



Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

BLUENOSE COAST - NOVEMBER, 2013

ROGER BROOKS >
International



Opportunity Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In July of 2013, an Opportunity Assessment of the Bluenose Coast, Nova Scotia was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop in October. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the Bluenose Coast area - how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public washrooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing this Opportunity Assessment, we re-assessed the area after our original assessment performed several years ago. The towns and surrounding area were "secretly shopped." Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

Once potential visitors find information about your area, are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Assessment, we reviewed your visitor website and print marketing materials.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)
- 2) Websites
- 3) Brochures and printed materials

4) Publicity (articles)

5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

We searched the internet for activities, requested and reviewed printed materials, and looked for articles and third-party information. As we prepared for travel to your community, we searched both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, tourism websites, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

The marketing assessment determined how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the area would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip of a two-hour drive - or from further away. The question on most visitors' minds is: What do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities falter is when they merely provide "lists" of what the community has, whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation, historic downtowns, scenic vistas, etc. Of course, nearly every visitor can do these things closer to home. So, what makes the Bluenose Coast worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or "complementary" activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets

all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for what makes your community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? We also used the marketing materials to assist us during the on-site assessment. Do the materials provide enough information to help find attractions? Do the attractions included live up to what is promised in the materials?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the area, looking at enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public washrooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The area benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift

shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost “suggestion,” where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed “recommendations,” as they were developed without consulting the communities first about possible constraints, future plans, or reasons why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the communities, leading them to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It’s important to note that to increase the area’s tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the area’s ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a region-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and provincial agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) will not be successful if the tourism effort is not region-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts.



But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are aware of but can't mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.

While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities - that cater to their interests - in your area? Do your communities have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises - otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or they simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the community, we have looked at all of these issues, and have developed some suggestions and ideas the communities can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending locally.

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash - often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended

social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors - providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these - but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, and hotels, ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it - you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.



THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do your residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signage, gateways and advertising.

2. Business travel

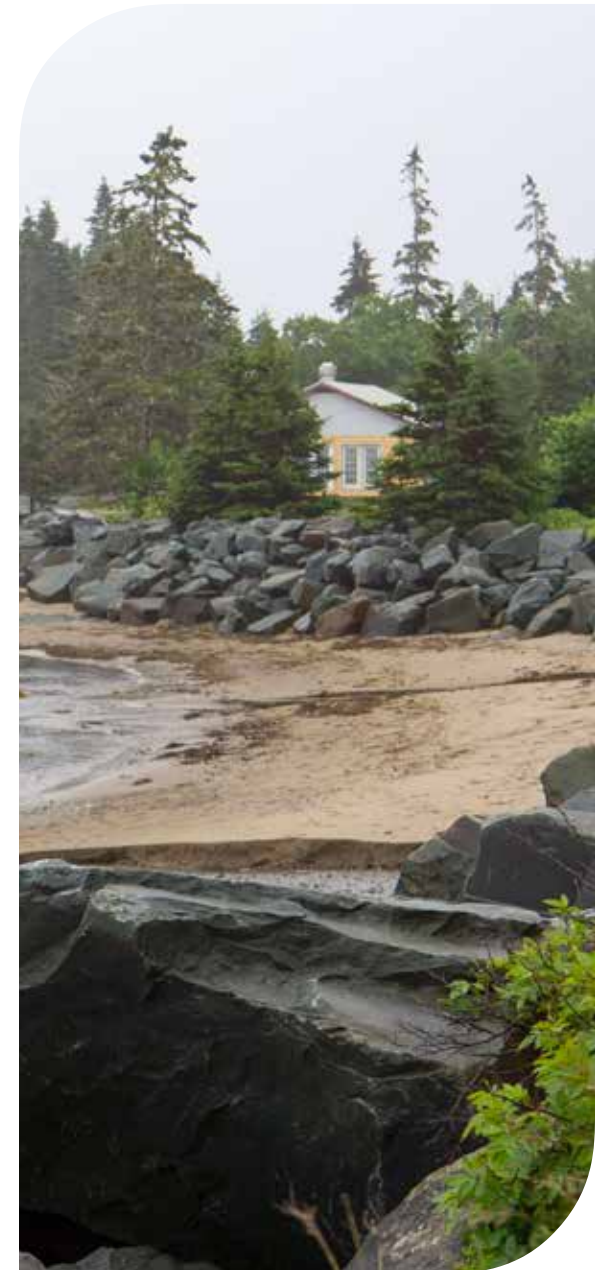
The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do "after hours" while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or "diversions," not simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think Disneyworld, Disneyland, San Antonio's River Walk, Banff, to name a few.

3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial

lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the "live music-theater capital of the world." This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary "lure" is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the





water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

If you take no action to develop the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, simply because some travelers will pull off local highways or freeways for gas, food, or lodging, as well as the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have some tourism.

2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community – buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which nearly always translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And those attractions must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes) If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip.

Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you'll be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries.

They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. If I want to go see Jann Arden, I don't care whether she's performing in Ontario or Alberta. People by the millions head to Disneyland, Disneyworld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity - the experience - THEN the location.

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can't find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not - you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance - they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to

visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or vegetable?

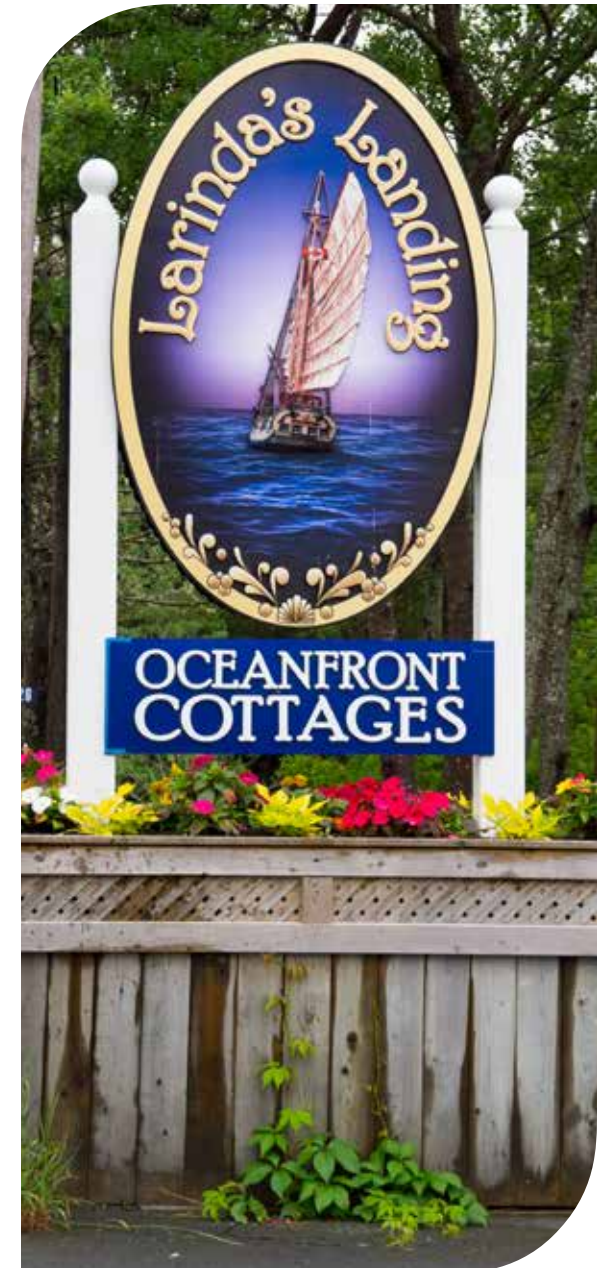
Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image of how wonderful they are in the minds of





your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise – just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, “Pinch yourself, you’re in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent.” This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you’ll see that in being unique, you’ll become a greater attraction.



CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is also how visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, washrooms, etc., all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing arts), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical mass –

the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is nearly a \$650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., nearly \$75 billion in Canada, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community's downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others – new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.



NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report will provide many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the communities and becomes a springboard for the communities in enhancing their tourism industry, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the communities should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed branding plan can build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today. RBI's BrandCamp program can help you build your branding plan from the ground up - with local input, brainstorming, research, and creative planning. We can work with you to guide you through the process, helping create a plan that has local champions and community buy-in.

The next step in the planning process would be to provide public outreach, and review past and current planning efforts. This would determine your goals as a region.

The third step involves research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for.

Then comes the "development" portion of the plan or the "how to get there" program: determining

what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village - everyone pulling in the same direction, each with its own "to do list."

Finally, there's the detailed marketing plan: how and when you will tell the world who you are and what makes you special: the place to live, work and play.

This branding plan should be an "action plan" as opposed to a "strategic plan." You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

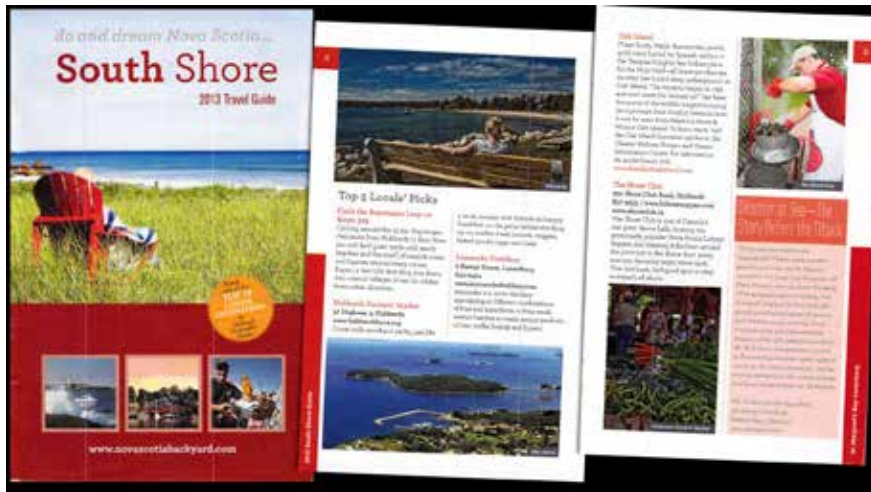
The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your area to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become more attractive and enjoyable for both visitors and citizens.

A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together to enhance the communities, building their unique images in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.



Findings & Suggestions





We first assessed the Bluenose Coast in 2008, and we felt the area was a world-class visitor destination. It has so much to offer! At that time we reviewed the Bluenose Coast marketing materials and performed an on-site assessment, looking at signage, gateways, wayfinding, overall appeal, critical mass, amenities, attractions, customer service and cross selling. We focused on Peggy's Cove, Lunenburg, Petite Riviere, Bridgewater, Hubbards, Terence Bay and Prospect. We offered suggestions with ideas to attract more visitors, improve the product, and help make the Bluenose Coast even better.

For the re-assessment this year, we wanted to dig deeper, visit places we missed in 2008, focus more on marketing, and compare the area to what we found in 2008.

It's good to be back! The Bluenose Coast is fabulous!

We stayed at the Rosewood Cottages (top right), which was wonderful.

We started out looking through the South Shore travel guide and the Bluenose Coast map/brochure (bottom left and right).

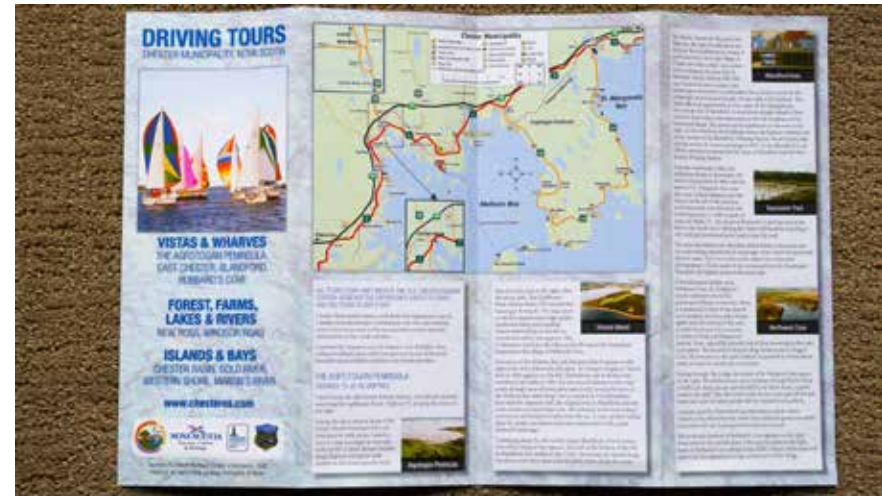


As we made our way through the assessment process, we found more and more brochures and rack cards promoting the area. We would have loved to have the Bluenose Coast map/brochure (opposite, bottom right) combined with the Lunenburg Region map/brochure (top left and right).

We liked the layout of the Bluenose Coast brochure with the map on one side and the sections highlighting different parts of the area on the opposite side. We referred to the map while driving, to see the hidden gems and descriptions of attractions.

The map itself should include more detail - consider making the lines showing the main route thinner to allow room to add more detail and additional roads.

Consider changing the text describing each of the areas to bullet points of specific sites, activities and attractions. Cut back on the generic descriptive text in favor of specific details to help visitors.

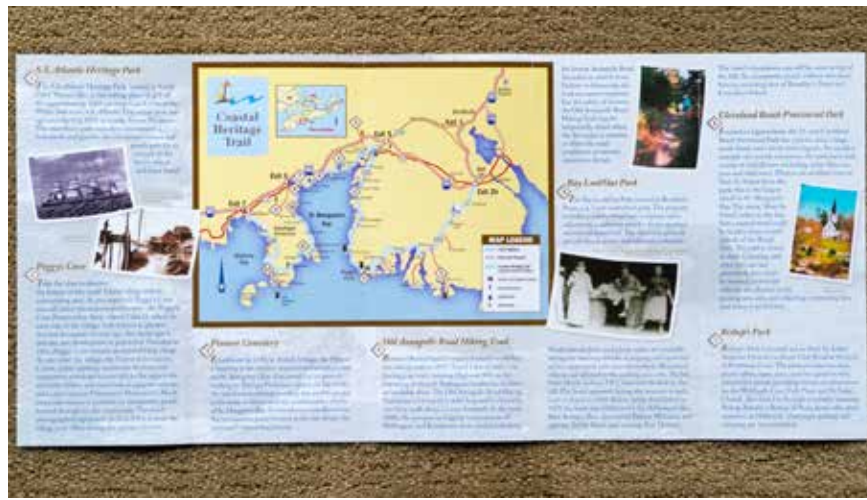


The benefit of tourism comes when visitors spend money in the area. One problem we found in the majority of the brochures was that they do not promote places where people can spend money.

The "Arts, Artisans, Antiques, Beaches, Museums, Great Food, Wine & Points of Interest around Petite Riviere" brochure (top left) addresses that issue by showing the incredible number of galleries and shops in the Petite Riviere area. Visitors want to know what kind of shops, galleries, and restaurants are available, and how to find them - and that's what benefits the tourism industry. Driving and bicycling routes, hiking trails, and museums are great things for

visitors to do, and they can help keep visitors in the area longer, but you need to make it easy for visitors to find places to spend money. Consider creating a Bluenose Coast Artisan Trail brochure with photos and descriptions of the shops and artists.

The "Driving Tours" brochure (top right and bottom left) gave very good instructions for each drive. Consider cutting back the text, and breaking it up with the use of bullet points, though, and enlarging the photos. That will make it easier to use.



First impression: Already having second thoughts. Suggestion: Grade the road, fill the potholes.



Private. No Trespassing. The worst entrance in Nova Scotia. We left.

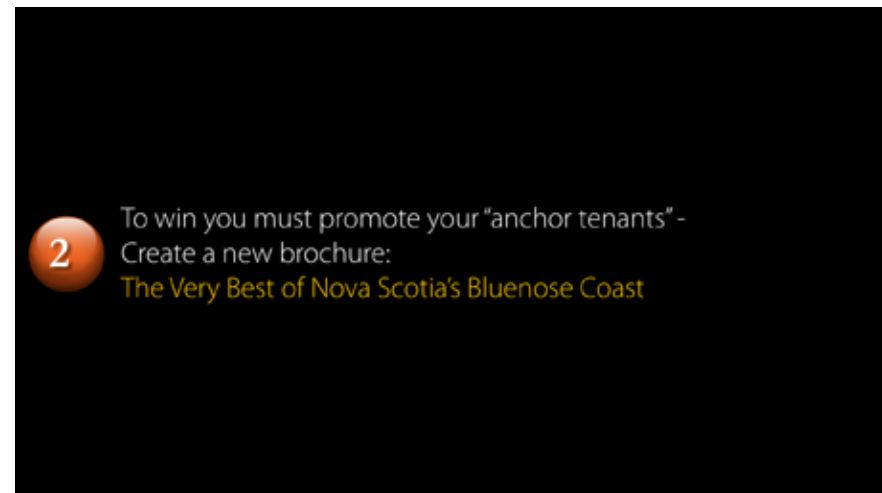
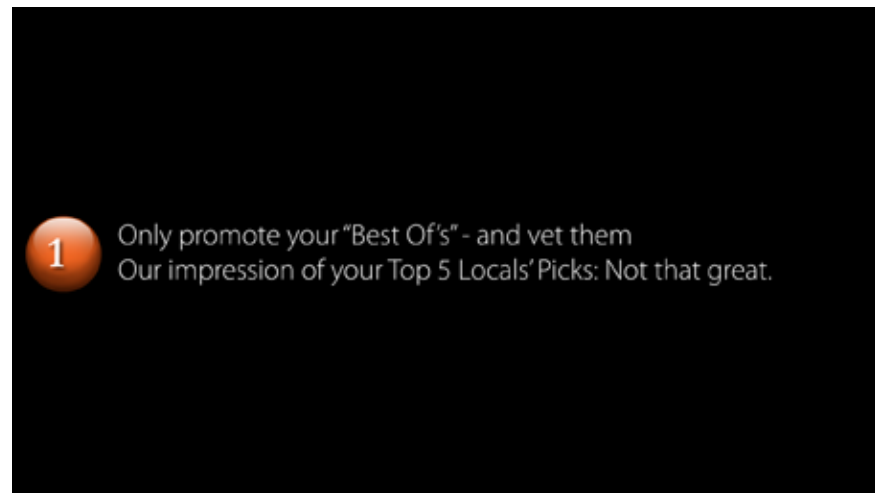


There are so many brochures for the Bluenose Coast area - driving tours, bicycle tours, kayaking, Chester, Lunenburg, hiking, etc. Consider combining these brochures into a stand-alone Bluenose Coast Activities Guide. It would be less costly, and it would be easier for visitors.

The Bluenose Coast website is attractive and nicely laid out. It could use more photos to catch the eye and the imagination. Nearly all the suggestions for things to do offer links for more information that take you away from the website. Instead of links, offer more information right on the website. Once

people leave your site, they might not come back!

We started our on-site assessment by heading towards Petite Riviere, and on the way, we wanted to check out Oak Island, which is heavily promoted. We immediately had second thoughts when we saw the potholes and no trespassing signs (bottom left and right). There was no information at the entrance to Oak Island about how to arrange a tour. If an attraction is a lot of trouble to arrange, visitors aren't going to want to try.



Don't promote places or activities where visitors aren't welcome. Suggestion: Remove Oak Island from the guide or totally redevelop the signage.

Promote your "Best Of" attractions, amenities, shops and restaurants. Make sure they are experiences visitors will be able to find and enjoy. They should be something visitors would go out of their way to visit - and they've got to live up to expectations. They are your "anchor tenants."

Alpena, Michigan created a "Best Of" brochure featuring their "anchor tenants" - things visitors couldn't get closer to home (bottom left and right). They used strict criteria to select their best of's.

Here's a sample criteria:

- Highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, TripAdvisor, Yelp, regional publications.
- Good curb appeal.
- Open at least May through October (to start)
- Open until at least 6:00 pm.
- Open six days a week.
- Unique to the Bluenose Coast.

At the back of this report we'll show you our ideas for some of the "Best Of's."



Suggestion: Never more than 12 words on a sign. Eight or fewer is better.



Market your best:

- Restaurants (5)
- Retail shops and galleries (5)
- Activities (5)
- Attractions (3)
- Scenic drives (2)
- Photo opportunities (they need to be really special!) (3)

Don't let local politics kill this effort! When people are attracted to the very best you have to offer, everyone else benefits too - people will visit the other

shops, restaurants, etc. while they are in the area.

We arrived at Petite Riviere Vineyards (top right), and everything about it was wonderful. The beautification, signage, customer service, and wines - excellent. They are definitely one of your very best.

Next we drove to the Painted Saltbox Gallery (bottom right). Very fun and entertaining, with wonderful art - it is definitely another "best of." Watch for "sign clutter" (bottom left) - too many words for people to read while driving.

Suggestion: Very nice. Consider adding even more planter boxes.



Note: The vast majority of your “Best Of’s” and “Hidden Gems” should be businesses - not just scenic overlooks and trails.

While in the Petite Riviere area, we visited several other shops. The General Store (top left) was very inviting. Adding more planter boxes would be even better.

70% of first time sales come from curb appeal - beautification is an investment with incredible returns.

We drove out onto Green Bay Road to Mariner Craft (bottom left). A very nice shop. Consider adding planters and an “open” flag. We kept on driving out to the water and passed a beautiful little community on the way to MacLeod’s Canteen - little beaches, beautiful little homes - a “hidden gem.”

Locals told us about the Best Coast Coffee Gallery (bottom right), which serves great food!



Wonderful, cozy, eclectic atmosphere (top left). They use locally baked fresh bread and grow many of their own vegetables (top right). We think Best Coast Coffee Gallery is a "best of!"

On to the LaHave Bakery - another "best of!" They do a great job with curb appeal (bottom left). Their ambiance (bottom right) is cozy and appealing, and it's hard to not buy everything in the store.



The craft shop behind the LaHave Bakery is a wonderful added attraction (top left). We really felt like we had entered an arts community!

The LaHave ferry (top right) was another fun experience. It's short, easy, and adds to the enjoyment of the area. We considered the ferry another "best of" experience - one you can't get in very many other places.

Westcote Bel Pottery (bottom left and right) must be one of the very best pottery shops in the entire province. Visiting the shop was an outstanding

experience. People are four times more likely to buy art if they meet the artist. Westcote Bel Pottery is definitely one of the very best of the Bluenose Coast.



Some of the pottery on display at Westcote Bel Pottery (top left), and part of the working area (top right).

Rissers Beach Provincial Park was recommended by a local for its fantastic boardwalk (bottom left). It is truly outstanding, and should be added to the Bluenose Coast map. In fact, add all of your "anchor tenants" or "best of's" to your map. Promote what you have that is truly unique or the very best.

As we scouted the area, we discovered a number of gems. Joy of Antiques

(bottom right) was a wonderful shop to visit, specializing in antique furniture and blankets. The small sample coffin made of oak was beautiful, and most unusual. It's a great "hidden gem" or "Bluenose Coast Treasure."

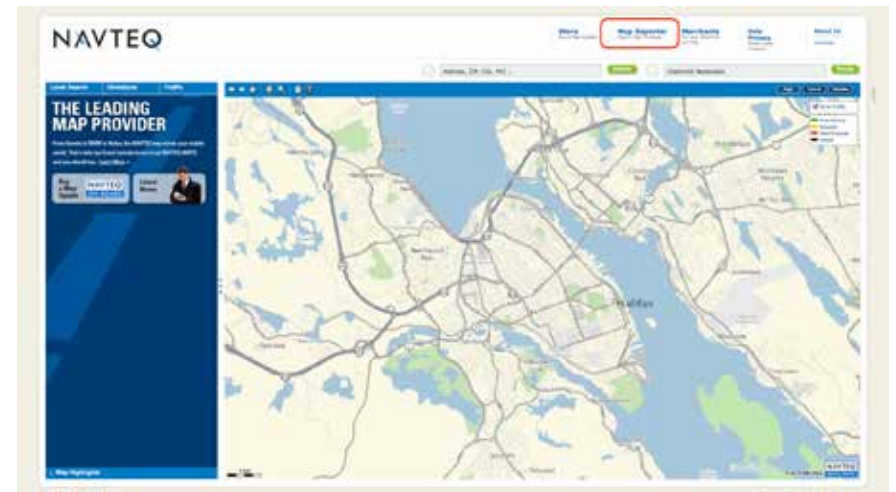
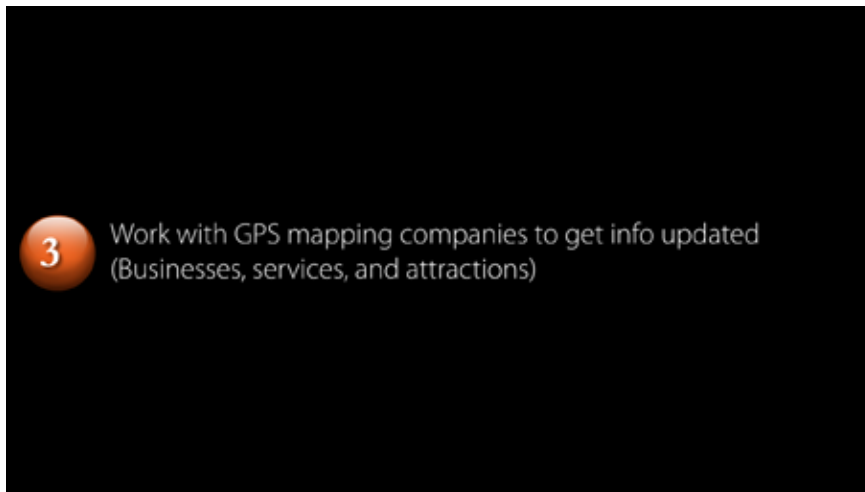


Jan's Antiques (top left) was another treasure - with a wealth of truly unique and wonderful wares, and specializing in antique porcelain.

We enjoyed reading the information on the interpretive signs (top right). Be sure to keep these signs maintained throughout the peak season - cleaning them regularly and repairing or replacing them if needed. We found that some places promoted on the interpretive signs were not included in the brochure/map. Make sure they are consistent.

The Fort Point Museum was a fun place to visit (bottom left). It was fascinating to learn that it was the site of the first capital of New France. Suggestion: Allow the tower to be open to visitors! That would create a stronger attraction!

We drove out to the LaHave Islands, where the road was a patchwork quilt of asphalt. It was a fun driving experience with Crescent Beach and the one-lane wood bridges. We visited the Marine Museum which contains artifacts about life in the LaHave Islands (bottom right). There are public washrooms at the museum - promote the locations of public washrooms on your maps.



Nicki's Inn in Chester was recommended to us for dinner by a local, and it was a great recommendation! (top left and right) Nicki's Inn should be included in the very best of Nova Scotia's Bluenose Coast!

The next day we started in Bridgewater. We looked at our Navigation System to see what attractions, restaurants, and shops were included. 20% of people now use navigations systems - on their smart phones, built into new cars, and as separate devices such as Tom Tom, Garmin, and Magellan. It's important to

make sure all your businesses, services, and attractions are included and locations are correct.

Suggestion: Work with GPS mapping companies to update information about your region. Get volunteers with various units to test locations: lodging, restaurants, shops, attractions, and more.

Navteq handles the maps for Farmin, Lowrance, NDrive, as well as for web-based applications such as Yahoo! Maps, Bing Maps, Nokia Maps and Mapquest, and for radio: XM Satellite Radio and Sirius Satellite Radio.



More on GPS mapping companies:

Navteq's main competitors are Google and the Dutch Company Tele Atlas, which was purchased by TomTom. TomTom provides data for TomTom and Apple's iOS 6 "maps." Google maps provides its own data. The appropriate URLs to add information to GPS databases:

- NAVTEQ: mapreporter.navteq.com
- Tele Atlas: mapfeedback.teleatlas.com
- Google Maps: www.google.com/placesforbusiness

We visited the Wile Carding Mill Museum (top left and right, bottom left), and we found it to be wonderful! It is an interactive experience - a guide shows you around, telling the story about Mr. Wile's good business practices and what it was like to work there. Plus - and this is awesome - each guest can hand-card some wool and spin it, and then gets to take it home. The Wile Carding Museum is definitely a "Best Of."

We also visited the Desbrisay Museum (bottom right). It houses a collection of interesting local artifacts.



Suggestion: Add some curb appeal - a problem for all of Bridgewater.



4

Every town should have a focus on the one thing that really sets them apart and makes them worth a stop or a special trip.

Museums would capture visitors' interest longer if they told more stories and became more interactive. Stories and visitor participation brings history and artifacts to life - giving them more meaning. Consider ways to bring the history to life with personal stories about the people who used the artifacts.

Suggestion: Trim back the landscaping surrounding the Desbrisay Museum. It's so overgrown some of the signs are getting covered (top left). It almost appears as if it's no longer in operation because of the dense overgrowth.

We used TripAdvisor to find a restaurant for lunch in Bridgewater, and Waves (bottom left) was the #1 pick. It was very busy with locals, and the food was good. Suggestion: Add beautification - some pots of flowers, a bench or two. That would add more curb appeal.

Bridgewater should consider positioning itself as the South Shore (or Bluenose Coast) "provisioning headquarters."

Suggestion: Signs should be maintained every year - or two at most. No more than 14 words.



We had to check out The Ovens - the description in the South Shore Travel Guide of the "cliff-side trails" and the "spectacular view of the sea caves, or 'ovens'" was intriguing, even though it was a very rainy day. Approaching the Natural Park, the sign (top left) didn't give a good first impression. It should be refreshed regularly. It's best to use 14 words or less on signs - this has 53 words. The only way to read it is to stop in the road. Signs aren't meant to be brochures.

We paid our fee and went into the park. It was a spectacular trail, and the caves are truly awesome (bottom left and right). We had a lot of trouble making our

way along the trail, though. The rain had backed up so much water along the route that it was very flooded, and we had to find detours through the woods. It would have been an easy thing to fix if a maintenance person came out with a shovel to clear some of the debris that kept the rainwater from draining. We told some of the staff about the flooding, but the response was a shrug and comment, "We don't hardly ever go out there." We would have expected staff to inspect the trail at least once a day to make sure it is maintained and safe for visitors. Even so, The Ovens is a great experience, and, if they fix their maintenance situation, it could be one of the Bluenose Coast's "best of's."



Suggestion: Consider professionally produced signage. But thanks! This is better than nothing!



As outstanding as ever. Love this town!



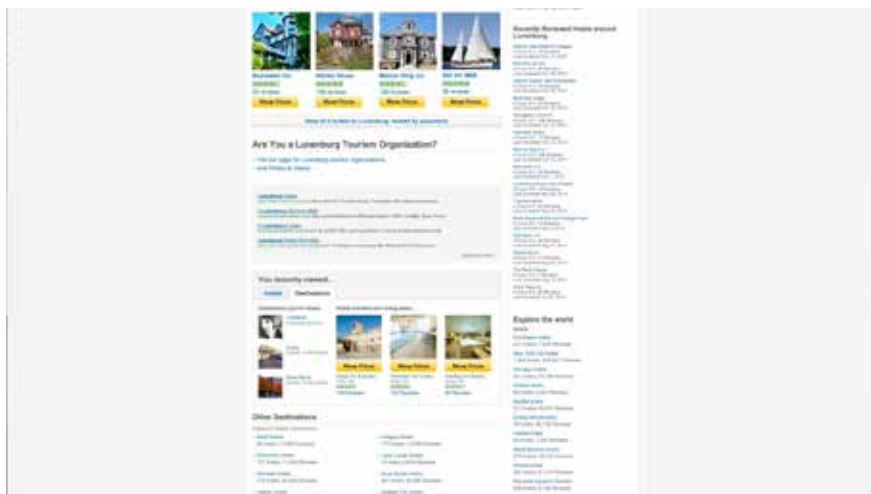
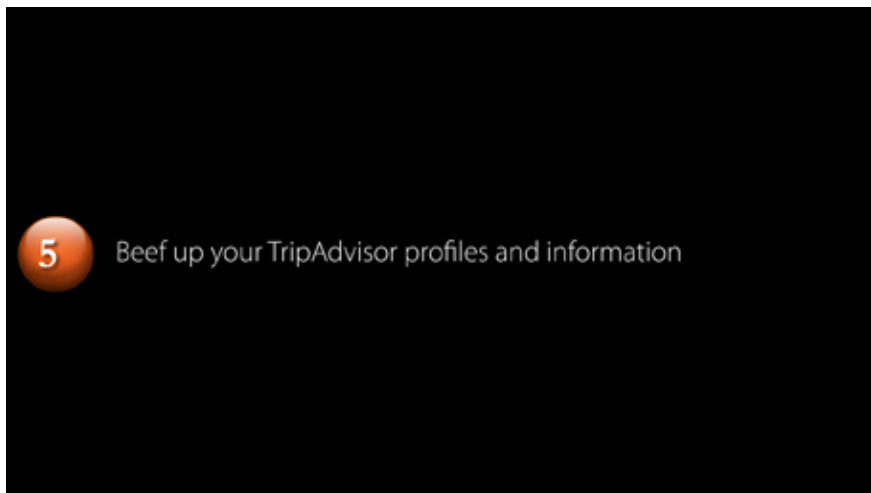
This handmade sign (top left) was helpful, but consider installing a professionally made one.

On to Lunenburg! (top right) Since our last visit, Lunenburg has been putting a lot of its wiring underground, and that is making a very nice difference in the town. There was more beautification outside many of the shops, and altogether, we found Lunenburg to be even more charming than before.

Lunenburg, with its walking tour, Fisheries Museum, shops and restaurants,



sailing tours, the Blue Rocks, and the Ironworks Distillery, is one of the very best of Nova Scotia's Bluenose Coast!



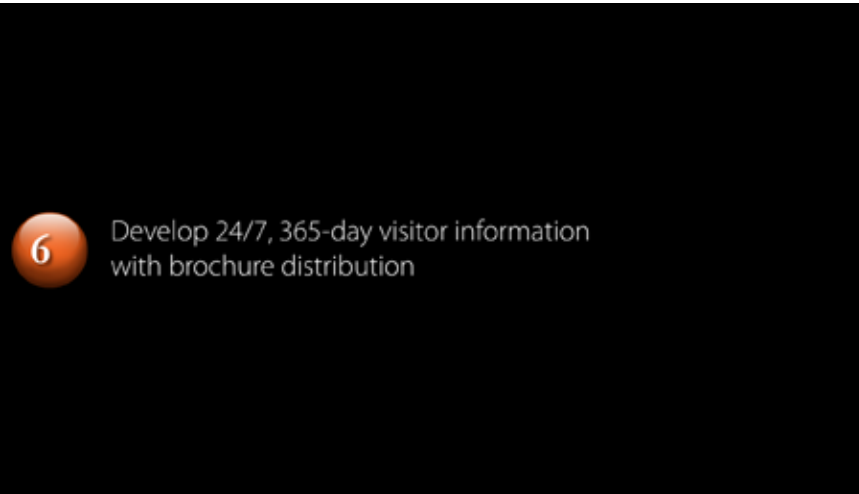
More and more travelers are looking at peer review websites to get information for travel planning. Make sure those visitors can find your businesses and attractions.

Provide the information to peer review sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp! about your locations and businesses. You can set up the information yourselves - a customer doesn't have to do it, and it'll be much easier for your happy customers to post a good review.

Feel free to ask your customers to post a review - first make sure they are happy with your service. Peer reviews are more important than ever before.

It's critical that merchants, restaurants, and lodging facilities monitor peer review sites and make a response if necessary. And it costs nothing to reply to a review, but it shows people you care.

Make sure your tourism organizations are adding content to TripAdvisor. It does take time, but it's a free service. The folks at TripAdvisor want to be more than just a review site for restaurants and lodging establishments. They are working hard to become the go-to source for planning a trip to just about anywhere. They want the site populated with attractions, activities, photos, and resources.



Since visitors don't just travel during business hours, offering information around the clock is important. Include brochure distribution.

In North Platte, Nebraska (bottom left and right), their VIC offers brochures in weather-proof holders, so visitors always have access to information.

Visitor information kiosks can offer the information visitors need 24 hours a day/7 days a week. They should cross-promote activities, events, attractions and amenities. The more visitors see there is to do, the longer they will stay and the more money they will spend. Every site should cross-sell to other sites,

attractions and amenities.

This attractive visitor center in Oxnard, California (top right) has brochure holders right on the front door for after-hours accessibility.



In the Central Bruce Peninsula in Ontario, visitors can get information after business hours from this simple weather proof brochure holder (top left).

Mahone Bay has one of the most attractive visitor information centres (top right). On either side of the door are weather-proof brochure holders.

This kiosk in Cape May, NJ (bottom left and right) is one of our favorites: It has light, shelter from the weather, ample room for brochures and displays, and it fits the ambiance of the locale.

Although the vast majority of visitors do their travel planning online, once they arrive, visitors want to find local information and have a brochure in hand to refer to. Bentley University's Center for Marketing Technology found that:

Only 32% of travel decisions prior to traveling are made using brochures. (#1 resource - internet; #2 resource - friends.)

81% of travel decisions while traveling come from looking at brochures (#1).

Brochures are still important.



Scouting around the area, we found the Railway Museum (top left and right). Suggestion: Give it more appeal. The blank brown building looks more like a warehouse than a fun place to explore. Consider a train mural, or a train car parked in front, and some beautification: benches, planters.

We explored Chester, visiting one of our favorite pottery shops (bottom left).

Suggestion: Consider adding a wayfinding system in Chester. We had a difficult time finding some places, such as the golf course. It's an amazing little

town, and wayfinding would help visitors find all that you have to offer.

Add signage at the golf course to let visitors know if the course is open for public play, if there is a pro shop, and if you rent cars and clubs. The golf course is spectacular.



Make wayfinding a priority.

Wayfinding not only educates visitors about what you have and where it's located, but will also educate your front-line employees about what you have and where attractions and amenities are located. The easier you make it for visitors, the more likely they are to spend additional time in the community and, as a result, spending will increase.

Wayfinding should be decorative to fit your brand, like French Lick, Indiana (top right and bottom left) and Greenville, SC (bottom right).

Consider using QR posts to offer additional information, like these designed for Barrie, Ontario (top right). Using a smartphone and QR reader, a visitor can access information about the area, including directions, shopping, dining, lodging, etc.



Signage hasn't changed in five years. Suggestion: Time to give it a facelift and add information.



Opportunity: Turn the waiting room into a non-staffed visitor info center with brochures.



Greenville, SC's wayfinding system helps visitors find additional shops, galleries, and restaurants, with its "More to Enjoy" signage (top left). Chester could use that same idea to direct visitors through its meandering streets to find additional shops, the waterfront, and parks.

Suggestion: The Tancook Island Ferry looks like it would be a lot of fun. Help convince visitors by giving them more information. What can they do on the island? Is there a restaurant, or should they bring food and drinks with them? Are there bike rentals on the island? How long should they plan to stay? How

long is the crossing? Is it good to have a car? Are there shops?

The waiting room could double as a visitor information centre with some brochures that can cross-sell various attractions. Use every opportunity to provide more information and cross-sell activities. The more there is for visitors to do, the longer they will stay, and the more money they will spend.

Suggestion: Add a small readerboard: Upcoming Performances. What a great spot!



Yes! Thanks for adding the brochure distribution!



Excellent job!



This park and gazebo (top left) are lovely! Let visitors know of upcoming performances by putting up a discreet, small readerboard. It should be decorative to fit the ambiance of this beautiful spot.

Chester is charming! The new map and brochure distribution (top right) are very good.

The calendar showing the Summer Theatre Festival (bottom right) is very nicely done - it gives visitors a reason to come back.

Consider putting together a self-guided walking tour of Chester. A Chester walking tour and the Chester Playhouse would be two more additions to the very best of Nova Scotia's Bluenose Coast.



We headed into Mahone Bay, which was as enjoyable a place to visit as we remembered. The shops and beautification are top-notch.

The deli/market/bake shop is always busy (top right), and it is an important part of the mix of businesses in Mahone Bay.

Northern Sun Gallery (bottom left) always has merchandise we want to bring home. Its outdoor beautification is also very well done. It could be included in the "Best Of's" as well.

The Old Station (bottom right) has created a very inviting entry.

Amos Pewter is ranked #1 for shops in Mahone Bay on TripAdvisor. It is definitely one of the Bluenose Coast's "best of's."



The combination of critical mass and beautification in Mahone Bay makes it an outstanding destination - visitors flock to the town. When like businesses are grouped together, they attract more customers - people are attracted to the choices. For a downtown to be successful, it needs to fit the **Ten + Ten + Ten Rule**. It needs "Critical Mass." It needs to have within three lineal blocks:

- Ten places that sell food
- Ten destination retail shops
- Ten places open after 6:00 p.m.

Women account for 80% of all spending. Women like to spend time in places that feel safe, are beautiful and friendly, and have a variety of appealing shops. Mahone Bay fits those requirements.

We headed east towards Hubbards and stopped for lunch at the Trellis Cafe (bottom right). It has great curb appeal and great food - and they do a good job of attracting customers - they have a sign out front that tells customers they won a people's choice prestige award from the Taste of Nova Scotia - great job!



The Visitor Information Centre in Hubbards (top right and left, bottom left) does an excellent job. We thought it was great that bicycles are available for rent, and the staff is very helpful. And visitor information is available 24/7 through the displays and the brochure holder.

There were a few attractions/activities that we saw in the map/brochure or from signs along the highway that we had a hard time finding, or we weren't sure if they were actually open to the public. One of these was Hubbard's Sailing Club, which looks like a great facility. But is it open to the public? Are

there boat rentals? If so, add signage to let visitors know. We followed signs for Cleveland's Outdoor Gallery (bottom right), but we weren't able to find it - the road ended abruptly. Either the signs should be changed, or they should be taken down.

The map/brochure mentions the Southwest Cove Fairytale Castle, but we couldn't find any signs telling where it is. We understood you could kayak out to see it, but we didn't know where from. If an attraction is too difficult to find, don't include it as a "must do."



Keep it authentic! We were glad it hasn't been overly commercialized for tourism.



We continued heading east to Peggy's Cove, and we were happy to see that it hasn't lost its charm and authenticity! The Visitor Centre was very well done - consider adding the locations of washrooms to the map/brochure. The shops were fun (we loved the Wharf Hags).

Do everything you can to help keep the homes and stores painted bright colors - red, yellow, green, purple, etc. The brightly painted buildings help give Peggy's Cove (and all of Nova Scotia) its own special ambiance.



This church at Peggy's Cove (top left) is simply beautiful!

Peggy's Cove Preservation Area (top right and bottom left) is absolutely stunning. Are there walking trails throughout the area? Kayaking tours? It would be wonderful to provide a way for visitors to see and enjoy the area's beauty beyond the road - if possible without damaging the ecosystem.

Peggy of the Cove (bottom right) is very nicely done - it does a good job making a very appealing entrance.



Peggy of the Cove (top left) - great mural! Very inviting entrance!

We continued driving around east towards Lower Prospect and Terence Bay. East Coast Outfitters (top right and bottom left) looks like a great facility. The location is spectacular. It should be promoted as one of the Bluenose Coast's "best of's."

As we headed to Heritage Park and the site of the SS Atlantic, we couldn't help but notice these signs (bottom right). Consider making this a directory sign to

make it more attractive and easier to read.

Suggestion: Same here. Hasn't changed in five years (or longer).



Suggestion: Now THIS is a terrific Hidden Gem.

Heritage Park and the SS Atlantic Interpretation Centre looks the same as it did five years ago. Be sure to maintain the signs. This is a really wonderful spot, and the boardwalk (bottom right) is gorgeous! It truly is a hidden gem.

Other notes:

Aspotogan Peninsula - this drive around Highway 329 is heavily promoted as a biking tour. We did see many bicyclists along the route - it is scenic and has

less traffic than Highway 3. There are some "Share the Road" signs. Consider adding more of those signs - with no shoulders, it's not really set up to be safe for bicycles. With no place to spend money along the route and no washrooms, we wondered why this route is promoted to visitors. The benefit of tourism is when people spend money, so consider adding vendors during the peak season along the route - maybe a food and ice cream truck around the half-way point. Add washrooms and a resting stop, where a vendor cart could be added to sell drinks and snacks. Monetize your bike route!

Suggestion: Remember that 70% of first time sales comes from curb appeal. Weeds anyone?



Suggestion: Add planters, benches, pots, hanging baskets. Still in business? Does't look like it.



Suggestion: "Shaw's Landing Restaurant" + "Great food. 2km"



Would you stay here? Suggestion: Make sure your signs adequately represent your quality.



Other notes and first impressions:

The Bay Landing sign (top left) - always promote what you're selling before the name of the store. If the Bay Landing is a restaurant, make sure you tell visitors. And your sign is our first impression of your business, so make sure it is maintained by clearing away weeds and keeping it well-maintained.

And so, is it an operating restaurant? (top right) Add beautification to increase curb appeal and let people know you're in business.

Shaw's Landing (bottom left) - again, let us know you are a restaurant.

Your signage is our first impression of your business (bottom right). Make sure your signs portray your quality, professionalism, and hospitality.



The 7-8-7 Rule:

- 70% of all retail sales take place after 6:00 p.m.
- Women account for 80% of all retail spending.
- 70% of first time sales come from curb appeal.

Curb appeal includes your signage.

Be sure to keep your signs fresh and well-maintained. They should be somewhat decorative to portray your business's appeal, hospitality, and quality.

Dilapidated signs along a highway create a negative impression of the area. Work with businesses and property owners to remove them, replace them, or repair them.

Suggestion: Another one for the removal list.



This sign (top left) should be removed.

The other signs on this page are nicely done and give a good impression of their businesses and the area. Larinda's Landing (bottom right) is particularly attractive with its planter box filled with bright flowers. Good job!

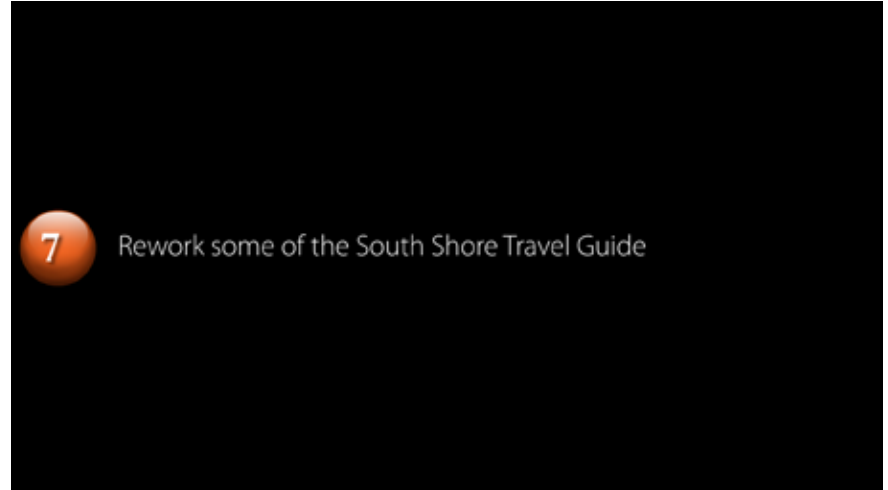
Suggestion: Avoid outlined text on signs and billboards.



If you were a visitor would you eat here?



Still have some work to do here: Down to only 24 signs.
At Hubbards (Hwys 3 & 103): 38 signs



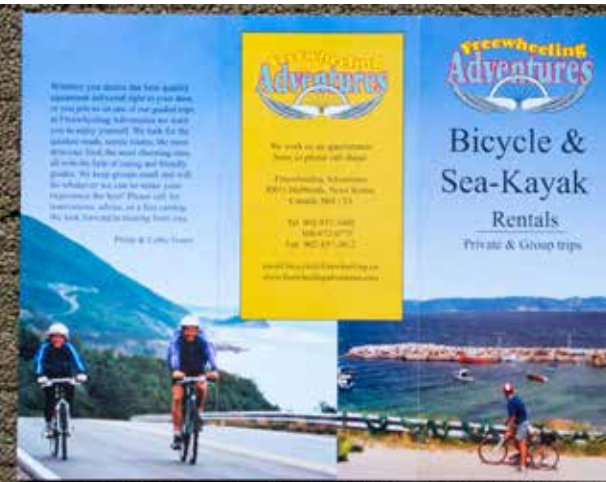
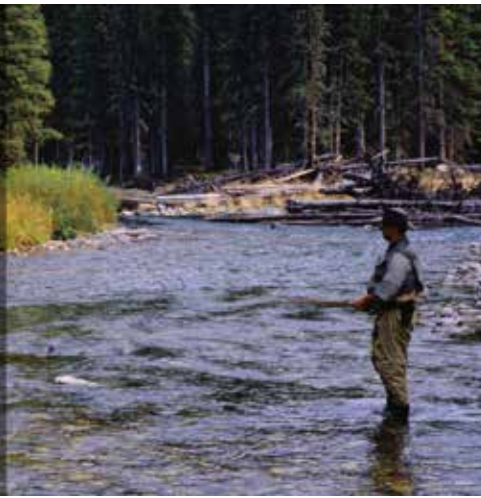
Shaw's Landing has a nice log-cabin style building, but some of the details could improve the curb appeal. Avoid using outlined text on signs and billboards - it's difficult to read, especially from a distance. Consider cleaning up the side area (top right). Remove the weeds (maybe landscaping or gravel?) and put away the old signs and lumber. Add planter boxes and benches outside to make it more inviting.

Sign clutter has improved over the last five year! (bottom left) Although there is still room for improvement!

The South Shore Travel Guide has excellent photography, and the organization of information is very good. Some suggestions:

- Add a short paragraph for each season telling us what to expect.
- Add more details - don't leave questions unanswered, such as "Where do I go to be able to scuba dive at Fox Point Beach?"
- Reduce the text and add more photos.
- Add details, and include details in specific itineraries. You can also use QR codes on maps to link to specifics on your website.

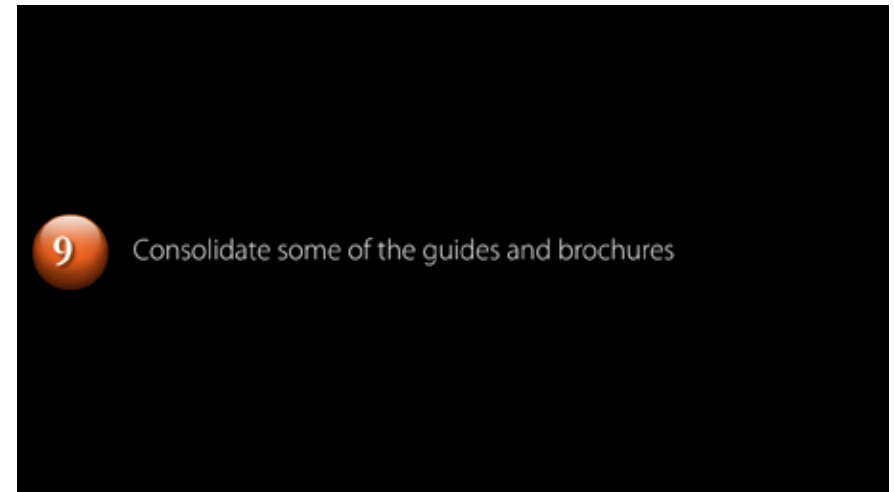
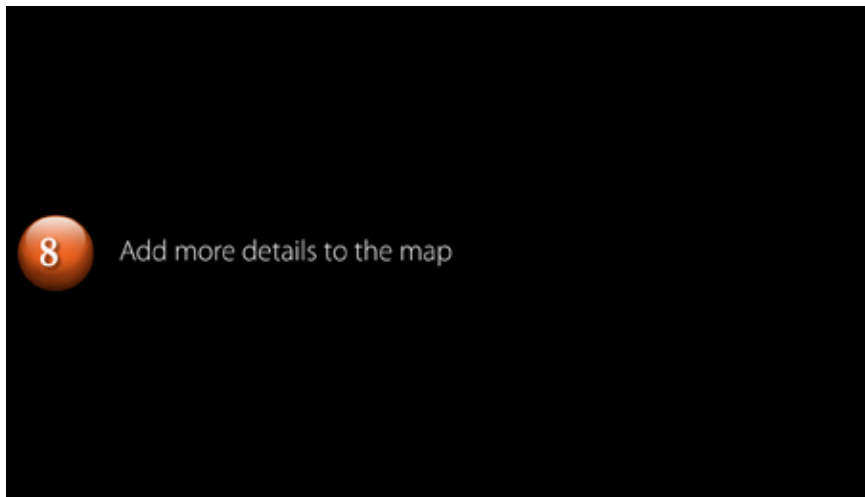
- What will I catch?
- Where do I get a fishing license?
- How much is it?
- What are the limits?
- When are the fishing seasons?
- What time of day is best?
- What kind of bait should I use?
- Is there a bait and tackle shop in town?
- Fishing guide services?
- How do I get to specific fishing spots?
- Is there a place to park?
- Anything else I should know?



Most of all - provide specifics. The easier you make it, the longer people will stay, and the more often they will come back.

For photography, make sure the photos are different or exceptional and show people enjoying themselves - not just scenic vistas.

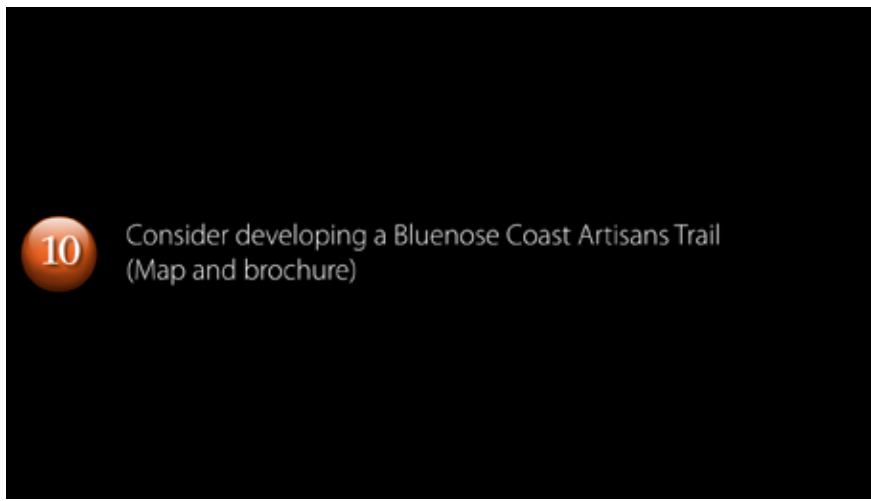
We are in the age of price transparency, so business brochures should include their prices.



We used the Bluenose Coast map/brochure quite a bit. Some suggestions:

- Add Lower Prospect to the map.
- Add Rissers Beach Provincial Park to the map.
- Reduce the thickness of the highway line, so that you can include some other roads as well.
- Add QR codes to the map to link to more details, such as:
 - Kayaking to the SW Cove Fairytale Castle
 - Information about the famous lobster suppers
 - Canoeing the Medway River

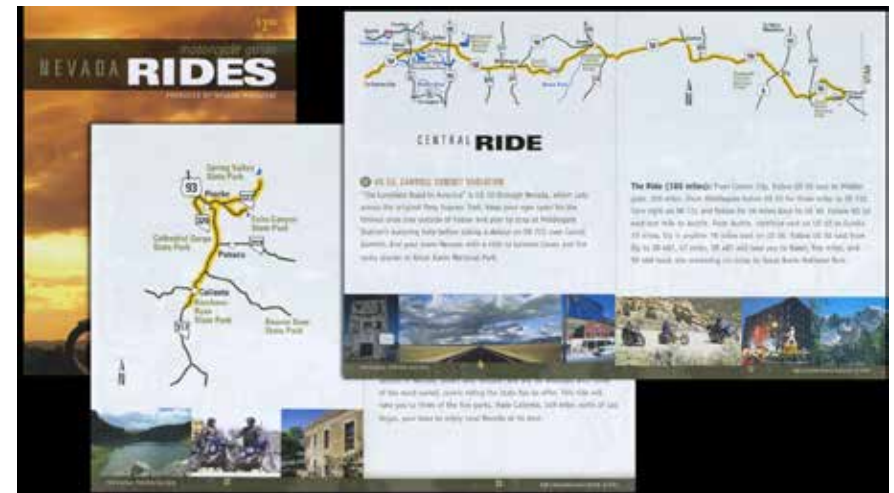
- The Hidden Gems are a great addition - just make sure they are easy to find.
- Prospect Village? Are visitors really wanted there? There are no spending opportunities, and while the shoreline would be nice to stroll, there's not much space to park. This shouldn't really be included as a visitor destination.
- Consider using bullet points rather than some of the more generic text.
- Finding things is still difficult. Add smaller roads and routes to some of the Hidden Gems.
- Use QR codes on both sides of the map.



Consider developing a Bluenose Coast Artisans Trail brochure with map. The Economusee does a nice job with its brochure, but it only features a very small number of the artisans in the Atlantic provinces. The Bluenose Coast has many, many excellent artisans, some few of which we have mentioned in this report.

The Cabot Trail has an artisan's brochure that does an excellent job - it features most of the artists and galleries around the Cabot Trail, tells a little about them, and shows their location on the map.

Detailed itineraries can be an excellent sales tool - they show potential visitors a variety of things to do, organized to be easy to follow, and with directions and specifics so that visitors can get the most out of their time. Good itineraries also help potential visitors imagine themselves doing those activities, and that's the first step to getting people to commit to making a visit.



To create detailed itineraries:

- Find local writing talent and local club members. Have them write up itineraries.
- Cost? Nothing except time, outreach, editing, and supplemental photography.

Itinerary ideas:

- 1 day: Peggy's Cove (or any of the towns)
- 1 day: Kayak or bike tour
- 2 days: Peggy's Cove to Lunenburg

- 2 days: Bluenose Coast artisans' trail
- 3 days: Bluenose Coast romantic escape
- 5 to 7 days: The full Bluenose Coast Experience

Of course, the itineraries must be fleshed out with details - very specific details, such as what shops to visit, specialties of restaurants, etc.



12 Make digital your #1 marketing priority



The web should be your number one marketing priority.
But remember: It must be good enough to close the sale.

Your marketing dollars at work:

- 45%: Internet/website/social media/apps/peer reviews
- 20%: Public relations, media - brand building
- 20%: Advertising - to drive people to your website
- 10%: Collateral materials
- 5%: Outdoor, trade shows, other marketing avenues

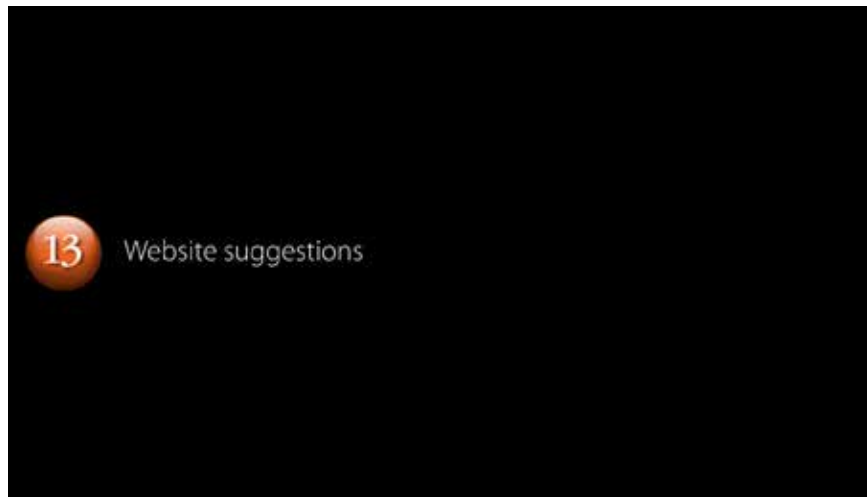
• Create itinerary booklets (top left). Cost: About \$2 each. Distribute them at local outlets and enthusiasts' shops. Ideas:

- Motorcycle tour routes
- Biking
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Photographers' showcase
- History and culture tour
- Foodies Guide to the Bluenose Coast
- Art lovers' tour

Consider on the web: Pick your season; pick your passion

Pick your season:

- November - January: Winter Solstice
- February - March: Romantic escapes
- April - June: Spring fling
- July - August: Summer fun
- September - October: Fall color



Pick your passion:

Engage locals in creating "itineraries from locals."

- Girls' weekends out
- Kids & family
- Wheels: driving & riding enthusiasts
- On the water
- Hook & bullet fans (fishing & hunting)
- History & Culture

- Photography, wildlife & site-seeing
- Romantic escape
- The environment: hiking, kayaking, canoeing

Suggestion: We need more details and fewer links to other sites on the Bluenose Coast website. Every time a reader has to leave your site to find more information is a chance they might not come back.



Website suggestions: bluenosecoast.ca

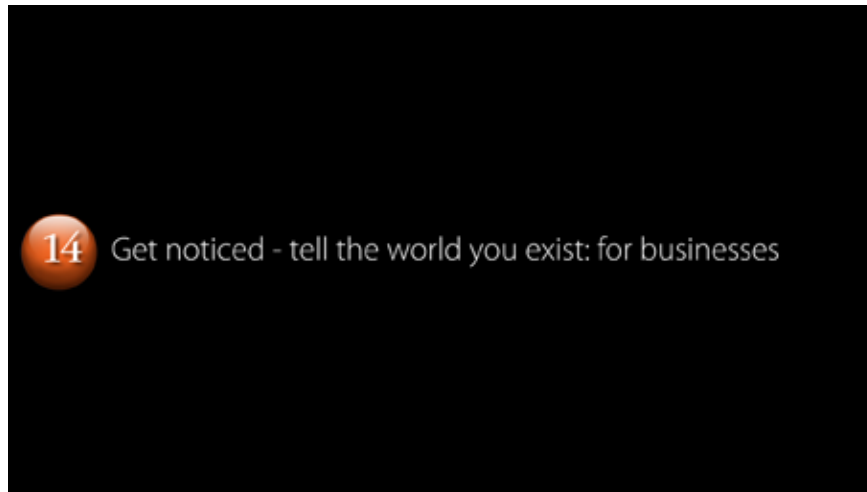
- Create a YouTube channel and add videos to the site (30 secs to 2 min.)
- The Very Best of Nova Scotia's Bluenose Coast should have its own tab. Put them in geographic order from Halifax west.
- "Hidden Gems" should be extra-special AND really UNIQUE to you!
- Try to give enough detailed information so people don't have to constantly link to other sites.

Website suggestions: novascotiabackyard.com

- Edit the text - it's a bit text heavy. Bullet points work well on websites.
- Add video content whenever possible. Videos sell! (30 secs to 2 min.)
- Promote the Best Of's by area:
 - Bluenose Coast
 - South Shore
 - Yarmouth & Acadian Shore
 - Bay of Fundy and Annapolis Valley



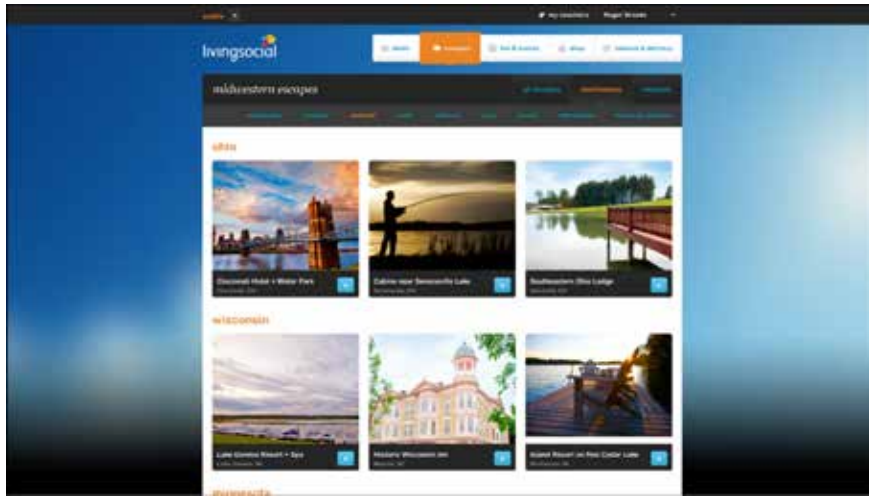
Make your itineraries super-specific right down to which shops to visit, which places to eat - including specialty dishes, time spent at each place, etc.



- Photography showing people enjoying experiences UNIQUE to the area.
- Overall, the websites are beautifully designed and easy to use!

Businesses should take advantage of new internet marketing tools, such as Groupon, Living Social, Amazon Local, and Google Offers.

Also, businesses should always pay attention to peer review websites - make sure your business shows up on TripAdvisor and Yelp! Monitor your reviews, and always respond to customer reviewers, even if it's just to say thank you.



A gentleman in Door County, Wisconsin created a small book "101 Things to do in Door County." It was privately produced and for-profit, and it has become one of the best promotional pieces ever for Door County. Each page features a short itinerary of something special to do in Door County - something only locals would really know about. It gives specifics, such as a specific restaurant with a specific dish to order, a street to walk along at a specific time of day, a specific shop to visit, etc. With 101 different things to do, visitors need days and days to be able to enjoy everything.

Create one of these books for the Bluenose Coast. It will entice visitors to the area and keep them busy, so they will stay longer and spend more money, while enjoying the Bluenose Coast even more.

Bluenose Coast 2013 Suggestions

- Seeing the Bluenose Coast again was wonderful. Lunenburg seemed better than before – more beautification. Roads were much improved.

Bluenose Coast brochure

This map brochure has a lot of good points, but it has some challenges too. We used it while driving along the Bluenose Coast, referring to the notations and hidden gems.

- I like the layout, with the sections highlighting different parts of the Bluenose Coast and the large map on the reverse side.
- Consider changing the text describing each of the areas to bullet-points of specific sites, activities, and attractions. If you get rid of the descriptive text that tends to be more generic, you could include more specific information. More details are needed for the things to do.

For example, Hubbards and Aspotogan: One of the “Must Do” items is to sea-kayak to see the fairy-tale castle in Southwest Cove. But where do you find that? It’s nearly impossible to find enough information to actually do that.

The text also says that shopping, hiking, biking and kayaking make this the “Playground of St. Margaret’s Bay”. It would be good to include specific information – where can I rent a bike; where can I rent a kayak? Where are the famous lobster suppers and the old time dance hall? Just telling visitors that you want them to enjoy these things doesn’t give them the information they need to be able to do so.

- Hidden Gems: It’s great to include hidden gems, but again, more information needs to be provided.
- The benefit of tourism is when visitors spend money in the area. So it’s important to promote places where there are opportunities for visitors to spend money. We were surprised at a few of the places being promoted: Driving to Prospect and biking the Aspotogan Peninsula, for example. Prospect is very scenic, but there’s not even any place to park, let alone anything for visitors to do or to spend money on there. The Aspotogan Peninsula is a popular bike route, but there are no services, amenities, or shops or restaurants

along the route. Of course, riding that loop does keep visitors in the area longer, but it would be great to work on product development – maybe even a vendor cart in season that sells drinks, sandwiches, and snacks. Maybe some souvenirs or bike accessories.

- The map itself needs to include more detail – maybe if the lines showing the main route were thinner, there would be room to add more detail and additional roads.
- Consider adding QR codes to the map for attractions so visitors can have easy access to more information.
- The South Shore and Bluenose Coast are also part of the Lighthouse Route, but finding most of the lighthouses, even when they are marked on the map, is difficult. Consider adding more information on the map – directions to the lighthouses.

Do and Dream Nova Scotia ... South Shore

2013 Travel Guide

- Excellent photography throughout! Nova Scotia is gorgeous, so it’s not hard to find beautiful scenes to photograph. And most of the photos do include people enjoying activities – that’s very good.
- Organization of information is very good. The General Information is helpful, and I like seeing your information about “smoke-free places,” and “Information for drivers.”
- “Explore our Four Seasons” is a good section. Consider adding a line or two at the beginning of each season describing the weather to expect. Be sure to include specific information about each activity – most give a web link for further info, but a few don’t. For example, where can I find out about canoeing the Medway River – is there an outfitter that provides those excursions?
- “Don’t-Miss Attractions,” which says that it includes top picks for attractions, shopping and dining, primarily showcases museums. The shopping pages specifically promote only the Economusée Network, and there are only three shops included in the Guide. The benefit of tourism is when visitors

spend money – that’s really the entire reason to try to bring more tourists to your area. Communities, governments, and organizations receive the benefits from tourism when visitors spend money at shops, lodging facilities, restaurants, and paying attractions. So you want to encourage shopping!!! That means more than the members of the Economusée network, although they are a great network. But there are only four artisans in Nova Scotia that are part of the Economusée network – when you send visitors to their website for more shopping information, it’s not helping them find artisans, craftspeople or shopping, and with so few promoted, it appears that Nova Scotia hardly has any shops!

- We suggest you broaden your scope in the shopping category. Private enterprise needs to be promoted – without it, there are no tax dollars to help fund local government, museums or visitor organizations. We suggest that you create a “Best Of” guide that includes the most unique shops, activities, and restaurants, and have the criteria for their selection not be based on if they are a member of a certain organization, but be based on the following criteria (or similar):

- They must be different than what your target market can get closer to home. They must be unique to your area. (Local artisans almost always fit this category.)

- They must have good curb appeal.

- They must be open at least 6 days a week.

- They must be open until at least 7:00 pm at least two days a week.

- They must be highly regarded by third parties – such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, or a magazine feature, or contest.

- For the Do and Dream South Shore Travel Guide, include as many of these “best ofs” as you can. Make it clear to visitors that the South Shore has LOTS of wonderful shopping. Because it absolutely does!

- The “Great Taste” pages in the guide are good – we love the recipes!

- Explain what a “Lobster Supper” is – visitors to the area may not know.

- Shining a Light: the South Shore’s Lighthouse Route: We love how this section tells visitors which lighthouses are accessible, and which are not. Thank you! This section’s information is good. Consider expanding it to include directions on how to find these lighthouses. We tried to find many of them, and to say it was

challenging would be an understatement. One of our suggestions is to improve the wayfinding signage to the lighthouses that are accessible.

- We like how the guide then goes into different sub-regions of the South Shore. That definitely makes it easier to navigate.

- Top 5 Photo Opportunities: Most of these are good ideas, but remember that a photo opportunity should be a specific location, rather than a general village or park. Pinpoint the specific spots.

- It is a great idea to include a recommended scenic drive. We took the drive along Route 329 along the Aspotogan Peninsula Loop, but we weren’t sure why it was so strongly promoted. It is scenic, but we didn’t find it to be more scenic than the rest of the highways along the South Shore region – they’re all scenic! We understand this is a popular bike route, which is great. But there are no places at all for visitors to stop and spend any money. If there were a vendor’s cart, even, at the halfway point where bicyclists and drivers could get a lemonade, sandwich, or ice cream, that would be good – along with a few picnic tables.

- The Top 5 Outdoor Activities: Provide more specific information about how a visitor can take advantage of these activities. For example, where do you find the ferry to the Tancook Islands? Is there a restaurant there, or should we pack our own lunch? What about restrooms? What days and how often does the ferry operate? For the Drowned Forest, let visitors know that they should check the tides to make sure it will be visible when they arrive.

- Top 5 Locals’ Picks: Add more details to make it easier for visitors to appreciate these great picks by the locals. For example, when is the Hubbards Farmers’ Market open? Some visitors may not have access to the internet when they’re traveling, so the website address, while important to include, shouldn’t be the only way a visitor can get the information they need.

- Oak Island is included as a Locals’ Pick. We drove out to Oak Island and discovered “No Trespassing” signs and felt that we’d better get out of there fast! Should you really be promoting this? If the only way to go there is to arrange for a private tour, include that information in the guide – both the fact that the island is only open for people who have arranged tours in advance, plus a phone number to call for the tour, because if you just follow the signs to Oak Island, you won’t find any mention of tours.

- The sections for the Top 5 Festivals & Events are good – dates are included, locations, and good teaser text. Likewise the Top 5 Heritage & Cultural Attractions. One note – when providing phone numbers, always include the area code. Most visitors don't know what it is.
- The section about Beaches and Provincial Parks provides good information about the parks, and it's well organized.
- You refer people to specific websites for more information about the trails – do you also have a printed guide to the trails? Good job on the trail descriptions and how to find most of them.
- Since your partners' directory is just information about your members, it is really not very helpful for visitors. For example, you only have five restaurants for the entire area. Does that tell visitors that you hardly have any dining options? Yes. Visitors don't care if a restaurant is a member of your organization – they just want to be able to find a good place to eat. Membership politics can kill the tourism industry. Find a way to be inclusive. Promote your "best of" restaurants – using pre-set criteria, such as reviews and ratings – not memberships.
- One section to consider adding to the guide is itineraries. They should be two-day, five-day, and longer itineraries designed for specific groups – couples (romance), family fun, bicycling groups, etc. They need to include specific information – down to specific places to eat, driving times, times spent at attractions, etc. More of these types of itineraries should be included on the website as well.

MORE IDEAS:

- Add wayfinding for the lighthouses.
- Add more signage to find kayaks for rent and bicycles for rent. Merchants should have brochures and signs at their shops that give more information about their tours, rentals, and guide services. (We did end up finding a sea kayaking brochure for ECO, but they should have a weather-proof brochure holder outside

their shop, so visitors who drive by after hours can still get information.)

- Add interpretive information signs at the Peggy's Cove Preservation area – it is so beautiful and unique, we really wanted more information. Maybe add a small turn-off with interpretive signs where people view the area.
- Create a Bluenose Coast Artisan Trail brochure that highlights the many artisans along the route, with photos and descriptions of the shops and artists. It should be organized along the driving route to make it easy to follow. This would help promote visitor spending! (There is one created for Petite Riviere, and it includes galleries, shops, restaurants, wineries, and other points of interest – we found it very helpful.)
- At the Hubbard's Sailing Club, if there are boat rentals, include that information on a sign.
- We were very impressed with the Wile Carding Museum – glad to see it listed as a Hidden Gem. Not only do they have costumed interpreters who give an excellent tour, visitors can card and spin their own piece of wool. It's a great experience.
- The Ross Farm Museum in New Ross is a fabulous experience, and it is definitely a "Best Of" attraction.

Website:

The Bluenose Coast

www.bluenosecoast.ca

- The sailboat photo is nice on the homepage, but consider whether it could be changed up for the interior site pages, such as Places to Go, etc.
- The main drawback of this site is the lack of photos. The boxes of text just don't do enough to draw the eye, or capture the imagination. You want people to look at your website and think, "I wish I was there right now!" Reading

little blurbs in blue or yellow boxes isn't going to do that. Great photography will.

- I like the idea of including "hidden gems" peppered throughout – in addition to having a section of the website dedicated to them. Again, enhance with photos!
- Almost all the suggestions for things to do, places to stay and places to eat offer links to more information that take you away from the Bluenose Coast website. Consider offering some information, particularly about the star attractions, on the website itself rather than always directing people elsewhere. Once they leave your site, they may not come back.
- Again, photography!! Add more! Lots more! And make sure it is professional quality and focuses more on people enjoying the various attractions, etc. – not just scenery.

Ideas for "The Best of the Bluenose Coast" brochure

These were our initial top picks, but there may be others! Develop a list of criteria to determine which shops, attractions, activities, and restaurants should be included. Don't include lodging, because you want lodging facilities to make these brochures available to all their guests.

- Best Coast Coffee Gallery
- Petite Riviere Vineyards
- The Painted Saltbox Gallery
- LaHave Bakery & Craft Shop
- Lahave Ferry
- Westcote Bell Pottery
- Rissers Beach Park boardwalk
- Nicki's Inn - Chester
- Wile Carding Mill Museum
- The Ovens (IF they fix the maintenance of the trails)
- Trellis Cafe
- Peggy's Cove
- East Coast Outfitters
- Lunenburg (walking tour)
- Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic
- Nova Scotia Sailing Tours
- Blue Rocks - Pleasant Paddling
- Ironworks Distillery
- Chester (walking tour - do one!)
- Chester Playhouse
- Mahone Bay
- Amos Pewter
- Northern Sun Gallery
- Ross Farm
- Peggy's Cove Preservation area
- Freewheeling Adventures





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