

Bluenose Coast,  
Nova Scotia  
Summer/Fall, 2008



Destination  
Development  
International



## Assessment Findings & Suggestions Report



### Ideas to increase tourism spending

In July of 2008, a Community Tourism Assessment of the Bluenose Coast, Nova Scotia, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a three-hour workshop in October. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the region – 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 region's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the “Community Assessment,” we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project, and the towns and surrounding region were “secretly shopped.”

There are two primary elements to the assessment process: First is the “Marketing Effectiveness Assessment.”

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the community or area? Once they find information, are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned two (or more) people to plan trips into the province and general region. They did not know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel guides, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might do in planning a trip to a “new” area or destination.

The region 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 tested all of these methods by contacting area visitor information services and attractions, searching the internet for activities, requesting and reviewing printed materials, looking for articles and third-party information, and questioning regional contacts. We reviewed both commercial and organizational

websites promoting the area, state tourism websites, read travel articles, and looked at CAA Tour Book reviews and suggested activities.

The marketing assessment determined how visible the region was during the research, and 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 further away. The question on most visitors' mind is: what do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities fail is when they merely provide a "list" 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, unique shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation (bird watching, hiking, biking, boating, etc., etc.), historic downtowns, scenic vistas, and so on. Of course, nearly every visitor can do this closer to home. So, what makes your region worth a special trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip, THEN your diversionary activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knott's Berry Farm get upset that Disneyland gets all the glory? That they are diversions? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with diversionary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities ride on those coattails.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for things that make you worth a special trip and an overnight stay. The secret shoppers look for details, details, details. To be successful you must provide itineraries and specifics - not just generalities. Are your marketing efforts good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the region, looking at enticement from freeways and 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 community 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 restraints, future plans, or reasons 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 region'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 region's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local 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.) cannot be successful if the tourism effort is not community-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 painfully 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 region? Does the Bluenose Coast 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 simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the entire region, we have looked at all of these issues, developed some suggestions and ideas the region 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 city 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, 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 region, 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 the 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 local 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, 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 the 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 Andy Williams, I don't care whether he's in Muskogee, Oklahoma or in Branson, Missouri. Visitors, 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 a vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. But to the vast majority of potential visitors, it's not a reason to make a special trip.

### 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), 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 a \$50 billion dollar industry in Canada, supporting tens of thousands 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 can provide the region with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the region and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing its 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 community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed “Regional Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan” builds on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and regional input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment essentially provides a look at where you are today.

The next steps in the planning process are interviewing local stakeholders, providing public outreach, and reviewing past and current planning efforts. This determines where you want to go as a community.

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 it's 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, Development & Marketing 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.

For every recommendation the following elements should be detailed:

1. A brief description of the recommendation
2. Who would be charged with implementation
3. When it would be implemented
4. How much it will cost
5. Where the money will come from
6. The rationale for making the recommendation

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

If you move forward with the development of the Action Plan and hire outside services, always hire the most qualified team you can find (issue a request for Statement of Qualifications) and then negotiate the scope of work and cost with them. If you are not able to reach an agreement, then move to number two on your list. A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together to enhance the community, building its unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment to live, work, and visit.



## Quick Facts:

- Tourism is an economic development activity.
- 90% of tourism industry businesses employ 15 employees or less.
- 83% of tourism spending is by visitors with annual household incomes of \$70,000 plus.
- Tourism is a \$1.3 billion industry in Nova Scotia.
- Of that \$1.3 billion, \$106.5 million was spent in the South Shore region.
- Tourism generated more than \$204 million in tax revenues. \$16 million of that tax revenue was generated in the South Shore.
- The province hosted 2.1 million visitors in 2007.

## Quick Info:

- Geography-based tourism is dead.
- Experience-based tourism is alive and is the future of tourism - starting yesterday.
- Visitors don't care about counties or districts, cities, towns and "places." • They are looking for "activities" - for that unique experience - THEN the location.
- The days of marketing *lists* are over. Visitors want to know the details.
- The heart and soul of any community, besides its people, is its downtown. It is the litmus test for all your economic development efforts.

## Planning a trip to the Bluenose Coast:

#1 Challenge: There are too many areas, too many layers:

- South Shore
- Bluenose Coast
- St. Margaret's Bay Region
- Lighthouse Route
- Coastal Heritage Trail

Pick one name and stick to it! Make it easy, not confusing.

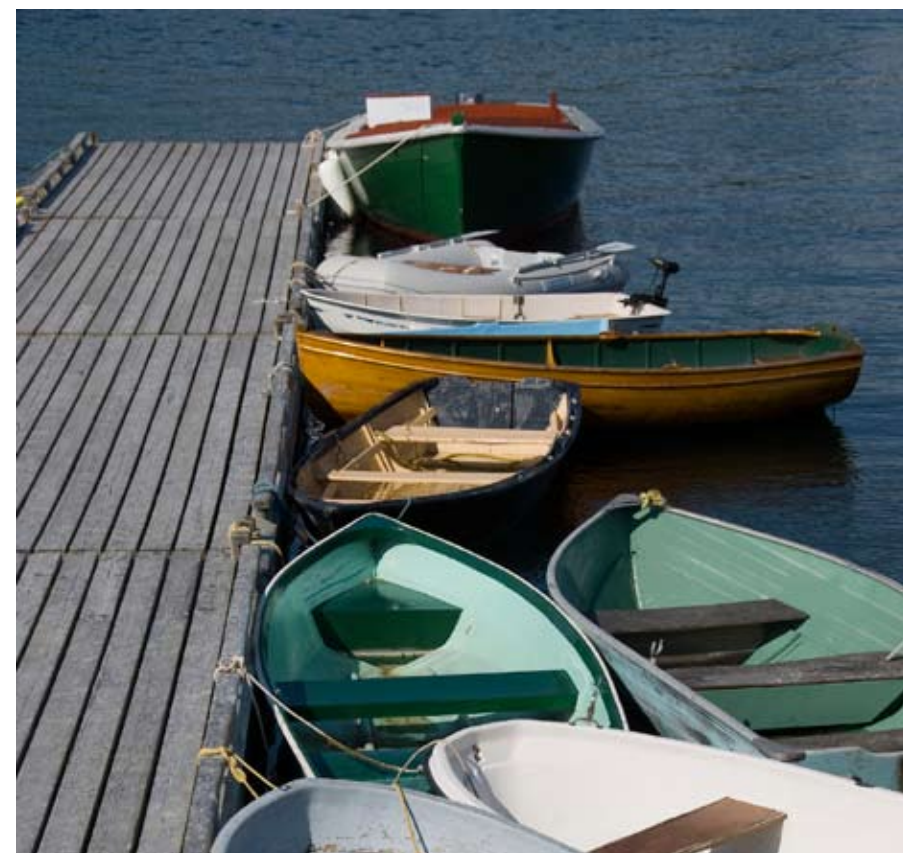
Remember, we are looking for activities not geographic designations.

Nova Scotia's Bluenose Coast:

- Pick your season.
- Pick your passion.
- Promote the hidden gems.

Marketing materials:

- Develop some detailed maps. The maps were poor - at best - making it difficult to really explore the region. In many cases locals hand drew maps to help us find our way around.



## HEADING OUT FROM HALIFAX

Yes. We stayed in Halifax (top right). Why? We had so little information to go on we could not make a good determination of where a good place would be to stay. We played it safe - like many visitors. Suggestion: Be sure to provide enough information about lodging facilities to help visitors make a choice. Visitors want to see photos of the properties and rooms, plus details of the amenities and rates. Let visitors know what else is nearby, such as if the lodging is within walking distance of restaurants and shopping, parks, or activities. Customer reviews can be your best sales tool.

From Halifax we headed around Highway 333 (bottom left), planning to go as far west as Bridgewater. Looking at our maps, we figured it should only take the better part of a day to explore the entire area. (Little did we know!)

Heading around Highway 333, we discovered the first “hidden gem.” In fact, a whole village (bottom right). It was very cute, and so well-done, we had to stop, get out, take photos, and make a donation.





In our book, this must be one of the best kayaking spots in the world (top right). Does it get any better than this? Hidden Gem #2. This is truly spectacular and we've always wanted to learn to kayak. Can it get more ideal than this?

The top priority on our return trip to Nova Scotia will be to learn to kayak right here (bottom left). This facility looks top-notch, and the water looks perfect for beginners.

Terence Bay and Prospect areas are a MUST SEE scenic destination (bottom right). Simply stunning and not to be missed. Had we not been doing an assessment we would have totally missed this beautiful Hidden Gem #3. Nothing in the marketing literature prepared us for finding these incredible spots and activities right here so close to Halifax. All of a sudden we're thinking we didn't set aside enough time to see everything - and yet we are just starting our excursion.



We accidentally found the SS Atlantic Heritage Park and Interpretive Centre (top right). This is such a lovely park, and we were immediately attracted to it, wanting to explore and walk down the paths to the seaside views.

Unfortunately, the Interpretation Centre was closed, and there was no sign indicating when it might be open. Suggestion: Add an open sign, or a sign indicating the hours of operation. Consider using a sign similar to the ones bottom right. A simple “closed” sign is another way of saying “go away.” Always invite visitors back, and let them know when to return.

This interpretive sign (bottom left) is very well done. It gives visitors all the information they need to decide to walk through the park and explore.

Another under-marketed hidden gem.





Although the SS Atlantic Heritage Park is noted in the marketing materials, nothing prepared us for such a charming spot, with such a great story to tell. It is a stunning site (top right) and is definitely another “hidden gem” to add to the quickly growing collection.

This tells a fascinating story (bottom left).

The boardwalk is exceptional. Suggestion: Add a sign that tells visitors about the boardwalk. How far does it go? Where does it end up?

Suggestion: The best way to promote these “hidden gems” is with photos and descriptive text that tells the story. Simply having them listed in a brochure does nothing to let visitors know how great they are.

Consider this part of a multi-day itinerary.



Nova Scotia's grand icon: The lighthouse at Peggy's Cove (top right). This iconic lighthouse should grace the cover of every provincial marketing piece not just for the Bluenose Coast region, but for the province. It's your "anchor attraction" for the Bluenose Coast and perhaps the province's best icon.

And it's undoubtedly the most photographed attraction in the province (bottom right). You won't find this anywhere else on earth. Always promote what you have that the visitors can't see or do closer to home.

It even comes with its own set of characters (bottom left).

These huge granite rocks along the coast, with the crashing waves and brightly colored buildings, create a very strong visual impact on visitors. These declare to the visitor that, yes, they are indeed experiencing Nova Scotia - a place that's truly unique. That is exactly the impact you want to create - that feeling of being in a destination that is like no other.





Peggy's Cove, the lighthouse, and the scenery surrounding are iconic Nova Scotia, as illustrated by all the photos on this page.

Suggestions: Convince home owners to shy away from painting their homes and brown, beige. The vivid color is what makes you special, setting you apart. Work with local homeowners and shops to paint homes red, yellow, bright green and other colors. Play it up? It's what makes you so special.





Suggestion: Resist the urge to appear too commercial. Keep true to your roots; keep the image quaint.

This shop (top right), with its bright green paint and yellow trim, blue awnings and benches, flowers and yellow chairs, looks terrific. Suggestion: Consider redoing the A-board sign - this one, while nicely done, isn't in keeping with the ambiance. It looks out of place and a little overly commercial.

Note the A-board sign in the photo bottom left. It is quaint and decorative, and fits the ambiance of the shop and town. Also, this sign (bottom right) makes a great statement about the kind of restaurant. These are good examples of decorative retail signs with a distinctive flavor to fit the shops and towns.





There's a good mix of shops (below) in Peggy's Cove, all in a great iconic setting. Note: Avoid plastic banners if at all possible, and this sign for the art gallery may be a bit too quaint. There's definitely enough for a visitor to do, besides exploring the lighthouse and coastline, to keep them active for several hours. Studies show that if you can keep the visitor busy for two hours, spending will increase. Peggy's Cove does that - weather permitting.

The visitor information center was very nice (top right). Suggestion: Add 24/7 visitor information - include outdoor weather-proof brochure holders, so that visitors can take information with them if they stop by after the visitor center is closed.

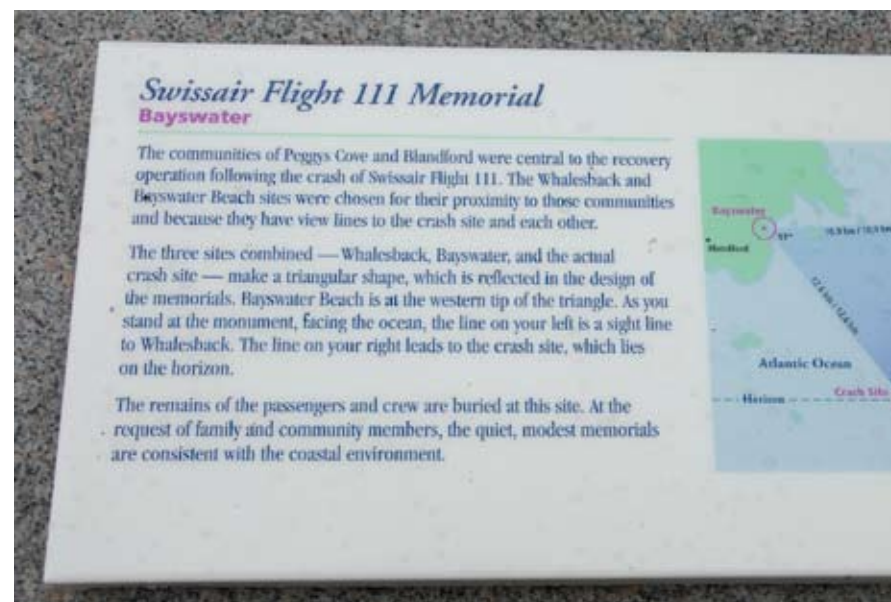
These displays are very well done (bottom right), and were getting plenty of use from the many visitors there that day. Good job!





This sculpture (top right) is fascinating as well. We weren't sure if the shop was a museum or gallery, or a store. The entry charge discouraged us from going in, since we weren't sure what was inside. Suggestion: Be sure to provide enough information to make the sale if there's going to be an entry charge. Let visitors know what they can expect inside, and why it's worth paying an fee to take a look. We overheard several visitors trying to figure out what was inside and whether or not it would be worth the cost. Put a brochure holder outside the door and have brochures in it that explain what's inside and why it's worth the cost of admission.

As we continued along our self guided exploratory tour, we shortly discovered the site of the Swissair Flight 111 Memorial at Whale's Back (bottom left and bottom right). By this time, the morning was gone, and we hadn't made it very far on our way to Bridgeport - there was far more to see and do than we had expected!





The view alone makes this worth a stop (top right). Perhaps not a “hidden gem,” but close. We read the story, took photos, and walked the beautiful grounds of this memorial.

Visitors are looking for activities, and experiencing new things is part of the attraction of travel. Scenery alone is no longer enough to make you worth a special trip, but it is a great way to slow people down and that translates to increased spending. Suggestion: Promote learning experiences wherever possible, such as learning to sea kayak (bottom left). Moving on...

### HUBBARDS

Hubbards has a very nice gateway sign (bottom right). Remember: Always put your gateway signs where you will make the best first impression. Make sure the surroundings are as well-tended as the gateway sign. Suggestion: Get rid of the weeds, and plant brightly colored flowers in the planter at the base of the sign. Have locals “adopt” the sign, cleaning the bird droppings from the sign every couple of weeks during the peak visitor season.





The business mix along the highway in Hubbards includes some very good, and some not-so-good business examples. This is a very cute shop (top right). Suggestion: It was summer. Perhaps take down the Christmas lights this time of year.

The best of Hubbards, however, is off the highway. What a treat (bottom left). This has to be Hidden Gem #5. This looks as though it would be a stunning place to stay and enjoy.

Had we known about this place (bottom right), we would have stayed here for the entire week we were visiting the area. Very nice. This shows the importance of promoting specific places, including photos, and providing plenty of details. When visitors are planning a trip to a place they've never been, they don't want to take a chance on unknown lodging. Because lodging is such a major cost of any getaway, visitors want to be sure it'll be good. So they tend to play it safe, not taking a chance on the unknown - particularly in rural areas. By providing details, photos, and customer endorsements, lodging facilities can erase that fear of the unknown.





This restaurant (top right and bottom left) has great curb appeal. In fact, we are showcasing these shops in speaking engagements throughout North America. The signage is also excellent - it really pulls people in. First impressions are lasting impressions and curb appeal can account for 70% of sales at restaurants, wineries, lodging, retail shops, golf courses. We all travel. Have you ever said “that looks like a nice place to eat”? We all do. It’s often the only thing we have to go by in our decision-making process.

The exterior of your shop, restaurant, or lodging facility gives visitors their first clue as to what to expect inside. Your signs are their first introduction to your business, and they can tell visitors a lot about what to expect. You should make sure your business signage enhances your image.

This shop (bottom right) also has excellent curb appeal. Using the baskets, the flowers, umbrellas, and outdoor furnishings make this storefront very inviting. It will make the “Destination Retail Idea Book” we are working on - a showcase for other businesses to learn from. Terrific job!





The visitor information and interpretive centre in Hubbards (all photos this page) is in a good location and is a nice facility. Suggestions: Add potted plants, more hanging baskets, and use the bulletin board for visitor information rather than community notices. Limit the number of fliers so it's not cluttered.

Suggestion: Maintain the landscape around the center. It is the litmus test for the community. Visitors are a mean lot - they almost always judge the book by the cover.

Providing outdoor brochure holders here (bottom right) is excellent for offering 24 hour visitor information. Visitors travel all hours of the day, so it's essential to offer information around the clock too. Other centres take note.



## CHESTER

The Chester visitor information center was easy to find and is also in a very attractive building. Nice sign (top right).

The representatives at the center were very friendly and helpful (bottom left), and the building is charming. Suggestion: Add 24/7 visitor information - some brochure holders outside would be very helpful and would help increase your visitor spending. Consider adding some hanging baskets and potted plants as well. Public washrooms? If so, be sure to promote them.

This trail information display is very good (bottom right). Suggestion: Other things to include would be a brochure holder for a trail map so people can take the information with them. Also, let people know if and where they can rent bikes (Perhaps a small business opportunity). Show a map with stops and highlights along the way. Is the trail for only hiking, or can visitors bike it as well? Cross country skiing or snowmobiling in the winter? Think of all the questions a visitor might have, and provide the answers on the display and in a take-with-you brochure.





As we drove into Chester, we saw the sign to the “Visitor Map.” (top right) Suggestion: Rather than promoting the map, promote experiences visitors can enjoy while in Chester. Most people won’t follow the sign to simply see a map. Instead promote “Waterfront shops, dining and island ferry.” Promote activities not places or things.

Another option: “Waterfront/Ferry and Harbour Village Shops.”

This artist shop is definitely another “hidden gem.” (bottom left) With such accolades for excellent work (bottom right), it would be easy to promote this shop as one of the must-see spots on a trip to the Bluenose Coast. It would be a highlight for many visitors. We now have Jim Smith art in our home in Seattle. This is how you build an arts brand. Promote your “anchor businesses” - don’t get caught in the mire of politics where you can’t promote your anchor businesses. Everyone else will benefit. Think Orlando. People go there for Disneyworld, yet while there they will also visit Universal Studios and more than 100 other attractions. While we certainly don’t see the Bluenose Coast as a theme park, this example simply illustrates the need to promote your “anchor businesses” - those that make you worth a special trip. And just like an anchor tenant in a mall, while we’re there we will also visit other shops, restaurants, and activities.



There are some cute shops in the “Village Shopping District.” (All photos this page)

The playhouse is very charming (bottom left). Suggestion: We wondered about the schedule of upcoming performances - always post them! Invite us back! Add some potted plants outside the entrance, and a bench or two.

Although the shopping district is a little disjointed, there are some great shops in Chester, and it's well worth a visit. It would help to have wayfinding signage to direct visitors to the shops that are there. There is not quite enough “destination retail” to fit the rule of “critical mass,” although there is potential to reach it. The rule of critical mass: Ten destination retail shops, ten dining places, and ten places open after 6:00 pm. Chester is close, but not quite there. Once you reach the critical mass, you'll become a stand-alone destination as opposed to a place to stop on the way somewhere else.

Overall, the merchants do a good job of maintaining and beautifying their shops. The community has a very nice, relaxed feel to it.





## Critical Mass is More Than a Religious Experience

### The 10+10+10 rule

Shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors, and it's where 80% of the spending takes place. This is why Disney created "Downtown Disney" (bottom right) - to capture that visitor spending. People are drawn to places that have a critical mass of shopping and dining options. The minimum business mix in just three lineal blocks to achieve the necessary critical mass is:

1. TEN places that sell food: Soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, sit-down restaurant, wine store, deli, confectionary.
2. TEN destination retail shops: Galleries, antiques (not second hand stores), collectibles, books, clothing, home accents, outfitters, brand-specific businesses, garden specialties, kitchen stores, cigars, etc.
3. TEN places open after 6:00: Entertainment, theater (movies, performing arts), bars & bistros, specialty shops, dining, open air markets, etc.

When like businesses are grouped together, they can develop the "mall mentality." They work with each other for the benefit of the whole group, with marketing efforts, keeping consistent hours, and keeping their storefronts clean and attractive. Think shopping malls, food courts, antique malls, auto malls, intersections with fast food or service stations. This is "clustering." When like businesses are clustered, they are more successful than when they are spread out. People are attracted to the convenience and variety of having the stores be close together.

AGAIN: 70% of ALL consumer spending takes place after 6:00 pm. Are you open?



While in Chester, we followed the signs to the visitor map (top near right), and were a little disappointed when we found it. This is it? (top far right) It wasn't very helpful.

Suggestions: Add a printed, folded map we can take with us showcasing shops and dining, so that we can find what Chester has to offer. Use a weather-proof brochure holder, so that the map will be available 24/7.

We were in need of the public washroom, which was on the map, but we couldn't find it anywhere - certainly not where it was shown on the map. We ended up cutting our visit short so we could search for a washroom. More about this subject on the next page.

Suggestions:

- Just show, on the map, the downtown village area including location of shops, restaurants, and things to do.
- Include a "you are here" location identifier.
- Showcase attractions, amenities and services.
- Keep the map current. If the public washrooms are no longer located as shown on the map, be sure to update it!

Chester has a lot going for it, and a lot of potential. What a great charming little town, in a spectacular setting.





## Toilets Attract More Than Flies

### The gotta go rule

The number one reason travelers stop is to use washroom facilities, and research has shown that once you get visitors to stop, there is a four-times greater chance they'll spend money as well. So place your washrooms in a location where people can spend time and money. Make it convenient, so that visitors don't have to leave your shopping district to use the washroom - if they do, chances are they won't come back.

Merchants should never post signs that simply state "No Public Washrooms," or "Washrooms are for customers only." That just tells visitors to go away. Often, if a visitor is allowed to use the washroom, he will make a purchase out of guilt or gratitude, anyway. So washrooms can help increase sales. Instead, merchants should post signs telling shoppers WHERE they can find the public washrooms, as this shop (bottom right) in Wickford, Rhode Island does.



Down by the water at Chester, we found a few restaurants and the ferry to Tancook Island (top near right).  
Suggestion: First rule of promoting a destination for visitors: Tell us WHY we should go to the island? What is there to do? Why will we enjoy going?

Provide more information as well: How long is the ferry ride? Should we bring food, or is there a restaurant or market on the island? Bike rentals?

Suggestion: Make the fare easier to figure out: Chester to Tancook - round trip: Passenger only: \$5. Motorcycles: \$10. Autos: \$20 (top far right).

Another very inviting restaurant - great curb appeal, terrific views (bottom left). And very busy! (bottom right) What a setting!



Ferry will make regular calls at Little Tancook on all trips to and from Chester

Sunday	9:00 am 5:00 pm	10:00 am 6:00 pm
Chester to Tancook (Return) - Tickets/Book		\$25.00
Chester to Tancook (Return) - Cash Fare		\$5.00
Automobiles (Return)		\$20.00
Children under 12		Free
Motorcycles (ONE WAY)		\$10.00
All Freight		NO CHARGE

Movement of unusual cargo will only be considered under special circumstances





### MAHONE BAY

What a great invitation (top right). Thank you. This welcome sign expresses a powerful sentiment that really touches at the heart of travelers. It says it all. Suggestion: Consider moving the welcome sign to the visitor information center area, which is really the primary “gateway” to town and where you see the stunning views (bottom left). What an incredible sight.

Thank goodness! Public washrooms in Mahone Bay! (bottom right) They are easy to find, well maintained, and very convenient. Great job! It's true that relieved visitors will spend more. With convenient washrooms, visitors don't feel that anxiety about needing to search. They're free to spend the entire day in Mahone Bay if they choose. The longer visitors stay the more they will spend. And, for travelers just passing through, when they spot these washrooms along the highway, it's easy to decide to take advantage of the opportunity to use them, and while they are stopped, to take a look around the town.



The Mahone Bay Visitor Information Centre (top right) is in a great location and has great curb appeal - it is simply charming. We were impressed with the staff - very friendly and knowledgeable, with good advice and not afraid to suggest a specific restaurant or two. And there is visitor information available even after hours (below) - excellent!

This is not a great way to enjoy the view (bottom right). Turn these benches around unless you really like looking at bumpers. There are spectacular views facing the other direction. Consider painting the bench as well. It can use some TLC.

The availability of easy to find public parking in Mahone Bay was very good.





We were looking for a good place for lunch while in Mahone Bay, and asked locals where we could find good chowder. They referred us to the Innlet Cafe (top right). They were right! And what great curb appeal - even without a referral, we would have been drawn to this restaurant. Beautiful setting.

Great staff. Nice atmosphere (bottom left). Good food. Claim to fame: the chowder. It delivers on the promise! We weren't disappointed! Another reason it's important to promote your anchor businesses: those that have something special, or better, to sell. It can come right down to the chowder or perhaps cinnamon rolls. Just something that makes you worth a special trip.

The gazebo (bottom right) creates a very nice first impression of the town.

As you can see from our tour, we're in mid-afternoon, stopping for a late lunch, and we're obviously not going to "complete" our tour as expected - in just one day. This is why the creation of itineraries will be important to your long term success. We really didn't want to drive all the way back to Halifax. If we had only known better...





This shop and market (top right and bottom left) are among the best curb appeal examples of any shops in the entire province. It was a pleasure just sitting at a table looking at all the brightly colored produce arranged in cute baskets and hanging from the rafters. What a great job. The flowers, brightly colored tables, chairs, signs, wheelbarrow all add to the exceptional ambience. Another example we'll showcase!

This museum (bottom right) is very nice, and the sign does a good job of pulling people in. Some suggestions about museums:

## Great Stories Make the Campfire Memorable

### The rule of stories versus artifacts

1. The average museum visit lasts between 20 and 40 minutes.
2. If you can captivate the visitor for two hours, spending will increase.
3. Museums MUST learn to tell stories, not just display artifacts with facts and figures. The key to capturing visitors' hearts and imaginations is to tell stories about the people who used the artifacts on display. Specific names and events - how did they live? What happened? How were their lives touched? You will captivate your audience, and they will love it.





## Real Men Don't Ask For Directions The rule of wayfinding

There are two primary signage issues that are critical to the success of any community: gateways and directional (or wayfinding) signage. Gateways introduce visitors to the community and/or downtown districts and provide a sense of arrival. Directional signs help visitors and residents navigate the area, telling them what attractions and amenities are available and where to find them. If visitors can't find what they're looking for, they'll simply head down the road. This example (top right) is from Leavenworth, WA, a town with a Bavarian theme. The signs reflect the brand.

And there is wayfinding signage in Mahone Bay! (bottom left)  
Other towns, take note.

Be sure to include signage for RV parking, as this town has done (bottom right). RV'ers are valuable visitors - they tend to spend at the top of the market.



The large signs along Highway 3 are very nice (top and bottom right). Great job. On the whole, it was easy to find directional signage to the communities along the Bluenose Coast. The signs were clear and nice-looking.

Suggestion: These wayfinding signs in Mahone Bay (bottom left) are functional, but not very attractive. Consider replacing them with something a little more fitting - more in keeping with the ambiance of the town. Don't cheap out. Put them on a decorative lamp-style post. Make a statement. You are a showcase town for the province. Make sure your wayfinding signage says so.

Wayfinding signage should be decorative - it should be part of your beautification efforts, enhancing the appearance of your town at the same time as it helps visitors (and residents) find what they're looking for.

It should also reflect your "brand" - what it is you want to be known for.





## Wayfinding signage:

These examples from French Lick, Indiana (top near and far right, bottom left) showcase how wayfinding signage can be very attractive, functional, and simple. Although decorative, these signs don't need to be expensive.

Nationally, less than 5% of visitors stop at visitor information centers - IF they can find that. The Bluenose Coast region should develop and implement a wayfinding signage plan and program that addresses:

- Wayfinding
- Gateways and entries
- Attractions
- Amenities
- Billboards and marketing displays
- Visitor information kiosks

Of all the places we've been in the Atlantic provinces, Mahone Bay seems to best understand the power of beautification (bottom right). This restaurant's curb appeal is stunning, and really pulls customers in.



We were prepared to be “wowed” by Peggy’s Cove and Lunenburg, but the big surprise was Mahone Bay. What a treasure! It’s obvious the community has been working together to make their downtown a wonderful destination.

There are so many examples of things this innovative community is doing RIGHT! These are examples we will include in workshops all over Canada and the U.S. Communities from all over the province should spend some time visiting Mahone Bay, talking to merchants, and asking questions. I think you’ll find that there’s a great return on the investment they’ve made. It was the busiest community we saw during the summer and even in October.

Most of the buildings are painted such charming colors - butter yellow, lavender, turquoise blue, red, purple, blue. The hanging baskets, window boxes, pots and planters, flags, creative decorative merchant signs, etc. It all works together to make Mahone Bay a very appealing destination. And when we were there the streets and shops were consistently full of visitors. This type of setting attracts visitors, and in turn, attracts more merchants to help create the “critical mass” of shops and dining that make a fun destination. During our stay, we visited Mahone Bay four times. That’s a powerful draw.





Suggestion: Bike rentals and sea kayaking are great idea (top right), but work on the landscape. Add a hanging basket or two, keep the grass trimmed, reduce the weeds, and maybe add a pot of flowers at the door. Even outdoor adventure shops benefit from beautification.

This is a great little shop (bottom left). Suggestion: Add planter boxes along the lattice at street level. Keep the weeds pulled.

Love the colors here! (bottom right). This is a wonderful display on the wall, and the red chair adds a real welcoming touch. Another terrific example of a merchant who “gets it” in terms of pulling visitors in the door. Yes, it takes some work to maintain, but it’s well worth the effort.





This shop (bottom left) is off to a good start with their curb appeal. The signs are very nice. Suggestion: Now add some additional plantings and a bench or two.

The Quilt Shop (top right) is great - with a very nice outdoor display.

People love gathering areas. They enjoy spending time in attractive settings where there are places for them to sit, relax, and visit with each other. They don't have to be restaurants or offer outdoor dining - a bench or table and chairs outside a shop are very appealing, even without the added lure of refreshment. Note this street scene in Wickford, RI (bottom center). The merchants here provide plenty of benches so that tired shoppers can recuperate and husbands can relax while their wives are hard at work in the shops.

This shop (bottom right) has created a terrific gathering area for tired shoppers and visitors. This encourages visitors to spend more time in town, and the longer people stay, the more they will spend.





Love the color throughout town. Many of the photos you are seeing should be on your website and in brochures. Be sure to use lots of photos in all your marketing - pictures really sell the community.

Include photos showing people having a good time: shopping, dining, biking, kayaking, laughing, having fun. Showcase these incredible shops and restaurants, and you'll convince visitors that they could be in Mahone Bay having as much fun as the people in the photos.

Mahone Bay really is a showcase community and a good example for other communities to emulate.



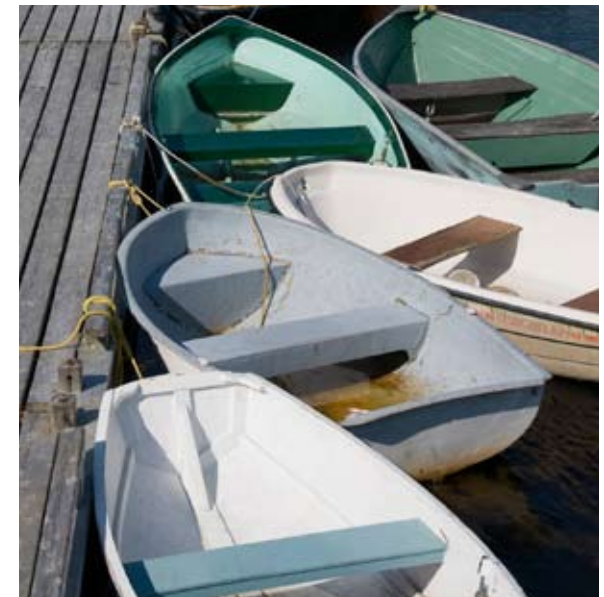


A beautiful B&B (top right).

This little visitor information stand is a great idea (bottom left). But we were a little amused -- it looks like people are so busy spending money, he's getting lonely! What a great problem to have.

Suggestion: Consider using a larger A-board or having a permanent one made (bottom center). This one is difficult to read. Yet, another terrific activity. If we only had more time! We need to come to Nova Scotia for a "real" extended vacation! So far, we could have spent the better part of a day learning to kayak in some pristine waters, and would have loved to spend some time here on the water as well as more time in the shops. We would have loved to stay in Hubbards or Mahone Bay rather than trekking back to Halifax in the evenings. Think itineraries.

This is what we love about Nova Scotia (bottom right).





## LUNENBURG

This is an attractive gateway sign for Lunenburg (top right), but in the absolute wrong location. Look at what's around the sign. Is this a great reflection on Lunenburg? This is how you are introducing the community to visitors - not a good idea here. This is what visitors see initially, after being introduced to the community by the gateway sign (bottom right).

Suggestion: Move your gateway signs to locations where they will always make a good first impression. Use this spot to tell us how to get to the shopping district using a wayfinding sign. Visitors "judge the book by the cover." When they see your gateway sign, they judge the community by what is around the sign - so it's very important to place your gateway sign in the first best location, which is not necessarily your town limits.

A spectacular setting worthy of being world heritage site (bottom left). This is the place to make the introduction "Welcome to Historic Lunenburg."





For such a beautiful town, it's nearly impossible to take a good photograph (top near right). Suggestion: The top priority should be putting the wiring underground. Gatlinburg, Tennessee just did that. It was easily worth it.

A few of the downtown merchants do a good job with the curb appeal (top far right), but for the most part it's a bit disappointing in terms of overall appeal. The impression is that merchants take it for granted that visitors will always show up and shop, and that they don't need to try very hard to make their shops attractive and appealing. But a complacent attitude can backfire - if you rest on your laurels, your competition may become the next destination of choice. We saw more visitors in Mahone Bay than in Lunenburg.

Suggestion: Get rid of the plastic "used car" banners (bottom left) and work on beautification efforts. Add lots of pots and planters, street trees, benches.

The architecture is stunning (bottom right), but that's not enough to pull customers into the shops and restaurants. The signs are nice, the building is painted beautifully - add some hanging baskets, rows of potted shrubs. What about street trees? Make it a stunning town in terms of curb appeal.





## The Downtown Idea Book

### Ideas to increase your bottom line

Think of your favorite destinations. Are they beautiful? Curb appeal is an investment with tremendous return, and it can account for 70% of first time sales at restaurants, wineries, lodging, retail shops, and golf courses. People like to spend time in attractive places.

In Jonesborough, TN (top right) the merchants add seasonal decor to the sidewalks to showcase the various holidays. Americana in July, autumn decorations, and Christmas.

Ellicottville, NY (bottom left) has a charming, much-visited downtown shopping district, and you can see why. These hanging baskets, the decorative building facades and signs, street trees, window boxes with annual color, and outdoor seating combine to really pull customers into the stores.

This merchant in Banff, Alberta (bottom right) has to contend with deer eating his plants. So he puts his flowers high out of reach of the deer, and plants shrubs the deer don't care for down low. The result is stunning.





In Battle Creek, MI (top near right), even the attorneys beautify the sidewalks in front of their offices. Note the attractive blade signs as well as the pots of flowers.

To entice patrons into his restaurant, this merchant in Banff, AB (top far right) has created a stunning menu display to post outside. Not only does the food sound delicious, but the display is so attractive it increases the perceived value of the restaurant and entices passersby inside.

Along the Great Smoky Mountain Art Trail, this shop in Gatlinburg, TN (bottom left) is so charming from the outside, shoppers feel compelled to go in.

This shop owner in Blaine, WA (bottom right) sets up this attractive display every morning, and puts it away again at night. She says this display saved her business - ever since she started putting this out, her business has more than doubled.

Beautification isn't just to make things pretty - it's a real investment, with a solid return.





This restaurant in Ojai, CA (top right) makes excellent use of the sidewalk to provide a small outdoor dining area. Nothing attracts hungry visitors to a restaurant more than attractive exterior dining area, especially if there are already people sitting there. People are always drawn to other people. This restaurant (bottom left) does a beautiful job - the planter boxes add a feeling of intimacy, and the white tablecloths and flowers on each table add a touch of elegance.

The merchant with this shop (bottom right) in Grass Valley, California, says that the few extra minutes it takes her to set out this display each day is well worth it for the number of customers it attracts. Doesn't it make you want to go inside? The flowers, by the way, are silk. It works year round.

Fredericksburg, Texas (population 12,000 - 3 million visitors annually) is the most visited small town in Texas. People drive from hours away to spend their day in this charming town. The merchants create a beautiful setting (bottom left and center) with potted shrubs and flowers, window boxes, decorative signage, beautiful lighting, benches, and covered sidewalks.

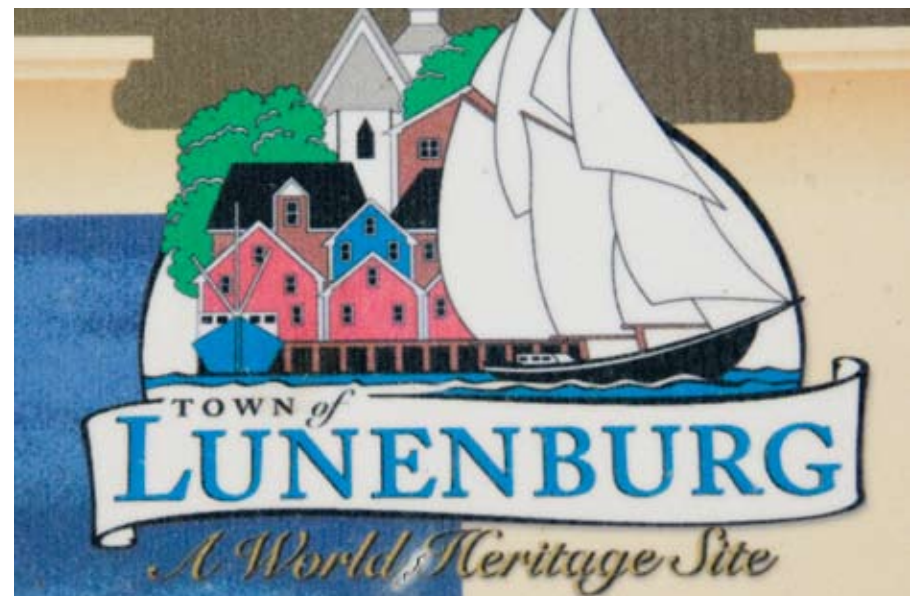




More examples of outdoor beautification in Fredericksburg, TX (top right and bottom left). The merchants don't simply set out one or two little pots with flowers, they make a bold statement with their decorations. It certainly pays off by attracting so many visitors who love to spend time, and money, in their town.

Suggestion: Consider developing a cooperative buying program among the merchants for pots, planters, and benches. Buying in bulk would help merchants obtain discounts and better service.

Lunenburg is a "world heritage site." That raises the expectation in visitors' minds that they're going to find a stunning town. Lunenburg's setting is spectacular; the waterfront is a lot of fun; but the town could improve its appearance through enhanced beautification efforts and, if at all possible, putting the wiring underground. We love the logo (bottom right).





This visitor information display (bottom right) is well done and well placed. And it contains weather-proof brochure holders to provide information visitors can take with them - good job! And they're stocked!

This is a nice spot (bottom far left). The flowers and decorative fence make this very pleasant. Love the colorful "open" banner here (bottom center). However, can you tell what's in any of these shops? Does this street attract you, making you want to find out what's there? Or does it look stark and empty? Suggestion: Use blade signs so people on the sidewalks can see what stores are there, and add several pots of flowers in front if these shops to soften the harsh lines of the sidewalk.

This window (top right) is so cluttered with fliers that it's overwhelming and totally overshadows whatever the shop sells. Too many fliers in a window looks sloppy. Would you stop to read through all 16 of them? Suggestion: Keep the fliers down to no more than three - four tops. Suggestion: Extend window displays to exterior spaces, BUT avoid the garage sale look of outdoor merchandising. There's a big difference. Add beautification to pull customers in: hanging baskets, pots, planters, a bench.



This page shows a couple of examples of outdoor retail that just makes the town look like a second-hand store or a garage sale. Toad Hall Book Shop in Nevada City, CA (top right) has set cardboard boxes full of books outside on the sidewalk. This gives the impression that these books aren't worth very much, and doesn't do anything to enhance the store's image. In actuality it's a very nice book shop. You wouldn't know it from the outdoor displays.

The Children's Shoppe in Marshall, MI (bottom left) has gorgeous planter boxes outside filled with bright flowers, but then, right in front, they've wheeled out a rack of clothes. This also gives a "garage-sale" look to the shop, decreasing its perceived value.

An outdoor display should be a continuation of your window displays - decorative, attractive, and artistic. Maggie Mae Mercantile in Clearfield, PA (bottom right) uses select store merchandise arranged in an artful display outside the shop door, rather than pots of flowers or shrubs for beautification. The effect is every bit as attractive. Suggestion: Extend your window displays to exterior spaces. You'll entice customers into your shop.



**Outdoor displays should always be extensions of window displays to exterior spaces. Say no to "outdoor retail" - clothes racks, tables piled high with merchandise.**





This cafe (top right) has done a great job with their outdoor beautification. The brightly colored planter box with flowers, hanging basket by the door, color-coordinated signage, and decorative readerboards all combine to create a very appealing cafe. Imagine how boring it would look without these. These efforts really make a difference!

Note the sign clutter in the street scene below left. There are so many signs it's overwhelming. Suggestion: Consider developing a retail signage program to reduce sign clutter and establish guidelines. This could be a merchant-driven program and could address retail signage, use of plastic banners, A-boards, and temporary signs.

General rule of thumb for blade signs: They should be no lower than seven feet, no higher than nine feet, and no wider than 42 inches. Most of these blade signs (bottom right) fall into those guidelines; however, a couple of them are too high. Suggestion: Lower the signs that are too high - they'll be much easier for pedestrians to see.



## 20/20 Signage Equals \$\$\$

### The rules of retail signage

Merchants should use perpendicular “blade” signs. Make them consistent height and size. Retail signs placed perpendicular to the building allow drivers and pedestrians to read them easily, even from a distance.

This page shows some excellent examples of blade signs: Leavenworth, WA (top right) a Bavarian-themed town; Nantucket, MA (bottom left); and Carmel, CA (bottom right). All of these towns are well-known visitor destinations, and shopping in these downtowns is a primary draw.

Perpendicular signs are seen ten times more frequently than facade-mounted signs by both pedestrians and those in vehicles.





This page showcases some additional examples of perpendicular retail signage:

- These signs in Valparaiso, Indiana (top right) look terrific. They are of similar size and placement, but the design of each reflects the individual shop.
- For shops that aren't directly on the sidewalk, this is an excellent way to make them visible. (bottom left) These are in Winona Lake, Indiana.
- These blade signs in Lethbridge, AB, are designed to withstand high winds and extreme weather conditions (bottom right).

Some towns have ordinances that do not allow blade signs. If this is the case in any of the towns on the Bluenose Coast, change the ordinance. Perpendicular signage is critical to the success of businesses that are hoping to tap into pedestrian or drive-by traffic.





The Lunenburg waterfront is terrific (top right). And it's very popular. No wonder - there's a lot to do: The museum, the shops, the restaurants, carriage rides, sailing and boating rides, walking tours, as well as just walking along the waterfront and enjoying the sights and activity. It's great fun and terrific ambiance.

Suggestion: Once again, add some curb appeal (bottom left). Some hanging baskets of flowers and pots of shrubs by the doorways would look terrific.

We saw this terrific decorative sign for walking tours, but it raised questions. Where is the Academy? Just once a day? How much does it cost? Suggestions: Include more information on the sign to answer potential questions like these. Include a rack card as well, so that visitors who miss it can come back another day or another time.





This is very well done and important (top right). Nice to see the cooperative effort of various tour vendors. These activities are critical to the waterfront's success - visitors are looking for things to do, not just things to look at. This is great.

What a stunning sight! (bottom left) The overall ambiance of Lunenburg is incredible.

Yes! Visitor washrooms! (bottom right) These are very nicely done - the benches and gardens make visitors feel welcome and comfortable. Suggestion: Include visitor information here as well. Add a small outdoor display and some weather proof brochure holders. Include the washrooms on downtown pedestrian wayfinding signage. Knowing these are available will keep visitors in town longer, spending more money.



The number one reason travelers stop is to use washroom facilities, and research has shown that once you get visitors to stop, there is a four-times greater chance they'll spend money as well. So having your public washrooms in a location convenient for visitor shopping is excellent.

Be sure to provide visitor information at your public washrooms. People are very likely to read it once they've stopped to use the facilities. Where do you do most of your reading? Cross sell attractions and amenities, so that visitors can see what the entire region has to offer. The more there is to do, the longer people will stay, and more money they will spend.

These washrooms facilities in Gig Harbor, WA (photos this page) are excellent examples. Note the brochure holders (bottom right) providing 24 hour access to the brochures. Make your washrooms a sales tool. That will help offset the cost of maintenance.





We were disappointed that we ran out of time. This sailing cruise (top right) is another not-to-be missed activity! So far, we could have spent at least three days in the area between Halifax and Lunenburg.

Point: A visit to the Bluenose Coast can't be done in a day. There is so much to see and do! It would be best to allow a minimum of three days - and that's if you don't plan on doing everything. Five days would be better. There's that much to do. When we were estimating our time based on what we read in the marketing materials, we really had no idea there would be so much. This tells us you are under-marketed.

Wow. Stunning building (bottom left). What is it? Another tourist attraction? School? Or is it a funeral home (note the cemetery out front). We tried to find it, but couldn't. It's an incredible landmark. Tell us more!

Walking through downtown, we noticed the "Question Mark." (bottom right) Universal symbol for visitor information. We were surprised. Really? There's visitor information up this way, which leads us out of downtown? We weren't sure how far - should we walk or go back and get our car?

Suggestion: Add the distance to the visitor information marker.



We followed the arrow, but this just doesn't seem right (top right) Visitor information should always be in the heart of the spending district. Suggestion: Wayfinding should always include continuation signage. One is needed here.

Well, sure enough, we found the visitor information center at a considerable distance from the shopping district (bottom left). It's isolated out here, but we assumed it was placed here so that it can handle the nearby RV camp site registrations. In that case, have two centers - one downtown on the waterfront. Or lease this one out to a vendor and have one downtown.

Good job with 24 hour visitor information and evening hours (bottom right). It's a great VIC with a helpful, friendly staff.

Always put your information center in the spending district. Once again, once people exit their vehicles (for information or washrooms) there is a four times greater chance they will spend money. Don't lose this opportunity. While the current arrangement may be convenient for the community, it's not convenient for the bulk of visitors, who generate a good amount of tax base for the community.





The museum at the waterfront is another must-see attraction. It's very well-done and we really enjoyed going through it. Lunenburg (top right) is a great place for visitors with friendly shop owners, great food, and lots to see and do. The biggest challenge we had was that merchants couldn't wait to close up shop. Fact: 70% of all consumer spending takes place after 6:00 pm. Shop after shop were chasing customers out so they could close and hundreds of customers were wandering around aimlessly with cash in their wallets and purses. Many complained about the early hours. What a shame and what a lost opportunity. By the way, this also happened in Mahone Bay and Chester.

### BRIDGEWATER

Well, we eventually made it to Bridgewater - on another day. Bridgewater is located in a great riverfront setting (bottom left). There's a lot of potential to take advantage of the riverfront for its stunning views, yet the river was the "back door" to big box retail centers. Go figure.

The town seemed to be more of a commercial center than a visitor destination (bottom right).



Perhaps Bridgewater's focus could be as the primary "provisioning center for the Bluenose Coast experience." (top right)

But hey! There is entertainment in town with some night life (bottom left). Suggestion: This spot could be made more inviting by adding some beautification: some tables and chairs with umbrellas for shade, some trees in pots, some pots of flowers for color. The wide expanse of the asphalt parking lot is harsh - if it's relieved by some beautification near the building, it'll be much more appealing.

There seems more signs telling people how to get out of town than into downtown (bottom right). These need to be updated - freshened with new paint. We would have never found downtown Bridgeport had we not been assessing the area. There were no signs directing us across the bridge. Every sign seemed to be telling us how to leave.





We searched and searched and never found any visitor information in the town. We initially thought that was what the key was for (top right).

Suggestion: The key isn't a universally well-known symbol (we think now it's for a museum or heritage site?) Make it more obvious what the key symbolizes, perhaps by simply adding "Heritage site" or something of that nature to these signs. Suggestion: Provide visitor information in Bridgewater, even if it's an unmanned display kiosk with brochure holders.

The parking was a tad confusing (bottom left). Suggestion: Redevelop the signage. Where are the "P" zones? Is this public parking or permit only parking? Make it simple and easy to understand.

To park, or not to park. Is this post the dividing line? (bottom right) The parking situation, from a visitors perspective, is a mess. We never could make sense of it. The signs were dilapidated, or missing (bottom left) and hodge podge, and it was difficult to tell who could park where. We finally gave up and simply parked in an empty space. Thank goodness we weren't ticketed. Other visitors we ran into simply gave up and left town. Even one local we approached didn't have a clue and told us they don't enforce the regulations, so park wherever you like.



## Parking Is Not Just For Lovers

### The parking limits rule

Convenient, easy to find parking is a critical feature for visitors who want to do some shopping in a downtown. Studies have shown that visitors will spend, on average, about four hours to do all the shopping and dining they want. If parking is limited to two hours, visitors are more likely to simply leave before they're done spending money, rather than move the car to another spot. Two hour parking limits dramatically reduces visitor spending and repeat visits. The town of Winthrop, WA (top right) realizes this, and sets their parking limits at four hours. If you must have some spots with two hour limits, post signs telling visitors *where* they can find four hour or all day parking and make sure it's still convenient.

These are beautiful signs (bottom left). Suggestion: Consider this motif for other signs throughout town.

First impressions are lasting impressions (bottom right). As we drive into town, our first glimpses aren't all that appealing. Consider adding many more street trees and some hanging baskets from the lampposts. Get rid of the concrete barriers.





While some businesses are working hard to be attractive (top right), others have a lot of work to do (bottom left). Get rid of the weeds from the cracks in the sidewalk, add a couple of tables with chairs and umbrellas outside, along with some potted plants. Replace the signage in the window with permanent, professionally produced signs. Get rid of the broken aggregate planter. Is this place still in business? It doesn't look like it. If it is, it looks like they don't care what the business looks like. That's sad.

This doesn't help either (bottom center). Suggestion: Take it down or make it shine. This is a good opportunity to develop a permanent display kiosk for visitor information.

Suggestions: Reorganize this "display" (bottom far right) by area attractions (things to see and do). Make it user friendly. Keep it updated - take down the old, and put up the new on a regular basis, maybe once a week. Add a brochure holder so that visitors can take information with them.

As is, you'd be better off taking this away than leaving it in this condition.



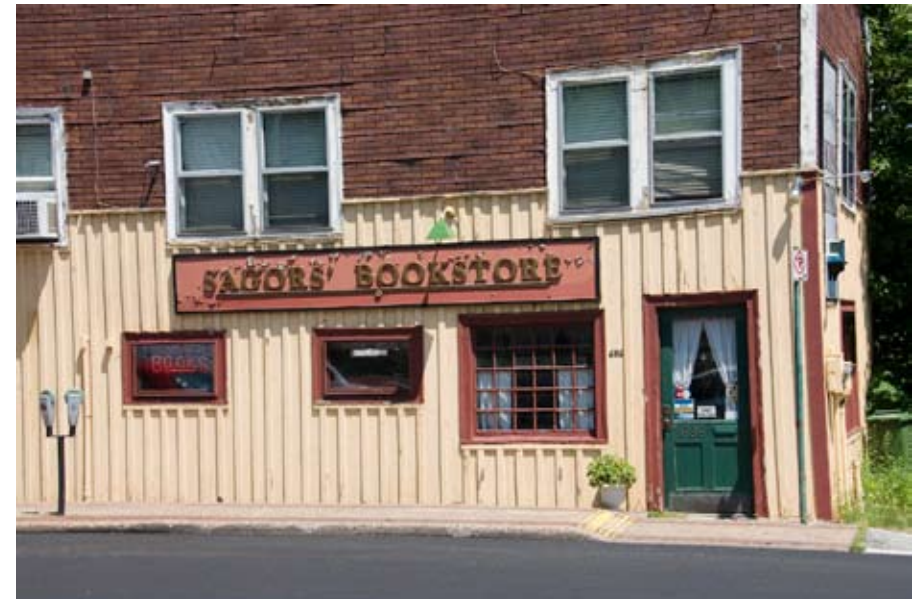
This bookstore (top right) looks like it's been closed for years. Is it really open? If so, make the outside look like it's an operating business.

Suggestions: Repaint the building, trim and sign. Add a blade sign. Clean up the weeds from the sidewalk and along the side of the building. Consider adding landscaping to the side of the building. Add a bench outside under the two higher windows, and add some pots of flowers or shrubs under the larger window. This shop could be very cute, and it would attract more business.

This shop (bottom left) could also be charming. Suggestions: Remove the Christmas lights. Add a planter box and hanging baskets. Update the sign. Have a professionally produced A-board created.

Flower shops (bottom right) should always set the standard in terms of a beautiful store front.

Suggestions: Create a beautiful outdoor display. Replace the sign with an updated, professionally painted, decorative sign. Add pots of flowers along the wall.





This pizza shop (top right) already has a lot of appeal because of the bright colors - that's great. Suggestions: Add a couple of tables and Catalina umbrellas and some potted shrubs to help soften the facade.

The mural on this pub (bottom left) is very nicely done. Now add some plantings in pots or planters and a bench.

While Bridgeport (bottom right) has tremendous potential, there doesn't seem to be a retail focus for the downtown. Think "the mall mentality."

When like businesses are grouped together, they can develop the "mall mentality." They work with each other for the benefit of the whole group, with marketing efforts, keeping consistent hours, and keeping their store-fronts clean and attractive. Think shopping malls, food courts, antique malls, auto malls, intersections with fast food or service stations. This is "clustering." When like businesses are clustered, they are more successful than when they are spread out. People are attracted to the convenience and variety of having the stores be close together. Think Argyle Street in Halifax.





This is very nice (top right), but it's sure easy to miss. Suggestion: Be sure to place signage prominently so visitors can see what you have to offer.

Does anybody care? (bottom left) When there's a lack of maintenance downtown, it gives the impression that the town is on the decline and that locals don't really care. Suggestions: Perhaps have a Boy Scout Troop adopt this. Have the weeds pulled, sweep the sidewalks, have lawn areas mowed, and the trash picked up at least once a month.

Suggestion: Consider a weed abatement program for downtown, to keep the sidewalks clear of weeds (bottom right). Is there a garden club that could adopt the planters and streetscapes to keep them planted, maintained, and looking nice? Could a scouting troop take on the project? Are there others who might form a volunteer group to keep downtown Bridgewater looking beautiful? How about regular, frequent downtown clean-up days?

The planter, below right, is nice, but the effort is negated by the lack of sidewalk maintenance.





IDEA: This block (top right) could be your “demonstration project.” It has great overall curb appeal already. When rejuvenating a downtown, it’s helpful to start with only one block. Make that a showcase, working on beautification as well as recruiting the businesses to achieve critical mass. After you’re done with that block, start on the next one, etc. This would make a great little “restaurant row.”

Shopping, dining and entertainment is where 80% of visitor spending takes place. People are drawn to places that have a **critical mass** of shopping and dining options. Just a reminder about the business mix:

1. TEN places that sell food.
2. TEN destination retail shops.
3. TEN places open after 6:00.

Many towns have had great success concentrating on a retail focus, such as gardening, home furnishings, dining, ceramic art, antiques, or even weddings.

Think Argyle Street in Halifax - with its critical mass of restaurants (bottom).





Argyle Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia (photos this page) is devoted almost entirely to dining. The 22 restaurants here (in just two blocks) have built decks over the sidewalks along one side of the street to accommodate tables and chairs.

During lunch and dinner hours every place is nearly full. It has become the hotspot for dining in all of Halifax if not the province. It proves the power of critical mass of like businesses grouped together - clustering.

Note the lush plantings that every restaurant has provided. Beautification is very important, and the restaurants all do their best to create an attractive setting. They've also used plants and planters as barriers to help create a feeling of intimacy for their dining patrons. The awnings create a sheltered feeling.

People love to be able to dine outside, and seeing people sitting at their tables, eating, laughing, and having a good time is the best advertisement a restaurant can have.





Two more great examples of restaurants in Halifax in the Argyle Street area (top right and bottom left). You aren't required to have more than 20 restaurants, but this example shows the power of critical mass of like businesses grouped together. When there is so many options of like businesses clustered together, people are attracted.

One restaurant owner on Argyle Street owns four of them. Isn't he competing against himself? Of course not. He maintains that the more you have the further people come and the longer they stay. He just proved the point.

Suggestion: This block in Bridgwater (bottom right) has tremendous potential for development into a small, intimate "restaurant row." There is space around the corner for outdoor dining, a courtyard area, and a cluster of several types of restaurants could create the critical mass of dining options to attract visitors from out of town. With lots of beautification and excellent cuisine, this spot could become a real success.





This is a great park (top right) and would be a great location for a visitor information kiosk.

## Kiosks Never Sleep

### The 24/7 rule

Visitors don't just travel during business hours, so make sure you provide visitor information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Put up visitor information kiosks with weather-proof brochure holders at local attractions, parking areas, and visitor amenities. Place them where visitors can also spend money, and you'll receive a double benefit. When visitors stop to get information, they'll be much more likely to decide to go into that nearby shop or cafe for a souvenir, gift, snack, or lunch.

Ashland, Oregon (bottom right) has a weather-proof visitor information display that provides information on lodging, dining, events, and maps.

Wherever you have provincial or district parks (bottom left), include visitor information. You can cross-sell attractions, keeping visitors in the area longer.





#### WHAT TO DO:

Visitor information kiosks can be built in a style that promotes the theme of the community. This one in Southampton, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Huron (top near right), is a great example, fitting the nautical image of the community.

There are several of these kiosks along the Teton Pass Trail (top far right), cross-promoting attractions and amenities.

This kiosk in Kingsport, Tennessee, (bottom left) is styled to match the classic brick structure of the surrounding architecture. The brochure holder (bottom right) is excellent. Each merchant pays \$5 per month to have their brochure included. The fee pays for upkeep, restocking, and to build a fund to construct the next kiosk.

The Bluenose Coast should develop a unique style of kiosk to fit its theme, and erect several of them in the region. They should all cross-sell different towns and areas along the coast, letting people know about upcoming events, attractions, and amenities.



Is this a visitor attraction? (Top right) It looked like it might be, but we couldn't be sure, and couldn't figure out how to get there. Is that a good thing?

We're looking for a museum in a residential area (bottom left). We're not sure if we're looking in the right place but there were a key signs leading us in this direction.

We saw signs for a museum before we headed up this way, but had a heck of a time finding it (bottom right). Signage should always be at the street - and perpendicular to traffic, so that drivers are able to find it easily.

Suggestion: Develop a marquee sign and place it just before the trees (below right) and perpendicular to the traffic. We drove past - twice - before we actually noticed the museum back there.





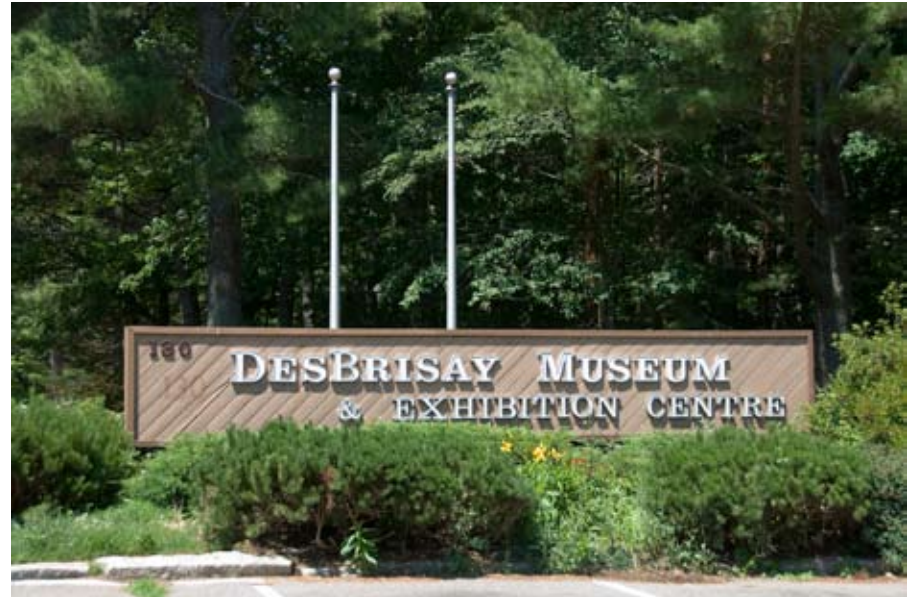
Once we arrived, we saw that the sign is very nice (top right). But is the museum open? It's hard to tell. If so, add flags to the flag poles. What is the museum's focus? Make that clear on the signage. As a visitor, we have no idea what or who DesBrisay is.

The gardens and grounds look like they're in an advanced state of neglect. (bottom left and right) Assumption: The museum is not longer operating, but we don't know why or if it will reopen again in the future.

Suggestions: If it's still operating, make it obvious: Post open signs, a sign out along the street, weed the gardens and enhance the landscaping, post the operating hours, uncover the sign (bottom left), etc.

If the museum is temporarily closed, post signs to let visitors know. Include information about what improvements are being made, and when the museum will reopen. Invite people back.

If the museum is permanently closed, post a sign to let visitors know that as well.





Visitor information signs led us to this little building (top right). It doesn't look like it's open any longer either. Suggestion: Be sure to remove wayfinding signs when locations change or no longer exist.

## First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions

### The rule of perceived value

Always put your gateway signs where you will make the first best impression - that may not be at your city/district limits. Gateway signs are a visitor's introduction to the town. They create a sense of arrival. Beautiful entries increase the perceived value of the community and help develop community pride. Gateways to Bluenose Coast communities can do the same thing - and increasing the perceived value makes it a more desirable place to visit and ultimately increases visitor spending. This is a nice gateway sign (bottom left), but it's not in a good location. Suggestion: Move it closer to town, in a more attractive location. Is this the first impression you want to leave with visitors?

This gateway sign to Baker Street in Nelson, BC (bottom right) gives people the sense that they've arrived at a classic and desirable destination. It's a good example of a well-placed, attractive gateway.





The moment we see a welcome or gateway sign (top right) we immediately judge the community by what we see around the sign. In this location, it paints a less-than-desirable image of the town.

As we approached this intersection (bottom left), we were overwhelmed by the sheer number of off-premise signs! It's hard to even notice the highway wayfinding signs because they are swamped by all the others. As drivers approach an intersection, they typically have twelve seconds to read the signs. So how many can you read in twelve seconds? GO!

This roadside (bottom right) collection of signs is almost as bad. How many can you read? And how many do you want to read?

Sign clutter like this is very unsightly - it creates a negative image of the entire area. But it's sometimes understandable that merchants use them - when there's inadequate wayfinding into towns or to their shops, they feel that there's no other way visitors will find them.

Suggestion: Wherever possible, consolidate signage - create directories.



Keep the Bluenose Coast as pristine as possible by not allowing sign clutter. This directory from the Cabot Trail (bottom left) is a good example of a solution to sign clutter. This was created by a merchant along the Cabot Trail to help visitors find their way through the Margaree Valley Area.

### PETITE RIVIERE

Had it not been for a meeting with the Bluenose Coast folks, we would have never found this hidden gem (top right). We had to even use hand drawn maps to find the area since it didn't seem to be included in any of the marketing materials we had gathered. Even then, we almost never found it. Thank goodness for navigation systems, which told us the bridge was Petite Riviere (bottom right).

Suggestion: Develop your wayfinding program to address not just wayfinding, but also gateways and entries. Each community should have a gateway sign (even if it's a small sign for a small community) that tells us we've actually arrived.





While in Petite Riviere, we found the wonderful Petite Riviere Wine Shop (top right) - another Hidden Gem. The sign is well done, letting visitors know they are welcome to stop in (top right). We had a wonderful visit at the wine shop, and came away with more knowledge of viticulture, and several bottles of wine.

We discovered some great little shops (bottom right) while exploring the Petite Riviere area. This charming little area added another half-day to the time we really needed to truly discover the Bluenose Coast region.





The Painted Saltbox gallery is worth a special trip from Halifax in its own right. (top right). Another outstanding “hidden gem.” The signs are excellent, the ambiance is simply charming, walking the grounds is half the fun, and the art is simply amazing. Meeting the artisans makes it even a greater treat.

By the way, people are four times more likely to buy art when they meet the artist. We left with numerous items.

Now that’s making a statement! (bottom center)

What a great brochure holder! (bottom right) Other merchants should consider buying some of these for their brochures and marketing materials. Locally made and excellent outside shops and restaurants.

In marketing your Hidden Gems, it’s important that you also promote “anchor” businesses - specifically. Those that make an area or a community worth a special trip. The winery and Painted Saltbox Gallery are anchors for Petite Reviere.





You know the roads are bad when they need to be mowed (top near right). It isn't a good route for RVers. Suggestion: Make a point to warn RVers in your marketing materials that the roads are rough. They'll appreciate you for that. Hopefully, road repair is a provincial priority.

While lost in the area we accidentally came across Crescent Beach (top far right) another quiet, serene escape. Very scenic and beautiful.

### BLUE ROCKS

While in Petite Reviere, it was suggested that we should see the Blue Rocks near Lunenburg - something we knew nothing about. So, we decided to check it out. What a stunningly beautiful place. We tried on multiple trips to go into this gift shop (bottom left), but it never seems to be open. Suggestion: Invite us back. If you are still an operating business, post the hours you will be open so that we'll know when to return. If not an operating business, let us know.

What a charming little place. Full of great photo ops! (bottom center and bottom right) One more incredible hidden gem of the Bluenose Coast!



After spending several days exploring the coastal communities, we headed inland.

### THE INLAND COMMUNITIES

Our first destination was the North Queens Heritage House. We found the Visitor Information Centre (top right), which was open. The staff was very nice and helpful. It is a nice area, but there's not much to draw visitors in terms of activities, shops, dining or entertainment.

We got there just in time for lunch! (bottom left) They were doing a Friday barbecue.

The Heritage House (bottom right) is a nice museum but more of a local treasure than a visitor draw. We were shown around, and made to feel very welcome - the people in the community were very friendly. But, like many historic attractions, once you've seen it, you've "been there, done that" and are not likely to return.





We searched and searched and never found the Parkdale Maplewood Museum (top right). Suggestion: Include distances on the wayfinding signs. For visitors who've never been there, distances always seem longer than they are. To keep visitors from giving up because they haven't gone far enough, always post distances and "reminder signs" - ahead 3 km.

As we drove through some of the inland areas, there were a few (very few) destination retail shops (bottom left). It was very hit and miss trying to find shops that were open during consistent hours.

Most did little to pull us in (bottom right). Unless there is a real "hidden gem" we missed or simply passed by, visitors may not find much to attract them to most of these communities. As noted before, curb appeal can account for 70% of sales at restaurants, wineries, golf courses, and lodging facilities. The curb appeal at the restaurant (below right) was not enough to pull us in. Is this still and operating restaurant? If so, make it obvious.





## First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions

### The rule of perceived value

Would you eat at this restaurant (top right)? Probably not, based on your first impression. You might wonder how this restaurant is still open and serving food to the public. Your first impression of a restaurant, a shop, or a whole town can color your lasting perception of that place.

The exterior of your shop, restaurant, or lodging facility gives visitors their first clue as to what to expect inside. Your signs are their first introduction to your business, and they can tell visitors a lot about what they can expect. You should make sure your business signage enhances your image.

This is an effective sign (bottom left), and made us want to check out the store and restaurant. But the shop's first impression, once we turned the corner, was not strong enough to pull us in (bottom right). It looks fine, but not unique or outstanding. Suggestions: Add some hanging baskets, reduce the number of plastic banners and signs on the building.





Curb appeal is incredibly important, especially to visitors who have only their first impressions of a shop or restaurant to help them make a decision. This burger shop (top right) looks like, well - a burger joint, and it might be good or it might be mediocre. It's hard to tell. Suggestion: Curb appeal could be improved by the addition of a few tables with chairs and umbrellas, some planters, and some hanging baskets. Add a sign letting visitors know when you're open!

The NSLC (bottom left) could also enhance its curb appeal with pots of flowers and hanging baskets. Overall, we were running out of ideas on what to see or do away from the waterfront communities.

And as we were about to give up, we discovered another terrific hidden gem! (bottom right) The Ross Farm Museum was definitely worth the drive! This kind of experiential museum is absolutely a must-visit destination. Consider calling it a "living farm and museum" more than just a farm. It really is. The word "living" brings it to life and tells people it's more than just a place to look at.

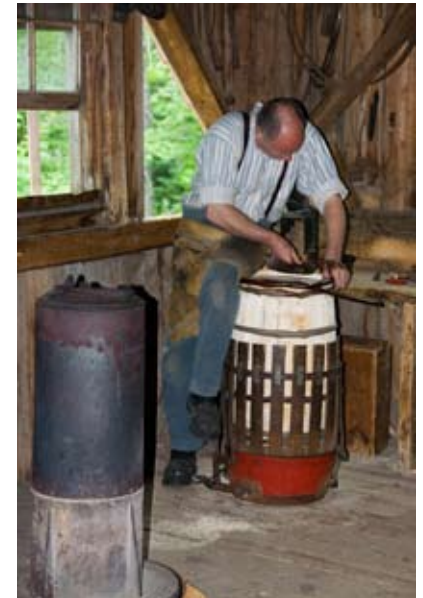


Great sign (top near right). Add: "Open at 10 am daily, year round" or whatever the actual operating hours are.

Go on a Saturday and catch the Farmers Market (bottom left). Complete with musical entertainment. A real treat that should be included in all Bluenose Coast itineraries.

What makes Ross Farm so special is seeing and meeting artisans and craftsmen in action. We learned a lot from the blacksmith (top far right) and the cooper (bottom far right). It's authentic and fun. We were disappointed that the mill (bottom center) wasn't operating - it's closed on Saturdays. Would it be possible for it to be closed perhaps on a Monday instead of a Saturday?

Ross Farm is a real gem. Great job. Great people. Perhaps the friendliest people we met during the entire trip - and that's saying a lot! Visitors should plan on spending two to four hours at the farm.





These displays (top right and bottom left) provided us with some fascinating historical information about the area and helped us “bond” with the area.

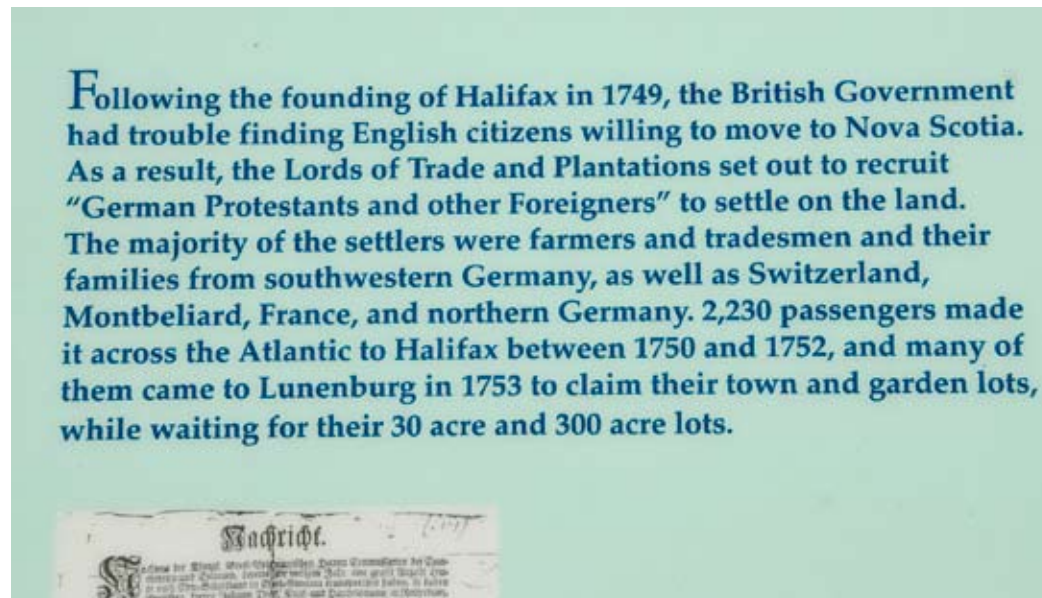
### A FINAL NOTE

It's nice to have a designated spot for those who like to loiter (bottom right). We did notice that it's away from the central shopping district in Chester. We wouldn't want people loitering downtown, so it was thoughtful to provide a place for deadbeats. (Just kidding of course. You have to admit, this is pretty fun.)

### WHAT TO DO:

#### Product Development

- Work on retail beautification (except in Mahone Bay).
- Develop a decorative pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding system.
- Find a retail focus: what each community wants to be known for.
- 70% of ALL spending takes place after 6:00 pm. OPEN YOUR DOORS.  
Note: Lunenburg wins the prize, when most other communities shut down early..
- Fix the roads and warn RVers of what to expect.



## Marketing

- Create the “Hidden Gems of Nova Scotia’s Bluenose Coast.”
- Develop detailed itineraries.
- Start with Pick Your Season, then Pick Your Passion.
- Promote your “anchor tenants” - especially private businesses that are highly regarded and worth a special trip in themselves.
- Develop better maps and make them available.
- Quit marketing regions and too many “trails.” The “Lighthouse Trail” is fine. Leave it at that. It’s too confusing for visitors.
- Sell experiences, not geographic locations.
- Jettison the generic in your marketing efforts. Market specifics.
- Develop a Bluenose Coast website with a focus on photography and experiences.
- Stay open later.

The region should be known by one name:

## The Bluenose Coast on Nova Scotia’s South Shore

The name “The Bluenose Coast” is distinctive and creative - it sounds like a truly unique destination; using simply the “South Shore” doesn’t have as great an impact because there are “South Shores” everywhere!

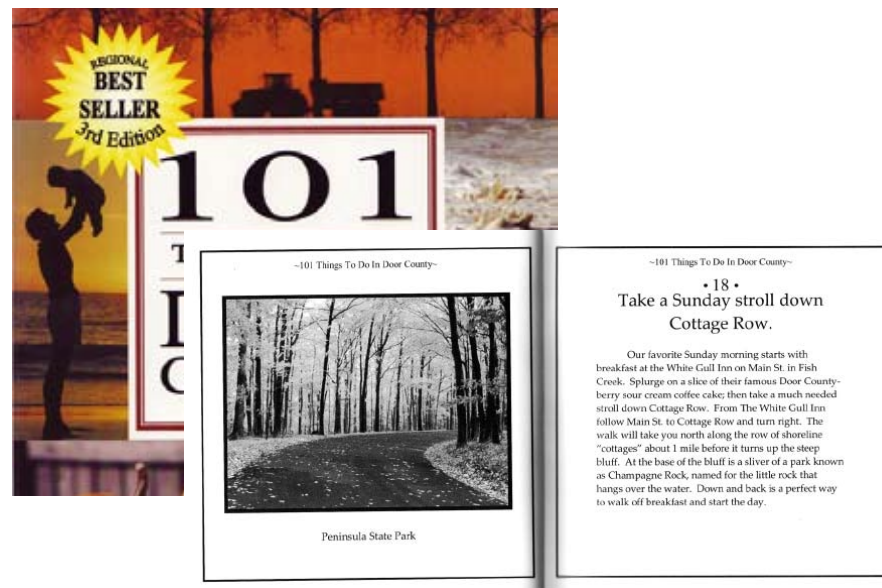
### Create detailed itineraries:

By type of activity:

- History & culture
- Arts & entertainment
- The environment
- Sports & recreation
- Shopping & dining
- Events

By type of travel:

- Motorcycle
- Bicycle
- Private auto, RV
- Tour bus



Itineraries should be created for half days, full days, and multi-days. Think like a travel writer. Some examples are on the following pages. Always include:

- Maps and distances (in miles and kilometers)
- Time between places and how much time to spend at shops and attractions.
- Specific shops and restaurants. Promote specialty foods and dessert items.
- Include costs, viewpoints, and options for visitors.
- Include activities: things to do, not just things to see.
- Name names. It’s ok to name and promote the shopkeeper.
- Include places to stay.
- Do NOT let politics get in the way. You MUST promote businesses and hidden gems.

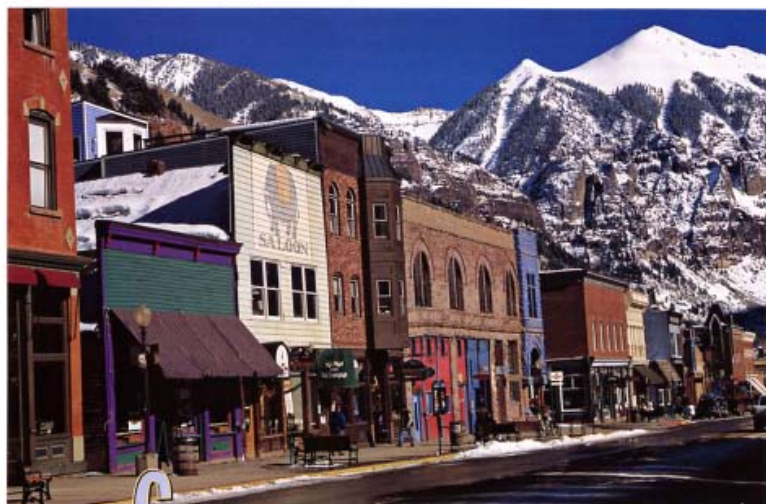


# great drives

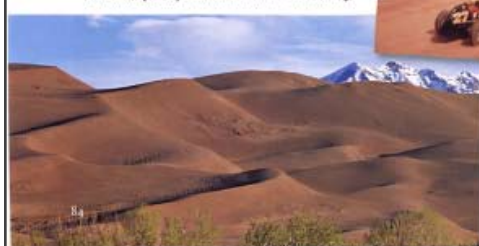
Colorado

## Peak Performance

From his Audi RS 6 supersedan, **Stephan Wilkinson** surveys canyons, caravans, and an infamous cannibal



The San Juan Mountains loom over Telluride (top); a 1950s contender in the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (right); cottonwoods bloom amid sand dunes (below).



**C**HARGING UPHILL IS NO PROBLEM for Audi's 450-horsepower, twin-turbo, 164-mph RS 6 supersedan, so I took it to Colorado's Rocky Mountains for a top-speed taste of three resort towns as different as a mint julep, a single malt, and a schooner of Stella: Colorado Springs, with its classic Broadmoor hotel; chic Aspen; and trendy Telluride. It's hard to imagine another state—or country—

within which easy 250-mile-a-day back-road legs can provide such diverse and spectacular drives. Certainly the Rockies are the state's crown jewels, but Colorado is not all mountains. On the Xats, the roads are a motorhead's mecca, most of them as smooth as an infant's buns and some so sinuous that they deserve to be on any location scout's list for car commercials.



### Colorado Springs to Aspen via Pikes Peak

**Day 1** One of my heroes is a shy, lanky German race-car driver named

Walter Rohrl, who has given me more than a few rides in fast cars (most recently, a 206-mph scurry in the new \$440,000 Porsche supercar, the Carrera GT). In 1987, Rohrl drove an Audi in the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb—after the Indy 500, the second-oldest motor race in the

moths, beetles, and flies that are impressed in rock. Thanks to the wonders of plate tectonics, Colorado has the only known fossil record of the tsetse fly, which of course has long since decamped to equatorial Africa.

On Route 24, I cross the 9,500-foot-high Wilkerson Pass (misspelled; I learned at age three that it's W-i-l-k-i-n-s-o-n, dammit), and suddenly, to the west, are the real Rockies. Pikes Peak and its ancillaries are part of the Front Range, but the Continental Divide runs through the snowcapped mountains far ahead, across a flat, broad valley.

"Welcome to Chaffee County," the sign says. "Now this is Colorado." It's absolutely right; there's something very specific and Coloradoan about the view. This isn't the cactus-dotted desert of so much of the Southwest, though that familiar landscape isn't far away. This terrain is vivid, and constantly changing, from forested mountains to luxurious grasslands. The road becomes arrow-straight, and the overpowered Audi romps.

Route 24 takes the Audi to Leadville, at just over 10,000 feet the highest incorporated city in the country and only 2,000 feet lower than La Paz, the highest city in the world. Just thinking about it makes me short of breath. The National Mining Hall of Fame & Museum in Leadville gives me the willies by making plain what a horrifying form of labor mining was—and still is. Upstairs, the walls are hung with portraits of men who became rich thanks to mining. Downstairs are dioramas, exhibits of old equipment, and a simulated mine, all hints about the lives of anonymous men scrambling like moles through the earth.

I'm entering Aspen through the back door—narrow, beautiful Colorado 82, which is closed in the winter. It's a splendid road, winding over 12,000-foot Independence Pass and then down, down through a magnificent forested gorge.

In front of me is a silver Mercedes SUV with local plates and an ML430 badge that says it's packin' a V8. The driver, eager to show this flatlander how to handle a Colorado mountain road, steams off, racking the boxy Benz through its inviting corners. I effortlessly stick the RS 6 up his tailpipe, and after five miles he pulls into a turnoff and waves me by, no doubt wondering how on earth a midsize sedan with Michigan plates can do that. (Hint: Skeptics should note in their rearview mirror the underside of the big oil-cooler inlet below the Olympic-rings grille, flanked by two brake-cooling ducts.

With 45 horsepower more than even a Z06 Corvette, it's not your commuter-dad Audi.)

Aspen, my day's destination: It's easy to make fun of a town that can be regarded as either an island of conspicuous consumption or an oasis of taste and quality, depending on your point of view. Either way, it's a place where the cops drive Saab squad cars and wear designer jeans, and thin, stylish women in coral-crush Stetsons and sheep-



dog-simulacrum. Ugg boots walk around with tiny cell phones glued to their ears. What it's like during ski season I don't want to know.

### Aspen to Telluride

**Day 2** On the four-lane out of Aspen, past Snowmass and on toward I-70, the opposite-direction traffic early in the morning is a steady flow of pickups, Toyota Corollas, and rusty old vans, not a Mercedes SUV among them. These are the maids, caretakers, and waiters, people who do Aspen's scut work but live in places named Basalt and Emma, Catherine and Carbondale. Southbound on Colorado 133, I'm poking the Audi's nose toward a steep wall of mountains, the West Elks. It looks as though there's no way through, but inevitably there will be a pass. It turns out to be a heavily forested, towering gorge, and the river that made it rushes alongside the road. Fir trees cling to the vertical gorge walls like hairs on a fat man's back. The water has been at work forever, exposing layers of colorful rock. It's straight out of an overwrought, sun-dappled Albert Bierstadt Western painting.

Just after topping McClure Pass, I pull into a turnoff to admire the vast view beyond the perilous, unguarded drop-off. There's a small cross stuck in the ground. Nailed to it is the faded red cap of trucker Bill Moore, of

Hotchkiss, Colorado, who must have missed the turn and gone airborne here last May, perhaps in a pickup. Whatever it was, the pieces are far below, amid the thick green trees. It doesn't bear thinking about. There isn't another car, nor is there a settlement, much less a town, for 15 miles. Yet ahead are two hitchhikers confidently walking toward Grand Junction, which happens to be about 75 miles away. This I learn after stopping to pick them up. Their van blew its transmission, and they're going to a junkyard to check out a replacement gearbox.

Junkers don't bother them. "We've got an Audi too," the man says. "It's an '87 that I bought for a hundred dollars. Abandoned, probably stolen. They stripped out the headlights and the radio, but the rest of the car seems fine." His wife is in the back seat. "Kathy is a country singer," he says. I glance in the rearview mirror. Kathy, an attractive woman probably in her thirties, smiles at me. Most of her upper teeth have gone missing.

"Boy, you sure handle these corners well," the man says. "Most people from out of state have no idea how to drive in the mountains." Kathy, however, is looking a little green in the mirror, so I back off. I drop the transmission shoppers off in Hotchkiss, and they stride toward Grand Junction, 50 miles to go. My destination is Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, a lesser-known but remarkable geological wonder.

I've seen deeper canyons, broader canyons, even grander canyons, but never one so deep, narrow, and sheer-sided. Not until you're right upon it are you even aware it's there, a sudden crack in the earth. My knees tingle with the electric sensation of true acrophobia as I force myself to peer far, far down to the Gunnison River, which from the rim looks like just a brook.

Driving from the canyon back to Hotchkiss, I'm retracing my steps. There's never wasted mileage in Colorado, for these are the awe-inspiring views that were at my back an hour ago. It will happen again tomorrow, for I'm on my way to Telluride. When I arrive, I'm struck by a sign painted on a wall: "Your civil liberties are safe in Telluride. Enjoy it."

### Telluride to Alamosa

**Day 3** My map shows a county road south of Ouray—County 18, the "Alpine Loop Back Country Byway"—to Lake City—and it will cut almost 100 miles from the normal route. The

great drive



## great drives

Audi has its trademark quattro all-wheel drive, and how bad can a backcountry byway be?

Way bad. County 18 turns out to be a rocky, muddy three-foot-wide track, not a road. It disappears up into the forest at about a 45-degree angle. Several leather-clad riders on motocross bikes and battered ATVs wait at the bottom to assault it, but this one's too tough even for Walter Rohrl.

I get my off-roading chance soon enough. The little sign on U.S. 50, a couple of hours later, says LAKE CITY CUTOFF, another dirt-road shortcut, this one at least suitable for ranchers' pickups. I wonder whether the Audi is the only \$85,000 German sedan to have ever left its tire tracks upon Gunnison County 25. Lake City is famous for one

### Pit Stops

**ASPEN** Some "restored" Western hotels look like the owners simply put up locked wallpaper and bought props from the suppliers who outfit T.G.I. Friday's restaurants, but the Hotel Jerome is the real deal—totally renewed and looking better than it did in its 1890s heyday, when it catered not to skiers but to silver-mining fat cats. Part 91-room boutique hotel, part colorful Victorian museum, part celebrity hangout, the Jerome is a wonderfully cluttered classic (800-331-7213; [www.hoteljerome.com](http://www.hoteljerome.com); doubles, \$570-\$730).

**COLORADO SPRINGS** At first glance, The Broadmoor could be just another huge Florida-style resort/golf hotel, but this magnificent complex is every bit as elegant as anything in Monaco or Paris, Los Angeles or London. The big difference is an absolute lack of pretense and none of the phony elegance of the Ritz-y newcomers. All the details are perfect, from the thick glass tumblers that accompany the room's ice bucket to waiters who call you by name rather than telling you, "I'm Jared, and I'll be your waitperson tonight" (800-634-7711; [www.broadmoor.com](http://www.broadmoor.com); doubles, \$230-\$495).

**TELLURIDE** Laid-back Telluride has the handsome Hotel Columbia, an uncomplicated chalet-style building with 21 rooms (each with a fireplace) just across the street from a ski lift and a gondola that climbs a scenic mountain, one of the great free thrill rides around (800-201-9505; [www.columbiatelluride.com](http://www.columbiatelluride.com); doubles, \$165-\$345). For excellent Northern Italian and a pricey but superb wine list with a number of very special Tuscan bottlings, try the coolly receptive Rustico Ristorante (970-728-4046; [www.rustico.com](http://www.rustico.com); \$15-\$38). —S. W.

thing: the Colorado Cannibal, Alferd Packer, who was tried and convicted for murder here. (He'd been christened Alfred but took the name Alferd, which is how it was spelled in the tattoo he wore on his arm. My guess is that the tattooist couldn't spell, thus the name change.) Packer had been one of a group of six prospectors who in 1874 got lost for three months during a winter expedition into the San Juan Mountains. Packer alone survived, and he returned to civilization so porky that it quickly became obvious from whence his frozen dinners had come.

Rene Faires is the talkative docent at the little Hinsdale County Museum, where several Colorado Cannibal artifacts are on display. It's my chance to ask a question that has nothing to do with Alferd Packer: Am I imagining it or do all Colorado drivers strictly adhere to posted speed limits? For three days now, I've been behind drivers doing exactly 20, 35, 40... whatever the sign says.

"Oh, that's absolutely true," Faires says. "We're just not in that much of a hurry. Myself, I don't have anything to hurry for. But the out-of-staters—oh my God, they're crazy. They pass over the double line, they pass in corners, they'll just blow by you no matter what you're doing."

I cut a peek at the Michigan plate on the Audi parked out front, next to the Hinsdale County sheriff's SUV cruiser, in fact. I'm doing the car guy's version of flashing for Faires—open the hood, show your turbos, and everybody goes, "Whoa!"—when the sheriff walks up. "So this is the car I've been hearing about on the radio," he says, and I don't think he means NPR. His squint slowly turns into a smile, yet I'm not altogether sure he's kidding. After all, I did touch an indicated 160 yesterday on a straight, empty stretch south of Montrose.

Back behind the wheel, I decide that Highway 149, the two-lane that runs southeast from Lake City, needs to go on everybody's master list of Ultimate Driving Roads—a category comprising scenery, lack of traffic, and endlessly challenging sweepers, bends, and corners. Car and driver both panting from the exertion of having done the route, we come to Creede, where a dozen Shelby Cobras—a car-club run of some sort—snort and bellow their way past me onto Highway 149 back toward Lake City.

Drive-in movies used to be places to neck—a word as archaic as that pursuit's inevitable by-product, hickies. In Monte Vista, Colorado, the ultimate realization of this activity is the Best Western Movie Manor Motor Inn, where you don't have to use the backseat because you're already in

the motel room, watching the movie out the window: *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* and *Jeepers Creepers 2* were showing on its two big outdoor screens. Some times, content doesn't count.

### Alamosa to Bishop Castle

**4** The Great Sand Dunes National Monument, northeast of Alamosa, is a slice of Saudi Arabia in the middle of the huge San Luis Valley, its dunes so large—they rise 700 feet above the desert floor—that you only begin to grasp their size when you see from a distance the tiny dot of a parked car against them. They are a sand glacier, and it's not just any sand. These crystals of silicon flew here, entirely on the wind, fine and sharp and almost dustlike.

Unlike most of our regimented parks, Great Sand Dunes is free of go-there/don't-walk-here/stay-off signs. The hardy can climb to the top of the drifts if they wish. The spoor of mule deer and coyote are interspersed with the mark of Nike. The park ranger at the gate tells me people arrive at the dunes "with sleds, garage-sale skis, snowboards.... There's a group that comes down every year from Boulder before they get snow there. The Moon Dune Loonies, they call themselves. They come on a full-moon night and ski down the dunes. In costume."

U.S. 160 takes me to I-25 northbound, back to Denver, but there remains one last sight to sample: Bishop Castle, 24 miles west of the interstate on Colorado 165. It is one of the most wonderfully eccentric accomplishments you'll ever see, a free-form assemblage of stone spires, buttresses, towers, a stainless-steel dragon of a chimney, great halls, and cubbyholes, all laced by wiry catwalks, spiral stairways, scaffolding, and steep ladders. The claim is that it's the largest single artifact of any sort made by an individual, certainly in the United States and probably in the world. Jim Bishop has been building it, solo, stone by stone, to a height of more than 160 feet, since 1969. In the process, he has become a curmudgeonly libertarian-cum-anarchist. Scattered about the grounds are angry rants, hand-painted on big plywood panels, against cops, judges, lawyers, bureaucrats, politicians, freeloaders, the IRS, motor-vehicle bureaus, and the taxpayers who support them. You're welcome to roam the property, climb the ladders, leave a donation, and revile the government that wants to charge him for the stones, since they come from the surrounding San Isabel National Forest.

Obsession or accomplishment, idiocy or artistry, it doesn't matter. The world needs a few Jim Bishops. But just a few.

## California Wine Country



A HEALTHY GRAPEVINE CAN PRODUCE ABOUT FIVE BOTTLES OF WINE.

Novices and connoisseurs alike will find new delights on this wine country journey.

## Itinerary

### Vintner's Choice

4-NIGHT CRUISE 36  
ROUND TRIP FROM  
SAN FRANCISCO

#### DAY 1 SAIL FROM SAN FRANCISCO

You will be transferred from San Francisco Airport to Cruise West's hospitality area at the Sheraton Fisherman's Wharf. Enjoy Fisherman's Wharf until boarding time.

You will be welcomed onboard the *Yorktown Clipper* with a flute of Champagne or Champagne punch as you cruise by the San Francisco skyline. Following a delicious dinner, gather in the lounge for a short presentation. Overnight, cruise up-bay for a busy day in the Napa Valley. **D**

#### DAY 2 HIGHLIGHT OF THE NAPA VALLEY

Note: you may visit today's wineries in an alternate order. Winery selection is subject to change.

You will be treated to a cooking demonstration, "Cooking With Wine," by the chefs at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Greystone campus and have time to peruse their amazing cooking store.

Lunch at the world-renowned Auberge du Soleil restaurant on the slope of Rutherford Hill with an impressive view of the entire Napa Valley. This exclusive Cruise West lunch will feature food and wine pairings explained by the sommelier.

Nestled along the historic Silverado Trail, Mumm Napa's spectacular views can be appreciated while tasting from the tasting salon or outside on the terrace.

Later, you will return to CIA for an engaging wine program (may include wind blending) taught by the professionals at Greystone.

Back onboard enjoy a leisurely cocktail hour and dinner. **BLD**

**DAY 3 SAUSALITO** Enjoy the relaxing morning sail. Brunch will be served onboard as the *Yorktown Clipper* ties up near the charming seaside town of Sausalito, just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. You'll be treated to a wine tasting at Bacchus and Venus, an elegant wine and art gallery. There will be time to explore this artists' town on your own.

Later, the *Yorktown Clipper* will sail back to Napa while guests enjoy a Cruise West onboard tasting. **BLD**

**DAY 4 CHOICES** There will be time for shopping and exploring at the park-like Sonoma Plaza, the largest of its kind in California. The Plaza is an eight-acre-square at the heart of Sonoma's unique historical district.

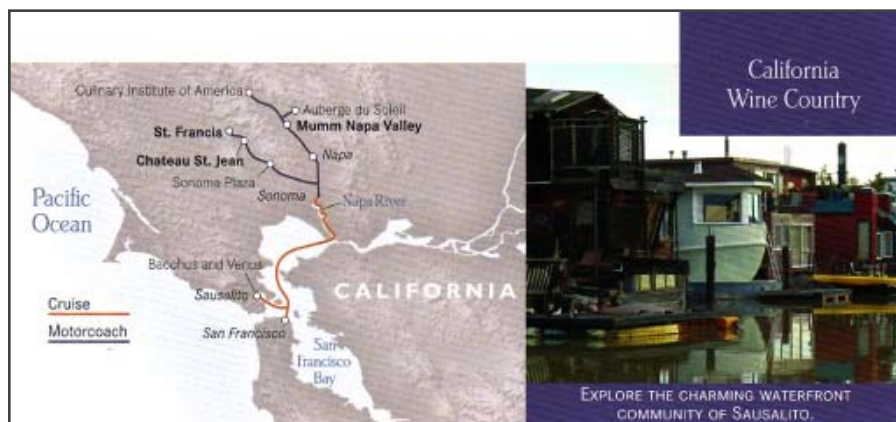
Or... For those of you who would like the opportunity to personalize your cruise by exploring one of your individual passions there will be optional tours available:

The Cabernet Lovers Limo Tour will visit three amazing wineries known for their high-end Cabernet Sauvignons: Quintessa, Silver Oak, and Joseph Phelps. (Wineries subject to change.)

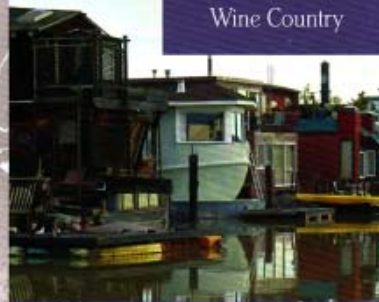
Or... An early morning hot air balloon ride over the lovely Napa Valley.

Or... Tour the olive grove at Round Pond during the harvest/press season. See olive oil pressed,





## California Wine Country



EXPLORE THE CHARMING WATERFRONT COMMUNITY OF SAUSALITO.

and taste it, while enjoying the music that accompanies the busy harvest workers.

Return to the *Yorktown Clipper* for lunch.

Visit two Sonoma wineries this afternoon. At St. Francis enjoy food and wine pairings, touring, and tasting. St. Francis Winery is known for its Cabernets, Meritages, and Chardonnays.

At Chateau St. Jean, you'll have tastings and time to view its magnificent gardens. This winery is known for its Cabernets and Chardonnays.

Back onboard the ship relax at a leisurely cocktail hour with featured wines followed by dinner. **BLD**

**DAY 5 RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO** You will want to be out on deck early this morning as the *Yorktown Clipper* sails under the Golden Gate Bridge before returning to the San Francisco pier for disembarkation.

A transfer to San Francisco's airport is included unless you are extending your stay. **B**

Contact your Travel Professional for additional tour information and itinerary details.

### CRUISE 36 4-NIGHT WINE COUNTRY

SPIRIT OF YORKTOWN	CABIN CATEGORY			
	A	AA	AAA	D,X
MONDAY DEPARTURE				
October 9, 16, 23, 30, 2006	\$1799	1899	2099	2399
November 6	\$1699	1799	1999	2299

The cost of your cruise includes service charges for land-based personnel and \$133 per person which covers taxes/port charges/fees, and onboard services. Onboard gratuities are neither required nor expected. Prices are per person, double-occupancy, U.S. dollars. Single/Triples rates available upon request where applicable. Airfare extra.

**BLD** = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### EXTEND YOUR STAY

Pre- or Post-Cruise Option

### EXPLORE SAN FRANCISCO

Extend and enhance your stay in one of the most beautiful cities in the world - San Francisco. Culturally diverse and rich with history, San Francisco is a mecca of unique entertainment and rewarding experiences. Your package includes one night hotel, portage, and one transfer.

### 1-NIGHT STOPOVER PACKAGE

Per Person

The Sheraton Fisherman's Wharf  
\$145

Sheraton: \$12 tax included per person based on double-occupancy.

Additional nights available. Please call for details.

## California Wine Country



ENJOY TASTING NEW-FOUND LOCAL WINES.

Scenic cruising, private tours and exclusive luncheons make this cruise a weekend escape for the senses.

# Itinerary

## Culture of the Vine

### 3-NIGHT CRUISE 37 ROUND TRIP FROM SAN FRANCISCO

**DAY 1 SAIL FROM SAN FRANCISCO** Transfer from San Francisco Airport to Cruise West's hospitality area at the Sheraton Fisherman's Wharf. Enjoy the delights of Fisherman's Wharf until boarding time.

You will be welcomed onboard with a flute of Champagne or Champagne punch and a toast as you cruise by the San Francisco skyline. Following a delicious dinner, gather in the lounge for a short presentation and casual conversation getting acquainted with your fellow travelers. **D**

### DAY 2 IN THE NAPA VALLEY

Note: you may visit today's wineries in an alternate order. Winery selection is subject to change.

Travel to St. Helena to experience a tour and tasting at the picturesque Merryvale Vineyards, the first winery built in the Napa Valley following prohibition. Savor their complex wines created in the European style.

Enjoy a three-course lunch in the cave theatre at Clos Pegase while listening to the relaxing sounds of live flamenco guitar. This exclusive Cruise West luncheon includes a tour and wine tasting. As well as producing excellent wines, Clos

Pegase is known for their extensive art collection and the fluid architecture of Michael Graves.

Next stop is at Clos Du Val, where you will enjoy a unique tour of a premium winery in the Stags Leap appellation. At Clos Du Val, you will delight in tasting several excellent wines, including the Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and Chardonnay that this winery is famous for.

Later onboard the *Yorktown Clipper*, enjoy a leisurely cocktail hour with featured wines followed by a delicious dinner. **BLD**

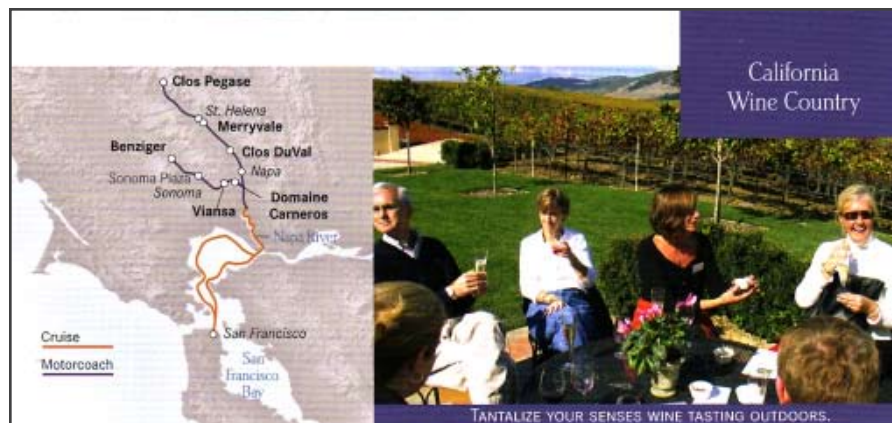
### DAY 3 IN THE CARNEROS DISTRICT AND SONOMA VALLEY

Note: you may visit today's wineries in an alternate order.

Today you will meet with the winemakers at Benziger Winery before boarding a private tractor-pulled tram for a ride through the vineyards and an up-close experience of the vines, later sampling a little fruit of the vine.

### DELICIOUS MEALS AND DELIGHTFUL WINES.





Lunch is served today at Viansa Winery & Italian Marketplace. You'll enjoy browsing through the Tuscan marketplace after lunch and tasting.

Delight in a stroll around the historic Sonoma Plaza where your Exploration Leader will provide you with a walking map and some suggested favorite spots.

Celebration of Celebrations! Your afternoon will wind down with a tour and tasting at Domaine Carneros where you

will be treated to Champagne, and relax on the beautiful outside terrace that overlooks the Carneros landscape. The experts at Domaine Carneros will share their secrets with you. Later, back onboard, relax with a leisurely dinner and selected after-dinner wines in the lounge. **BLD**

**DAY 4 RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO** You will appreciate the early morning views of the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco's waterfront before returning to the pier. A transfer is included to San Francisco's airport or your stopover hotel. **B**

**EXPLORE SAN FRANCISCO - EXTEND YOUR STAY**  
PLEASE SEE *VINTNER'S CHOICE* ITINERARY.

#### CRUISE 37 3-NIGHT WINE COUNTRY

YORKTOWN CLIPPER	CABIN CATEGORY			
	A	AA	AAA	DLX
FRIDAY DEPARTURE				
October 13, 20, 27, 2006	\$1249	1349	1549	1849
November 3	\$1149	1249	1449	1749

The cost of your cruise includes service charges for land-based personnel and \$81 per person which covers taxes/port charges/fees, and onboard services. Onboard gratuities are neither required nor expected. Prices are per person, double-occupancy, U.S. dollars. Single/Triples rates available upon request where applicable. Airfare extra.

Contact your Travel Professional for additional tour information and itinerary details.

**BLD** = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner





## ILLINOIS SUMMER GETAWAYS AS



**1 CULTURAL CHICAGO**  
Chicago (City)

In summer, Chicago's cultural scene really heats up. Take a tour of our famed cityscape with the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Get an up-close look at the masterpieces of Monet and more at the world-renowned Art Institute. Stroll the 25 acres of Millennium Park, Chicago's stunning showcase for the arts. Squeeze in shopping on State Street or Michigan Avenue. Catch a play in the Loop Theater District or laugh at The Second City.



**2 BIG CITY FUN**  
Chicago (City)

There's no better season than summer for families to visit Chicago. At Navy Pier you can take a spin on the Ferris wheel, kid around in the Chicago Children's Museum, and hop aboard a hot air balloon. Take time to talk to the animals at the free Lincoln Park Zoo. Ride the Chicago Trolley to the Museum Campus and explore The Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, and Adler Planetarium. Get a great view of it all from the 94th-floor Hancock Observatory.



**3 FAMILY FROLICS**  
Gurnee

Head to Chicago's loads of family-friendly fun. At the Schomburg, kids' reactivity games, who heads for the 300 Center. Experience Wapet Settlement DuPage Children's habitats at the Br...



**4 ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS**  
Elgin/Geneva/St. Charles

Get ready for a weekend of romance while antiquing in St. Charles and Geneva, sampling wine at Lyndred Winery, and cuddling on a paddlewheel boat cruise on the Fox River. Strut arm-in-arm through a scenic Japanese garden on the Fabron Estate, then explore historic Elgin. Get pampered at the Pheasant Run Resort & Spa. Have dinner in Aurora at Walter Payton's Roundhouse, then catch a show at the Art Deco Paramount Theatre.



**5 FAMILY FROLICS**  
Gurnee

Get ready for nonstop family fun in Chicago's northern suburb. Ride a wild roller coaster at Six Flags Great Escape. Cool off next door at Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, a massive new water park with 25 water slides and a gigantic wave pool. Power shop at nearby Gurnee Mills, home to more than 200 stores, a movie theater, and an ice rink. Take a nature walk at the Chicago Botanic Garden, then play at the Kohl Children's Museum.



**6 GET IN THE GAME**  
Galena/Rockford/Treppert

Northern Illinois is home to some of the finest golf courses in the Midwest. Get golfing on one of the four courses at Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa in Galena, ranked one of the best golf resorts in America by Golf Digest. Black Hawk Golf Club in Stockton offers beautiful wide-open fairways. Golf Digest's best mid-sized golf city in the U.S., Rockford, is home to the Alden Golf Club & Practice Centre, featuring a challenging August-designed course.



**7 SMALL-TOWN SWEETHEARTS**  
Galena

Fall in love again in Galena. Stay in a cozy bed and breakfast or the luxurious Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa. Shop charming Main Street and learn about the town's fascinating history on a Galena Trolley Tour. Sample the vineyards of Galena Cellars and Nachesbach Ridge wineries. Struggle up for an old-fashioned stagecoach ride from Stage Coach Trails Livery. Catch the sunset as you soar in a hot-air balloon with Galena On The Fly.



**8 OUTDOOR ADVENTURES**  
Utica

Illinois is all about the great outdoors. Jump head-first into adventure with Skydive Chicago. Hike through 2,600 acres of thick forests holding lush canyons and sparkling waterfalls at Starved Rock State Park in Utica. Ride the white water with Vermillion River Rafting. Rent a speedboat at Starved Rock Adventures or saddle up at Starved Rock Stables. Then make a splash in the new water park at Grizzly Jack's Grand Bear Lodge.



**9 BIKING**  
Quincy/Naavoo

The Quad Cities are a River Trail, a 62-mile Mississippi River Trail. Arsenal Island that pass several Arsenal Museum, and other Diverse of American Discover Island County.



**10 TIME TRAVEL**  
Quincy/Naavoo

Follow the Mighty Mississippi along the Great River Road and travel back in time to the historic towns of Nauvoo and Quincy. Rich in Mormon history, Nauvoo is home to the fascinating Joseph Smith Historic Site (where dozens of landmarks include the Brigham Young Home) and the stunning Nauvoo Temple. Quincy boasts the architecturally important East End Historic District and the Quincy Art Center, showcasing Midwestern artworks.



**11 PLAY IN PEORIA**  
Peoria

Families enjoy all-American fun in Peoria. Take in an old-fashioned baseball game played by the Peoria Chiefs at O'Brien Field. Check out the science exhibits and planetarium at the Lakeview Museum. Spend the night in a renovated caboose and wake up early with the animals at Wildlife Prairie State Park. Head for the action on the RiverFront, a complex of shops and restaurants right on the water. Cruise the Illinois River on the Spirit of Peoria.



**12 THE GREAT OUTDOORS**  
Alton

Start your outdoor adventure in Alton with a ride along the Mississippi River on the 20-mile Sam Naddabene Bike Trail. Explore the miles of trails in the 8,000-acre Pers Marquette State Park, Illinois's largest state park. Splash the day away at Ragging Rivers Waterpark or paddle the Illinois River with a rental from Grafton Canoe & Kayak. Learn about the famed exploration that changed America at the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Hartford.



**13 LIVING HISTORY**  
Cahokia/Prairie du Rocher/Ellis Grove

From French Colonial sites to battle-tested forts, experience the remarkable history that has shaped Southwest Illinois. Explore the Cahokia Courthouse, an excellent example of pioneer French architecture. Tour Fort de Chartres in Prairie du Rocher, a former French military stronghold that's now a museum. Drive scenic Bluff Road to Ellis Grove and wander the remains of Fort Kaskaskia, built to ward off the British during the American Revolution.



**14 GO FORE IT**  
Marion

Southern Illinois's great golf courses are open all year round. Stone Creek Golf Club and Resort in Mahanada has one of the most scenic courses in the region, set in a dense forest and featuring 11 rustic cabins. Nokopelli Golf Club in Marion was named one of "America's 100 Best Courses for 2000 or Less" by Travel + Leisure magazine. Gambit Golf Club in Vienna features a par 71 course that snakes through rolling meadows and woodlands.



**15 HIT THE ROAD**  
Marion

Strap on your bike. The 45-mile Tamaqua converted railroad National Forest in Bicycling Capital of Karak leads to the Area and a magnificent The scenic River-S that connects the



**16 SHAWNEE ROMANCE**  
Carbondale/Metropolis

Find romance in the rolling hills of the Shawnee National Forest. Wine lovers can sample their way along the 25-mile Shawnee Hills Wine Trail. Saddle up at Cosmic Acres Stables for a guided horseback tour along the equestrian trails that loop through the Shawnee Forest. Make tracks among the towering sandstone cliffs of Giant City State Park. Spend the night in a secluded bed and breakfast that caters to couples seeking the perfect getaway.



**17 LINCOLN LORE**  
Springfield

Learn about the life of one of the most popular presidents in U.S. history at the recently opened Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. With dazzling special effects and rare Lincoln artifacts, the museum is a must-see. Then visit the many historic Lincoln sites around town, including the Lincoln Home, Old State Capitol, and Lincoln's Tomb. Be sure to make a side trip to Lincoln's New Salem, a re-created 1800's village.



**18 AMISH COUNTRY**  
Decatur/Lake Shelbyville/Champaign

Discover a simpler way of life in Central Illinois's Amish country. Learn about the Old Order Amish at the Illinois Amish Interpretive Center in Arrola. Pick up a map at the Arthur Amish Country Visitor Center for a guide to Amish farm-based shops selling quilts and handcrafted furniture. View acres of lovely flower and rock gardens at Rockstone Gardens. Boat, fish, and swim at nearby Lake Shelbyville, one of Illinois's largest lakes.

\*Rate includes two nights' accommodations and one attraction for two people. Prices are subject to change without notice, and all reservations are based on availability. Price of attractions will vary. Package price does not include tax.

[www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com)

90 Bluenose Coast, Nova Scotia November 2008



**The final ingredient:  
Enthusiasm**

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.” -Unknown

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” -Margaret Mead

“Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm.”  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

**The Bluenose Coast is, absolutely, a world class destination worthy of a flight from anywhere on earth, and it’s a place that requires at least a week to fully enjoy.**

**But to really take in the full experience, simply hang up your phone, don’t pack the computer, and spend two weeks - and spend time in a kayak, on a bike, in a canoe, and don’t forget the camera.**





## Bluenose Coast Marketing Materials Review:

### Visitor Guide to Nova Scotia, Fundy Shore & Annapolis Valley, Yarmouth & Acadian Shores, South Shore

By Destination Southwest Nova Assn.

- Photos are amazing!
- The section that describes Nova Scotia – setting the stage – does an excellent job of describing Nova Scotia, introducing a visitor to what Nova Scotia is about:

From “Our Beginnings” through “Marine Culture.”

- Events should be included by AREA, not just organized by date. This guide encompasses such a large geographical area that the events should be broken down into smaller areas.
- Maps should include more detail.
- This guide doesn't give enough details to actually plan the trip. It would be beneficial to reference another more specific guide, i.e. South Shore or Bluenose Coast publication, unless much more detail could be added to this guide.
- The paragraphs on each town or area are mostly too general; they need to be more specific, highlighting specific shops, art, beaches, lighthouses, restaurants, food, etc. to entice visitors. Example: Bridgewater page 80.
- The guide should highlight the BEST ATTRACTIONS not to be missed on a visit to this part of Nova Scotia. Be specific.
- Organize attractions and activities by, first, “Pick your season.” Then, by each season, highlight “Pick your passion.” This way, the guide can show all there is to do during the shoulder seasons, not just during the summer.

#### • Peggy's Cove brochures

(The folding is awkward – it would be better to fold them standard.)

#### • An Interpretive Guide to the Village of Peggy's Cove

First, and most important – Show a picture of the village. It is so quaint and distinctive. A picture is worth a thousand words! Show it! Show the shops – they are so great. Include text about the wonderful little shops! You are missing the boat if you don't. Remember, the number one activity of visitors is shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting. AND that's where most of

the money is spent, which is the primary benefit of tourism! If visitors don't spend money, then what's the point? Show this village – it's an incredible asset. You can educate them too, but don't miss out on attracting visitors for the shopping.

#### • A Natural History of Peggy's Cove

This is a well-done informational piece – it's very interesting.

Both of these brochures are folded so they are awkward to use. Redo them with standard folding so that they are more convenient to use.

Neither of these brochures would convince me to go to Peggy's Cove. They seem to be strictly educational pieces – not really designed to encourage visitors to come to Peggy's Cove. It's possible to combine the two goals in your brochures – education and marketing. If you want these to be marketing pieces, they need to address the activities that a visitor can do while in the Peggy's Cove area and include photos of the village.

#### Ross Farm

This is a well-done brochure! Good photos, diagram and map. Excellent on the back page, where it describes all the different things there are to do.

The cover photo is very good – it would be nice if there were a sheep or two behind the women.

Make the title “Ross Farm” in light yellow – it will catch more attention.

#### SS Atlantic Heritage Interpretation Park Rack Card

Good! Add a star on the little map on the back to denote the location.

#### Mahone Bay – A Treasure Since 1754

This brochure is basically a map and a bunch of ads. The map is useful – it shows the locations of everything in Mahone Bay, with a key.

This brochure doesn't “sell” me on visiting Mahone Bay, but is useful once visitors arrive to help them locate things.

### **Nova Scotia Museum Map 2008-09**

27 museums. Nice brochure, with an appealing cover, good map, useful information and easy to follow and use.

### **Distance Marketing Assessment:**

The following few pages contain assessments by our secret shoppers, who researched the area from a distance, reviewing marketing materials, websites, and gathering information through telephone calls to see if they could find the area, and if they were convinced to make a visit.

#### **Nova Scotia Assessment #1**

Nova Scotia (NS), all the way across the country—at today's gas prices and with generally only a week or ten days for a vacation, you have to fly there from the West Coast. A quick look at Kayak.com (<http://www.kayak.com/s/flights>) for a September trip, and it will cost \$635 per person on a one-lay-over, red eye flight from Seattle. A red-eye is not my favorite way to start a vacation, but it does help with jet lag. I noticed that Halifax is only 2.5 hours from NYC or a little less than two hours from Boston, and Montreal is an hour and half by plane.

Flying into Halifax, it seems like we should stay a few days in the province's largest town. The city's website (<http://www.halifaxinfo.com>) offers numerous types of accommodations. A condo or apartment would be a good option for my family, and Premiere Suites (<http://www.premieresuites.com/>) has many appealing options. Both the Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites ([www.lordnelsonhotel.com](http://www.lordnelsonhotel.com)) and the Marriott Harbourfront Hotel ([www.halifaxmarriott.com](http://www.halifaxmarriott.com)) also look like good possibilities. I like their central locations and enjoy exemplary service. The Accommodations page works very well, has all the basic facts and direct links to the hotel's websites.

Reviewing the cultural gathering for Sept. 2008 in and around Halifax, it is rather impressive. The Atlantic Film Festival ([www.atlanticfilm.com](http://www.atlanticfilm.com)), the Atlantic Fringe Festival ([www.atlanticfringe.com](http://www.atlanticfringe.com)), the NS International Air Show and DRUM featuring drummers and musicians from NS, and for sure the 50 Mill Route Yard Sale (902-384-2006) from Mousquodoboit Harbour to Dean – what great way to see the interior of NS.

A quick look at Halifax's museums and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mma/>) looks interesting with exhibits of the Titanic, shipwrecks and sailboats; I thought I would check out the website. It is not a great website, lots of text, few pictures. I called the Nova Scotia.



com tourism office (1-800-565-0000) and asked about spending a couple of days in Halifax and what we should see. The representative mentioned that a great way to see the harbor without paying for a cruise would be to take the ferry over to Dartmouth and maybe have lunch, although she said the cruises did offer lots of historical insight. The Citadel ([http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/ns/halifax/index\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/ns/halifax/index_e.asp)) is worth a visit and only takes about an hour and a half, the Maritime Museum is a good museum, and Pier 21 has a lot of history. She suggested the Ghost Tour for our teenage sons, as it is a good historical walk with “great stories about supposedly haunted places”.

Canoeing or kayaking the nearby waterways might be fun, but there were only a couple of places listed and this might be better to do on a lake and not the world's deepest harbor. Left a message with the Nova Scotia touring and gave them my email, waiting to hear.

On June 12th, via email, I requested information from NS.com and received it on July 1st. I received Halifax's information much quicker on the 18th of June. The map sent by NS.com is wonderfully large, clearly marked with Things to See and Do and Services. It looks as though it would be easy to drive around the whole province and have a very scenic vacation. One of the best aspects of the map is the Approximate Touring Time and Distances. Another thing I loved was that the information sent includes the map and a catalog-like book—not millions of cheesy pamphlets. The catalog color codes each of the 7 regions and at the beginning of each region lists the Visitor Information Centers and then “the Classics” which are the popular museums, historical sites, etc.

While talking to the representative at NovaScotia.com tourism office (23 minutes) we discussed an approximate 10-day itinerary of touring NS. I told her I would be traveling in late September with my husband and teenage sons. She suggested a drive up the Eastern Shore with a stop in Sheet Harbour or Sherbrooke for lunch and on to Baddeck. In Baddeck we can stay on the lake and go kayaking. She suggested staying at the Inverary Resort as they have kayaks right there. Leaving Baddeck we should head down to the Bay of Fundy with a stop in Pictou to see Hector Heritage Quay, which has a replica of an old sailing ship. While at the Fundy Shore we should go Tidal Bore Rafting. I was totally intrigued by the thought of riding the high tide out of a river like river rafting. Cape Chignecto Provincial Park is also worth

a visit as you can walk on the tidal floor at low tide. Our next stop would be Yarmouth for a bit of shopping and visit the Acadian village. Our final stop before returning to Halifax would be along the South Shore. Mary mentioned both Barrington and Shelburne. In closing I asked her if there was anything we should not miss and she told me about the Ovens and the Lunenburg—sea caves and a schooner—both places we would all enjoy! She assured me that she could make any reservations I needed and told me that they are open until 11 pm every night. In addition, she gave me the numbers for the various tourism bureaus.

Starting at the beginning, googling Sherbrooke leads one right to the number one listing (<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/sv/index.php>). The website shows a very charming village, and I love the idea of Hands on History, dressing up in historical costumes and crafting like they used to in the 1800s. Since I am looking for a lunch spot, I check out the What Cheer Tea Room, and that directs me to the Sunshine on Main Café & Bistro, seems like the only restaurant in town based on a very quick search. Maybe we will stop earlier at Sheet Harbour since I really had no luck here finding a restaurant on the web. Sheet Harbour (<http://www.sheetharbour.ca/>) doesn't help; there are no listings under dining. There are about six restaurants listed in the NS.com guide, located between the two cities. I think we would just drive along until we found something that looked good.

Heading north again to our destination of Baddeck, I wonder if we have a 4-5 hour drive from Halifax or a 6-7 hour drive, which it looks like from the map. The representative I spoke with and then the gentleman at the Baddeck tourism office (902-295-1911) both say 4-5 hours. I love the Nova Scotians and their honesty. So far, both tourism people have named places where we should stay! The Baddeck office suggests the Inverary Resort or the Silver Dart Lodge. Both offer kayaking along the lake. Inverary's website listed in the book ([www.inveraryresort.com](http://www.inveraryresort.com)) sends me right to Nova Scotia Vacation Resort page ([http://www.capebretonresorts.com/inverary\\_tab1.asp](http://www.capebretonresorts.com/inverary_tab1.asp)); it looks pretty and nice, and I love the idea of nightly bonfires on the beach. The tourist bureau also suggested: the Alexander Bell Museum, the Fortress of Louisbourg (an 1.5 hour drive), the Miners Museum at Glace Bay and most definitely the Cabot Trail. I am very curious about the Miners Museum as the mine goes 7 miles out under the ocean! The museum ([http://www.miners-museum.com/mine\\_tour.htm](http://www.miners-museum.com/mine_tour.htm)) was easy to find when you Google it. I know

the kids would like it. Looking through the tour book I don't find the mine, but see pictures of the Cabot Trail, which looks a little too pastoral for our family. It seems like a long day of 6-8 hours of driving for views of the water and waterfalls. If we did decide to do it I would spend the night at the Keltic Lodge Resort (<http://www.kelticlodge.ca/>).

On our way to the Bay of Fundy area, I would like to visit the Northumberland Shore. We might stay here a night or two. The town of Pictou (<http://www.townofpictou.com>) seems to have it all. The accommodations are a nice variety and the Hector Heritage Quay would be a wonderful place to spend part of a day. The McCulloch House museum (<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mch/>) also looks interesting since we are a bit Scottish.

Next stop would be Stewiacke for tidal bore rafting. Talking to a representative at the visitors centre (902-639-1248) for about six minutes, rafting sounds so fun. The Shubenacadie River Runners Ltd. (<http://tidalborerafting.com/2008/index.html>) has an awesome video of riding the tidal bore and explaining it. The website also offers direct links to accommodations. Another local company, Shubenacadie River Adventure tours (<http://www.shubie.com/>) also offers tours and has its own lodge. Wish I could join them on the full moon when the tides run really high!! I asked about the town Truro, and she mentioned that it is a city with, "a great, big, Victorian park in the center". There is also a wildlife park nearby. She mentioned Cape Chignecto, and that when the tide is low you can walk out on the ocean floor, and the kayaking is beautiful. I didn't really consider it until I saw the pictures in the tour book—once again a picture is worth a thousand words. She also wanted me to make sure that we got to Peggy's Cove and Lunenburg on the South Shore.

Moving down the Fundy Shore and Annapolis Valley (Truro to Yarmouth is only 4 hours 15 minutes), it looks like a very scenic drive with a few publicly accessible lighthouses to break up our trip. One observation about the Yarmouth area, it is the smallest section in the tour book and I had a brief four minute conversation with the representative at the tourism bureau (902-742-5033). I asked what to do in Yarmouth and she responded with, "we have three museums". I mentioned restless teenagers and was informed I could rent paddleboats at Lake Milo. She told me I could find accommodations online or in the tour book. I asked about the Acadian heritage, and she

told me about West Pubnico where you could spend at least a half day. She wasn't very helpful.

The tour book offers a website for SW NS (<http://www.acadianshores.ca/>), but it is under construction. Googling Yarmouth the first website is Yarmouth's tourism site (<http://www.yarmouthonline.ca/>), and it is more friendly than the woman on the phone. At first glance, I thought it was too basic; however, it is easy to navigate, and I think I would like to stay in Yarmouth. I would like to visit the Historic Acadian Village, but I spent about five minutes searching and clicking around the web, and it seems that its website is truly under construction.

After a visit to the village, we would move along to the South Shore. Our first stop would be near Barrington (902-637-2625) as I spoke with a lovely representative there for about 15 minutes. (<http://www.barringtonmunicipality.com/>) You can actually climb the five stories to the top of the lighthouse. Cape Sable Island was another nearby spot to visit NS's tallest lighthouse. The island is easy to reach via a bridge and only takes 30-40 minutes to circumnavigate. It was once a forest, and now is also known for great sea birding. Her other suggestions included The Ovens, Lunenburg, Peggy's Cove, Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic and taking a 5K walk around the Seaside Adjunct of the Kejimikujik National Park. There is a great restaurant in Summerville and, "everyone always loves the beach there".

Staying in Lunenburg (<http://www.lunenburgns.com/popular-attractions>) looks like it might be fun especially with all the things to do, such as the Fisheries Museum, visiting the Bluenose II sailing sloop, and the town itself looks super charming. Both the Ovens and Peggy's Cove are nearby too. The website is very easy to navigate and has tons of information. It is nice when they really show what also surrounds their town.

The Ovens (<http://www.ovenspark.com/>) looks great, as does their funky, reasonably priced cabins. It is interesting that it is privately owned. Many people have mentioned Peggy's Cove, and I wonder if it will be too touristy. Visiting the website (<http://peggyscove.ca/welcome/>), I found an article that addresses this issue right on their front page! Makes me not want to visit the area as it does sound a bit crowded especially when you read that 750,000 visit each year! The website is also filled with ads and not very pretty.



All in all, I found NS to be very welcoming, and they have the absolutely the best phone customer service ever!! I talked to people all over the province, and they all knew about other parts of NS and were not afraid to share this information. I think it is a great destination for someone from the mid-west or is land bound. My problem is that we live in a very similar geographical region, so I feel like it would be visiting a giant island in the San Juans, here in Washington State. I think if I lived in Boston or NYC and wanted to “get away” and appreciate the coast it would be a perfect place to visit. It is too expensive to fly there from the West Coast. I would try to visit in mid to late September; several people mentioned that was the best weather, and the leaves would be turning color around Cape Breton. I would go there with my family or perhaps with another couple when we are retired and you can take 10 days to drive around the whole island. It looks like a great venue for eco adventures I would think.

## Nova Scotia Assessment #2

I have always wanted to plan a visit to Nova Scotia, Canada. Why? Its reputation is legendary. I can imagine taking in views of its maritime scenery along a coastal drive, the pastoral beauty of the rural inlands and the rich cultural heritage with influences at play in its cuisine, art and music. I had heard about Cape Breton Island, named by Conde Nast Traveler magazine as the most beautiful island anywhere. The island also happens to be one of the world's hotbeds for Celtic Music. As a former performing arts presenter, I knew of the Celtic Colours International Festival and the musical reputation of Cape Breton, which has been bolstered by the success of such performers as international touring artist Natalie MacMaster. In my quest for information on the province, I recently picked up a copy of Life magazine's “Dream Destinations, 100 of the World's BEST Vacations” and, of course, Nova Scotia made the list. I was eager to learn more.

I began my travel research on Nova Scotia by entering those words in a Google.com search. I was happy to see that Nova Scotia's official tourism website popped up at the top of the search results: <http://novascotia.com/en/home/default.aspx>. For this assignment, I decided to order visitor information via their website and wait for it to come in the mail. The materials arrived in about 10 days, and I began to peruse them as soon as possible.

I loved the title of their 2008 guide, “doers’ and dreamers’.” I took a look at their regional tourism map to familiarize myself with the defined regions. Knowing just a little about Cape Breton Island, I found myself wanting to read its information first. I did spend some time researching the other regions, but if I were making a first visit to Nova Scotia, I would plan my trip for Cape Breton Island.

To satisfy my curiosity, I searched on Expedia.com for flight information from Louisville, KY, (nearest international airport to my hometown) to Sydney, Cape Breton Island, NA, Canada (this seemed to be the closest fly-to airport). I was interested to learn how long it would take me to get there and how much the flight would cost. The results were a bit shocking: \$1,388 for a roundtrip flight and a one-way travel time of 9 hours and 12 minutes with two connections (5 hours and 18 minutes airtime). I decided to compare the results of flying into Halifax from Louisville and then renting a car. The cost to fly from Louisville, KY to Halifax was a definite savings at \$572 for a roundtrip ticket. The total travel time was also less: 4 hours and 13 minutes in the air; 5 hours and 10 minutes in total travel time with one connection. On the other hand, I would have to rent a car from Halifax and then drive about four hours to get to Cape Breton Island. In the end, I would pick the scenic route, since I was on vacation and part of the experience is to take in all the gorgeous scenery Nova Scotia has to offer. I could envision planning the trip for my entire family.

My visit to Cape Breton Island would definitely include a drive along The Cabot Trail, named for famous explorer John Cabot and known as one of the world's most scenic drives. According to the book, “1,000 Places to See Before You Die,” by Patricia Schultz, the most breathtaking section of the Trail is a 27-mile stretch from Cheticamp north to Pleasant Bay, with remarkable views of the western coast.

To begin my weeklong stay in Nova Scotia, I would drive from Halifax to Baddeck, [www.visitbaddeck.com](http://www.visitbaddeck.com). Baddeck is considered to be the beginning and end of The Cabot Trail. This beautiful village was also the summer home of Alexander Graham Bell. Today, visitors celebrate Bell's life's work through the exhibitions and interactive demonstrations at the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site.

Since I would be driving around the island, I would stay in several places during the trip. For the first two nights, I would plan to rest in Baddeck before heading out on The Cabot Trail. My pick for accommodations in Baddeck would be The Inverary Resort, the only property in Baddeck situated right on the magnificent Bras d'Or Lakes. The main lodge was originally built in 1850. Besides its historic charm, the 11-acre resort property offers a vacation getaway with water sports, fishing, tennis, a full service spa, restaurant, pub and evening bonfire on the beach.

My first stop along The Cabot Trail would be Cheticamp, about a one-hour drive from Baddeck, to make a stop at Les Trois Pignons—Elizabeth LeForte Gallery. It's a museum, art gallery and genealogy centre all in one. On display are the incredible works by rug hooker Elizabeth LeForte. Her handiwork hangs in the Vatican and Buckingham Palace.

Following the coastline to the north, I would plan to drive through the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. One-third of The Cabot Trail's length is within the Park. Steep seaside cliffs and rolling forestland at this national park remind visitors of the Scottish highlands. Boasting some of the maritime provinces' most stunning scenery, the 370 square miles encompass valleys, low mountains, sandy beaches and old-growth woodlands. Hikers take advantage of 26 trails snaking through the park's interior and running along the scenic cliffs.

I would plan to overnight in the area to enjoy the Park for two or three days. On the east coast, the town of Ingonish is home to the Keltic Lodge, <http://www.kelticlodge.ca/index.html>, which is situated high on a cliff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. One of the cozy two-room cottages with its own fireplace sounds like the perfect place to getaway. The Lodge features a casual dining restaurant, nightly entertainment, heated pool and full-service spa. Adjacent is the Highland Links Golf Course, rated the number one public golf course in Canada. It was also rated by Golf magazine as one of the World's Top 100 Courses in 2007.

This northern area along Nova Scotia's most isolated coast, offers a great chance for whale watching. There are several whale tour operators in the area that guarantee whale sightings. I would take them up on their offer. From mid-May to late October, visitors can catch views of humpback, minke,

pilot, sei and fin whales as well as dolphins. Blue and killer whales have also been spotted on local whale watching tours.

My next stop along The Trail would be south to St. Ann's and Englishtown to explore the island's Celtic culture and history at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts. The only institution of its kind in North America, students of all ages and ability travel there from around the world to study programs in traditional Scottish disciplines including Gaelic language and song, music, dance and crafts. The campus features, the Great Hall of the Clans museum, which depicts the history of the Scots on Cape Breton and the Gaelic College Craft Shop.

For my final few days on the island, I would travel south to Louisbourg, a seaside town home to the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site of Canada. This faithful re-creation of a town 250 years ago is the largest historical reconstruction in North America. Ramparts, streets, households and interpreters help to create the look, texture and mood of another century. I would plan to spend at least a day and take in 18th-century cuisine in a reconstructed restaurant in addition to spending the night in one of their inns.

Since I'd want to experience the music traditions of the island, I might plan my trip during the Celtic Colours International Festival, [www.celtic.colours.com](http://www.celtic.colours.com), held in October. (This year its dates are October 10-18.) Communities around Cape Breton Island host concerts and workshops by renowned Celtic performers from around the world at a time when the fall leaves are at their most brilliant and traveling around the island offering one breathtaking view after another. These communities are the places where the culture has been nurtured for over 200 years. In 2007, Celtic Colours was named the "Top Event in Canada" by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. "The festival had visitors from 25 countries and generated over \$5 million in economic impact into Cape Breton Island," said Festival Board Chair, Dr. Jacquelyn Thayer Scott.

There is a saying common to Nova Scotia: "Ciad mile failte." It means "a hundred thousand welcomes" in Gaelic. Some day I hope I can experience these warm greetings from this one-of-a-kind destination and its people.



### Nova Scotia Assessment #3

I used a variety of sources of information to research Nova Scotia, including the internet, the 2008 “Doers’ and Dreamers Guide” from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, as well as the “Frommer’s Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island” guidebook.

Nova Scotia is such a large area with so many diverse places to visit, it would be tough to narrow it down into one trip; unless it was a long one. The Frommer’s guide starts by saying that the only people who complain about their trip to Nova Scotia are those who try to see it all in one weeklong visit. With that in mind, assuming I would have adequate time, the following are places in Nova Scotia I would be interested in visiting:

**Halifax:** Being the urban center of Nova Scotia, and the likeliest place to arrive via airplane, my trip to the region would include a visit to Halifax. It seems to have a fair number of things to see and do, including museums, historic sites, the Citadel, and the waterfront. I’d spend time shopping, exploring some of the city and visiting places like the Citadel, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and the Public Gardens. As far as accommodations, I’d probably choose a moderately priced hotel like the Waverly Inn.

**The South Shore:** Prior to doing any research, when I thought of Nova Scotia, I was probably envisioning the South Shore. Rugged coastline, quaint fishing villages, lighthouses. I would definitely visit Lunenburg. I’d spend time exploring the town on foot, perhaps even taking a guided walking tour. I’d want to see St. John’s Anglican Church as well as the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic and maybe catch a whale watching tour. Mahone Bay would be another stop. I’d spend time exploring and shopping on Main Street, and it might also be a good place to try some sea kayaking. I’d try to find a nice B&B, probably in Lunenburg.

**Cape Breton Island:** The Cabot Trail appears to be a great way to explore this area of Nova Scotia by car. I would base my trip in one town, possibly Braddock due to its location and relative abundance of accommodation and dining choices. I’d take day trips out to places such as Louisbourg, including the Louisbourg National Historic Site, Mabou, a little village on the western

shore, and Pleasant Bay. I would also want to explore Cape Breton Highlands National Park, both by car and on some of the hiking trails.

**Annapolis Royal:** The Frommer’s guide calls Annapolis Royal possibly Canada’s most historic town, and a treat to visit. In my trip to Nova Scotia, I would like to spend time in Annapolis Royal. I’d do a walking tour, whether on my own or guided. I’d also want to visit some of the historic sites, including Fort Anne National Historic Site, Historic Gardens and Port Royal National Historic Site. There are also good places to hike nearby, so spending time outdoors and enjoying the scenery would be on the list.

Nova Scotia as a whole has a lot to offer. It would make for a great driving trip, as you explore the various regions, towns and cities. If I lived within a one-hour flight or eight-hour drive, I would definitely visit Nova Scotia. Living where I do, on the west coast of the U.S., the distance is a little more daunting. I searched for flights from Seattle to Halifax and travel times ranged from 8-12 hours, depending on the connecting flight. That’s a very long day of travel, so it would have to be a trip where I planned to spend a good week or more in Nova Scotia. But after looking into it closely, I do think Nova Scotia is a place I’d like to go someday. It isn’t the type of trip I’d take with small children; and mine are small now, so it would be a place I’d go when they are older (or old enough to be left at home with Grandma and Grandpa!) But it’s the type of vacation that I can get excited about: exploring new places, finding the unexplored, traveling around in a large region and making up our itinerary as we go.

One thing I’d like to see more of, especially with regards to the photography, is what makes Nova Scotia truly unique. What can I get there that I can’t get on the east coast of the U.S., or even the west coast of the U.S.? It is a long way to go and if I visited, I’d want to feel like I was in a place that is unlike anywhere else. What do they have to offer that you can only get there, can only see there? The Doer’s and Dreamers’ 2008 guide is huge, but it’s mostly full of advertising. I think it would be better to provide a true Activities Guide that isn’t simply a big ad book, but a resource full of great photography that really sells the experience. The scenery is such a huge piece of the appeal of Nova Scotia, and I would have liked to see more of what makes it unique.

## Contact

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