

Rendez-vous Canada 2019, May 28 to 31, 2019

Last month we attended Canada's premier international tourism marketplace, Rendez-vous Canada.

Led by Destination Canada and the Travel Industry Association of Canada, RVC showcases the rich diversity of Canada and contributes to the prosperity and growth of our tourism industry. Held in Toronto, RVC introduced some 680 plus qualified Tour Operators from 30 countries, and selected Travel Trade Media of Destination Canada's 10 international markets to Canadian sellers of tourism products. A total of 1700 delegates were in attendance, over a 4-day marketplace.

HHBRTA partnered with 11 market-ready regional tourism experience businesses, in a co-investment strategy, that showcased our destination as a must-experience for Canadian Landscapes, Gardens, Grand River, Canadian Stories, First Nations, and a feature of our two Ontario Signature Experiences. We co-shared a half booth with our key partner, Royal Botanical Gardens. Through this strategy, we mentored the development of Travel Trade profile/sales sheet collateral, as a standard tool to present buyable packages. A 12-page collection of authentic Canadian experiences – "A Place to be Canadian" booklet was developed that featured 19 trade-friendly experiential and unique packages, and of the 19 packages offered, 13 were developed specific to this opportunity. A Media Kit was also developed that further elevated our message and product offerings, and was provided to media in attendance, as well as post-marketplace engagement.

Overall, we held meetings with 34 buyers (4 Media, 4 Online Travel Agencies), representing 10 different countries, during pre-scheduled appointments. Further, we met with 3 additional Tour Operator buyers to reach our maximum allowable 37-meeting goal, as well as other Tour Operator engagement during networking and strategic opportunities. Finally, we conducted meetings with 11 Canada-China Travel Experts in the same titled marketplace pavilion. Our destination and its experiences were highly welcomed as a must-anticipated extended Canadian experience outside of iconic Niagara Falls and Toronto.

Destination Ontario also partnered with HHBRTA for an Industry-led Pre (RVC) FAM, Product Tour, on Monday, May 27, 2019. The region and its 11 market-ready partners hosted a one-day destination showcase event, and presented 5 unique experiences that featured its link and connectivity to both the Niagara Escarpment and our Canadian Stories. Featured product destinations included:

- Albion Falls for a Waterfall Hike talk by Grand Experiences Outdoor Adventure Company;
- Royal Botanical Gardens Luncheon at the Rock Garden Pavilion, Top Tier Regional Partner Marketplace; a guided tour of the Rock Garden
- Edible Hike talk by Grand River Rafting
- Guided tour, below the stairs, of MacNab's Kitchen at Dundurn National Historic Site
- Guided tour of Crawford Village at Crawford Lake Conservation Area with an authentic Canadian treat – S'mores

We greeted the group in Niagara-on-the-lake with War of 1812 costumed expert guide, Hamilton Civic Museum's Daryl MacTavish – introducing the region through stories that make our destination unique; linking history from the Niagara Region to Hamilton. As a tasting engagement, Humble Bee, a local sustainable beekeeper's delicious honey was enjoyed while on board the coach, adding an element of found-here flavours.

Overall, 28 Tour Operators and Media participated in our Pre-FAM, representing 12 countries, leveraging new business and introducing them to a region that could be easily added to existing Toronto to Niagara Falls touring, but more importantly, showcasing our four-season destination of painted landscapes, our authentically Canadian tapestry of history and heritage, a bounty of nature-based experiences, and discovery of our First Nations storytelling.

As a result of both Destination Ontario Pre-FAM Product Tour and RVC Marketplace, sales leads were generated and submitted to co-invested partners for follow-up and to begin discussions of opportunities that will evolve into business transactions. Partners will be required to provide a report to HHBRTA for measurement of opportunities, destination viability to the International Inbound market, and to further develop engagement with market specific audiences.

In pursuit of the international travel business, our efforts will continue, focusing on securing B2B opportunities and bookings for our partners; building on future investments with a measurable ROI.