



# VISITORS' WELCOME EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT



# EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The secret behind great tourism experience development is quite simple. Everything you do to create great experiences is to always remember that you are motivating, attracting, and retaining the visitor.

What persuades a traveller to vacation in our destination could come down to the ability to engage in amazing, unforgettable, and memorable experiences that are both inspiring and that connect with special places, people and cultures on a personal and emotional level.

Experiential travel is about widening horizons for both the tourism operator and the tourist it involves taking a basic product or service and truly transforming it into a compelling and rewarding experience.

As we discover through what is trending, tourists want to immerse themselves in a meaningful way with the locals. They want to engage their senses by hearing stories from people, getting active in nature, attend festivals and events that feed their interests, learn the history and significance of our region, taste and enjoy good food and be entertained.

Focus on memory-making as the baseline and what inspires visitors to share their positive experiences with loved ones and friends, but also put in your objectives how to encourage them to come back.

Creating strong authentic experiences that are signature to Hamilton Halton Brant, while leveraging the many ancillary and supporting experiences will build those memorable moments that will last a lifetime.

# Delivering World-Class Experiences

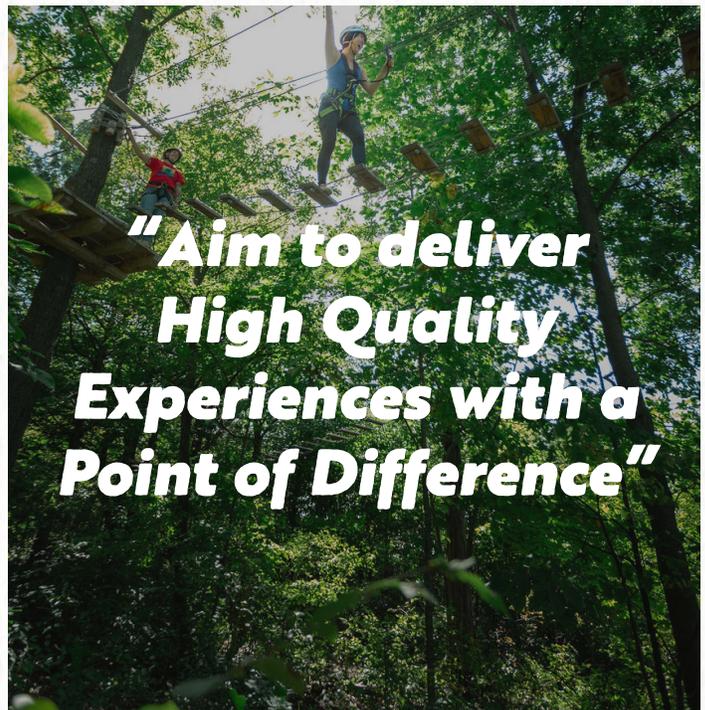
## What is Tourism Product?

Product is what ultimately drives visitation to our region and is at the core of their experience. With any visitor servicing plan, operators need to understand that your tourism product will strengthen – a) what the visitor are looking for; b) how they see themselves in that experience.

## Your Experience Development Plan

By preparing to increase the economic and social contributions of tourism in Hamilton Halton Brant, will also strengthen Ontario's foothold as an international recognized visitor experience. Develop supporting ancillary experiences for the region that will:

- Inspire and motivate visitors to stay longer and spend more
- Extend the length of the season, and consider shoulder season and off-season opportunities
- Align to relevant regional and provincial brands, target markets and segments, based on your product and data
- Make sustainability a priority by protecting the special environmental character of our region
- Consider ways to sustain and increase tourism jobs



## Auditing Our Region as a Tourism Destination

1. Review our strengths and uncover our primary (export-ready), secondary, and emerging experiences.
2. Start with our primary experiences and list all the product associated. Then work on secondary and emerging experiences.
3. Identify cluster groups by sector, i.e. farms, breweries, waterfalls
4. Focus on the gaps and look for opportunities to build out services

"If you step back and just look at it from a consumer proposition, forgetting the category, it is experience. It's not necessarily the beach holiday or the cruise...They're looking for more immersive experiences, cultural connections, and it's all age levels, so it's not demographic either. It's very much the same thing with baby boomers as it is with millennials. Looking for the alternative holiday is now becoming the norm."

Dan Christian, Chief Digital Officer, The Travel Corporation

# Strengthening Industry Capacity for Recovery

The Plan	How
Support the scope and growth of exceptional product and experiences to support visitor demand and market trends.	Providing insights, guidance and advocacy on market gaps, opportunities and demands to industry and stakeholders.
Ensure businesses have the knowledge, tools, and resources they require to meet the current challenges, and those of the future.	Facilitating the ongoing improvement of business capacity through training and development opportunities.
Support opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop their tourism business operations that recognizes diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and build on the benefits of their local communities.	Facilitating ongoing partnerships with ITAC and ITO to leverage engagement for experience development through training and marketing.
Strengthening the relationships, partnerships and collaborations that sustain, expand, and extend your visitor pipelines.	Continue to build stronger B2B relationship that support the visitor journey.





## Trend Identification

As a broader perspective than just “tourism”, behaviour and expectations are part of fully understanding the macro-trends in demographics, technology, and environmental sustainability. To have an influence on our industry, and make an impact to achieving your goals, together we need to take a deep dive into people whom we refer to as tourists, visitors, and consumers.

### Looking Forward:

Notably are trends that are evidenced but not entirely widespread – yet! As markets evolve, we will discover the need for more of one trend verse another. For example, Millennials and Gen Z now form one of the largest cohorts of tourism, we know as digital natives they have an expectation of connectedness.

### Example:

**Aging Tourist Segment:** Consider implementing accessibility features for mobility challenges of this segment of your market. Further, not all members of this segment are connected to technology at the ready, and traditional standards may still need to be included in your product development communication plan.

**Millennials and Gen Z Segment:** As a large section of the tourist population, they are digital natives and have an expectation to be connected, with quick responses, and the access and reliability of technology. Mobile-friendly websites, Apps, QR codes, social channel marketing are a standard to speak directly to this audience.

Regardless of demographic, we are now living in an experience-seeking society. Global tourism partners are offering immersive and meaningful experiences, and if not, it is well in their plan to do so.

## Looking Outward: Broader Behaviour Trends

Personal satisfaction appears to be derived more from the experience and less by physical phenomena.

- **Safety and hygiene** – We all know the importance of imposing quality safety and hygiene standards in our businesses. It has become absolutely paramount if you want to stay relevant and customer friendly. Tourists will seek out messages on your protocol enforcements to demonstrate a clear expectation of protection for both the customer and business staff.
- **Shift from international to local** – Keep your focus on local, especially as international inbound travel is recovering and returning to Canada. In the meantime, focus on domestic travellers and plan to highlight amenities and local flavours to attract the domestic visitation.
- **Growth contactless payments** – Technology in tourism includes the growth of contactless payment options. The emergency of options like Google Pay and Apple Pay has certainly helped to take this to the next level, meaning customers do not need to carry around a debit card or credit card. Further it can elevate the friction and improve the speed of check-ins and check-outs.
- **Digital content for pre-planning** – Virtual tours, video, images – Capitalizing on technology can give operators the edge especially as potential customer can experience your product and your hospitality in the comforts of their own home and prior to making a commitment to choose our destination, and book with your business.
- **Considerations for the solo traveller** – More and more people are choosing to explore on their own, and enjoy a solo trip is no longer considered unusual. The needs of the solo traveller is diverse, travelling without the distraction of a companion, for example, other are looking for like-minded social activities.
- **Emphasis on local experiences** - The tourist of now is not interested in experiencing as a spectator or seeing the big attractions, they want a balance, especially to engage with and participate in the local culture. From enjoying local cuisine to celebrating regional festivals, local experiences are set to become some of the top tourism trends of today's traveller.
- **Personalization** – The traveller of today may be more influenced where experiences are closely matched to their personal preferences. The more closely an experience can be tailored to a client's desires and expectations, the more they can see you understand and listen to their needs.
- **Ecotourism** – The customer base of today's visitor is influenced by the concerns of sustainability and climate. As a new generation becomes increasingly relevant in the marketplace, the ideals driving their purchasing decisions create a new interest for ethical and regenerative tourism. Consider including a volunteer element, perhaps in a conservation aspect.
- **Customer Experience** – There is an ever-broadening array of tourist options, enhancing the customer experience has never been more vital. Fine-tuning the experience can make the difference between creating a loyal repeat customer who boosts your business via word of mouth, and one who drops out at the booking stage. From web interface where your clients book their experience to the final touch point of engagement needs fulfill expectations.
- **Internet of Things** – IoT is a real thing. The rise of the "smart" room in a hotel can be as simple requesting such things as room service or extra pillows via a hub or a smartphone application. Campgrounds could find this a feature for their business and certainly a benefit to the camper renting that site – especially if they need extra firewood or bug spray.



## Centering Around People

Understanding people as people and not just consumers or tourists. Therefore, in developing your visitor attraction or experience, it is important to be aware of the range of visitors to our destination or your business.

**Holidaymakers** - international inbound or better defined as overseas tourists. This includes both group tours and F.I.T.

**Domestic** – Canadian tourists

**Locals** – Within 40 kms locals

## Product and Experience Development

HHBRTA works with export-ready operators to help market their businesses in domestic, cross-border and markets offshore through international trade events and marketing alliances, as well as through the international and domestic media and trade familiarization programs.

Business operators are required to “trade ready” especially for the international inbound market to participate in regional sales partnerships. Consider the product development initiatives that address the key visitor experience component that ignite the path to purchase.

- Ensure your product is well developed for the export market. Look at the current trends for the market and adopt those guiding principles or enhance your current product with those market trend elements to elevate the offer.
- Display your product on your website. Take into consideration the recommendations to enhance your website for the trade audience.

Having a good understanding of the tourism assets and the key selling propositions of our region, building strong relationships and partnerships with Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association is the baseline for compelling experience.

- The art of delivering a consistent message or story.
- Inspiring tourists throughout their experience.
- Delivering something that motivates visitors to become ambassadors for our destination, while also providing the tourist the necessary tools to elevate the message.

Beyond providing a fun and enjoyable experiences for an audience, the elements of experience development aim to achieve broader theme-driven products that evoke a positive emotional response in tourists.

# Leveraging our Unique Trip Motivator Experience Brands

As a trip motivator for visitation, we developed brands that will speak directly to the needs of industry and based on sector or cluster sector.

Brands	Methodology
	<p>Launched in September 2021, StayTripping was developed to support the accommodation section in recovery during the pandemic. Since most accommodation partners experienced booking challenges due to consumer confidence, lockdowns and restrictions, and staff shortages, we developed a marketing plan to address these issues. By investing in our regional accommodation section through marketing and other campaigns, we aim to increase incremental bookings for multi-day stays. We further amplified local sentiment as a way to incentivize staycationers to explore their own backyards and spend the night or more for a mini break while supporting local.</p>
	<p>The <b>True Brew Path</b> was developed to elevate the evolving craft-culinary industry in the region, while focusing on cluster synergizes within the sector to help promote a route. This fast-growing industry was initially recognized to maintain a competitive foothold as other locations throughout the province were amplifying their craft tourism businesses. From the launch of 7 or 8 breweries, the True Brew Path has evolved to include cider, distilleries, and wineries. Today, we celebrate over 20 craft business in our region, all who are visitor-ready and visitor-servicing. As we evolve to incorporate destination dining, foodie events, it will only strengthen our region's food tourism.</p>
	<p>Pivoting our marketing to support local businesses in their efforts to sustain economic viability during the pandemic timeframe, we launched Stay &amp; Play brand. Committed to continuing to work in collaboration and partnership with regional tourism industry businesses and operators to encourage locals to “Stay and Play”. As this was initially a 2020 campaign, it was to stimulate local resident spending and to plan staycations in Hamilton Halton Brant. As we moved through the pandemic and post-pandemic considerations, we know the local will be a mainstay contributor to our visitor economy.</p>



# Experience Heroes

## Bound By Nature

Nature-Based Tourism involves any type of tourist activity where the main selling point is its natural features and/or the area that it is in. The tourists are attracted to the images of the environment and what the area has to offer. It differs from rural tourism as it is solely focused on the outdoors and the natural assets that can be utilized in the area. A lot of these natural attractions cost very little to see but the other things that the traveller does while visiting the area provides a large opportunity for local businesses that shouldn't be disregarded.

### People visit natural locations for a variety of reasons:

- To enjoy the grandeur of nature.
- To escape from the pressures of urban life.
- To escape from humanity.
- To explore different landscapes.
- To experience outdoor adventures in a natural setting.
- To learn about the environment.
- To participate in conserving the environment.

**Trail Seekers:** There are many trails located throughout the region that are a mix between walking, hiking, and cycling. The largest of these being the "Bruce Trail". The Bruce Trail is Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath - 900 km from Niagara to Tobermory. It does a great job connecting the traveller to the wonders of the Niagara Escarpment. It weaves through conservation areas and natural sections making it one of the most popular trails in Canada. There are 10's of thousands who hike this trail each year.

**Hiking:** There are 100's of different trails for hiking within our region and they are located in many different spots. Some can be right beside your business while others could be located deep within the UNESCO Niagara Escarpment and other natural areas. Tourism Businesses

should check out what trails are located nearby and see if they can offer any products that can be used while hiking. These can include things such as trail maps, refreshments, or recommendations of places to visit while on the trail. It is almost a certainty that there is a hiking trail near your business. The Bruce Trail is Canada's oldest and longest footpath that meanders along the escarpment and takes hikers through Carolinian forests, waterfalls, and unique rock formations.

**Cycling:** Cycling is a large part of Ontario's culture whether that be cycling for the scenery, exercise, or just transportation from one place to another. A study done by Ontario's Ministry of Transportation found out that there are 1.2 million residents of Ontario who ride their bicycles daily, and 2.8 million residents who ride their bicycles at least once a week. It is likely that you see at least one cyclist on your commute to work each day and this is prevalent in every part of our region. It is important to know this and capitalize on these cyclists as most cycling routes are located on roads rather than hiking trails in the woods. This means they are more likely to see your business, more likely to enter, and more likely to purchase products.

For example, the "Great Lakes Waterfront Trail" and the "Greenbelt Route" are two of the most popular cycling trails within our region. They extend all throughout Ontario but at least one of them passes through nearly every town in the Hamilton, Halton, and Brant Region.

### Facts and Features:

- Regional outfitters offer hiking and cycling curated guided tours and bike rentals
- Bruce Trail Waterfall Walks itinerary packages feature 1-day, 2-day, and 5-day waterfall adventure experiences
- Travel on a small coach for a point-to-point waterfall experience – scheduled departures and custom
- Winter travellers can hike by snowshoe
- Region-wide self-guided waterfall itineraries

## Case Study/Example : Hiking, Cycling, Trail-Seekers - Hamilton “City of Waterfalls” and Halton Region

Hamilton has earned the nickname the “City of Waterfalls” due to its 100’s of different waterfalls located within its local area. They attract day-trippers, weekend travellers, and international travellers to get to know some of the most popular waterfalls and the surrounding attractions, food experiences, businesses and more. A quick google and you’d find that these waterfalls are one of the largest tourism attractions within our region. These waterfalls can be accessed in a variety of ways ranging from walking, hiking, cycling, and driving. In order to get to these waterfalls, you have to take a trail and discover more of the local plants and wildlife too.

Waterfalls exist across the Hamilton area going through Flamborough, Dundas, Ancaster, Central Hamilton, and the Stoney Creek area. A traveler could spend a whole day visiting the area’s waterfalls and find it difficult to see all of

them, which is why it can bring in the weekend and international travellers. These travellers eat, sleep, and shop in the area bringing a large amount of economic value to the local businesses. The same applies to other natural areas in our region. Even though the majority of the time it doesn’t cost money to see these natural attractions, the economic value they bring massively counteracts the potential missed revenue for charging access to these waterfalls and other natural attractions within our region.

**National and Provincial Parks:** Provincial parks are areas of land and water, large or small, natural, or man-modified, designated by any of the provincial governments for the purposes of nature protection, recreation, tourism, historic preservation, and education. In our region for example, these parks include Bronte Creek Provincial Park.

### Nature and Conservation Reserves:

A section of land managed to preserve its wildlife and physical features. There are over 295 conservation areas throughout Ontario.

Halton	Hamilton	Brant
<p><b>Conservation Halton</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Nemo CA</li> <li>• Rattlesnake Point CA</li> <li>• Crawford Lake CA</li> <li>• Kelso CA</li> <li>• Hilton Falls CA</li> <li>• Mountsberg CA</li> </ul> <p><b>Credit Valley Conservation Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limehouse CA</li> <li>• Silver Creek CA</li> <li>• Terra Cotta CA</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hamilton Conservation Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eramosa Karst CA</li> <li>• Hamilton to Brantford Rail Trail</li> <li>• Dundas Valley CA</li> <li>• Spencer Gorge CA</li> <li>• Westfield Heritage Village</li> <li>• Valens CA</li> </ul> <p><b>Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Binbrook CA</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grand River Conservation Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pinehurst Lake CA</li> <li>• Brant CA</li> </ul>

# On-The-Water Tourism

Water assets in the region comprise of lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. Located in the Grand Valley to conservation areas, and of course, Lake Ontario, which is one of the five Great Lakes are all located in Hamilton Halton Brant.

## Paddling Development – A Canadian Experience

Still aligning with Destination Ontario's Canadian Canoe Culture campaigns (2018) to shape Ontario, connecting Canada to how the canoe played an integral role of building the province of Ontario. Historically, the canoe connected the Indigenous, English, and French cultures, throughout Ontario and across Canada. The Canadian Canoe Culture's philosophy reaches beyond the canoe to include the various forms of paddling and symbolizes the core values and ideals of our province, our country and ourselves. We are a Nation of rivers and a river of Nations.



As a region, we continue to build our platform to capture the essence of the Canadian Canoe Culture in Ontario, and in Hamilton Halton Brant to inspire new, existing, and future adventures to get out paddling. We aim to unite and unify the paddling community, operators, Indigenous community of Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Mississauga of the Credit First Nations, regional DMO partners, and paddling experts through our dynamic marketing and B2B approaches. Together as a common voice, messaging and Grand River Visitor Brand Development our leverage partnerships to increase awareness and visitation.



## Kayaking

The History of Kayaking spans 5,000 years, originating from the arctic and Inuit people of Siberia. Constructed of whale bones and sealskins, these watertight vessels were designed primarily for hunting and fishing, though later adaptations were perfected for both scouting and transport.

Today, kayaking is considered one of the easiest and most accessible water sports in the world. Those with a moderate level of fitness will quite capably maneuver their craft through the water.

### Facts and Features:

- Professional outfitters and guides offer half-day to multi-day paddling experiences – kayak, canoe, SUP, tubing, rafting
- Water vessel rentals
- Conservation Area rentals
- Guided paddle excursions
- Fast-water rafting in spring season



## Fishing

The region provide high quality and distinctive fishing and angling experiences, while working with established and professional outfitters. Visitors will enjoy fishing in our region as we build and grow our Southern Ontario outdoor adventure profile.

### Angling and Fly Fishing

In alignment with Destination Ontario's programs that support angling in our province, we understand that we are home to an incredible diversity of fishable species and angling experiences in Hamilton Halton Brant. Considered one of the top destinations in the world for freshwater fishing, Ontario's waters are brimming with muskie, northern pike, brook trout, walleye, perch and more!

Our region is accessible by fly-in, drive-in and train-in. Expert angling outfitters make their home in our destination, including the Grand River. All season tourism opportunities exist.

## Ice-Fishing

Conservation areas feature winter experiences for great ice fishing opportunities, fitted with the necessary amenities to make your experience seamless.

### Sport Fishing

Outfitters located Oakville's Bronte Marina offer unique charter experiences for sport fishing of Lake Ontario salmon and more.

## Authentically Canadian

Heritage tourism is travelling to understand the cultures and places of the past—including those of your ancestors. This kind of travel involves travelling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.

This history is filled with mystery and stories that attract many tourists to different locations across the world. As the years go by, people are more interested in what happened before and the history behind their family. This is evident with the rise of sites such as Ancestry.ca and 23andme which have 10's of millions of users each year looking to discover their family history and discover the mysteries that lie in their past. They could be related to royalty or have a family member who did great feats that they had no idea about. The intrigue and stories of the past are increasingly capturing tourists' interests both internationally and domestically. A 2018 study from Business Insider found out that there was a 500% increase since 2014 in Airbnb travellers looking to trace their roots and see how their ancestors lived.

Internationally, there are iconic Heritage destinations that people visit from all around the world. Take the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt for example. While also being one of the 7 wonders of the world, this heritage site receives over 14.7 million travelers per year. A closer to home example would be the Niagara Falls Heritage Area located in Southern Ontario which receives over 8 million travelers over the year.

As countries with a history of immigration have the largest number of Heritage Tourists, Canadian businesses have a great opportunity to capitalize on this rising trend. On an average trip, there are many heritage sites that people visit but those tourists aren't necessarily taking part in heritage tourism trips. For example, simply going to a museum is a perfect way to see some of the history of the area in a relaxed and comfortable setting. In Canada this year, even given the fact that there have been many lockdowns during the pandemic; there were over 3.4 million visitors to science, technology,

and natural history museums this year.

There are over three dozen different museums and galleries located within the region of Hamilton, Halton, and Brant which results in many domestic heritage tourists travelling throughout the region for this specific purpose. It could simply be a couple hour driving day trip or multiple nights discovering the history that is unknown to many who don't search for it.

### Example:

One of the largest historical events that took place within our region was the "War of 1812" where there were 5 major battles and dozens of smaller skirmishes that we know about. This was one of the largest and most impactful moments in Canadian History which has resulted in a large influx of domestic travellers. Most likely, there is some 1812 historical content located very close to your business with many memorials and stories that a tourist can search and find out. Tourism Hamilton and other local tourism websites have numerous packages which lets visitors find all these locations and go on a tour of the various monuments and battle sites.

### Example/Case Study:

#### HMCS HAIDA National Historic Site

The HMCS HAIDA is the most famous battleship in all of Canadian History. It is a Tribal-Class Destroyer and was active during World War II. During the start of the Pandemic in 2019/2020, there were over 18 000 people who came to the Hamilton area specifically to see this battleship. As is usual for heritage tourists, these 18 000 stayed in the area longer, spent more money, and did a larger variety of activities at the surrounding businesses in the area. This influx of tourists didn't only bring a positive economic impact to the historic site, but it created jobs, businesses, events, and festivals that all the local community could take advantage of. From the number of visitors specifically coming to see the HMCS Haida it is clear to see the economic value it has brought to the local community.



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Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) announces the launch of their new campaign, The Original Original. The campaign

aims to educate travellers, modernize their perception of Indigenous experiences and rebuild the industry, which was disproportionately devastated by the pandemic.

Through this campaign, ITAC aims to further develop wide-spread recognition of authentic Indigenous experiences across the country.

Visit [www.originaloriginal.ca](http://www.originaloriginal.ca) or [www.indigenoustourism.ca](http://www.indigenoustourism.ca)

## Culturally Authentic

Sustaining our cultural heritage requires focus on building on the potential of the rich and unique features and characteristics that not only preserve but highlight our strong points of differentiation. The goal is to address gaps within the regional experience provision in addition to maximizing the potential of existing assets that can contribute to addressing opportunities.

Visitors are eager to immerse in a cultural experience tied to the land and its people, where they can experience spectacular landscapes while learning more about first nations of Canada. Working with both ITO and ITAC, we aim to support sustainable restoration of Indigenous tourism in our region, Ontario and Canada.

## What is Indigenous Tourism

All tourism businesses majority-owned (51%), operated and/ or controlled by First Nations, Métis or Inuit Peoples that can demonstrate a connection and responsibility to the local Indigenous community and traditional territory where the operation resides.

## What is Indigenous Cultural Tourism

The Indigenous Tourism criteria, a significant portion of the experience incorporates Indigenous culture in a manner that is appropriate, respectful, and true to the Indigenous culture being portrayed. The authenticity is ensured through the active involvement of Indigenous people in the development and delivery of the experience.

ITAC's President & CEO, Keith Henry shares "This year has seen us make great strides in strengthening our industry across the country under the banner of Building Back Better – Reconciliation Through Indigenous Tourism. Recent MOUs with Parks Canada and Destination Canada mark quantifiable action towards ensuring the rebuild of our industry is better than ever. Additionally, Federal Tourism Minister Randy Boissonnau's recent announcement at our National Indigenous Tourism Conference of \$1.3 million in tourism specific supports..."

Indigenous Tourism Is Reconciliation in Action 2022-2023 Action Plan

# Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) – four-pillar approach to business: 2022-2023

## Deliverables:

Leadership	Partnerships	Development	Marketing
Increasing positive industry awareness, advocacy, and accountability to gain market respect, establish confidence and build member support. This includes generating own-source revenues through investment in the International Indigenous Tourism Conference, led by ITAC.	Uniting the Indigenous tourism industry in Canada, bringing together members and key industry organizations to collaborate and maximize results. Keys to ITAC’s success will be leveraging resources with federal, provincial, and regional partners through investments in provincial and territory Indigenous tourism organizations.	Encouraging product development and investment from non-Indigenous tourism and destination development, to ensure the industry remains competitive international. Tourism HR Canada will play a key role with ITAC’s training and labour strategies.	Promoting Indigenous tourism and its positive community and cultural impacts with high-value, targeted marketing as well as through research, media, and sales efforts. This includes marketing investments of \$30 million over three years with ITAC leveraging an additional \$18 million in support and matching funds from dynamic industry partnerships.

## ITAC’s New Industry Targets

As the Indigenous Tourism Industry in Canada recovers from COVID-19, ITAC has set targets to move forward while being adaptable and sustainable. Recognizing that this undertaking will present known and unknown challenges, ITAC is prepared to face them head on using proven strategies and funding resources.

“We’ve got to share with our international tourism partners what Indigenous tourism is and what it looks like and how it’s changed. It’s culinary, it’s remote and rural, it’s, yes, talking with elders, yes, it’s having bannock, but it’s evolved and it’s a lot more than that.”

The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance

## Complementing the four-pillar methodology are three main priorities for ITAC:

**Inspiring** ITAC member businesses across the country to rebuild or refocus their businesses offerings through targeted business support, education, and training

**Leveraging** partnership opportunities and investments with the Provincial and Territorial Indigenous Tourism organizations to maintain their membership and infrastructure.

**Strengthening** ITAC as the national leader and advocate for Indigenous tourism operators, stabilizing funding through the federal government, partners, and members.

## There are five key things to consider in developing a culturally authentic tourism experiences, recommended by Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO):

- Can I demonstrate the participation of a meaningful benefit to the Indigenous people and community?
- Is all my Indigenous cultural content done in an appropriate, respectful manner that follows all local protocols?
- Does the Indigenous community being portrayed have control over the content of the cultural programming?
- Can I demonstrate a connection to the community portrayed that respects a responsibility to that community?
- Is the community involved in the delivery of the cultural programming to the visitor?

### Case Study #1 Talaysay Talking Trees Tour by Talaysay Tours

**Experience:** Nature enthusiast, we invite you to join and walk the land with us. Each plant, each tree has its own special story. Explore Vancouver's iconic Stanley Park and Beaver Lake, with our local Indigenous guide – cultural ambassador who will highlight how the local trees and plants of the Pacific Northwest have been harvested by our people for food, medicine, and technology for thousands of years. Our guides are members of local Indigenous communities and the surrounding region. They will share our ecological practices, ancient and contemporary history, stories, legends, and Indigenous ways of living with you.

- **90-minutes**
- **Stories of folklore**
- **Visitors will see the forest through a fresh lens**

**Extend The Experience:** Guests are invited to book a room at the Skwachays Lodge and Residence, which is Canada's first Indigenous

art hotel. Its 18 rooms were designed by Aboriginal artists, and a first-floor gallery immerses guests in the region's First Nations heritage.

**Value-Add:** The hotel can also arrange for visitors to experience a smudging ceremony or sweat ceremony led by First Nations elders.

### Case Study #2 Learn How Traditions Inspire Today's Cuisine – Destination Indigenous

With its focus on local flavours and ingredients, Indigenous cuisine has been reclaiming its rightful place on the global culinary landscape. Learn all about how our traditional recipes have been passed down from generation to generation, and the importance of food in the understanding of our culture and history.

Destination Indigenous invites visitors to their website the opportunity to explore Indigenous cuisine in regions across Canada.



# What is a target market?

A target market is a clearly defined segment of customers that you know are going to buy or be interested in your product. Grouped by a unique set of characteristics that they share, to properly define your target market and make the most out of your marketing budget it is important to follow these steps.

**1. Understand your Niche Market:** To target the proper set of customers you need to understand what type of market you are in. You need to ask yourself questions such as:

- What needs does your product fill/satisfy?
- Does your product solve any problems in your customers lives? i.e.) Specialty designed pillows for insomniacs or electric car charging stations at your business
- How does it improve your potential customer's life?



**2. Look at your Current Set of Customers:**

When a business starts to sell their service/products there are always customers that will purchase the product in the early stages. This will set the tone of your product's quality and what type of people you would market your product towards. Using analyzing tools from your various marketing channels including things such as Google Analytics you can find out what your "Ideal Customer" is and what characteristics they have. These can include:

- **Age:** What is the age of your customer base? Boomers and Gen X? Millennials and Gen Z? Is there a wide range of customers?
- **Gender:** Is your product designed for a specific type of gender i.e.) the cosmetic industry
- **Income:** is your product meant for a specific income group? Very expensive? A cheaper product? Are customers purchasing your product once or making repeat purchases? i.e.) A dishwasher vs toilet paper
- **Location:** Where are your products most purchased from? A specific country? A city or a more rural area?
- **Behavior:** What do your customers do? Are they active? Do they spend a lot of time online? What kind of content do they consume?
- **Values:** What do your customers value? Do they value sustainability? Are they more interested in ethical products?



**3. Look at your Competitors:** A great way to see what type of customers you need to market your product towards is to look at their customers and what they are looking for. They have an identified target market that is probably quite similar to the customers you want to capture. For example, if you are opening a local restaurant in your town, looking at who is visiting the other fast-food restaurants will give you a good idea of what type of customers you should look for. Some great ways to see who your competitors are marketing towards is to:

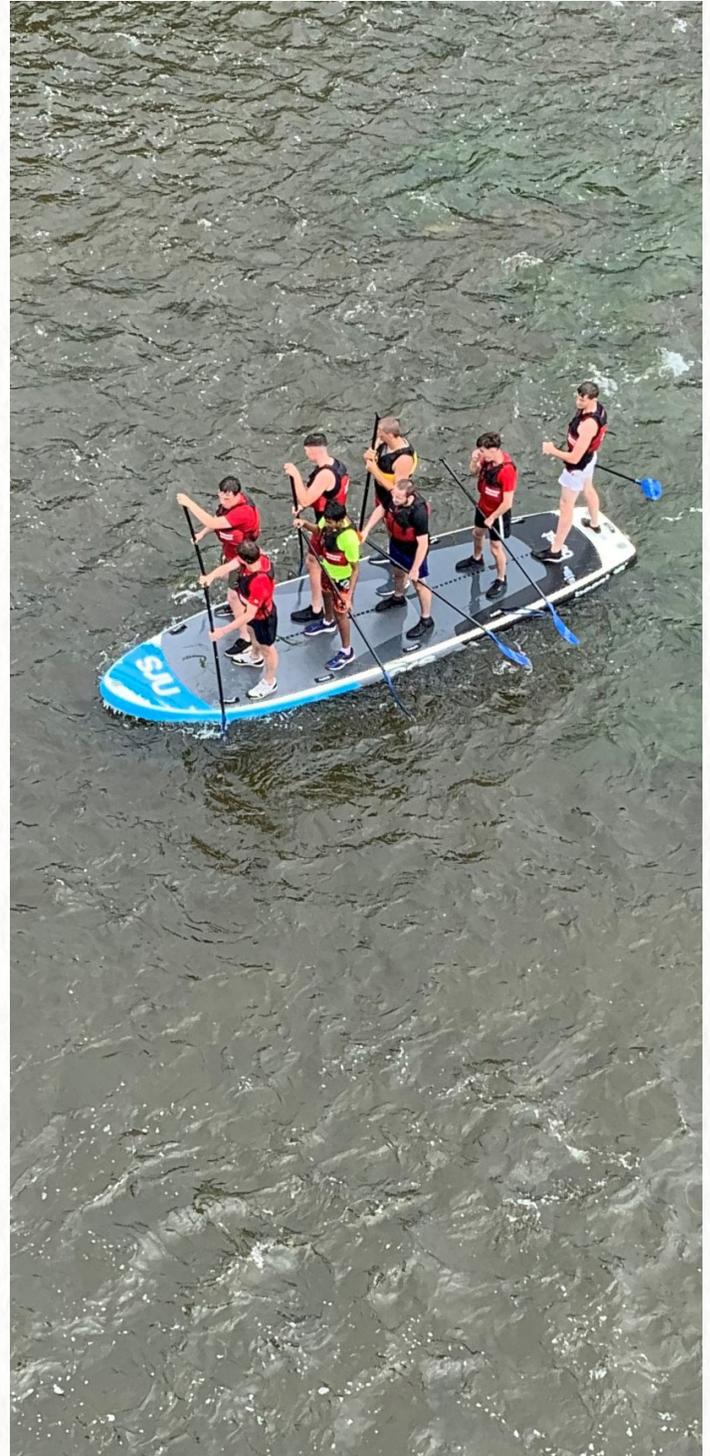
- Check out their social media channels
- See what type of advertisements they use and what channels they appear on
- Check what their best-selling products are and compare them to what you offer
- What kind of language do they use? Young slang? Words more dictated towards the elderly?

**4. Understand your Products Features and Benefits:** It is important to know what motivates your potential customers to purchase your products. Part of successful marketing is to understand the decision-making process that your customers go through before purchasing your products. Understanding this is an ideal way to properly define your audience. For example, if a convenience store is noticing that the most popular products, they sell are sports drinks and energy bars that means that their customer base are coming or going from athletic activities and are looking to refuel. If the store understands this, they can move their advertising to better market towards this type of demographic. If they do it correctly, they'll capture even more customers with the specific need for sports drinks and energy bars.

Overall, it is extremely important to know who are your customers and who is purchasing your product. Marketing towards one set of customers can be totally different from marketing towards another set of customers. For example, if the convenience

store shifted their marketing towards more of their unhealthy and higher calorie snacks, they wouldn't gain the extra customers from their switch in marketing.

Understanding your target market is one of the most **IMPORTANT** pieces of information you need and understand in order to be a successful business. It can reduce expenses, increase revenue, capture a larger number of customers and more.



# Luxury Market Tourism

Simply described, a luxury trip is determined by the uniqueness and exclusivity of the experience and by the personalization of the services.

## Profiling the Luxury Tourist

- When making a purchase, high-level travellers first choose the destination and then the on-site service, preferably exclusive boutique hotels followed by internationally branded hotels.
- Most luxury travellers still book offline and rely on the recommendations of a travel specialist (travel agent, tour operator).
- Generation X on the rise as most of them are couples aged their mid-30s to late 50s.
- While on holidays lux travellers tend to look for relaxation and comfort, and they also love tasting gourmet food, experiencing the local culture and making excursions in nature.
- They are more sensitive to the value-add, rather than being price driven.
- They are growing in demand for action on the impact on the environment and consumption.
- Have sought for deeper and more authentic connections with the places they visit.
- Want to enjoy personalized and co-created experiences offering stories worthy to be shared in order to build their caché, but above all they want to be distinguished from the crowd.
- Expect to build experiences that align with their unique interests, needs and values, trips that allow them to let the world know who they are and what they represent.



## Luxury Market Case Study/Example

Today, Luxury travel is defined less by thread count and Michelin stars and more by access to the people, places, and experiences that represent all that is authentic about a destination. However, there's no denying that comfort factors still apply, and high standards of accommodation and dining will always feature on the luxury traveller's wish list.

In our region, Luxury travel is minimal but there are still some locations and activities that tourists can partake in. These include exclusive restaurants, stores, and hotels that offer a premium experience that you wouldn't normally see every day. A study from TravelPulse indicates that luxury travellers spend over 60% more than the average tourist. This money doesn't solely go to other luxury businesses but goes towards local stores, businesses, services and more.

Regardless of if you consider your business a luxury business or a business more marketed towards the average tourist it is important to know what a luxury tourist is and what potential products/packages you could offer that would attract them. If your business can capture even 1% of the luxury tourist market it will improve profitability and bring more potential luxury tourists in the future.



## Example/Case Study: The Pearle Hotel & Spa

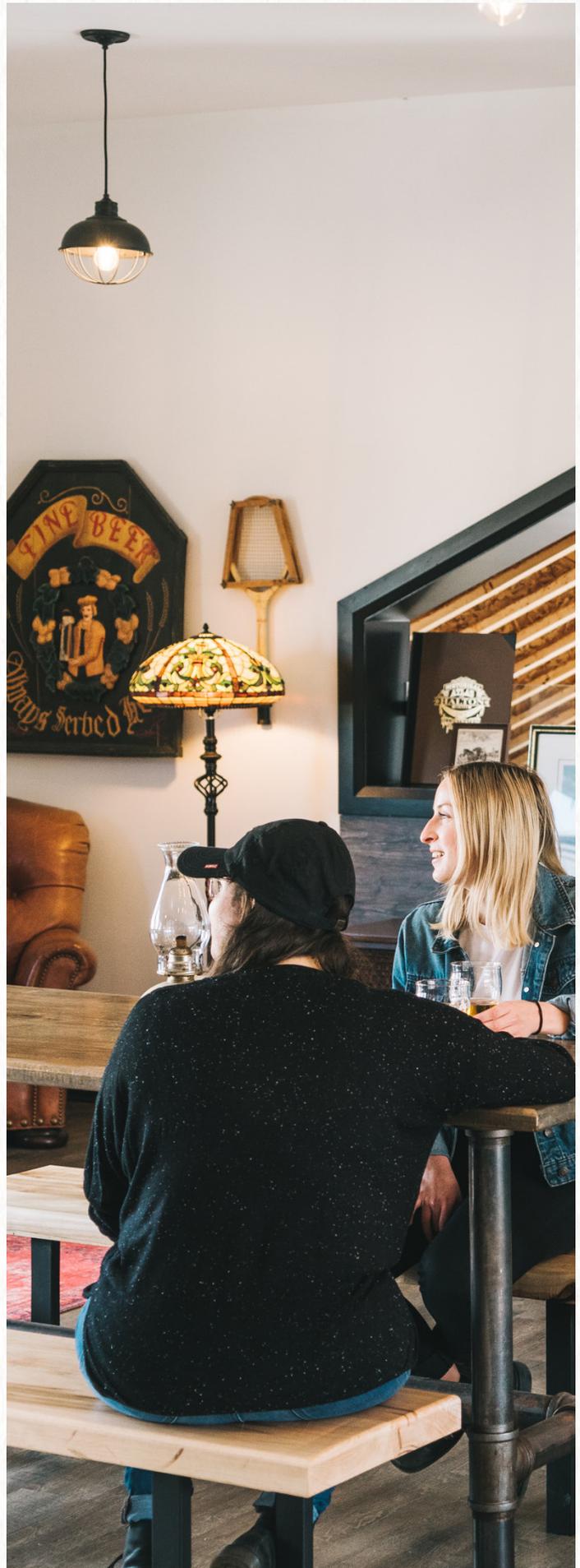
The Pearle is a new luxury hotel located in downtown Burlington. Inspired by the local lake houses of the past, it sits along the waterfront providing views of Lake Ontario as well as the bustling downtown area.

The result of this new hotel has brought an increased number of a new demographic of tourists. These tourists are wealthier and more likely to spend money in the surrounding businesses which brings extra revenue to the downtown area. Other businesses can take advantage of a luxury business in the area which can help with your sales regardless of what type of business you operate.

For example, if a business were to reach out to the Pearle to explain their business and what benefit it could provide to the potential tourists that could bring major benefits. The business could be included in the information packages in each room for “places of interest”. This would not only get your name out there but the association with a luxury business can reflect the high-quality products and serviceability your business offers. Overall, Businesses should take advantage of the new demographic of tourists in order to capture the additional revenue that the tourist is willing to spend.

### Takeaways:

- Find out what luxury businesses are in your area
- Is your product a luxury product?
- Think if you have any luxury products or packages you can sell
- Try partner with one of these luxury businesses even if it's a small partnership
- Ask yourself how you can change/adapt some of your advertising to attract a luxury tourist



# Generation Z Breakdown: From Boomers to Gen Z

The new era of travel has begun and the changes of values within the key demographics have changed too. As Millennials born between 1981 - 1996, have become the new driving force and largest demographic in travelling, they are far different from the generation that came before them. As of 2022, the Millennial demographic has taken over Baby Boomers as the largest section of the tourism market consisting of approximately 31.5% of all travelers. That is why understanding these travelers and marketing towards them will be a deciding factor in the success of tourism related businesses in the future.

Generation Z also known as “zoomers” are individuals who were born between the years of 1997 and 2012. Although half of this generation isn't necessarily old enough to go on individual trips there are many 18+ year old who are taking their first trip by themselves and are very meticulous when it comes to planning their trips. Due to the fact that this generation will be more online than ever, it is important for travel related businesses to keep Generation Z's values in mind as they become more prominent in the travel industry over the next decade. Especially considering how different Millennials and Gen Z are in comparison to the older demographics that preceded them.

## Millennials: Characteristics of Target Audience

- 1. Growing Market:** As stated earlier, the millennial demographic now holds the largest chunk of the tourism market and that isn't going anywhere soon. The gradual increase of 1.2% per year will hold steady for years to come even given the fact it is the largest section already.
- 2. Online Purchases:** Millennials are far more tech-savvy and internet dependent when it comes to their daily lives including traveling. According to a Forbes report, over 97% of all millennials use social media while

travelling and 75% of those travellers post at least once per day. Essentially, this is free marketing to take advantage of. If a traveler visits your business, has a great time, and posts something related to their trip on their social media; then all their followers would see that and would be more likely to visit your destination in the future. This is the new form of “word of mouth” advertising and doesn't cost your business a single cent.

- 3. Youth Travel Atmosphere:** Having young travellers visit your destination gives your area the increased identity of being more tech-savvy, independent, and progressive. Due to the increased presence of the internet being used as a form of communication, having these values will increase the popularity of your destination. The millennials have become the largest demographic in the tourism industry so dictating your marketing towards them in the future would be very beneficial.
- 4. Increased Leisure Time:** A study from Destination Canada indicated that millennials are taking longer trips than previous generations. This is because they are more likely to combine their business trips and leisure travel to stay longer at a location to visit friends and family. That added to the fact that many workplaces have transitioned to online, or hybrid work schedules has resulted in longer trips for millennials. Longer trips mean more spending for the local area.
- 5. Travel Conscious Spending:** Although Millennials are spending longer periods of time on their trip, they also have an increased awareness on purchases such as accommodations, transportation, and activities. This has led to a rise in things such as Airbnb bookings, hostels, public transportation, and self-guided tours. In order to attract more millennials, businesses should look at their prices and see what changes they can make to make their products more attractive to the millennial traveller.

## Forbes Topdeck Travel Survey

This survey done by Topdeck Travel was made with the intention to discover Millennials Travel interests and the change in what they are looking for when going on a vacation. The Survey targeted 18–30 year-old from 134 different countries and asked over 34 000 of those millennials their travel habits and what they look for in the future.

The survey found that 88% of them traveled overseas between one and three times a year; 94% were between 18-30; and the majority travelled in Europe, North America, and Australia/ New Zealand. A large of these trips were recommended by friends and family which 76% of respondents said was a key factor in their decision making.

In addition to this, Millennials don't necessarily take a large amount of "party trips" as many businesses would assume but are looking for more experiences. The survey found that 86% of them prioritized experiencing a new culture; 69% of them prioritized eating local foods and the cuisine were listed as common determining factors for motivating people aged 18 to 24 to travel. In comparison, approximately 44% had partying as a contributing factor and only 28% of respondents said shopping was a large factor in their travel-making decisions.

This combined with the fact that a 2021 Travel Pulse survey in coordination with the World Travel & Tourism Council revealed that 99 percent of U.S. and Canadian travelers are "eager to travel again" means that this 99% added to the fact that Millennials have taken over Boomers as the largest travel demographic will result in tons of opportunities for travel related businesses in the future.



## Generation Z: Getting Prepared for this Target Audience

Generation Z have different lifestyles, motivations and habits which make them a segment difficult to pin down. However, it is the segment that will pave the way for innovation and responsible tourism in the new era of the tourism world. Generation Z travelers are still discovering and solidifying their consumption preferences, and this presents a tremendous opportunity for travel-related businesses.

Assumed to be low spenders, the youngest generation of global travelers are often overlooked by destination authorities and tourism businesses. However, they play a key role in shaping consumer demand, and in acting as an agent of change in destinations. It is important to know the benefits they can bring as well as some of the characteristics about the generation that have been discovered.

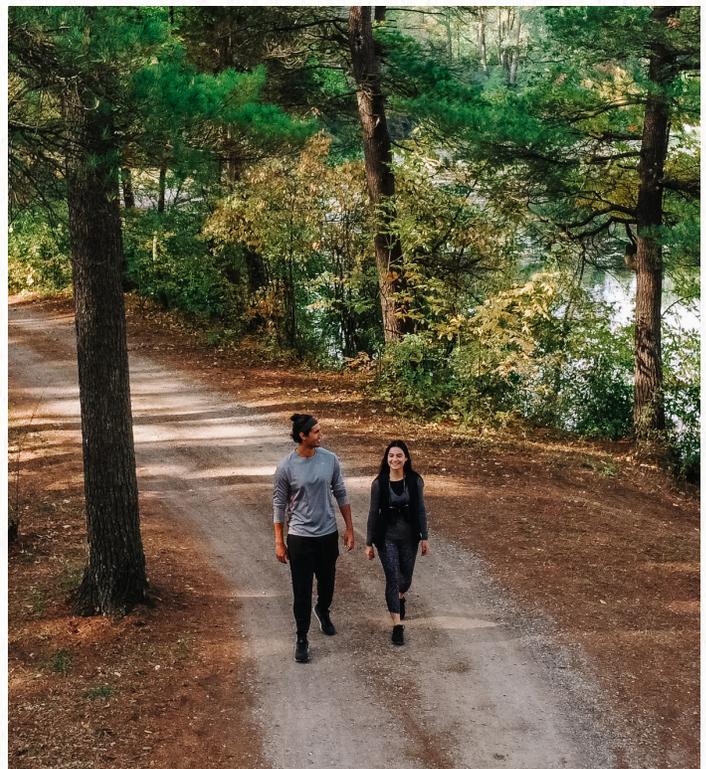
### Traits:

- 1. Fond of OTAs:** OTA stands for an Online Travel Agency, which has a large amount of loyalty programs and packages. They use this platform far greater than others such as travel agent websites, metasearch, and direct websites. Gen Z's use these platforms to mostly book hotels, cars, and air transportation.
- 2. Travel Subscriptions:** Younger Generations are a lot more open to receiving travel options through direct channels such as email and messaging. Not only do they welcome the direct offers but seriously consider their value and act on them to organize new trips. Similar to the Millennials conscious spending approach the newer generations will look for the best deals
- 3. More resilient to change:** Largely due to the pandemic, Generation Z will find a way to travel via changing their trip rather than canceling it outright. This can include isolated lodging, traveling to less populated areas, and domestic travel to local destinations

- 4. International Travel:** Although domestic travel is booming, Generation Z also had 40% of their demographic travel internationally which is the largest of other generations.
- 5. Travel Importance:** Counteracting the amount of international travellers Generation Z values travel and experience greater than all the other generations. Roughly 43% of Gen Z consider travelling one of the top priorities. This can be associated with the lack of travel during the pandemic and the increased Globalization throughout the world.

### A brief overview of the results of these trends include:

- **Young travelers** are likely to return and give more value to the destination over time
- **Young travelers** are the pioneers who will discover new tourism destinations
- **Young travelers** are at the cutting edge of using new technology in the travel and tourism industry
- **Young travelers** are more interested in gaining cultural benefits from their travel and contribute to the places they visit





## Attracting the Generation Z Target Audience

Even though they may seem somewhat similar, Generation Z still has different travel values than that of Millennials. As Generation Z consists of people approximately between the ages of 9 - 24 there are still many sections of the population that are yet to go on their first individual trip. This means that to attract the future generation of travelers there are still additional things to consider and change about your business in the future

**1. Shorter Attention Spans:** Generation Z has the lowest attention span of a generation of all time resting at a measly 8 seconds. This means that even if your business has already shifted their marketing style online to better target the current generation of Millennials, further changes might be required. These changes would include shortening the timespan of your online marketing. For example, making more short-form video content through social media platforms such as Snapchat or YouTube, and having instant online access for various questions and concerns they have when browsing your online content.

**2. Enter their Online World:** Even with the rapid increase of internet marketing and services the past decade there are additional changes that will impact Generation Z more in comparison to previous generations. This includes the introduction of VR “Virtual Reality” Content. Virtual Reality is a simulated experience that can be similar to or completely different from the real world. For example, many museums have added “Virtual Tours” of their museums to attract more customers to visit their exhibits. This involves a virtual walkthrough of the museum where the user can interact with the exhibits, learn more about them, and go from room to room online. Although this seems like it may distract visitors because they’ve already had their “Virtual Experience”; the actual result is that museums see a larger number of visitors to their sites. The same can apply to other tourism related activities and is an effective strategy to persuade the new Generation Z travelers to visit your business/area.

**3. Adapt your Products:** This doesn’t necessarily mean you have to change your products or services. It essentially means you must adapt to the increased use of the internet and online tools when it comes to your business. Generation Z treats the internet as a utility similar to how we would think of water or heating aka it is essential to a lot of the new generation. This can include things such as contactless payments, online registration, electronic keys and codes, online menus and more.



# Food Tourism

An all-inclusive term, food tourism encompasses the entire food and beverage tourism and all motivators of beverages and culinary.

“Food tourism is the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place.”™

World Food Travel Association

## Benefits of Food Tourism

Creating a strong sense of place through food and beverage tourism will yield many benefits for our region.

- Build our regional brand
- Increase visitation and drive new audiences
- Drive a stronger export demand
- Blur boundaries to neighbouring food tourism destinations

Visitors need to eat whether they are here for the day or an extended stay. Research by World Food Travel Association recommends that on average 25% of total visitor spending is a safe economic impact assessment. Although the number is almost impossible to estimate, we can gauge for this figure the opportunity to build of food tourism profile.

Have you ever gone on vacation to a country and not tried their local food? Have you seen the difference between their food and the food you normally eat at home?

The simple answer is yes whether that be trying Italian food in Italy or dumplings in China the original origin of that tasty delicacy. People will travel all around the world going to countries specifically to experience the culture through their taste buds. Over 95% of all tourists could be considered “food tourists”. This is because breaking bread and sharing a meal is a universal expression of hospitality and welcome across the world. Food tourism isn’t just about eating food but understanding a place through its food.

## Who is the Culinary Tourist?

When talking about a culinary tourist there are some common stereotypes of what we think they are. From an outside perspective when most people think of a culinary tourist they think of a person at a fancy restaurant, trying everything on the menu, taking photos, and writing a long piece about how good it is and a review of the restaurant. Although there are culinary tourists that are like this, they only make up a smaller section of the consumer base as a whole. A culinary tourist can be defined as a “visitor” who plans their trips partially or totally in order to taste the cuisine of a place.” This can range from high-end restaurants to a local street vendor who is offering the local areas cuisine. These different range of culinary tourists can be classified into 3 groups:

### Foodies

Foodies are the people we normally think of when defining a culinary tourist. They plan most of their trip with a heavy emphasis on the food and drink of the local area. In any of the trips they plan tasting the food and drink would be considered a top priority. These foodies are informed and plan many of their experiences and must-visit attractions in a destination prior to their arrival; this includes making the necessary reservations for accommodation and transportation.

### Food-Connected Consumers

This group is made up of tourists who view culinary experiences as a pleasant and enjoyable add on. They will actively look to find and taste the local foods, but it doesn’t need to be a determining factor when it comes to picking what destination they are visiting. They do not plan their culinary experiences prior to the trip like foodies which opens the opportunity for restaurants/eateries to attract these visitors to their establishments. For example, the owner of the AirBnB they are staying at could recommend a local restaurant that they should visit.

## Agritourist

These types of travellers are another niche section of culinary tourists. The difference between this section of travellers and the others above is their love for the agritourism activities that take place in the preparation of the food. For example, a foodie or food-connected consumer might enjoy picking the grapes at a vineyard which might eventually be used in the production; while an agritourist would one step farther and participate in the grape smashing at the local vineyard. Agritourists have a deep desire to learn about the people, places and practices involved in the agriculture of a destination.

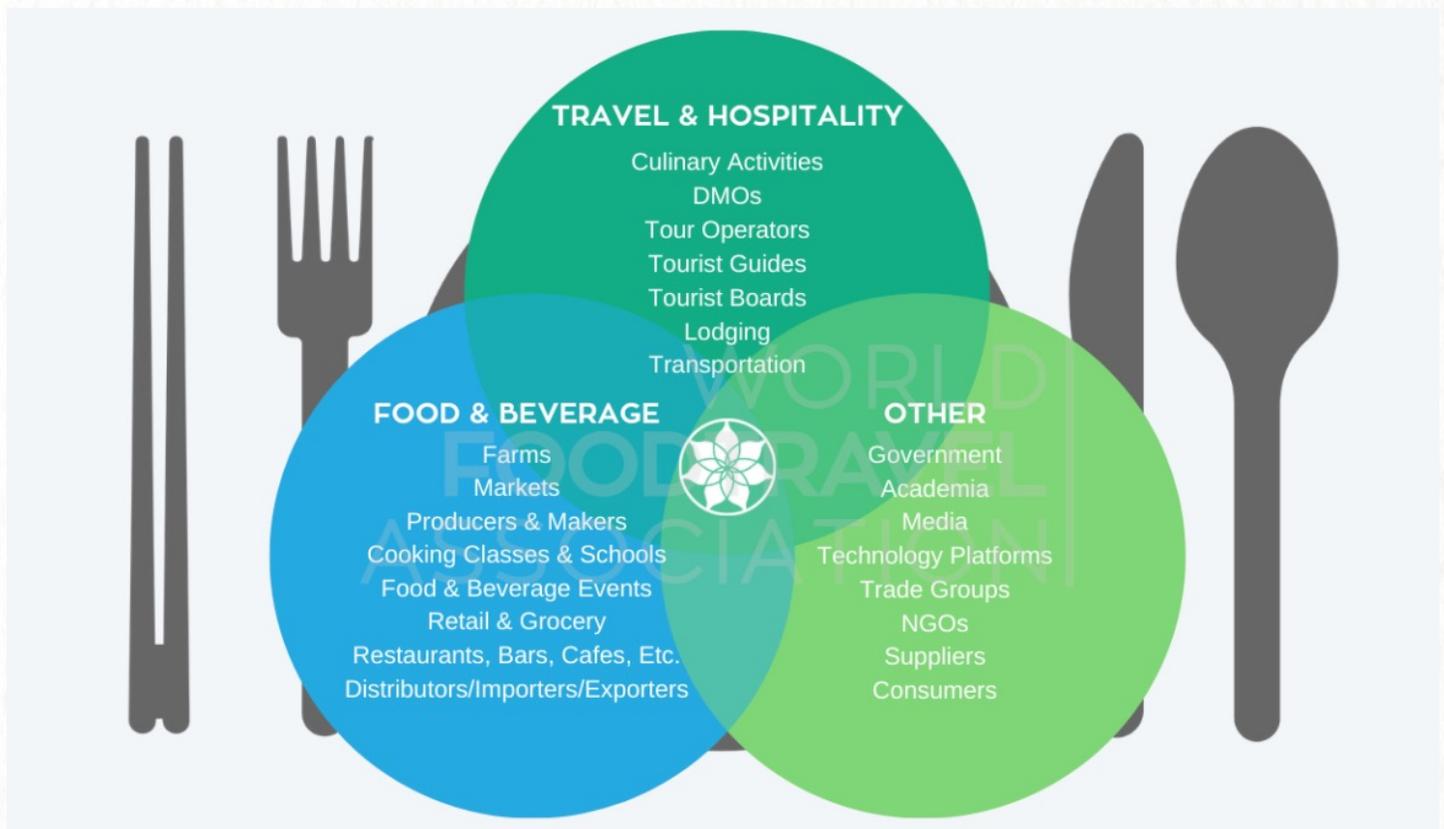
## Erik Wolf, the director of the World Food Travel Association defines food tourism as:

In regards to Canada, a lot of businesses feel that the market is small when it comes to food and craft tourism in the country because the food is not unique but that is far from the truth... Although it might seem regular to use there is food in Canada that nobody else has in the world.

*Canadian food can include: Poutine, Montreal style bagels, and meat, Beaver Tails, Nanaimo Bars, Butter Tarts, Peameal (Canadian) Bacon, Bannock, Maple Syrup, Caesars...*

There are many unique foods in Canada and to local areas within Canada and businesses can capitalize on the rising trend of food tourism. In fact, in 2019, the food tourism market was valued at \$1,116.7 billion and this is expected to rise to \$1,796.5 billion by 2027. This means that the tourism market has a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.8%. With a growth rate that is that high, not taking advantage of this growing trend will lose lots of customers/sales that a business can take advantage of.

## Food Tourism Ecosystem: Industry Cluster



Source: World Food Travel Association

## Different types of food tourism can include:

**Cooking Classes:** A class is a group of pupils or students who are taught together that explore the art of cooking and learn how to cook certain meals, use certain methods, and valuable skills that they can have for the future.

**Food Markets:** A food market is where farmers and restaurants will sell their fruit, vegetables, meat, cheese, and meals directly to the customer

**Walking Food Tours:** A food tour involves walking around a neighborhood, going into restaurants and eateries to try various foods, and hearing both about the foods themselves and how they fit into the city's culture

**Street Food:** It involves prepared or cooked food sold by vendors in a street or other public location for immediate consumption. It is a chance to truly experience the local food.

**Other examples:** Food Festivals, Tasting Sessions, Vineyard Tours, Cidery and Farm Tours, Market Experiences, Producer Visits, Distillery Tours, Food and Beverage Trails



## Example/Case Study: Steel Wheel Brewery, Brantford

This is an on-site brewery set in a unique, fully renovated 1890's farmhouse, Steel Wheel Brewery features a comfortable tasting room and an adjacent outdoor patio where patrons are invited to try a variety of small-batch brews. The Brewery offers a variety of food tourism related courses that customers can also sign up and experience. These include courses such as the "Basics of Beekeeping" which teaches tourists what makes a queen bee so special, how bees make honey, and much more. Steel Wheel Brewery grows their own ingredients while emphasizing sourcing local ingredients and employing local residents. They also restore old steam engines and tractors which is another unique part of the brewery.

The Brewery attracts tourists specifically looking to "taste the local brews" and experience the local food in the area too as well as learning key parts to their processes which they can take back to their own areas too. The additional focus on these unique experiences has brought many tourists to the Brewery that wouldn't have normally visited if they didn't know about these interesting facts and programs.

## Takeaways

- See what Canadian food you can offer and specifically market it as "Canadian"
- Learn if there is any local food specifically related to your area (i.e.) Montreal Bagels
- Are there food businesses, eateries, wineries, breweries that you can partner with?





## Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism involves types of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling, and sightseeing. Essentially, Rural Tourism takes advantage of the natural area around them and how they utilize that natural area. The key to taking advantage of this type of tourism is to understand the area your business resides in and what products/packages you can make to bring tourists to that area.

**Agricultural and Farms:** There are many farms located in the Hamilton, Halton, and Brant regions. Agricultural Tourism involves trips/packages/tours that attract visitors to the farm, ranch, or other Agricultural Businesses with the intention to create revenue by entertaining and educating the visitors.

The aspect of nature is generally associated with this type of tourism and can be less expensive as a business doesn't need to create a tourism spot but rather take advantage of the spot they are located in. A perfect local example would be the many waterfalls that exist in Hamilton giving it the nickname "City of Waterfalls". Many businesses utilize this and have created walking packages for certain waterfalls and guided tours where they can explain the history of the area.

In Brantford, businesses take advantage of the Grand River located directly beside the town and offer activities such as kayaking and boat tours. In between those, dozens of farms have their own farmers markets and have special workshops where a tourist can explore the farm and understand the agricultural practices they use.

During the post-pandemic era, Rural Tourism continues to grow as the trends for the tourism market of 2022-2023 slowly becomes clearer and clearer. In fact, 56 percent of tourism jobs in Canada are in rural areas. The rise of different types of tourism such as sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, green tourism and more will see rural tourism stay as a large part of the industry for years to come.





## Case Study Rural Tourism: Example/Case Study: Browndale Farm and Market

Browndale Farm and Market is one of the larger farms in our region. The quality of their products are elevated by the way they treat their animals, as well as how they are fed. Their animals live on their own terms, eat, sleep and milk all at their leisure in a modern free stall space designed for optimal comfort and welfare. Browndale's social media is very active and shows numerous processes throughout the farm. They also offer a package where if you spend \$50 at their farmers market you get a free 30-minute tour of the farm. This incentive leads to a higher spending total when people come to the local farmers market. This higher spending total completely counteracts the extra 30 minutes the business must give when touring the rest of the farm.

The opportunity to learn about the farm and see how it operates intrigues the visitor and makes them more likely to explore the local area in the future. Additionally, if a visitor enjoys this rural experience, they are more likely to spend at surrounding businesses in the local area. Although there are many rural areas that are free to visit, the surrounding businesses (restaurants, stores etc.) all receive an increased number of visitors.

### Takeaways

- See what natural areas exist in your local community
- Think of what products/packages you can create that capitalize on this area
- Integrate aspects of sustainability, responsibility, and eco-friendly into rural tourism products
- Partner with rural businesses around you i.e.) farms and see how you can work together
- Create an appreciation for the local products, cultural aspects, and nature in your area

## Re-Defining Winter Travel

The winter season in Southern Ontario provides a wide range of vacation opportunities for visitors – from local to domestic to international. Snow being the driver for their travel experience, as people choose winter vacationing for a variety of reasons. In order to define the winter traveller, why they choose winter destinations and what they expect to get out of their trip.

We have discovered that travellers are seeking nature-made wonders, man-made wonders, activity, and experience. Wherever you deliver your product, service or experience, the goal is to understand how and who you can create the best tourism product and content that align with and leverage positive, existing consumer expectations.

### What Defines the Winter and Shoulder Season?

The summer season is traditionally the most popular time to visit and travel around Canada. Still, as travellers look for more authentic and unique experiences, real connection and interaction with locals and higher quality services and amenities, the winter and shoulder seasons are becoming coveted travel periods in their own right.

Establishing a clear description of each tourism season is a vital first step in understanding how destination features and challenges can be transformed into benefits for travellers. Each destination may have its own unique high season, low season and shoulder season which can last anywhere from a few weeks to a few months.

Travel Industry Association of Canada, Toolkit – Developing Winter and Shoulder Season



### Case Study: Iceland Tackling Summer High Season by Growing Winter and Shoulder Season Offerings

Iceland, a Nordic island nation, is a popular destination known for its stunning volcanoes, hot springs and lava fields, massive glaciers, and national parks. Before the government's influential tourism program, the three-month summer season from June through August was considered the peak profit opportunity for local businesses.

Back in 2012, Iceland introduced its Tourist Site Protection Fund, to be partly financed via income from an accommodations tax. Its purpose was to propel the development of new attractions that would capture visitors while relieving some of the pressure from existing popular spots and better protecting its precious nature sites. Iceland's marketing efforts also homed in on responsible traveller behaviour, safety, multi-seasonal offerings instead of just summer, and looked to drive visitation towards lesser-known areas of the island.

In recent years, tourism has grown. The program has created a balance between summer visitor volume and newer, off-season visitation. Back in 2010, a total of 488,000 international visitors arrived in Iceland. Skipping ahead to 2017, after the funding and marketing pivots, this number had grown to 2.2 million. As of 2018, the total population was 356,991, and a record breaking 2.3 million tourists visited Iceland.



## Nature-Made Wonders vs. Man-Made Wonders – Samplings to Get Inspired

Nature-Made: Elements that occur naturally	Activity: What are we doing?	Experience: Emotion-Evoking
<b>Ice Climbing</b>	Book an ice climbing instruction with a local professional climbing operator. Enjoy a curated waterfall climb in a conservation area in Hamilton.	All skill level guiding ice climbing on majestic icefalls and discover the thrill of ascending ice formations frozen over a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve – the Niagara Escarpment
<b>Winter Hiking</b>	Hike one the regions groomed trails, rail trails, conservation paths, and even the Bruce Trail, Canada’s oldest and longest footpath.	<p>Endless UNESCO Niagara Escarpment footpaths along the Bruce Trail beckon winter lovers and fans of the great outdoors, embracing the winter sky and the brisk air of a winter in Ontario.</p> <p>From groomed trails to rail trails, hikers will find serenity and solitude meandering footpaths. Enjoy a snowshoe trail in conservation haven and discover a Canadian pastime.</p>
<b>White Water Rafting, Canoeing and Kayaking</b>	Late winter/early spring rushing rapids of the Nith River	Feel the rush of water and enjoy the thrill of your achievements.
<b>Birdwatching</b>	Birds can be found all throughout the region. Winter birding is especially rewarding, hiking the trail paths of Hamilton Halton Brant. RBG is dominated by the Cootes Paradise Nature Reserve, a Nationally Important Bird Area at the head of Lake Ontario, and surrounded by the Niagara Escarpment. Its most easily accessible site is Princess point at the southeast corner of the marsh. The most spectacular and isolated location is the Marsh Boardwalk Platform overlooking the Spencer Creek delta. The site is accessed from the Arboretum and is adjacent to the Hopkins Woods and Spencer Creek Special Protection Areas.	Royal Botanical Garden is home to 27 km of trails, spanning across wetlands, grasslands, and forests. Birders can find access points at Princess Point (South Cootes Paradise), Rock Chapel (Escarpment Property), Westdale, Chery Hill Gate (Hendrie Valley), Rock Garden, Laking Garden, and the Arboretum. What is unique is that the nature sanctuaries located at the head of Lake Ontario and sheltered by the Niagara Escarpment there is always birds present. RBG’s trail system provides intimate experiences and observation platforms into a variety of habitats including the largest remaining coastal marshes on western Lake Ontario, old growth forests, meadows, exposed escarpment edges, and the garden areas themselves. Annually about 300 species can be observed, most are migrants. Concentrations of birds and species at this location are often awe inspiring and are highlighted by the year-round resident Bald Eagles.
<b>Owl Nature Walk</b>	Pre-Book your conservation experience at Rattlesnake Point	Hike through thousand-year-old cedars, and the uncommon Hackberry tree, and even winter adapted creatures like Chickadees floating about. Did you hear that hoot? Many species of owls are adapted for the winter, and you’ll see them on your nature walk. Experience the escarpment glitter in the winter sun at the lookout points along the trail.

<b>Man-Made:</b> Those created or developed	<b>Activity:</b> What are we doing?	<b>Experience:</b> Emotion-Evoking
<b>Rustic cabins in Carolinian snow-capped forests</b>	Book a small or large cabin, depending on your party size and needs.	Rustic cabins situated on Indigenous lands in Carolinian snow-capped forests and immerse in nature. Embrace a warm crackling campfire, perfect for smores, some story time and plenty of laughter.
<b>Fireside Winter Wine Tasting</b>	Reserve your spot at a local winery for a warm fire with wine tasting and music on a perfect winter's evening.	Make your way to Ridge Road Estate Winery for a fireside wine tasting experience under a warm blanket. Spend time with friends for a spirited chat around the ambiance of a winter flame. Enjoy Baco Noir Hot Chocolate and delicious smores.
<b>Winter Wagon Rides in conservation areas</b>	Pre-book your weekend winter wagon ride at Mountsberg Conservation Area in Campbellville.	At Mountsberg Conservation Area, the kids will love the fun of a horse-drawn ride through winter wonderland. Imagine the memories you will make.
<b>Snowshoeing</b>	As a popular recreational activity Conservation Areas offer groomed trails for snowshoeing.	It is believed that snowshoes arrive in Canada during ancient migrations at least 10,000 years ago from eastern Siberian over the Bering Strait. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain provides the first written account of First nations using snowshoes to walk across the deep winter snow. Today, as part of our cultural history, visitors are invited to step up their hiking game and try snowshoeing as a practical mode of winter transportation.
<b>Cross-country Skiing</b>	Conservation Areas offer groomed trails for cross-country skiing.	Explore beautiful nature trails through escarpment woods and beaver meadows to the stunning waterfall of Hilton Falls. Trails are suitable for all levels of skiers and adventurers looking to get their heart rate up will not be disappointed.
<b>Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding</b>	Book a day on the slopes of Glen Eden for alpine skiing and snowboarding.	Visit Conservation Halton's Glen Eden for a ride on the slopes of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.
<b>Ice Fishing</b>	Conservation areas where some offer ice fishing amenities for the recreational fishermen.	Take a trip to local lakes in the region for a fun day on the frozen water. It's an experience to spend a winter's day warm and dry inside your ice fishing hut. Fish for muskie, trout, bass and more.
<b>Skating on Cootes Paradise</b>	Book your skate experience and plan to include your pre-booked exclusive firepit and snacks to enjoy by fireside and under the light filled natural rink.	Delightful music fills the air as you skate and appreciate nature's beauty at Cootes Paradise. Plan a getaway with your loved one for a romantic skate under the stars and take a break at a firepit with snacks and treats.
<b>Winter Camping</b>	Pre-book and plan your winter camping getaway at Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area.	Unplug and take an adventure into nature during Ontario's winter bliss. Snow-loving campers and adventurers will crave the outdoors of a night's sky in this season.
<b>Maple Sugaring</b>	Late Winter maple sugar in Ontario is abundant and sought to experience by families, friends, and couples.	Visit a rural farm and conservation areas set in forested lands. Enjoy an outdoor interpretive experience tasting, sampling and discover the making of a Canadian Tradition.