.08, N=212), being close to nature (4.07, N=214), learning about the natural environment of this region (4.06, N=217), and experiencing the local arts scene (3.90, N=210) among others (Table 7, and Figure 4). Therefore, this information could help with destination planning to accommodate activities that could fulfil the visitors' expectations for their trips and propel the intention to revisit among visitors.

Table 7: Means on the visitors' reasons for travel

Attributes	N	Mean Index	Std. Dev.
Create good memories	209	4.53	.893
Spend time with family and/or friends	206	4.38	1.061
Be in landscapes with scenic beauty	205	4.34	1.005
Learn about the history of this region	217	4.32	.879
Have a break from my daily routine	203	4.32	1.029
Experience the culture of the region	215	4.19	.908
I want to visit somewhere new	212	4.08	1.147
Be close to nature	214	4.07	1.023
Learn about the natural environment of this region	217	4.06	1.023
Experience the local arts scene	210	3.90	1.158
Gain a new perspective	200	3.74	1.256
Be independent	196	3.57	1.348
I want to exercise or engage in physical activity	208	3.53	1.191
Be away from crowds of people	204	3.50	1.345
Better understand how to protect and preserve nature	198	3.49	1.362
Bisbee and the surrounding region are special to me	202	3.47	1.357
Help cope with stress	197	3.37	1.328
Attain a healthy lifestyle	200	3.34	1.347
Find inner peace and harmony	202	3.32	1.350
Meet people with shared interests	199	3.26	1.378
Challenge my way of thinking	201	3.24	1.297
Find new interests or hobbies	203	3.17	1.271
Feel a sense of belonging	204	3.16	1.337
Be more resilient	193	3.09	1.357
Stay focused and think clearly	197	3.05	1.362
Take guided tours	207	3.04	1.381
Discover what I am capable of	201	3.01	1.296

I want to challenge my physical abilities	207	3.00	1.270
Handle unpleasant feelings and emotions	196	2.72	1.398
Gain self-esteem	196	2.66	1.411
Deal with uncertainty	195	2.65	1.367
Not get discouraged in the face of failure	196	2.61	1.397

Please Note: 1= Strongly Disagree; and 5 = Strongly Agree.

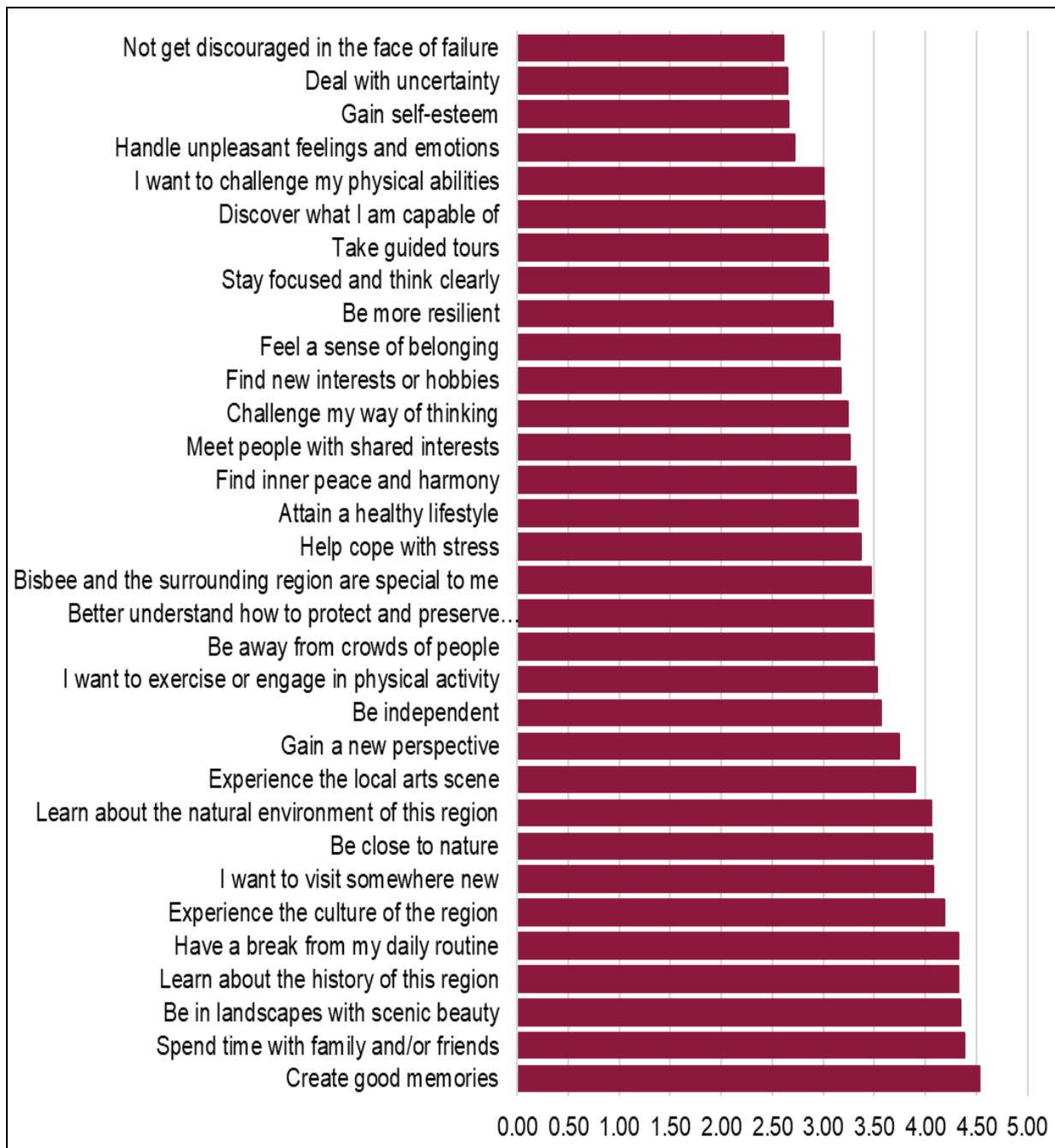


Figure 4: Means on the visitors' reasons for travel

Visitors' Preference of Tours

Visitors were asked if they took or plan to take a tour on this visit to Bisbee and Southeast Arizona. Overall, most visitors preferred walking (42.1%), self-guided (41.1%), and Hiking tours (15.8%). However, there are other tours that fewer visitors (less than 10%) prefer, which include bus of a small group bus (6.5%), recreational

Vehicle (5.5%), mine tour (4.1%), biking (2.1%), nature-birds (2.1%), horseback riding (0.7%), cave our (0.7), and wine tours (0.3%) (Table 8, and Figure 5). This finding suggests that improving publicity and awareness for the tours with fewer visitors may increase public knowledge and participation of the tours.

Table 8: Summary on Visitors' Preference of Tours

Types of Tours	Frequency	Percentage
Walking	123	42.1
Self-Guided	120	41.1
Hiking	46	15.8
Bus of a small group	19	6.5
Recreational Vehicle	16	5.5
Mine	12	4.1
Biking	6	2.1
Nature-Birds	6	2.1
Horseback Riding	2	.7
Cave	2	.7
Wine tour	1	.3

Please note that the summation in the table does not equal 100% because visitors are allowed to select multiple tours they either participated or intended to participate in.

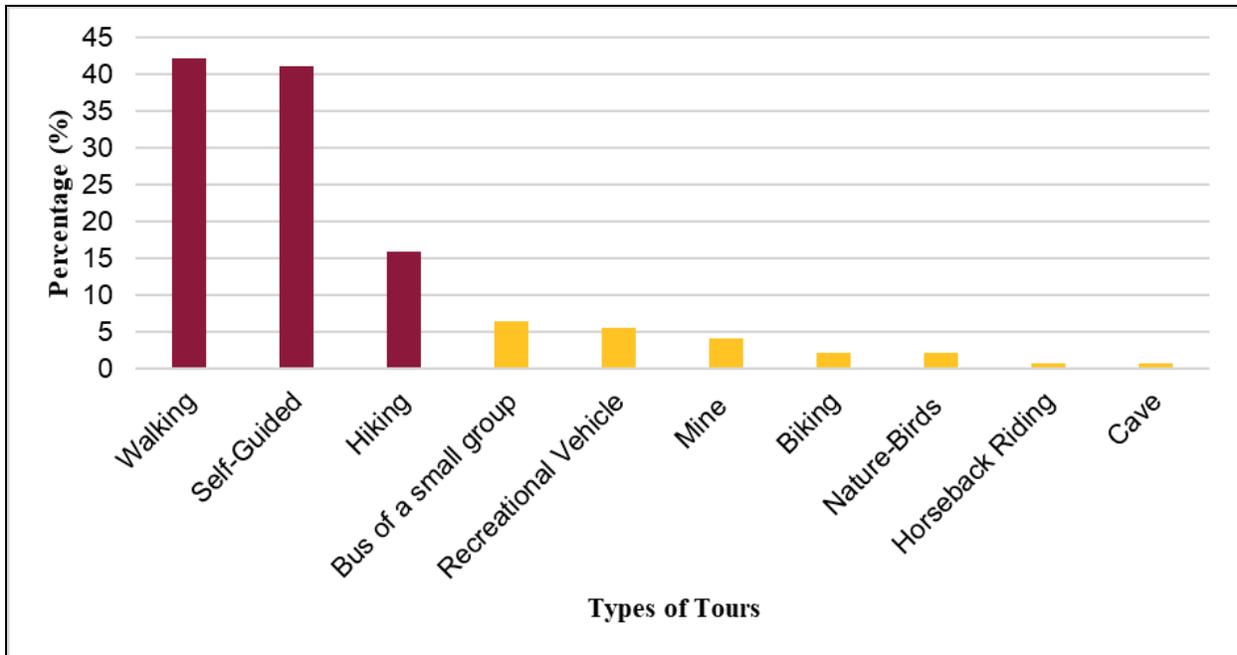


Figure 5: Summary on the types of tours visitors participate in or are willing to participate in during this trip

Visitors' participation, recommendation, and feelings about the fees paid, at various sites in Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Overall, the visitors have varying presence in the places and sites they have visited or planning to visit, generally, most of the visitors would recommend the visited sites to other people and they feel that the fees paid across the sites are low and about right, suggesting that the fee could be reviewed upward and still be affordable to the visitors. The map in Figure 6 shows sites that were asked on the survey, this map displays the distribution of nature sites (in green) and cultural sites (in red). A black star designates the sites of the Science Exploration and Research Center Bisbee.

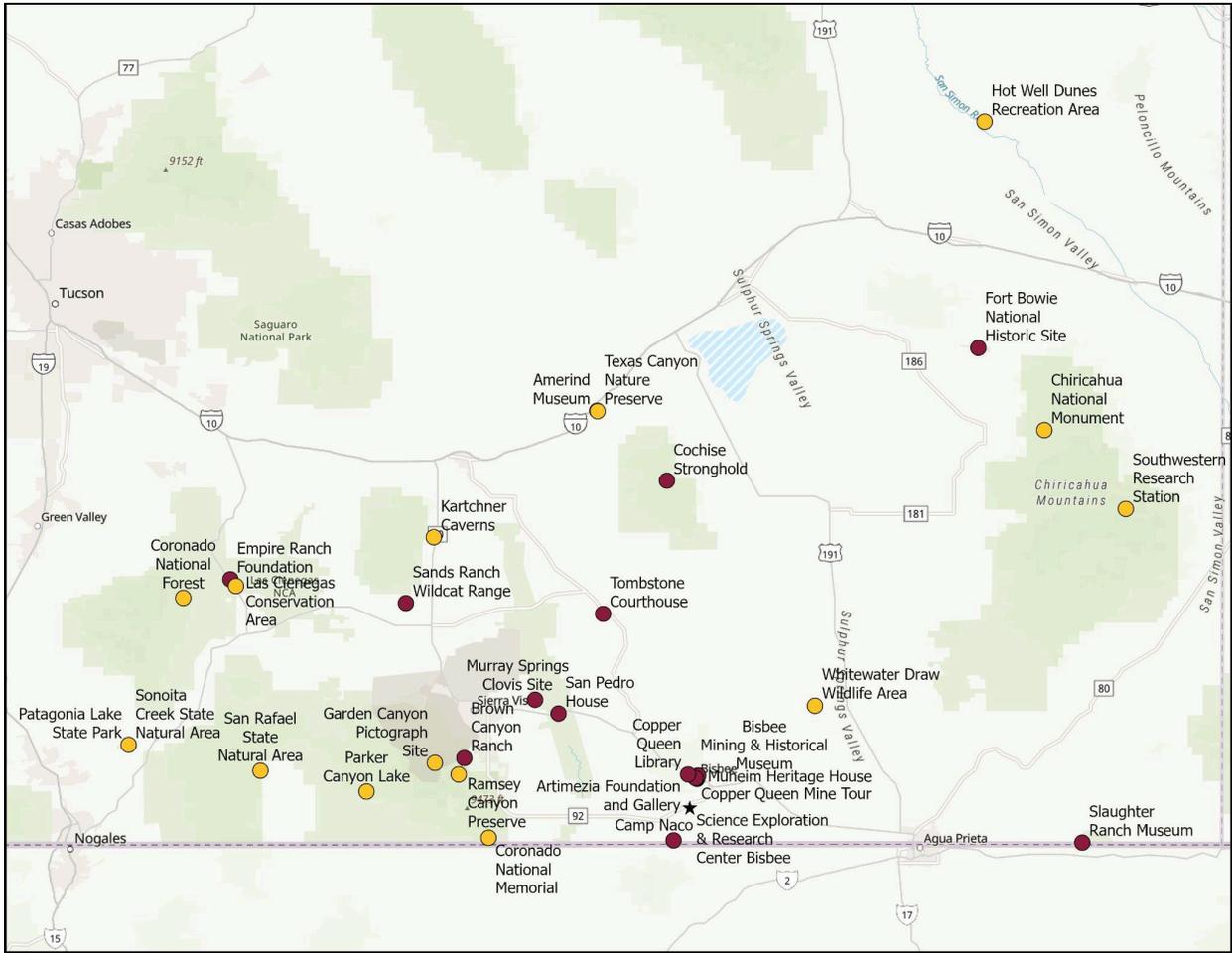


Figure 6. Map of sites and attractions that appear in the survey (red indicates culture/heritage sites, and green indicates nature sites).

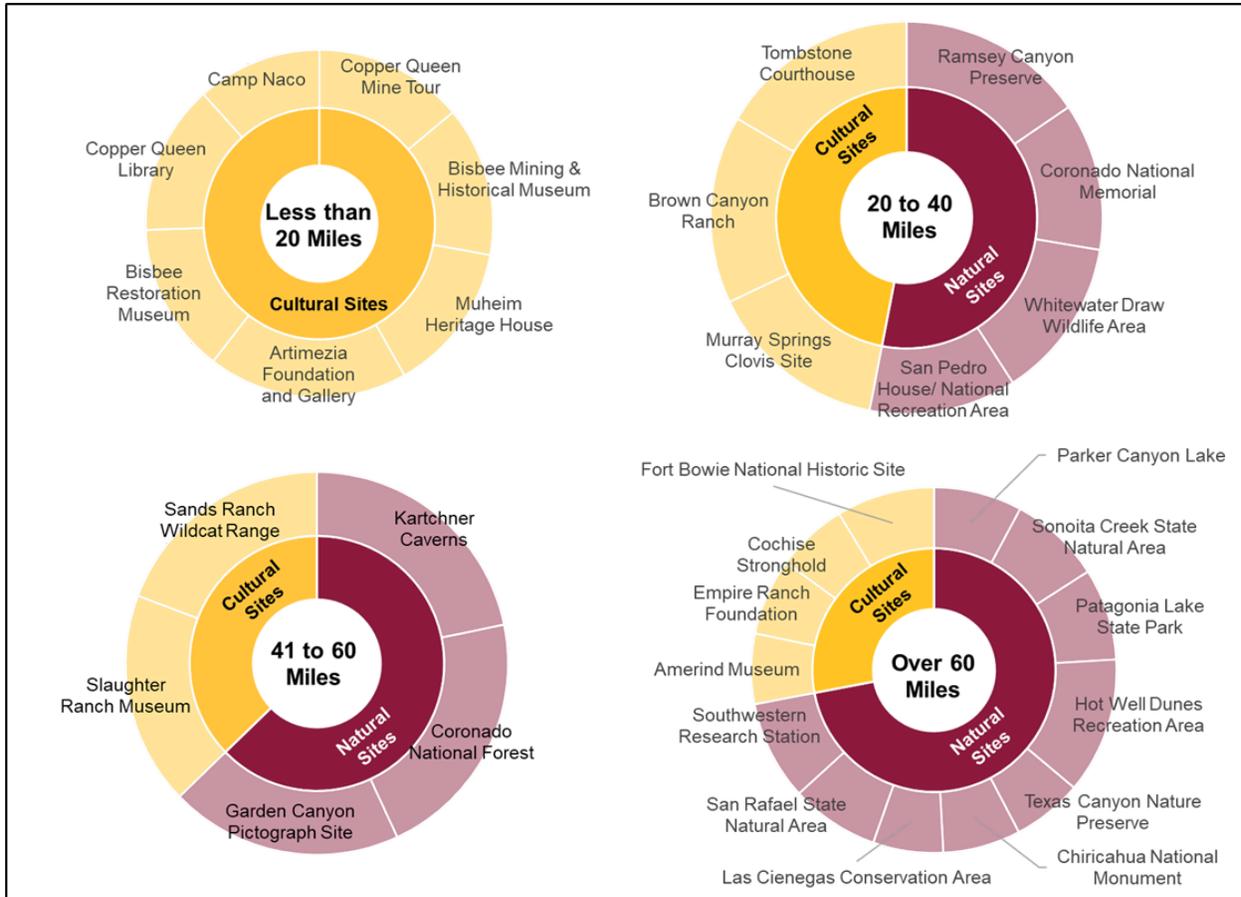


Figure 7: Distribution of the Sites according to the distance from BSERC

Specifically, Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum is the site with the highest (30.5%, N=89) visitors' preference to visit, with 17% of the visitors willing to recommend the site to other visitors, and 89.4% (N=66) feel that the fee paid is low and about right, and 10.6% attested that the fee paid was high. This was closely followed by Copper Queen Mine Tour, Kartchner Caverns, Patagonia Lake, Coronado National Forest, and Tombstone Courthouse, with over 20% of the visitors visited or plan to visit, and over 10% of them would recommend the site to others, whereas above 80% of the visitor for each site feels that the fee paid is low and about right except for Patagonia Lake that is 66.7%. Furthermore, between 10% to 20% of the visitors visited or plan to visit six sites comprising Ramsey Canyon Preserve, San Pedro House, Parker Canyon Lake, Sonoita Creek, State Natural Area, Cochise Stronghold, and Amerind Museum, among which would recommend those sites to others, and 80% of these visitors feels that the fee paid is low and about right. Below 10% of the visitors visited or plan to visit the remaining ten sites comprising Texas Canyon Nature Preserve, Hot Well Dunes Recreation Area, Muheim Heritage House, Artemisia Foundation & Gallery on, Murray Springs Clovis Site, Empire Ranch Foundation, Southwestern Research Station, Brown Canyon

Ranch, Slaughter Ranch Museum, and Sands Ranch Wildcat Range, among which over 80% of the visitors for each site feels that the fee paid is low and about right with, and would recommend those sites to others (Table 9).

In summary, the attraction sites have varying degrees of popularity, which may reflect in the number of visitors patronising them. Despite this variation, the unifying components are the visitors' willingness to recommend and how they feel about the fees paid. The deductions made from this finding are that visitors may be willing to pay more for a renewed experience, as most of them are satisfied with the current fees across the sites, and also, word-of-mouth is imminent among these visitors, as they are willing to recommend the sites they have visited.

Table 9: Summary of responses on Visitors' participation, recommendation, and feelings about the fees paid, at various sites in Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Attraction/Site	Visit or Plan to Visit		Would Suggest to Others		How do you feel about the fee paid?							
					Low		About Right		High		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Nature Attraction/Site												
Kartchner Caverns	78	26.7	49	16.8	6	10.3	43	74.1	9	15.5	58	100
Patagonia Lake	68	23.3	30	10.3	6	16.7	18	50.0	12	33.3	36	100
Coronado National Forest	64	21.9	36	12.3	7	19.4	25	69.4	4	11.1	36	100
Ramsey Canyon Preserve	49	16.8	25	8.6	11	31.4	21	60.0	3	8.6	35	100
Parker Canyon Lake	42	14.4	24	8.2	7	31.8	13	59.1	2	9.7	22	100
Sonoita Creek State Natural Area	37	12.7	13	4.5	8	42.1	8	42.1	3	15.8	19	100
Texas Canyon Nature Preserve	29	9.9	10	3.4	5	27.8	10	55.6	3	16.7	18	100
Hot Well Dunes Recreation Area	23	7.9	5	1.7	5	55.6	3	33.3	1	11.1	9	100
Southwestern Research Station	19	6.5	7	2.4	4	44.4	3	33.3	2	22.2	9	100
Culture/Heritage Attraction/Site												
Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum	89	30.5	51	17.5	6	9.1	53	80.3	7	10.6	66	100
Copper Queen Mine Tour	79	27.1	41	14.0	7	12.1	44	75.9	6	10.3	57	98.3
Tombstone Courthouse	59	20.2	25	8.6	4	13.3	22	73.3	4	13.3	30	100

San Pedro House	44	15.1	24	8.2	9	33.3	15	55.6	3	11.1	27	100
Cochise Stronghold	33	11.3	16	5.5	2	13.3	10	66.7	3	20	15	100
Amerind Museum	30	10.3	13	4.5	5	20.8	16	66.7	3	12.5	24	100
Muheim Heritage House	21	7.2	8	2.7	4	33.3	6	50.0	2	16.7	12	100
Artemizia Foundation & Gallery	20	6.8	7	2.4	4	28.6	7	50.0	3	21.4	14	100
Murray Springs Clovis Site	20	6.8	8	2.7	4	36.4	6	54.5	1	9.1	11	100
Empire Ranch Foundation	19	6.5	7	2.4	3	30.0	5	50.0	2	20.0	10	100
Brown Canyon Ranch	18	6.2	10	3.4	5	50.0	2	20.0	3	30.0	10	100
Slaughter Ranch Museum	18	6.2	3	1.0	3	37.5	2	25.0	3	37.5	8	100
Sands Ranch Wildcat Range	9	3.1	5	1.7	3	37.5	2	25.0	3	37.5	8	100

Visitors' participation, recommendations, preferences, and feelings about the fees at various non-fee sites in Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Overall, the visitors have varying preferences for the non-fee sites they visited or planning to visit, among the listed sites, Copper Queen Library is the most preferred by the visitors (23.6%, N=69), and the most site that would be recommended by the visitors to other people (11.3%, N=33). However, while 37.5% of the visitors are not willing to pay a fee for the Copper Queen Library, the majority (51.8%) of them are not sure of their willingness to pay; only 10.7% express their willingness to pay for the site. This was closely followed by Chiricahua National Monument, Coronado National Memorial, Bisbee Restoration Museum, White Water Draw Wildlife Area, Camp Naco, and Bowie National Historic Site, with over 10% of the visitors visiting or planning to visit, and between 2.4% to 12% of them would recommend the site to others. In terms of willingness to pay a fee, majority of the visitors are willing to pay a fee to visit Chiricahua National Monument (54.9%), Bisbebee restoration Museum (47.6%), and White water Draw Wildlife Area (39.4%), whereas majority of the visitors are not sure whether they are willing to pay to visit Coronado national memorial (37.5%), with (30%) saying they are willing to pay and 32.5% saying they are not willing to pay. Also, 8.6% (N=25) of the visitors visit or planned to visit Las Cienegas Conservation Area, and Bisbee Science Exploration & Research Centre, and 3.4% and 4.1% of them, respectively, would recommend the sites to others. However, 41.4% are not sure whether they are willing to pay to visit Las Cienegas Conservation Area, while 42.9% are willing to pay to visit Bisbee Science Exploration & Research Centre. Garden Canyon Pictograph Site and

San Rafael State Natural Area are the least preferred (6.2%, N=18), where most visitors in these categories are not sure whether they are willing to pay or not (44.0%, and 40.0%), respectively (Table 10).

Table 10: Summary of responses on Visitors' participation, recommendation, and preferences and feelings about the fees at various non-fee sites in Bisbee and Southeast Arizona

Non-Fee Sites	Visit or Plan to Visit		Would Suggest to Others		Are you willing to pay a fee?							
					Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Nature Oriented												
Chiricahua National Monument	59	20.2	35	12.0	28	54.9	8	15.7	14	27.5	51	100
Coronado National Memorial	49	16.8	17	5.8	12	30.0	13	32.5	15	37.5	40	100
Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area	38	13.0	16	5.5	13	39.4	10	30.3	9	27.3	33	100
Las Cienegas Conservation Area	25	8.6	10	3.4	8	27.6	9	31.0	12	41.4	29	100
BSERC	25	8.6	9	3.1	12	42.9	6	21.4	10	35.7	28	100
San Rafael State Natural Area	18	6.2	9	3.1	6	24.0	9	36.0	10	40.0	25	100
Culture/Heritage Oriented												
Copper Queen Library on this trip	69	23.6	33	11.3	6	10.7	21	37.5	29	51.8	58	100
Bisbee Restoration Museum	45	15.4	22	7.5	20	47.6	7	16.7	15	35.7	42	100
Camp Naco	30	10.3	7	2.4	8	25.0	9	28.1	15	46.9	32	100
Bowie National Historic Site	30	10.3	13	4.5	13	44.8	8	27.6	8	27.6	29	100
Garden Canyon Pictograph Site	18	6.2	4	1.4	7	28.0	7	28.0	11	44.0	25	100

Tables 9 and 10 overview sites with fees and non-fees that survey participants visit or plan to visit. To get a sense geographically how far these different sites are from BSERC, Figure 7 breaks down these sites and attractions listed in the survey by distance.

Visitors expenditure:

Estimated spending on guided tours?

Based on all the data reported, 87 participants reported spending on tours with an average spending of \$168.95 (spending reported ranged from \$1 to \$5,000). To adjust the result and remove outliers (those who reported \$1, \$3, and \$4 as the lowest spend and \$2,200 and \$5,000 as the highest spend, accounting for 5 participants), the adjusted average spend on tours comes to \$91.35 (for the remaining 82 participants

who reported spending). Breaking this down based on those who say they are not from Bisbee, the spend is an average of \$124.64, and those who say they are from Bisbee, the spend is an average of \$400. When removing the same noted above outliers, those not from Bisbee spend on average \$111.15, and those from Bisbee spend \$66.67

Estimated visitor expenditure for this trip to Bisbee and Southeast Arizona?

Looking at the overall trip spend, 152 participants reported their estimated expenditures on their trip to Bisbee and Southeast Arizona with an average expenditure of \$969.86 (spending reported ranged from \$4 to \$10,000). To adjust the results and remove outliers (those who reported \$4 as the lowest spend and \$5k, \$6k, \$7k, and \$10k as the highest spending, accounting for 8 participants), the adjusted average estimated trip expenditures come to \$690.38 (for the remaining 144 participants who reported expenditures). It is important to note that in survey research, several limitations that need to be considered are recall error and memory limitations, social desirability bias, where people consciously and unconsciously misrepresent spending, timing of their trip when they complete the survey, and lack of checking records and receipts (Geisen et al., 2016).

Visitors' Perception of Bisbee

The final question in the survey was an open question where participants could elaborate their perception of Bisbee. Survey participants were asked to describe Bisbee as a destination. The response rate to this question was over 50%, with 149 participants offering their perception of Bisbee. Responses were analyzed were coded and categorized into the following six areas: 1. general excitement and enthusiasm; 2. quaint, historical, and aesthetic; 3. quirky (and artsy); 4. local connections and desire for more; 5. mix of nature and culture; and 6. critique/suggestions

These categorizations are each overviewed with supporting quotes, the first five are based on reactions and the final category is based on a semblance of critique or suggestions that the participant wanted to bring forward.

General excitement and enthusiasm

Visitors commonly expressed an overall sense of joy and anticipation when describing Bisbee, with short one word responses including: “Awesome”, “Intriguing”, “Wonderful”, or “Fantastic” . Participants offered comments that relate to feelings of friendliness and a welcoming atmosphere. The town is perceived not just as a place to visit, but one that generates positive emotional connections, such as fun, relaxing, and worth returning to. Many described Bisbee as a “welcoming” and “friendly” town, and highlighted interpersonal interactions in the destination, which enhanced their experience. The perception of Bisbee as a sociable place fosters feelings of comfort, even on a first visit. Several responses carried a tone of pleasant discovery—often tied to the town’s unique

character. This highlights strong positive impressions and can enhance word-of-mouth promotion and repeat visitation. Examples responses include:

- *“A fun place to visit”, “Great place to visit, very friendly for visitors. Good parking”,*
- *“Love Bisbee. Something for everyone.”,*
- *“It’s a small little mountain town filled with everything from people to shops. While small, it’s complex. A place worth seeing”,*
- *“Pleasant town nice people. A very welcome feeling. We love it”, “A real treasure, very unique, a must see”.*

Quaint, historical, and aesthetic

A significant number of comments referenced Bisbee’s historic charm and aesthetic appeal, with participants mentioning beautiful, eclectic, historic or charming. Much of this related to the town’s old mining character. Descriptions highlighted the town’s architecture, slower pace, and distinct atmosphere. These elements contributed to a romanticized or nostalgic vision of the town. Regarding architecture, these aesthetic markers allowed participants to reflect on Bisbee’s landscape identity, separating it from more modern or generic destinations. The built environment, with its old mining town heritage, enhances the sense of place and contributes to an authentic experience that visitors today seek. Participants also felt a sense of slowing down with a feeling of stepping back in time, speaking to the temporal experiences that Bisbee offers, especially for those seeking nostalgia. Examples responses include:

- *“A cute mining town”,*
- *“unique historic small town that maintains its beautiful architecture integrity. We will be back for a multi-night stay.”,*
- *“Has more to offer than the originally thought. Great educational and recreational options. variety of historical and attract contemporary shops. We are enjoying exploring Bisbee”,*
- *“Historical, feels like you are living back in time”,*
- *“This is a very captivating town with scintillating architecture and history. Colorful town with a nice arts section and good restaurants”,*
- *“Vintage town in Arizona with lots of beautiful history.”*

Quirky (and artsy)

Art plays a central role in how visitors experience Bisbee. The town is seen as a haven for creative expression, from murals and galleries to artisan shops and local performances. This artsy identity not only attracts cultural tourists but also reinforces Bisbee’s positioning as an authentic and expressive community that values creativity over commercialism. Bisbee’s eccentric and artistic vibe emerged as a key attractor for many respondents. While this can also relate to the historical aspects of the town, these

responses aligned more to artsy vibes and scenes that made the town unique and different. Participants highlight Bisbee's individuality, diversity, and creative culture. The artistic elements and local flavor add to its identity as a place that stands apart from more conventional destinations. The term "quirky" was consistently used as a compliment rather than a point of criticism. Visitors appreciate the town's eccentricity, viewing it as a refreshing departure from uniform, over-designed tourist spaces. This also complemented Bisbee's idiosyncrasies—whether in local culture, architecture, or personalities as noted in other themes. Examples responses include:

- *"Bisbee is a lively small town in Southeast, AZ. It's filled with one-of-a-kind experiences only available here. Locals are so kind. The town is quirky, clean. I would 100% come again and would recommend to friends and family."*
- *"The bohemia couture that exist is a wonderful example from the hyper conservative ranching and military culture that exists within the surrounding area, easing the most beautiful mirage of nature and community."*
- *"Friendly, festive, artsy, trendy, vintage, weird, welcoming, wonderful"*
- *"Quirky + Fun"*

Local connections and desire for more

Some respondents expressed a deeper, more personal connection to the community, suggesting repeat visitation, and like the first theme with general excitement and enthusiasm—an emotional attachment. People who have a second home here make this connection while others refer to Bisbee as their "favorite place", which is important for destinations to help enhance visitor interactions and build long-term destination loyalty. Example responses include:

- *"Bisbee is a wonderful place to visit, friendly, lively, good food, pleasant place to stay, great art galleries; favorite place; library, mining museum, historic mining sites."*
- *"Bisbee is a really beautiful place, lots to do, see and explore. We will definitely be coming back"*
- *"I love the music, art, people, and community. We came here to get away from heat and see this beautiful scenery"*
- *"I will definitely return again. hopefully for longer."*
- *"This is where my husband and I can listen to music, walk and explore, talk with locals, shop, visit the library (Sale books), drink alcohol and coffee, eat and reconnect without any stress of home. An adult playground."*
- *"We just go here but fun, friendly, safe, colorful, artistic, and welcoming. People are nice and would like to live here"*
- *"We love coming to Bisbee. Its small but there is a lot to this. we have been 4 times once the start of 2025. The people and mood is just so calm and friendly."*

Mix of nature and culture

Given Bisbee's geographical position and layers of historical, cultural, and natural appeal, several participants framed these overlaps in how they feel this destination is unique, as there are several landscapes to experience simultaneously. Respondents mentioned hiking, scenic views, and the surrounding environment alongside the arts, food, and historic experiences—suggesting a balanced appeal for both nature lovers and cultural tourists. This is ideal for people who seek both cultural and natural experiences within close proximity. Visitors appreciated being able to hike in the morning and then visit art galleries or local cafés in the afternoon. This blend caters to diverse interests and allows tourists to curate their own style of experience—active or relaxed, rural or urban, and shows potential to attract varied tourist segments. Examples responses include:

- *“A food / shopping tourist town in a historic mining town located at higher elevation with trees / vegetation”*
- *“Beautiful old architecture, nature and sights”*
- *“Beautiful. Very nice to get away from large cities, congestion, and noise. And to have clear skies at night to stargaze. We visit as often as possible and spend our vacation dollars in Southeastern Arizona.”*
- *“Fascinating old mining town with a rich history built in canyons and on steep slopes”*
- *“Great community, culture, access to nature. Weird and cool. Able-bodied mostly-so many stairs”*
- *“Great mountains, architecture and landscape. Great food options, music and art.”*
- *“Rich in history, friendly people, beautiful climate, great food/restaurant option, interesting topography/ landscape”*
- *“Very interesting Landscape, historic buildings, compact layout, mining history, art and eccentric culture”*

Critique/suggestions

While overall sentiment was largely positive, a few participants offered critical feedback or suggestions for improvement. These included concerns about gentrification, environmental issues, or accessibility. This feedback signals areas where development or destination management might consider thoughtful adjustments. Visitors are concerned with the crowding and increasing prices, some points of critique were:

- *“We had a 3 year old, it was hard funding something to do online while the rest of the family went on the mine tour”*
- *“So many stairs, handicapped parking is a bit challenging. This is not a town for disabled.”*

- *“Nice to visit - don't want to stay. Too much else to see - like San Pedro House, Miller Canyon, other birding sites - Bird Conservancy Chiricahua”*
- *“It's a cool town but I felt a bit unsafe walking around”*
- *“It seems to accommodate older, wealthy, and gays. It's a great place to swing thru on your way to somewhere else. There's no great parks or places where families can go to socialize. As a resident, I've watched tourists flock in and out and I have yet to see where any of their money has been beneficial for our community. Bisbee has a great story-- but so do many other places.”*
- *“expected better shopping and stores, many were old, thrift, gift, antiques, and very high priced.”*
- *“Regarding Bisbee as a destination, I believe it is too dependent on tourism.”*

Examples considerations that participant bring forward include:

- *“More tourists there expected, but not too bad. Hope it doesn't become part of Industrial tourism scene”*
- *“It is very pretty but the shops are all tourist rather than local for citizens. Also you need a tea shop here.”*
- *“Great weekend getaway. I hope the town is able to open up some additional restaurants to replace those that closed up.”*
- *“Wish there were more for kids, plus food restaurants that serves water.”*
- *“Food was very good, the art was OK. Parking a bit difficult. Needs a Sedona type remodel, or something like a Jerome remodel. Overall it was a fun trip. Really liked the original OK corral show and tombstone too. Learnt a bit! The Lavender Pit needs a guided tour to bottom! Bisbee Table was excellent. Bar with music was so, so. Blue Gin was great, but homemade tonic was not. Lowell-Erie St and breakfast was a "10" The Badassery was a hoot [and] have done an excellent job The La More was haunted, great staff too.”*
- *“Bisbee is a treasure, I have been here since I was a child to bask in the unique flavor, history, and local arts creation. My greatest wish is that this thing be preserved and that the tourism be funneled towards the local population. This small town can become so much smaller with so much tourism. Thanks to the generous hospitality of locals Bisbeens, this treasure will be experienced by many more like me.”*

Local Resident and Business Perspectives

The following section is the combined findings from four focus group sessions and four individual interviews conducted with Bisbee business owners and residents. There were four focus groups hosted in April 2025, which included one virtual group of local

business owners, one virtual group of Bisbee residents, and two in-person focus groups with Bisbee residents held at BSERC. The individual interviews were conducted with leaders of for-profit and non-profit organizations who were also Bisbee residents. Each focus group and interview began with a more general question related to the participants' favorite places in Bisbee. After this initial question, there were seven primary questions. This summary of the findings follows the order of these seven questions (See Table 12), and includes conversational elements, quotations, and visual representations of the findings. Poll Everywhere software was utilized for the virtual business focus group to facilitate conversation. Finally, one interview was held with the Executive Director of the Ogden Nature Center in Utah for benchmarking purposes.

Table 11: Questions Asked During the Focus Groups and Interviews

Question 1	What major tourism (or specific niche) assets do you have in Bisbee?
Question 2	What makes Bisbee and Southeast Arizona a unique tourism destination?
Question 3	What type of tourism is best for business and residents?
Question 4	How do you envision your organization and community in 10 years?
Question 5	How does tourism (directly or indirectly) contribute to your vision?
Question 6	What actions and strategies do you feel are needed to achieve this vision?
Question 7	How can the outcomes/ideas be strategized and sustained in the Southeast Arizona and Bisbee region?

Initial Question: Favorite Places in Bisbee:

In order to begin the conversations during the focus groups and individual interviews, researchers asked a preliminary question to all participants: What are your favorite places in Bisbee? This question allowed researchers to gain familiarity with the participants, and provided a way for the participants to become familiar with each other. The answers ranged from specific sites to general attributes of Bisbee, and fell into three main categories: historical assets, natural assets, and cultural assets. While there is overlap between the categories, historical assets were associated with both the built environment, or physical buildings, as well as cultural heritage tourism; natural assets related to the landscape, biodiversity, and parks; and the cultural assets included current happenings, places, and events in Bisbee.

When asked about their favorite specific sites in Bisbee and the surrounding region, participants mentioned: Old Bisbee, Warren Baseball Field, San Pedro River, Whitewater Draw, Huachucas, Chiricahuas, Vista Park, and Artemisia Gallery.

In addition to the sites mentioned, we can break these down into detailed tourism assets based on historical, cultural, and natural value (see Table 13).

There were specific quotations that highlighted the participants favorite places in Bisbee:

- *“You can... be in the city and in nature [at the same time].”*
- *“I love going down there [to Old Bisbee] and soaking up the local businesses and the feel of the people that are there on the streets. A lot of them are tourists.”*
- *“I like the energy of the place [Bisbee] and it’s where I feel kind of at home.”*

Table 12: Perceptions of attractions based on unique assets

Historical	Cultural	Natural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Old Bisbee & Nostalgia · History · Baseball Fields, both history and current use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Politics · Farmer's Market · Stair Climb Event · Hereford Road · Hanging out with friends · Stores & restaurants · Artemisia Gallery · Walking around the town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · San Pedro River · Natural Environment: Wetlands restoration, Planting Trees, Monsoon Season & Waterfalls, Mountains, Open Spaces · Biodiversity: Birding, Kill Cranes, White Water Draw, El Segundo Blue Butterfly · Dark Skies · Vista Park · Rural areas

Tourism Assets in Bisbee:

The focus group participants were asked: What major tourism (or specific niche) assets do you have in Bisbee? Similar to the previous question, participants answered this question about tourism assets in Bisbee both in specific and general terms. Additionally, the same three categories of responses matched the previous question: historical assets, natural assets, and cultural assets. There are several overlaps between these first two questions, meaning that the participants not only enjoy spending time at various sites in and around Bisbee, but they also see these sites as current or potential tourist assets. This mixing of local and visitor participation at these various sites is important to note, given that there was a push for tourist activities and events to be preliminarily

Table 13: Tourism Asset Responses from April 3, 2025 Focus Group

Historical Assets	Cultural Assets	Natural Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Old Bisbee · Old Western Culture, History, & Architecture: Like traveling back in time · Mining: Museum, History, & Geology & Land Reclamation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Not Tombstone · Shopping & Restaurants: Cafe Rocca, Copper Pig, Jackie's Patisserie · Copper Queen Library · Events, Theater & Art · Safety · Agriculture · Warren baseball field · Activism Tourism · Three Stop Light Town · Nice, Friendly, and Helpful people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · National Parks & Monuments: Huachucas, the Chiricahuas, Sonoran Desert, Kartchner Caverns · Vista Park & Upper Vista Park · Hiking & Mountains · Ramsey Canyon and Carr Canyon · Uniqueness & Extremes · San Pedro River · Sky Island area and biodiversity: Whitewater draw, Sandhill Cranes wintering, Quadamundi, Scaled quail, mushrooms · Sierra Vista · Dark Sky Certification · Gardens · Weather · Proximity to Naco / Mexico

Unique Places in Southeast Arizona:

The next question was: What makes Bisbee and Southeast Arizona a unique tourism destination? This question was asked to the focus groups and within the individual interviews in order to gain a better understanding of the geographical context where Bisbee exists. Again here, there is an overlap between the types of asset categories that were discussed when considering the previous questions, and the answers ranged from both specific to general types of places and activities that made Southeast Arizona unique. Given the consistency between the participants' favorites sites, participants' opinions about the tourist assets in Bisbee, and the responses related to Southeast Arizona, the idea of making Bisbee a tourist hub within the Southeast Arizona region is feasible. This is because the assets within Bisbee highlight and are central to the key tourist assets of the region. At the same time, there are challenges to tourism development, which will be discussed in the following sections of the report.

What makes Bisbee and SE AZ a unique tourism destination?



Figure 9: Unique Southeast Arizona Sites Responses from April 3, 2025 Focus Group

Specific Sites:

- Old Bisbee
- Tombstone
- Sonoran Desert
- Sky Island
- Kartcher Caverns
- Rockhounds Baseball

In addition to the specific and general responses given by the participants, there were also quotations that illuminate their responses during this discussion:

- *“The diversity is incredible.”*
- *“I live here and I'm weird, but I fit right in because, you know, everyone just is. I have more friends here than I've ever had in my life.”*
- *“There's a cultural environment.”*
- *“The vistas, the views, the sunsets, the sunrises.”*

Best Types of Tourism for Businesses and Residents:

The following question was asked to both the business focus group and the resident focus groups, as well as the individual interviews, which included residents and business owners: What type of tourism is best for business and residents? During the business focus group, participants answered this question with three key terms: cultural, events, and mixture. These responses show that the business participants desired tourism that involves cultural tourism and cultural heritage tourism, tourism that accompanies events within the Bisbee area, as well as a mixture of the types of tourism, which included the promotion of both cultural and natural assets. There were also terms given that related to the type of tourists the businesses wanted to see, namely high value tourists. These types of tourists are ones that are staying for longer durations of time, spending money in Bisbee, and enjoying both hotels and restaurants during their stay. Overall, business owners wanted to see a diversification of tourism offerings in order to draw tourism to Bisbee.



Figure 10: Types of Tourism for Businesses Responses from April 3, 2025 Focus Group

There are several key quotations from the participants which illuminate these responses further. In terms of having a mixture of the types of tourism in Bisbee, one participant said: "... diversify the selection of events and destinations... we already have a nice diverse mix in terms of history or architecture, shopping, music, arts, etc... There's something for everybody." Another participant commented: "It's better if somebody



comes into town with a plan to do various things and see various things. Not just birders, not just art. For us, it's good if [tourism is] expanded throughout and we can cover multiple different things for the tourists." These comments highlight the importance of diversifying tourism offerings in Bisbee and spreading not only the tourists, but also where they spend their money, over multiple locations. This is an important consideration, particularly because of later comments made by the participants related to the congestion of Old Bisbee.

Participants also had important quotations related to events in Bisbee. Businesses were interested in events because they draw tourist dollars to Bisbee and build community in the process. One participant said: "They [events] bring publicity. People return." Another participant said: "[Events bring] familiarity to Bisbee. They [tourists] may just come in for a 1 day event, or just, or stay overnight, but especially if they're new to this part of Arizona, they really open their eyes up to what we have to offer during that time. So I think events are not only good for the revenues that they bring in at that time during that event, but they do result in a ton of repeat visitors." One participant also spoke about similar community-building activities, through the Bisbee 1000 (The Great Stair Climb): "[The Bisbee 1000] support[s]... a diverse and healthy community". For the business owners, events were seen as a good way to promote tourism in Bisbee, draw the types of tourists they desired in their community, as well create an avenue for tourists to return to Bisbee and explore other areas around the city. There was a consensus that events must consider the needs of the Bisbee residents first, then the needs of the tourists.

During the resident focus groups, both virtually and in person, several specific events were mentioned as good examples of the types of activities that should be supported. These included: the Garden Tour, Mariachi music festival, Pride parade, and Motorcycle Rally. These events were chosen because they promote the uniqueness of Bisbee and set it apart from places like Tombstone, which also may promote Old West cultural heritage. One resident said that events should "respect the community and respect the people that live here." Another participant said that: "Locals are excited to be a part of it [events, particularly Pride]... it's not just for tourists that you find a way to excite the people who live here to attend as well." Again here, residents emphasized that the needs of the community should come first.

Residents spoke about other types of tourism development strategies that widened the scope from specifically event-based tourism. These various types of tourism included nature-based tourism, cross-cultural and border tourism, and activism tourism. Residents wanted these types of tourism in order to promote an appreciation for the natural environment as they emphasized a need for sustainability, economic development, different modes of transportation, and engagement in the local community. One participant said that they desired tourism that "appreciates... our landscape and our desert critters that live here. We're very passionate about protecting



our animal neighbors.” These comments highlighted the types of tourists that enjoy hiking and physical activity through the natural landscapes around Bisbee. Another participant said that they wanted tourism that “showcases our town and our talents and our neighbors.” In terms of activism tourism, one participant urged that tourists “... engage with a place and appreciate the surroundings and the happenings that are going there... they express their experience in a different way and that experience then gets shared.” These types of tourism emphasized the building of connections and community through tourist activities in Bisbee, which was distinguished within the virtual resident focus group from passive tourism, such as going to a museum. One participant did not specify which type of tourist would be ideal for Bisbee. Rather, this participant stated: “Anybody who’s looking to get away for a day or a weekend. It’s pretty relaxing around here for the most part... there’s a little bit of everything for everybody... Whatever your reason that draws you here is great and then expands your mind while you’re here.”

Visions for the next 10 years:

This question was asked to both businesses and residents: How do you envision your organization and community in 10 years? Because the previous parts of the focus groups and interviews were centered around tourism, several participants answered this question in relation to tourism; however, there were also responses that did not involve tourism. The responses from both the focus groups and interviews complemented each other and are organized here into several overlapping themes: *Heightened Coordination and Collaboration; Increased Levels of Visitation; Placemaking, Revitalization, and Community Building; Infrastructure and Transportation; and Marketing and Education.*

Heightened Coordination and Collaboration:

The participants discussed the need for coordination and collaboration at multiple levels of governance, in addition to the private sector and community members. These actions were related to tourism and more generally with daily life within Bisbee. Participants wanted to see more coordination around recreational and touristic offerings and promotions in order to show visitors that there is more to see in Bisbee than the mining tour. Participants noted the lack of a Bisbee Chamber of Commerce and previous mass marketing campaigns which they felt lacked a target audience for potential visitors to Bisbee. Collaboration also extended to the challenges of Airbnb’s and affordable housing in Bisbee. Several participants mentioned that residents were being priced out of living in Bisbee because of the high levels of Airbnb’s. These participants wanted to see more coordination at the local government level to counter current regulations and create affordable housing for residents. One participant suggested that tourists should stay at hotels in order to address the Airbnb challenge because the infrastructure is already in place: “The infrastructure is already there for all that [tourist infrastructure / hotels], so it could be interesting to see those places thrive. They’re historical; they’re

interesting in their own way, so I think that would make a nice niche way for people to visit.”

Increased Levels of Visitation:

Business participants desired a higher level of tourists to the Bisbee area. They pointed to a population decline and business closures within Bisbee that impact the level of tourists coming to the City. One participant stated that: “We can’t keep people in this town to work... people are leaving this town.” Here, this participant made a clear connection between tourist arrivals to Bisbee, the Bisbee population, and cultural assets for visitation purposes. This participant stated that, “Tourism is vital, but it’s only vital if you have people living here that can promote tourism [and] support tourism coming in.” They talked about the local community as a key influence for tourists to come and then ideally return to Bisbee. Another participant related the level of visitation with government support of tourism. Here, the participant stated that showing the levels of visitation and their impact on local economic development, job security, health, and safety would contribute to governmental actions in favor of promoting tourism. Participants also spoke about events as a key way to promote tourism, giving suggestions for creating a new Bike Summit around Bisbee and Southeast Arizona and re-establishing the Coaster Races in the city center. Finally, some participants discussed the tension that tourism can cause in Bisbee: “We are not Tombstone... we are not like that at all. We’re not [a] show... we’re a really remarkable community that has a long history of both mining and artists... so I think that that creative, imaginative, unique, diverse population can really be highlighted.” Here, the goal was still to increase tourism arrivals, but in a way that does not compromise the uniqueness of the local community.

Placemaking, Revitalization, and Community Building:

The participants discussed their desires for more efforts to be placed on revitalizing Bisbee as a favorable place to live and visit. This theme comes in response to the perceived population and tourist decline over the last several decades. For the participants, this has caused many businesses to close in Old Bisbee, which has negative impacts on tourism and local life. Participants wanted to see further collaborations between businesses, residents, and governments to accomplish this goal, ultimately pushing towards building connections between these groups of people. Here, they specifically mentioned their desire for Bisbee to become a place that is actively working towards reducing their carbon footprint as they build alternative modes of transportation. Other participants discussed events as a way to promote community building and a way to balance the needs of the tourists with those of the locals. Any of these initiatives within this theme, however, were seen to be limited by City staff.

Infrastructure and Transportation:

There was a particular emphasis on building safe and accessible infrastructure and alternative modes of transportation in Bisbee, particularly in Old Bisbee. The participants saw this as a desire especially for those with mobility challenges and older adults. In terms of reducing Bisbee's carbon footprint, one participant wanted to see a greener and more shaded Bisbee in 10 years. By building infrastructure such as shared use and multi-use paths for biking, walking, and hiking, some participants felt that this would not only lead to a better quality of life for residents, but also create the infrastructure needed for ecotourism. Other specific suggestions related to transportation infrastructure included the building of electric vehicle charging stations, potentially connected to tourism sites; making Bisbee an electric car or golf cart town, improving e-bike infrastructure; and re-establishing the trolley car in Bisbee. There was a general opposition to ATV's. Finally, one participant wanted to see free internet and cable for the entire City within the next 10 years.

Marketing and Education:

Education was discussed in several ways. The first way was connected to the other placemaking and visitation themes given that this discussion centered around education and marketing Bisbee in a more expansive way. For example, participants wanted to see Bisbee displayed as a nature-based destination that also had a rich history and cultural assets, rather than simply an old mining town. They thought that the shift in marketing would need to come through traditional marketing channels, as well as through word of mouth, social media, and TripAdvisor. One participant mentioned the need for a better map of the Bisbee area so that visitors stopped trespassing on private land. Another participant commented that: "we could get a really cohesive message that our city would put out so all the rest of us could jump on board," which relates to the *Heightened Coordination and Collaboration* theme. Overall, participants wanted to see better marketing for the Bisbee area, similar to that of Northern Arizona or Utah, which were perceived to be places known for their national parks, conservation, mountains, and nature.

The second way education was discussed was in relation to the desires for residents and visitors to learn about Bisbee and its surrounding area. There was a desire to develop Bisbee as a research center with field stations for citizen scientists. This would emphasize both STEM and STEAM education for students, adults, and visitors alike. By learning about the natural landscapes and biodiversity of the Bisbee area, there was a desire to induce a new appreciation for the area. This type of education was also anticipated to shift the types of tourists that may come to Bisbee, specifically those who are more interested in deeper learning and participation in local life. One participant commented that this shift would effectively be "marrying science with tourism."

Tourism Contributions to 10 Year Visions:

For both business and resident participants, there are four overarching themes related to the question: How does tourism (directly or indirectly) contribute to your vision? These include: *Economics*; *Education and Awareness*; *City Operations and Infrastructure*; and *Health and Well-being*. These include both the direct and indirect impacts of tourism in relation to the previous question about the 10-year visions of both businesses and residents of Bisbee.

Economics:

A key direct impact of tourism is related to the economic opportunities that tourism can induce in a destination. For the participants, this included job opportunities and job diversification, as well as general economic development opportunities for Bisbee through increased tourism arrivals. The participants saw tourism as a necessity for businesses in the Bisbee area.

City Operations and Infrastructure:

Within this theme, leadership is emphasized, particularly that from the City government. The City is seen as a link between the businesses and the people within Bisbee, and therefore the operations related to tourism should be more heavily coordinated at this level. Participants spoke about how tourism can lead to improved infrastructure, such as solar power and water recycling, sustainable funding sources for the infrastructure, and emphasized the importance of developing the infrastructure for the aging population. Finally, the participants thought that tourism may assist in better data collection processes at the City level.

Education and Awareness:

The theme of education and awareness was emphasized in three ways for the participants. First, through learning about the natural environment in and around Bisbee. The participants see tourism as a way to promote this type of environmental education because Bisbee is a unique place of particular beauty, diversity, and resilience. Some participants saw this type of learning as related to the shifting of perceptions regarding the human-nature connection. One participant commented that: "Increased tourism will hopefully mean that more people come here and learn about that [nature] and understand it better, and through that understanding become more empathetic to the planet as a whole... getting people out of just why they may have come here to look at something new or different, and to go beyond their immediate, you know, sidewalks." This comment connects learning about nature to increased empathy. Finally, some participants thought that increasing tourism in a way that promotes learning may cause



locals to want to learn more about their local environment and explore the places around Bisbee.

Health and Well-being:

Participants perceived tourism as a means to boost healthy and physical activities for residents. Creating bikeways was one physical activity that was stressed. The participants thought that bikeways and other activities may also promote a feeling of local togetherness, which could have possible positive impacts on well-being. Pro-social sharing behaviors were seen as an additional positive outcome of tourism development. As tourists come to learn about Bisbee in deeper ways, this could promote a sense of community between not only visitors and locals, but also between people and the natural environment surrounding Bisbee. Participants thought that pro-social behavior could be further promoted through events, leading to the shifting of perspectives and interconnectivities between health and well-being.

Question 6: Actions and Strategies:

After the participants discussed their visions for the next 10 years, they spoke about the various ways they may achieve this vision (through tourism or otherwise) through this question: What actions and strategies do you feel are needed to achieve this vision? The responses for this question centered around leadership, collaboration, and communication through five themes: *Valuing Tourism; Collaboration and Partnerships; Infrastructure; Events; Marketing and Education.*

Valuing Tourism:

The participants discussed the need to value tourism in different ways. At the government level, the participants stated that the City should keep track of and share tourism data, including arrivals and budgets. This requires civic leadership. The participants suggested that there should be an increase of accommodations and restaurants with consistent hours of operation. One participant mentioned that: “Businesses [are] very fractured in terms of how they perceive tourism. What they look at as positive tourism versus negative tourism [differs].” Another participant mentioned that businesses may not be able to afford regular hours of operation, so this should not reflect their lack of valuing tourism, but rather the fact that there may not be enough tourist arrivals to support their business. From the resident perspective, one participant thought that local community members should see tourism as a benefit to the community and not just a benefit for the tourists: “I think we still have an internal responsibility to the residents and the tourists. But even just to the residents, to involve them in things that some people might think are for tourists, but they’re actually really for residents, too.” This would involve a process of education around the value of tourism for Bisbee residents.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

Collaboration and partnerships was an important theme that ran through most of the interviews and focus groups. As it pertains to tourism development and promotion, many of the participants agreed that the primary onus is on the City government to coordinate such efforts. The participants suggested that the City government should lead these collaborations and guide communication efforts with not only businesses and residents in the Bisbee area, but also with the county, state, and nearby towns. Other collaborations that were specified by the participants included those between the Copper Queen Library, Freeport-McMoRan, and the Cochise Country Tourism and Economic Council. The participants pointed to a lack of a Chamber of Commerce and a Visitor Center as two reasons why this type of collaboration may continue to be a challenge.

Infrastructure:

While transportation was discussed as a primary infrastructure challenge to address within Bisbee, housing, plumbing, and green spaces were also mentioned. In terms of transportation, the participants urged both public and clean transportation options to be developed in order to lower the carbon footprint of Bisbee. These suggestions included the development of better public transportation, bus systems, and bikeways. There was also a suggestion to develop Bisbee into a hub for tourism in Southeast Arizona. Similar to previous comments, alternative and affordable housing options, aging plumbing systems, and a push for more tree planting in Bisbee were also mentioned as necessities for infrastructure.

Events:

Similar to the *Collaboration and Partnership* theme, the participants suggested that Bisbee events should take place with several entities and resident consent. Coordinating with BSERC and other educational organizations for events was given as a possible way to not only promote the events successfully, but also change the perception of visitors and residents through events. The participants suggested that experiencing Bisbee should not only be for tourists, but that events could be ways of building community for local residents as well. One participant said that new events or initiatives should piggyback off of existing events so as to not create more traffic or other local challenges. One participant also stated that “Bisbee does a great job of having a lot of events and I think that would help in getting the tourists here.” Here, this participant emphasized the importance of coordinating events for multiple purposes and communities.

Marketing and Education:

Finally, for the participants, marketing and education was seen as a key way to shift the perception of Bisbee to more than just a mining town. One participant saw events as a key to shifting the potentially negative stereotypes of tourists: “I think that we also need to educate people on what these things [events / tourism] actually are doing for the town... if they understood the benefits that these events are really bringing to the town and to the community and to everybody, and the importance of them overall to our economy, I think it would be different.” The participants also discussed ways to educate tourists in various ways in order to attract more participatory and active (eco)tourists to Bisbee. In this regard, the participants thought that creating an online presence for marketing purposes would change the perceptions of Bisbee into an eco-destination. Other suggestions for shifting the image of Bisbee included its proximity to Mexico and a destination for health and fitness.

Sustaining Strategies:

In the final question, participants were asked about how they thought their suggested strategies may be sustained over time within this question: How can the outcomes/ideas be strategized and sustained in the Southeast Arizona and Bisbee region? There are two primary themes for this question: *Leadership and Accountability* and *Image and Vitality*.

Leadership and Accountability:

Participants felt strongly that leadership, particularly that of local government, was required to provide vision, accountability, organization, inspiration, and support tourism and other initiatives. Leadership to build collaborations and partnerships was seen as a key method to achieving participants’ visions and strategies over the next 10 years. While some saw leadership from the top-down, others thought that leadership should be spread across several groups or individuals, which would effectively broaden the accountability for the desired initiatives. Again here, participants mentioned the need for a Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center to coordinate such leadership efforts. The participants thought that stronger leadership may also lead to sustainable funding opportunities and trust-building. There were, however, still concerns about who was responsible for built infrastructure and transportation concerns. Finally, there was a push for leadership to create spaces for continued communication between various stakeholders in Bisbee because “the interests that would support... businesses and residents... are not dissimilar.”

Image and Vitality:

The participants spoke about increasing Bisbee’s visibility and pushing towards new ideas and inspiration, leading to a new image and vitality for the City. The participants wanted a focus on what draws people to Bisbee – both tourists and residents. This inherently would require participation with the local community and involve community buy-in regarding any new promotion, marketing, events, or placemaking in Bisbee. Some participants spoke about the need to draw younger people to live in Bisbee. One participant commented that these younger people: “come in with ideas... with excitement and the willingness and the ability to work towards such things.” New industries were seen as critical to creating jobs and growing capacity within Bisbee. However, there was a strong emphasis on residents not wanting to lose the unique culture of the Bisbee community in the process.

Benchmarks: Nature Centers

We identified a few sites that can be considered benchmarks, and we interviewed two of these nature and education centers. Benchmark organizations highlighted include: Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center (PA), Outdoor Education Center at Jennings Park (NC), Willow Bend Environmental Education Center (AZ), Ogden Nature Center (UT), and Pajarito Environmental Education Center (NM).

Interview with the Ogden Nature Center:

For benchmarking purposes, an interview was conducted with the Executive Director of the Ogden Nature Center. The Ogden Nature Center is located in Utah and has the mission “to unite people with nature, and create a community dedicated to environmental stewardship” (ONC, 2025, n.p.). The Center strives to be an educational center for the community as an outdoor classroom and living museum. The Center also offers community programs, which draw over 50,000 visitors for activities such as “visual and performing arts, photography, birding, wildlife in Utah, outdoor recreation, conservation, sustainable practices”, all of which are elements of ecotourism (ONC, 2025, n.p.). This Center was chosen as a benchmarking institution for BSERC because of its educational and touristic offerings, as well as its community-oriented programming.

The Ogden Nature Center describes their admission fees as low. They charge \$6 per adult and \$4 per child or senior. However, they encourage the purchasing of annual family passes for \$60. In addition to encouraging repeat visitors, the annual pass also allows for discounts to their gift shop and announcements for Center events. They noted that other equivalent centers charge about \$18-20 per person. During events, the board of directors encourage the purchasing of annual passes and they have increased these purchases by 15% over the past 15 months.



In terms of their visitors, they estimate that about 90% are local and 10% are tourists, emphasizing the types of events they host per year. This community-based programming averages about three events per month. Their largest event draws about 350 people and raises about \$150,000 for the center. There are various events related to specific days of the year (e.g., Earth Day, Veterans Day), in addition to concerts and birding events.

They state that they have a good relationship with local government and are involved in thoughtful development of the area. The Center helps to build the reputation of the community through “creating magic” and “creating buzz.” This approach may be described as participatory placemaking as they are shifting the perception of the community to move beyond “just a railroad town.” They also collaborate with other museums, a local zoo, park, and aviary by having a family passport (same cost as the annual pass) which allows purchasers to visit each site unlimitedly.

There are a few challenges for the Center related to technology and data management. They would like to move towards measuring their visitors more robustly and creating a database that tracks more information. Liability insurance and worker’s compensation insurance are also required, and must go through the city because the property is owned by the city.

Email Correspondence with Willow Bend Environmental Education Center:

For benchmarking purposes, an email correspondence was held with the Executive Director of the Willow Bend Environmental Education Center. When asked about pricing structures, they mentioned: “ We don’t charge entry to our center unless there is a specific event happening. Our center isn’t like a museum where the doors are always open as we are a small staff and often are out teaching. However, we do charge for school field trips and summer group visits to cover staff time, materials, preparation, and breakdown costs. Since pricing structures can vary widely, it may be helpful to research what similar organizations charge based on their unique offerings.” The center does not organize conferences to make additional revenue. Willow Bend Environmental Education Center conducts off-site programming, and produces a report annually which includes program numbers offered: <https://willowbendcenter.org/annual-reports/>. They do not track total visitor counts at the center. When it comes to insurance recommendations, “directors & officers (D&O) insurance and general liability coverage. If you have paid employees, workers' compensation is essential. Additionally, auto insurance is necessary if a company vehicle is used.” Willow Bend Environmental Education Center does “partner with various agencies to offer tours at different sites. Some partnerships are contract-based, while others are grant-funded. All of our work is conducted through our center.” Overall “main sources of revenue include grants, contracts, memberships, and individual donations, and events.”

Business Analysis

This Business Analysis section distills the findings of the feasibility study into a set of structured frameworks that sharpen BSERC's strategic position in relation to ecotourism. It is designed to bridge the detailed research with the final recommendations by clarifying external conditions, internal capabilities, and the interplay between the two.

The analysis is organized into three parts: the PESTLE Framework, which highlights the broader forces likely to shape ecotourism in Bisbee; the Assets and Limitations Register, which captures BSERC's internal resources and constraints; and the SWOT Analysis, which synthesizes these perspectives into strategic considerations. Together, these tools provide the foundation for the recommendations that follow by identifying where BSERC is best positioned to act, where risks are most acute, and how the organization can align its mission with market opportunities.

PESTLE Framework

The PESTLE framework is a strategic tool used to analyze the broad external environment in which an organization operates. By examining Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental factors, it highlights macro-level forces that shape opportunities, risks, and long-term viability.

For BSERC, the PESTLE analysis is applied to better understand the larger forces influencing its potential entry into the ecotourism sector. The preceding sections focus on ecotourism in Bisbee and Southeast Arizona broadly and this framework compliments that work with an environmental scan that will directly inform the subsequent organizational-level SWOT analysis focused on BSERC.

The analysis draws upon findings from this feasibility study as well as insights from three IBISWorld industry reports (2024–2025):

- **National Parks & Other Nature Institutions (NAICS 71219):** Offers data on national parks, reserves, and nonprofit science/nature centers, with attention to funding structures, visitation trends, and long-term environmental pressures.
- **Tour Operators in the U.S. (NAICS 56152):** Examines the packaged travel and tourism industry, including the rise of customized and niche tours, distribution platforms, and key success factors in a fragmented, volatile market.
- **Museums in the U.S. (NAICS 71211):** Focuses on science, history, and cultural museums, with insights into revenue diversification, interactive visitor programming, and the financial challenges faced by nonprofit cultural institutions.

Together, this PESTLE analysis establishes a robust foundation for strategic decision-making. These sources provide a nuanced perspective that is highly relevant for BSERC, whose identity spans these three domains: a nonprofit science center, a potential niche tour provider, and a potential community-based nature institution.

The following section is organized by the six PESTLE categories, with each highlighting the most relevant dynamics and their potential implications for BSERC's future in ecotourism.

Political

- **Public Funding & Grants:** Science centers and nature institutions have traditionally relied heavily on government appropriations and grants. However, shifts in federal and state priorities—such as changes in USDA or EPA programs—can delay or withdraw funds (IBISWorld, 2024a). This is also leading to funding cuts at national parks which is straining conservation efforts and limiting park system maintenance leading to widespread ecosystem degradation (IBISWorld, 2024a).
- **Polarization of Sustainability:** The topic of sustainability is increasingly polarizing in North America and organizations that have highlighted it in the past are retreating to avoid political scrutiny (Stewart, 2025). Federal funding is also being cut for projects that have connections to sustainability or climate change (Iacurci, 2025).
- **Content Regulation:** Schools and donors increasingly request previews of educational content reflecting heightened scrutiny of education programs (IBISWorld, 2024c).
- **Local Government Alignment:** The City of Bisbee is updating its General Plan; alignment with ecotourism initiatives with city planning could unlock cooperative support.

Economic

- **National Industry Growth Trends:**
 - **Nature Institutions:** Stable, subsidy-dependent sector, with significant reliance on donations and grants (IBISWorld, 2024a).
 - **Tour Operators:** A more dynamic sector — U.S. tour operators revenue grew at a 20.6% compound annual growth rate (2020–2025), though profit margins remain slim (~3.6%) (IBISWorld, 2024b).
 - **Museums:** Revenue projected to grow at a modest 1.7% compound annual growth rate (2024–2029), with profit margins averaging 7.2% (IBISWorld, 2024c).
- **Revenue Structure:** Museums and other nature institutions around the country are seeking to diversify revenue structures as public support declines (IBISWorld,

2024c). Innovative revenue streams that depend more on direct consumer spending offer an opportunity to increase revenues and, when paired with efficiency-focused cost management, can lead to greater financial sustainability (IBISWorld, 2024b).

- **Tourism Spending:** Rising domestic travel and recreation expenditure supports demand for local/niche tourism (IBISWorld, 2024a). National parks in particular are experiencing a surge in visitation with domestic visitors increasing by over 20% in 2024 (IBISWorld, 2024a). Spending by overnight visitors accounts for over 75% of revenues for the National Parks and Other Nature Institutions industry because this group is more likely to spend on additional amenities like guided tours and lodging (IBISWorld, 2024a). However, visitation is sensitive to consumer confidence, inflation, and discretionary income levels (IBISWorld, 2024a). The recent 10% year over year decline in international tourism to the United States is a concern for Arizona-based locations where international visitors comprise 10-12% of the total number (Carroll, 2025).
- **Local Economy:** Tourism is a major economic driver for Bisbee but the town has suffered recent setbacks including a fire which reduced access to the downtown area. Business owners note that labor is difficult to keep as people seek better opportunities outside of Bisbee. The current amount of business also makes it difficult for restaurant owners to offer longer hours.

Social

- **Visitor Preferences:** Overall, Bisbee visitors are drawn to a mix of leisure active activities with a number of eco-tourism-aligned opportunities present. Sightseeing (ranked #1 at 70.9%) can incorporate visiting a wide range of places of interest which further highlights the interest in a mix of experiences while hiking/walking (ranked #2 at 54%) is a clear focus on nature-based activities. Three other activities aligned with ecotourism opportunities also made the top ten ranking including nature viewing (ranked #6 at 39.4%), nature experience (ranked #7 at 37.3%), and star gazing (ranked #9 at 18.2%).
- **Community Dynamics:** Residents and stakeholders express concern about tourism being extractive rather than additive to the wellbeing of the local community. There is a recognition that tourism is a powerful economic benefit for Bisbee but that collaboration is needed to ensure mutually beneficial investments are made in things like tourism infrastructure and tourism opportunities like special events that everyone can enjoy.
- **Cultural Uniqueness of Bisbee:** The city's character—historic mining heritage, quirky arts culture, friendly community and proximity to unique biodiversity (Sky Islands, San Pedro River, Whitewater Draw)—give it a strong identity that

appeals to “authentic experience seekers.” Ecotourism offerings that tie into these narratives would resonate with visitors.

- **Local community groups and collaboration:** The Bisbee area is home to numerous community groups, each advancing causes to enhance residents’ quality of life. Focus group feedback, however, indicates that these efforts often lack coordination when it comes to broader initiatives such as regional tourism marketing. Participants pointed to the absence of a local chamber or tourism office as a barrier and stressed that the City of Bisbee should take the lead in coordinating these efforts.
- **Sustainability & Ethical Travel:** In spite of the political polarization, a recent Booking.com study uncovered that large share of U.S. travelers now expect eco-conscious tourism options with 83% of respondents considering it important and nearly half of respondents indicating that there are not enough sustainable travel options available (IBISWorld, 2024b).
- **Tour personalization:** Customers are prioritizing the ability to tailor trips to their needs and small companies are finding success by offering a portfolio of niche experiences (IBISWorld, 2024b).

Technological

- **Tourism Platforms:** Growth in tour bookings is increasingly driven by digital aggregators (e.g., Viator, GetYourGuide, Airbnb Experiences), which expand reach but reduce margins (IBISWorld, 2024b).
- **Museum Innovations:** AR, VR, and mixed reality are transforming visitor experiences—from AR apps to VR-based immersive exhibits (IBISWorld, 2024c).
- **Operations & Marketing:** Online ticketing, mobile reservation systems, and digital storytelling are now standard in museums and tours which increases operational efficiencies but requires major investment (IBISWorld, 2024c).
- **Accessibility Tech:** Museums are deploying AI-powered translation, AR navigation, and 3D printing for accessibility (IBISWorld, 2024c).

Legal

- **Permits & Licensing:** Operating ecotourism activities (e.g. hikes, guided fieldwork, etc.) requires compliance with federal/state land management agencies (e.g., National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management). Tour operators must secure permits, licenses and potentially insurance.
- **Private land:** Much of the natural environment directly adjacent to Bisbee is privately held by Freeport-McMoRan and access has generally not been granted to the public for recreation use.

Environmental

- **Ecotourism Appeal:** Bisbee's setting—Sky Islands, San Pedro River, Whitewater Draw—provides natural assets with high ecological and visitor appeal. A variety of organizations are currently engaged in promotion and conservation of these areas including The Nature Conservancy, the Southern Arizona Attractions Alliance, Visit Tucson, the Sky Island Alliance, Arizona Office of Tourism, Western National Parks, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- **Climate Risk:** Rising temperatures, drought, and wildfires are intensifying in Southern Arizona. This directly threatens natural sites and ecosystems, outdoor tourism activities, and season length. The region now experiences a significant rise in fire weather days—those with simultaneous high heat, low humidity, and strong winds—adding 49 to 57 more such days annually between 1973 and 2024, among the highest growth nationally (Boehm & Fitzpatrick, 2025). Research from the U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountains Research Center also warns that prolonged drought, warmer temperatures, and more frequent fire are pushing montane forests upslope and converting some forest/woodland to shrubland or grassland, with the Huachuca Mountains and greater Sky Islands specifically flagged for potential carbon-loss and tree-mortality outcomes under future climate scenarios (O'Connor, 2021).
- **Dark Sky community:** Bisbee became a certified Dark Sky Community in 2024 which recognizes the city's stargazing opportunities and has spurred additional efforts to continue preserving and enhancing the city's light pollution controls (Brean, 2024). This is further enhanced by Arizona's status as having the clearest skies in the country (Schutsky, 2025). In 2024, Conde Nast Traveler magazine identified stargazing as a top travel trend and a recent study at Missouri State University predicted a \$5.8 billion boost in revenue for states like Arizona that have national parks visitors drawn by the well-known stargazing on the Colorado Plateau (Brean, 2024).

Assets and Limitations Register

The Assets and Limitations Register is designed to capture the internal factors that shape BSERC's current capacity to pursue new opportunities, particularly in the ecotourism space. While the PESTLE framework highlights broad external forces, the register focuses inward, identifying the tangible resources, programs, relationships, and capabilities BSERC can leverage (its assets), alongside the constraints and vulnerabilities that may hinder its ability to act (its limitations).



This tool builds on best practices in entrepreneurial venture development, where understanding both strengths and gaps is essential for designing strategies that are realistic, phased, and adaptive. By clearly articulating what BSERC already has at its disposal and where it faces constraints, the register provides a baseline for evaluating how the organization can prototype, test, and scale ecotourism initiatives using Lean Startup and human-centered design approaches.

Together, this register offers a candid snapshot of BSERC's organizational readiness for ecotourism and serves as a bridge between the external scan (PESTLE) and the strategic synthesis (SWOT) that follows.

Assets

- **Indoor science center spaces:** Two former classrooms provide flexible space with parking, restrooms, and visitor amenities that support both community use and potential tourism programming.
- **BSERC exhibits and Maker/Tinker space:** Existing interactive STEM exhibits and workshop spaces showcase BSERC's educational credibility and can be reframed for visitor engagement.
- **Outdoor space (8 acres):** The former school playground offers a sizable area for outdoor programming and potential expansion into ecotourism activities.
- **Backyard Project design assets:** Completed schematic designs and community input provide a foundation for future development if funding is restored.
- **Master Naturalist curriculum and client list:** 60 hours of course work in the natural history, ecosystems, flora, fauna, and cultural history of Arizona. The course also is heavily focused on leadership and equity and inclusion in the outdoors. BSERC also has the client list from the recently departed Master Naturalist program.
- **Mobile STEAM Lab:** The mobile k-12 lab delivers annual rotating exhibits with science experiences beyond the main facility to 5,000-6,000 students per year and could be adapted for visitor outreach.
- **STEM Fridays programming:** Regular community-facing events build local engagement and offer a model for experiential programming.
- **PIE & Sky programming:** Astronomy-themed events are a proven draw and can be scaled into tourism-focused Dark Sky offerings.
- **Existing local audience:** School-age children and community members already participate in BSERC activities, creating a base of support and early adopters for pilots.
- **Diverse collection of funders:** Past and present funders demonstrate BSERC's credibility and potential to secure external support.

- **Local partnerships:** Strong connections with the Copper Queen Library, schools, local businesses, and cultural institutions expand reach and collaboration opportunities.
- **Passionate staff and supporters:** A committed core team and volunteer base bring energy, trust, and credibility to new initiatives.

Limitations

- **Limited ecotourism expertise:** With the Master Naturalist program relocating to Sierra Vista, BSERC does not have ecotourism expertise in-house or within their current roster of official collaborators.
- **Limited financial reserves:** BSERC has little buffer for risk, restricting its ability to absorb failed experiments or slow payback periods.
- **Backyard Project funding disruption:** The stalled flagship project illustrates vulnerability to shifting grant priorities and limits capacity to expand infrastructure.
- **Limited earned income:** Virtually no earned revenue from admissions and program revenues (appx. \$1,500 per year), leaving the organization reliant on grants and philanthropy.
- **Limited tour operations expertise and infrastructure:** While experienced in science programming, BSERC lacks the systems for booking, packaging, and managing visitor logistics.
- **Low regional/national visibility:** Outside Bisbee, BSERC is not well known, making it harder to attract out-of-town visitors without strong marketing.
- **Geographic position outside visitor corridors:** The facility is not inside or adjacent to a magnet nature site, reducing incidental tourist traffic.
- **Located near the US/Mexico border:** The facility is located relatively close to the US/Mexico border and some visitors may perceive that as having negative safety implications.
- **Constrained reach beyond Bisbee:** The current audience is largely local, requiring deliberate strategies to expand beyond community-based participation.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis provides a structured synthesis of BSERC's internal and external position as it explores entry into the ecotourism sector. By examining Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, this framework highlights the organization's competitive advantages, internal constraints, external possibilities, and the risks that must be managed.

While the PESTLE framework offered a broad environmental scan of macro-level forces and the Assets and Limitations Register identified BSERC's internal foundation, the SWOT analysis brings these insights together at the organizational level. It is intended to inform strategy by clarifying how BSERC can leverage what it already has, address



its most pressing limitations, pursue promising opportunities, and anticipate external challenges.

This analysis has been developed through an entrepreneurial lens, drawing on best practices in Lean Startup methodology and human-centered design. As such, it distinguishes between short-term opportunities for rapid prototyping and validation and long-term strategic positioning that could establish BSERC as a leading ecotourism hub for the region.

The following section is organized into four categories—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats—with each point framed as a strategic consideration rather than a static observation. Together, they provide a roadmap for BSERC’s next phase of decision-making in ecotourism development.

Strengths

- **Existing local users:** A foundation of school-age children, families, and community members already engage with BSERC’s programming. This creates a baseline audience that can be mobilized for early pilots and word-of-mouth growth. In Lean Startup terms, these users are early adopters for new ecotourism products.
- **Local network of groups, businesses, and government entities:** BSERC is embedded in the Bisbee community with partnerships that range from cultural institutions to small businesses. This trust and connectivity can be leveraged to build packages, cross-promotion, and advocacy for a broader ecotourism identity for Bisbee.
- **Collaborators at ASU and U of A:** Access to academic expertise, research resources, and credibility through existing relationships adds legitimacy to programming. These collaborators can also help design and evaluate pilots, ensuring rigor and innovation.
- **Strategic location & facility infrastructure:** While not directly inside a magnet nature site, BSERC’s facility sits between key nature recreation areas. The existing parking, restrooms, and indoor spaces are crucial for visitor services and provide a base of operations for tours, orientation, and special events.

Weaknesses

- **Limited expertise in ecotourism:** With the Master Naturalist program relocating to Sierra Vista, BSERC no longer has direct access to a built-in pool of trained guides or collaborators with deep naturalist knowledge. While the curriculum remains, BSERC lacks the in-house expertise and partnerships needed to deliver high-quality, science-informed ecotourism experiences. Without developing this expertise internally or securing a reliable partner, BSERC would face an

insurmountable barrier to entering the ecotourism market in a credible and sustainable way.

- **Limited external draw:** BSERC has low regional/national visibility, and its facility is not adjacent to high-traffic natural attractions. That proximity has been a key factor in the success of benchmark nature intuitions. As a result, BSERC cannot rely on incidental traffic or large-scale tourist flows. This makes marketing, partnerships, and destination branding critical to attract visitors from outside Bisbee.
- **Stressed financial position:** The organization has limited reserves, disrupted grant funding, and modest earned income streams. This fragility means BSERC must avoid capital-heavy initiatives and instead use lean, incremental pilots to build revenue before scaling.
- **Limited tour operations expertise and infrastructure:** While BSERC has experience running educational programming as a science center, transitioning into tourism operations introduces new complexities—such as booking systems, visitor coordination, packaging with lodging/food, liability coverage, visitor transportation, and marketing through digital platforms. Building the logistics and infrastructure of a tour company is considerably more complex and represents a key capacity gap that must be addressed before scaling.
- **Located in area with heightened safety concerns:** BSERC is located about five miles from the U.S.–Mexico border, a region that is sometimes perceived by outsiders as unsafe due to media narratives about border security and migration. While these perceptions may not reflect day-to-day realities in Bisbee, they can deter some potential visitors, particularly those unfamiliar with the area. This creates an additional barrier to attracting non-local tourists and may require proactive communication and reassurance in marketing and outreach.

Opportunities

- **Leverage strong network to build partnerships:** Explore collaborations with existing operators and ecotourism experts to co-brand or white label experiences. This reduces operational risk while giving BSERC immediate exposure in the tourism market.
- **Leverage momentum for ecotourism:** Pilot a range of low-cost, small-scale offerings to test willingness-to-pay, refine messaging, and reveal which segments have the strongest traction (guided tours, self-guided experiences, niche mixes of culture and nature, etc.).
- **Leverage local interest:** Experiment with offering programming that highlights the science and conservation side of traditional hunting and fishing activities (e.g., sustainable hunting/fishing) as well as other activities locals prefer including

picnicking, tent camping, and target shooting. This taps into local cultural practices and may broaden BSERC's relevance within the community.

- **Leverage local/external interest in special events:** Organize ecotourism tied to unique natural phenomena (e.g., butterfly migrations, star parties under the Dark Sky certification, birding at Whitewater Draw). These events are time-bound but high-visibility opportunities that can establish BSERC's reputation as an innovator.
- **Leverage local interest in ecotourism:** Step into a convener role to overcome reliance on city-led action by organizing local interest groups and advocating for ecotourism with the city and regional tourism bodies. By seeding collaboration early, BSERC can shape Bisbee's brand as an ecotourism town and position itself as the hub.
- **Leverage and accelerate momentum:** As momentum builds over time, work towards establishing BSERC as the ecotourism hub. This will require building considerable brand presence, proven economic viability for a diversity of business and community collaborators, as well as aligning infrastructure projects and investment within the area towards ecotourism (e.g., transport, lodging partnerships, outdoor learning spaces). This moves BSERC from a program provider to a destination-defining institution.

Threats

- **Inflation and broader economic uncertainty:** In the short term, this could reduce discretionary spending by both locals and visitors, undermining willingness-to-pay for new ecotourism offerings. For BSERC, which is already financially constrained, this risk could worsen its fiscal position if pilots do not cover costs.
- **Local infrastructure limitations:** Bisbee's limited parking availability, hotel capacity, and restricted restaurant hours create bottlenecks for accommodating larger volumes of visitors, especially overnight tourists who typically generate the highest economic impact. Without sufficient infrastructure, the town's carrying capacity for ecotourism is capped in the nearterm, which in turn constrains the number of customers BSERC can realistically serve. Unless addressed through partnerships or coordinated infrastructure investment, these constraints pose a direct threat to BSERC's long-term ability to position itself as a regional ecotourism hub.
- **Continued environmental degradation:** Climate change and continued disinvestment in national park maintenance is a medium-term existential threat. Rising heat, drought, and wildfires are shortening safe seasons for outdoor activities. At the same time, disinvestment in national parks and conservation efforts could erode the ecological quality that makes Southeastern Arizona

attractive for nature tourism in the first place. Without resilient programming, ecotourism viability may decline over time.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that ecotourism could provide a viable pathway for BSERC to develop new revenue-generating products and services, but only under certain conditions. Evidence from visitor surveys and industry analysis shows that there is strong and growing demand for activities aligned with ecotourism—such as hiking, birding, stargazing, and nature-based experiences—and that the national market for ecotourism continues to expand. At the same time, BSERC and Bisbee face significant structural and market challenges that complicate this opportunity.

Currently, neither Bisbee or BSERC is strongly associated with ecotourism, and while the community sits between attractive natural sites in the Sky Islands region, its location is not close enough to automatically capture visitors traveling to those destinations. BSERC also has limited in-house expertise in ecotourism and currently lacks a collaborator with the necessary knowledge to fill this gap. These are serious barriers to entry. Developing ecotourism will therefore require proactive partnerships, intentional branding, as well as highly desirable, unique ecotourism products and services.

Taken together, these factors suggest that BSERC should approach ecotourism not as a quick solution but as an incremental strategy that will take years to develop substantial revenues. Success will depend on BSERC's ability to:

- Build in-house ecotourism expertise and/or partnerships with experts to inform product development and lead ecotourism experiences.
- Identify realistic milestones and intermediate funding sources, monitor progress, and remain prepared for a decade-long horizon.
- Build a coalition with long-term dedication to lead community inclusion, coordinate with diverse stakeholders, and advocate for investment.
- Launch pilots to identify unique, scalable ecotourism experiences that visitors and residents desire and will pay for.
- Adapt quickly to emerging challenges including economic pressures like inflation, worsening environmental risks such as wildfires and desertification, and underlying local infrastructure limitations such as parking and lodging capacity.

The recommendations that follow outline how BSERC can position itself as a convener and catalyst for ecotourism development, while ensuring that growth aligns with community priorities and long-term sustainability.

Ecotourism Expertise

One of the most critical gaps identified in this study is BSERC's limited in-house expertise in ecotourism and the absence of a collaborator with deep naturalist knowledge. Without credible expertise, BSERC risks offering products that lack authenticity, scientific rigor, or market appeal. This limitation must be addressed before pursuing ecotourism as a significant revenue stream.

BSERC should consider a dual-track strategy for building this expertise with potential solutions including:

- Develop in-house capacity:
 - Identify and support staff or local volunteers interested in pursuing formal training or certification in ecotourism, naturalist interpretation, or outdoor recreation management.
 - Leverage the existing Master Naturalist curriculum as a foundation for internal training, even if a formal program is not currently active in Bisbee.
 - Provide staff with opportunities to shadow tour operators or attend professional development workshops, courses, or certifications to gain practical experience.
- Partner with external organizations:
 - Reestablish ties with regional conservation and nature-focused groups (e.g., Sky Island Alliance, Arizona Game and Fish Department, or The Nature Conservancy) to bring subject-matter expertise into program design and delivery.
 - Collaborate with universities such as ASU or U of A to access faculty knowledge, graduate student research, and field expertise.
 - Explore partnerships with existing local operators like B Active Bisbee to co-create hybrid offerings that combine BSERC's science-based interpretation with established visitor logistics.

By taking this approach, BSERC can close the expertise gap that currently represents one of the largest risks to its ecotourism strategy. Ensuring that offerings are authentic, science-driven, and professionally delivered will be essential to gaining community trust, meeting visitor expectations, and positioning BSERC as a credible convener and catalyst for ecotourism development.

If BSERC cannot develop or secure this expertise, it would not be advisable to pursue ecotourism as a revenue stream.

Ecotourism Coalition

BSERC should take the lead in convening an Ecotourism Coalition to coordinate and guide Bisbee ecotourism development over the long term. Creating a viable ecotourism sector will require years of sustained effort across multiple fronts—community inclusion, branding, product development, policy alignment, infrastructure investment. No single organization has the capacity, resources, or authority to manage all of these dimensions on its own. By serving as convener, BSERC ensures that the conversation continues, that resident perspectives remain central, and that progress is not dependent on City or Discovery Bisbee action alone.

The Ecotourism Coalition should act as a catalyst for coordinated action, combining the direct contributions of certain members with the broader support of diverse collaborators who can strengthen and expand the initiative. In this way, the Coalition and its collaborators can ensure that:

- Community voices remain central and tourism initiatives reflect resident priorities as well as visitor demand.
- Key stakeholders are engaged and coordinate on areas where their responsibilities overlap, such as destination branding, pilot offerings, and infrastructure advocacy.
- Share goals, milestones, and metrics are identified in the immediate, intermediate, and long-term.
- Momentum is sustained over time.

The Ecotourism Coalition also plays a catalyzing role in all the recommendations that follow in this report. It will be essential, for example, in demonstrating the kind of local demand and aligned community interests that will engage key tourism marketing outlets like the Bisbee Visitor Center and Arizona Office of Tourism. Similarly, that same collaborative power will be essential in advocating local government for investment in ecotourism including infrastructure or even the creation of an Ecotourism Board that could direct tourism tax spending and marketing efforts.

It is important to recognize that not all potential coalition members or collaborators will immediately see the value of ecotourism. Some may need evidence from successful small-scale pilots that demonstrate real revenue potential, while others may be persuaded only once they see broader community engagement or a specific stakeholder engaged. This variability underscores the importance of starting with a committed core group, building early wins, and using those results to gradually draw in additional partners. Over time, visible progress and growing momentum can help transform initial skepticism into active participation, strengthening both the coalition and the overall viability of ecotourism in Bisbee.

Destination Image

Bisbee already attracts visitors with a rich blend of historic, cultural, and artistic experiences, and this diversity is one of its greatest strengths. Survey results confirm that tourists are not looking for a single attraction but rather a mix of elements—heritage, culture, art, and nature—that together create a unique, memorable destination. BSERC can play a leading role in ensuring that ecotourism-oriented experiences are integrated into Bisbee’s destination image, rather than competing with its existing assets. To do this, BSERC should:

- Expand the narrative, not replace it: Position ecotourism as an extension of Bisbee’s identity—where historic mining meets the Sky Islands, and quirky arts culture meets science and sustainability. This framing reinforces that visitors can have a well-rounded experience rather than a niche one. The specifics of this messaging should be tested through pilots and iterated based on feedback and engagement data to determine the most effective way to communicate Bisbee’s expanded narrative.
- Highlight signature ecotourism elements: Build visibility around the ecotourism products and services that feature local attractions such as stargazing in a Dark Sky Community, birding at Whitewater Draw, and science-based interpretation of Bisbee’s unique desert and mountain ecosystems.
- Collaborate on destination marketing: Through the Ecotourism Coalition, work with Bisbee Visitor Center, Visit Tucson, and the Arizona Office of Tourism to incorporate ecotourism into regional promotions. If engagement from traditional partners is limited, BSERC and its collaborators should seek alternative pathways through conservation organizations, universities, and digital platforms that market directly to niche travelers.
- Leverage digital marketing campaigns: The survey indicated that the majority of visitors learn about Bisbee through word-of-mouth, internet search, and social media which are channels that BSERC and partners can actively shape through digital marketing. Rather than expensive billboards or print media, BSERC and collaborators should pursue a mix of organic strategies (storytelling through blogs, short videos, and social media content) and paid campaigns (Google Ads, targeted social media advertising) to reach nature-oriented travelers. Collaborating with local partners to develop backlinking strategies will also help drive search visibility and ensure that ecotourism offerings appear prominently alongside Bisbee’s cultural and historic attractions. By monitoring engagement, BSERC can quickly iterate these campaigns to sharpen messaging and maximize visibility and impact.
- Leverage media rankings and features: Continue to capitalize on Bisbee’s strong track record of being highlighted in major outlets such as *CNN*, *Travel + Leisure*,



and similar publications. These rankings carry significant influence with potential visitors and can elevate Bisbee's visibility far beyond what local marketing budgets allow. The Bisbee Tourism Center has a proven track record for securing these placements.

Ecotourism Offerings

Once BSEC has built in-house ecotourism expertise or partnered with an external organization with that expertise, it should begin pilot small-scale offerings that test market demand, generate early visibility, and provide practical learning. These pilots should be designed as minimum viable products (MVPs)—low-cost, small-scale, and quickly deployable offerings that can be rapidly iterated based on feedback from both residents and visitors. The goal is not to perfect offerings immediately but to experiment, measure traction, and refine until a portfolio of scalable, high-value experiences emerges.

An initial type of offering that BSERC could explore are tours because they are flexible in format and content, scalable, not hindered by the physical location of BSERC, and require a lower investment of time and resources compared to developing permanent infrastructure like the Backyard Project. Several possibilities to explore, include:

- **Flexible content:** Survey results show that visitors to Bisbee are highly interested in sightseeing, hiking, and nature viewing. Tours directly translate these interests into structured experiences that can be easily marketed and consumed. The content can be packaged in different ways to target specific segments—for instance, a general tour blending nature, heritage, and culture for the average visitor, or specialized packages focused on stargazing or the biodiversity of the Sky Islands for niche ecotourism travelers. Packages could also be combined into multi-day experiences designed to capture overnight visitors, who are the most economically valuable segment.
- **Flexible format:** Tours can be designed to accommodate a wide range of customer preferences and budgets. Survey data show that over 40% of visitors are interested in self-guided experiences, which BSERC could pilot through a simple map sold at various locations around Bisbee, a downloadable digital guide, or even an app using geofencing and AI-assisted tools for identifying local flora, fauna, and constellations. Tours could also take the form of walking experiences (of interest to over 40% of visitors) or driving tours that cover a wider range of destinations and mobility needs. In addition, guided tours can be tailored for private clients, small groups, or larger parties, with premium touches such as champagne under the stars or chef-prepared lunch boxes offered for higher-paying segments. Comprehensive tour services could also be offered that



package lodging, tours, and dining recommendations or even directly handling booking like innovative offerings from companies like KimKim.

- Scalable pilot potential: Tours are among the lowest-cost ecotourism pilots to launch, as they can begin small, require minimal infrastructure, and be expanded if demand and revenue potential are proven. To build in-house expertise, BSERC could adapt its Master Naturalist curriculum into a simple ecotourism map or guide as an entry point. If successful, this could later evolve into a more sophisticated AI-assisted app using tools such as Base44. BSERC could also partner with existing operators like B Active Bisbee or collaborate with ecotourism experts at ASU (the Center for Sustainable Tourism offers an outdoor survival course, environmental interpretation, and others for example) to test co-branded or white-labeled guided tours. If pilots demonstrate traction, the portfolio could gradually expand into additional packages. This not only reduces BSERC's risk but also strengthens the network of collaborators needed to build a viable ecotourism sector.
- Leverage of BSERC's unique assets: As a science-based organization, BSERC has the ability to frame tours through education and interpretation, turning an ordinary hike or stargazing event into a distinctive science/learning-infused experience. This differentiates BSERC from existing operators who focus more on transportation or recreation logistics.

Because this study is focused on assessing the overall feasibility of ecotourism as a market for BSERC rather than modeling specific offerings with defined specifications, it is not possible to provide reliable revenue projections at this stage. Revenue forecasting requires detail on product design, pricing structures, customer acquisition costs, operating expenses, and scale of delivery—all of which will only emerge after pilots are tested and refined.

At the industry level, however, IBISWorld data provide useful context. Revenues for U.S. tour operators are projected to grow at 3.2% annually over the next five years, a slower pace compared to the 20.6% growth of the previous five years (IBISWorld, 2024b). This deceleration reflects high revenue volatility within the industry tied to economic pressures that can cause sudden shifts in travel demand. The recent inflation trend is of particular concern here. Despite this volatility, several key success factors stand out for operators:

- Active membership in tourism industry organizations to stay informed about emerging threats and opportunities.
- Securing exclusive contracts with hotels or institutions, which provides more stable revenue streams.
- Building strong referral and distribution networks to ensure consistent customer acquisition.

- Establishing or collaborating with a strong brand name increases the likelihood of attracting customers.

Importantly, IBISWorld also notes that product innovation within the industry is currently considered low, which presents an opening for organizations like BSERC. By creating specialized ecotourism products that combine Bisbee’s cultural and historic identity with unique science- and nature-based experiences, BSERC could differentiate itself in a crowded market and capture underserved niches. While precise revenues cannot yet be projected, the evidence suggests that innovative, niche-aligned offerings have the potential to outperform standard products in terms of both visibility and pricing power.

Average profit margins in the U.S. tour operator industry rose by 10 percentage points to reach 3.6% over the past five years, despite heightened competition and pressure from digital booking platforms (IBISWorld, 2024b). Notably, digital products such as self-guided tours, digital maps, or mobile apps often deliver significantly higher margins than physical experiences because the costs are concentrated in development rather than ongoing delivery. Incorporating digital offerings could provide BSERC with an opportunity to further boost profits.

Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism in Bisbee is constrained by limited parking, lodging capacity, restaurant hours, and transportation options. While these gaps already affect the visitor experience, they represent an even greater barrier to ecotourism growth—particularly the ability to attract and retain overnight visitors, who are the most economically valuable segment. Without improvements to core infrastructure, Bisbee will face a natural ceiling on visitor volume and will struggle to position itself as a regional hub for ecotourism serving the Sky Islands, Whitewater Draw, and other surrounding natural attractions.

It is also important to recognize that Bisbee’s unique geological setting—with its steep streets, historic building footprints, and quirky layout—is both a constraint and a distinctive part of its charm. Any infrastructure investment must therefore be carefully designed to balance preservation of character with expanded capacity. Equally critical is the need to center the priorities of local residents: parking solutions must not displace neighbors, expanded lodging should avoid driving gentrification or short-term rental pressures, and improvements to food service or transportation should create benefits that residents enjoy year-round, not just during peak tourism season. By framing infrastructure through the lens of both livability and visitor readiness, the coalition can build broader community support and avoid perceptions of tourism being extractive.

While BSERC cannot solve these challenges alone, it has an important role to play through the Ecotourism Coalition:

- Advocate for investment: Elevate infrastructure needs in conversations with city leaders, county officials, and state agencies to ensure ecotourism priorities are reflected in funding and planning decisions.
- Help shape strategy: Use the coalition as a forum to develop community-driven recommendations for infrastructure improvements, ensuring that resident needs are centered alongside visitor demands.
- Position infrastructure as an enabler: Communicate clearly that parking, lodging, and food service capacity are not only quality-of-life issues for residents but also determinants of Bisbee’s long-term economic potential as a sustainable tourism destination.
- Leverage partnerships: Encourage collaboration with local businesses, hospitality providers, and regional tourism organizations to pursue grants, public-private partnerships, or phased improvements aligned with ecotourism development.

In this way, BSERC can help ensure that infrastructure development is strategically aligned, community-supported, and ecotourism-ready, laying the foundation for Bisbee to grow beyond day-trip visitors and become a recognized regional ecotourism hub.

Creative Placemaking

Bisbee’s greatest competitive edge lies in its distinctive character—a blend of mining heritage, arts and culture, architecture, geography, and community spirit that differentiates it from other destinations in Southeastern Arizona. Strategically amplifying these qualities not only strengthens Bisbee’s position in the regional tourism landscape but also creates a unique platform for ecotourism development, where nature-based experiences are enriched by the cultural identity of place. Leveraging this mix offers Bisbee an opportunity to “level up” its ecotourism potential in ways that surrounding destinations cannot easily replicate.

Creative placemaking provides a powerful framework for this work. At its core, creative placemaking integrates arts, culture, and community identity into planning and development efforts in order to animate public spaces, strengthen local economies, and deepen civic engagement. In the context of Bisbee, it means weaving together heritage, art, and nature so that ecotourism products and experiences feel authentic to the town’s identity while also enhancing livability for residents.

Findings from this study underscore the importance of such an approach. Survey data confirm that visitors to Bisbee are motivated by a mix of experiences—heritage, culture, art, and nature—rather than a single draw. Residents expressed both pride in Bisbee’s uniqueness and concern that tourism not become extractive or disconnected from community life. Stakeholders also highlighted infrastructure challenges tied to the city’s quirky geography, which, while limiting in some respects, is also part of Bisbee’s charm

and appeal. These realities point toward the need for ecotourism development that is inclusive, place-based, and rooted in what already makes Bisbee distinctive.

BSERC has a clear role to play in advancing creative placemaking as part of ecotourism strategy. Through the Ecotourism Coalition, BSERC can convene artists, cultural organizations, local businesses, and residents to co-create experiences that integrate science, culture, and community storytelling. This might include artistic interpretation along trails, festivals that combine ecology and culture, or science-based programming that highlights Bisbee's history and environment in creative ways. By fostering collaboration and ensuring that placemaking efforts remain community-driven, BSERC can help ensure that ecotourism strengthens Bisbee's identity, improves quality of life for residents, and enhances its long-term competitiveness as a destination.

Next Steps Roadmap

This roadmap translates the findings of the feasibility study into a staged approach for BSERC to pursue ecotourism opportunities. It emphasizes small, testable pilots for near-term validation and revenue, community-driven processes for mid-term coalition building, and long-term structural investments that recognize Bisbee's trajectory toward becoming a regional hub could take two decades or more.

Short-Term (0–2 years): Quick Wins and Early Validation

Goals: Find core partners and Ecotourism Coalition members, generate small but tangible revenue, test market interest, and demonstrate early traction to residents and partners.

- Design strategy for developing in-house ecotourism expertise and/or identify key external partners to fill this critical gap.
- Engage early Ecotourism Coalition members to begin laying groundwork for collaborative pilots and destination image shift.
- Launch low-cost pilots (MVPs):
 - Leverage low cost high impact technologies - apps, AI to build local itineraries with local attractions, lodging, food and businesses who pay to be on app etc.
 - Dark Sky stargazing events (leverage current local interest in this activity to test out pricing models for a local “member” offering).
 - Self-guided digital walking tour prototype (low-cost digital guide or map for sale on website and at strategic locations around Bisbee/partners).
 - Science-nature hybrid experiences (e.g., geology + mining history tours, birding walks with ecological interpretation).

- Reach out to more advanced peers like the Ogden Nature Center to further learn from their experience and local membership model success.
- Design for a one-year pilot cycle: Each pilot should run long enough (12 months) to gather meaningful data across seasons.
- Define success metrics: Tickets sold, participant satisfaction (NPS), repeat attendance, and willingness-to-pay.
- Engage community in co-design: Involve residents in shaping themes, pricing, and formats to keep offerings community-centered and transparent about revenue generation priorities.
- Leverage digital marketing: Test organic and paid campaigns (Google Ads, social media, backlinks with collaborators) to measure digital discoverability.
- Early revenue focus: Even modest revenues provide proof of concept and help de-risk future investment.
- Begin building a plan for human infrastructure. In the beginning, this might include mostly part time paid employees. Later, develop a future model that is not only volunteer-based.

Medium-Term (2–7 years): Coalition Building and Strategic Alignment

Goal: Build legitimacy, expand collaboration, and align infrastructure and branding efforts around ecotourism.

- Expand Ecotourism Coalition: Convene local businesses, conservation groups, residents, and tourism entities. Define shared vision and near-term wins for the Coalition to work towards.
- Expand formal relationships to include neighboring cities and municipalities to build a geographic destination strategy leveraging the greater area.
- Solidify portfolio: Increase outreach/promotion for successful pilots to determine if sales continue to expand (solidifying market viability). Pilot variations for promising customer segments (e.g., premium packages, seasonal experiences).
- Align destination image: Use coalition to advocate for ecotourism integration into Bisbee’s marketing alongside cultural and historic draws. Consider a regional marketing strategy in partnership with neighboring cities to leverage earned media as well as paid marketing. Consider a shared regional employee.
- Creative placemaking event: Pilot event/festival-oriented experience that draws both local and visitor interests integrating creative placemaking principles.
- Infrastructure advocacy: Through the coalition, lobby for improvements in parking, lodging capacity, and dining hours. Position these as benefits for both locals and visitors and leverage positive results of ecotourism offerings as evidence for strategy. This could include confirming or developing clean wayfinding signs from the highways. Work with AZDOT to get Bisbee located as a Control City or a final destination.

Long-Term (7–20 years): Toward a Regional Ecotourism Hub

Goals: Build the structural, reputational, and collaborative capacity for Bisbee to serve as a regional hub linking surrounding natural assets and conservancy groups.

- Institutional leadership: Develop state and regional advocacy including BLM, military base, etc.).
- Scale successful offerings: Develop a portfolio of tours and experiences that are both revenue-generating and mission-aligned.
- Consider advocating for a redistribution of tourism tax centered on regional and local specific tourism goals ensuring all TPT goes towards direct tourism strategy.
- Expand infrastructure in alignment with community needs: Support city and regional partners in pursuing lodging, transport, and dining improvements without eroding Bisbee’s quirky, historic identity.
- Build regional linkages: Position Bisbee as a gateway to the Sky Islands, San Pedro River, and Whitewater Draw through integrated itineraries and collaborative marketing with surrounding destinations.
- Continue building infrastructure to support a growing eco-tourism strategy. Protecting open spaces, dark sky, conservation plans, increasing sustainable building and affordable housing for local employees to support local businesses.

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