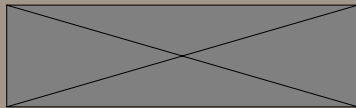


CABOT TRAIL
Nova Scotia, Canada
NOVEMBER 2008



Assessment Findings & Suggestions Report



Ideas to increase tourism spending

In July of 2008, a Community Tourism Assessment of the Cabot Trail, Nova Scotia, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a three-hour workshop in October. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the community – 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 restrooms, overall appeal, and the community’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 areas 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 communities or areas around the Cabot Trail? Once they find information, are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned several people to plan trips into the 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 services, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might do in planning a trip to a “new” area or destination.

The community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)
- 2) Websites
- 3) Brochures and printed materials
- 4) Publicity (articles)
- 5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

We 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, provincial tourism websites, read travel articles, and looked at CAA Tour Book reviews and suggested activities.

The marketing assessment determined how visible the area 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 community 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 Knotts 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 a full week visiting the Cabot Trail, looking at enticement from the highway (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, way-finding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, 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 Cabot Trail communities benefit 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 community first about possible restraints, future plans, or reasons the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the community, leading it to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the community'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 community's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a Trail-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state 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 - around the Cabot Trail? Does the region 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 a week assessing the Cabot Trail, we have looked at all of these issues, developed some suggestions and ideas the communities can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending locally.

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when communities import more cash than they export. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the area, 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 local park, 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 community, you need to have places for them to spend it - you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as 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 the area. 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 area of the province? 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 communities would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community – buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there’s a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in each 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. This is the primary benefit to marketing the Cabot Trail as a single destination. 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.



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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. Diversions are activities we can do closer to home, but will do them while in the area.

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.



All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a fishing 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 nearly a \$60 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 your community with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue around the Cabot Trail and becomes a springboard for the communities in enhancing the local 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, each 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 community input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today.

The next steps in the planning process is 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 its own “to do list.”

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

This Branding, 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.

Suggestion:

Tourism is an economic development activity. Consider the following:

- Tourism is a \$1.3 billion industry in Nova Scotia.
- Of that, \$226 million was spent in Cape Breton.
- Tourism spending generated nearly \$35 million in tax revenues and 5,500 jobs.
- Nova Scotia hosted 2.1 million visitors in 2007.

Quick Facts

- 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" first, THEN the location.
- The days of marketing lists are over.
- The heart and soul of any community, besides its people, is its downtown or town center. It is the litmus test for all your economic development efforts.

ENTERING THE TRAIL

Which way to go? Clockwise or counterclockwise?

We did both. The first time: Clockwise.

Not a bad entrance sign (photos this page), but it is somewhat hard to read.

It was difficult to tell where the trail really begins (or ends). Is Baddeck part of the Cabot Trail? If not, it should be.

At first, we weren't sure about taking the ferry (noted on gateway sign, bottom right), since we didn't know how often it ran or how long it took. Turns out, it runs all the time and is just a little hop across the water. Add a snipe to the sign that lets visitors know this important information. "Just a 5 minute ride every 15 minutes - 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m." Or whatever the actual hours of operation are.



Suggestion:

We saw the new gateway sign: “Welcome to the World Famous Cabot Trail” but were unable to get a photo. We would have had to wait in line! Every time we went by, visitors were having their photos taken in front of the sign.

Great job, and it makes a perfect photographic icon. Even when we returned to the Cabot Trail to present the assessment workshop, we saw several visitors getting out of their cars to have their pictures taken by the new sign. That’s great advertising!

Suggestion: Spend the money and make it look like this. (photo top right) Add a stone planter, keep it planted and maintained, put a roof over it. The most viewed photograph will typically be that of the gateway - the icon. Make this a stunning icon. Make it really showcase the Cabot Trail.

Gateway signs are a visitor’s introduction to the region. They create a sense of arrival. Ever wonder why developers create beautiful entries into their high-end housing developments? Those beautiful entries increase the perceived value of the neighborhood and help develop pride in the community. Gateways to the Cabot Trail can do the same thing - and increasing the perceived value makes it a more desirable place to visit and ultimately increases visitor spending.

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. Baker Street is the primary shopping and dining street in downtown Nelson.



First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions The rule of perceived value

First impressions really are lasting impressions - you want to be sure to “put your best foot forward.”

Please don't let this (top right) continue to happen. The sign clutter creates a very poor impression - it looks like a commercial area - not like a world-famous scenic destination. Earn those titles of “world class” and “world famous.” Corners with sign clutter like this are disappointing.

At an intersection like this, visitors will take less than four seconds to look at signage. Having ten signs, most unreadable from a distance, at one location is an eyesore, and most, if not all, of the signs are simply ignored. If you insist on allowing commercial “off-premise” signs in locations like this, then consider a cooperative single sign, professionally produced, promoting the various businesses:

- Galleries
- Lodging
- Dining
- Historical attractions

Great sign. (bottom right) You certainly can't miss it! This makes a bold statement.

Suggestion: Consider creating a Gateway & Wayfinding Style Guide for the whole Cabot Trail. It will create continuity and “brand building.” It would be ideal if the whole Trail had a single “style” for the gateway signs. The individual communities could have variations of that style, with the overall look being similar. This helps carry the theme of the Trail throughout, and makes the brand stronger in visitors' minds.

Imagine if every Coca-Cola bottling plant did its own Coca-Cola logo. The brand wouldn't exist. Having a Gateway & Wayfinding Style Guide would tie all the communities around the Cabot Trail together into a cohesive, well-branded destination.



First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions - Business

The rule of perceived value

WHAT TO DO

Curb appeal can account for 70% of sales at restaurants, wineries, lodging, retail shops, golf courses. 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.

Would you stay here? (bottom right) There's nothing wrong with having a rustic sign, if that's the image you want to portray, but that doesn't have to mean sloppy. A better image of the business could be achieved with a more professional looking, attractive sign. The posts are just fine, even the way the sign is fastened between them fits the rustic appeal, but the lettering should be professionally done.



Suggestions:

NEIL'S HARBOR

Consider a directory sign as opposed to a bunch of ads. (top right) Don't over-commercialize this great little area. Remember: You must deliver on that promise of "world class" beyond just scenery. Make your signage fit the ambience of the Cabot Trail - here's your opportunity to add to the beauty, not detract from it.

If this was somewhere else and you were visiting, would you stop to read through all the ads? Probably not.

This Cabot Trail directory sign (bottom left) is a very nice example of good styling and a directory sign.

What a beautiful scene! (bottom right)



Suggestion:

We were told the food here (top right) was very good, and we were disappointed to find it closed. We weren't sure if it was closed for the day, closed for the week, or permanently closed. Even though there was a place on one of the many closed signs for operating hours, nothing was posted. Is it ever open?

How many times can you say CLOSED? We assume that people come up and bang on the door hoping that the merchant would open the doors, so in frustration he (or she) put up three closed signs to make sure we understand that they are closed and may never open again.

When a business puts up a "Closed" sign it's just like saying "Go away." Always invite customers back - let them know when you'll be open. We would gladly have come back during business hours, but had no idea if, or when, that would be.

Also, work on the curb appeal and sign. Had it not been for local referrals, we wouldn't even have considered eating here. We all travel. When you travel to a new place have you ever uttered the words "That looks like a nice place to eat"? As visitors, curb appeal is often the only factor we have in determining where to eat.



Never accentuate the negative

The invitation rule

Emphasize the positive - tell customers you hope they'll come back when you're open, and let them know when that will be. Use signs like these (top right and bottom left) to let people know.

Remember, curb appeal can account for 70% of sales at restaurants, golf courses, wineries, retail shops and lodging. Do these signs (bottom right) look like they belong to a world-class destination? Use your signs as opportunities to promote your business! Make them attractive, fitting the ambiance of the Cabot Trail, and the ambiance of your establishment.

Replace all "closed" signs with signs that state WHEN you will be open. Make it an invitation to come back, not a rejection that says go away.



Suggestion:

Once again, instead of just saying “Closed,” consider: “Open daily 10 - 5” to creating an invitation (top right). Make the shop more inviting.

CONTINUING ALONG THE TRAIL

One of the “Signature Shops” that should be promoted specifically is Tartans and Treasures (bottom left and right). Always promote your “anchor” businesses - those who have things visitors can’t get closer to home. This is a great example of that. Additionally, the shop promotes much of the heritage of the area.

This shop has the largest selection of tartans in North America. Good curb appeal. Good hours. Open year round. This is a real gem! The owners can vouch for the power of good signage, beautification, and paving the parking lot. The cost was an investment, dramatically increasing business. Other businesses around the trail should take note and follow this lead.



Promote your anchor tenants

Market your specific businesses - the BEST that you have to offer. Too often, communities market the same thing everyone else has: outdoor recreation, shopping, dining, beautiful scenery, hiking, biking, "something for everyone." But why should I go out of my way to visit you, if I can find the same things closer to home? This is why it's so important to market specifics, not generalities. Have you gone anywhere because "They have something for everyone"?

Create an Activities Guide (bottom photos) that highlights specific shops, attractions and restaurants that are THE best you have to offer. This one, produced by the Ottawa, Illinois Visitor Center, is proving very successful.

'This restaurant (top) in Huntsville, TX, is one of their most unique, and most visited, attractions. Although it looks like a dump, that's actually part of its appeal. The Huntsville New Zion Baptist Barbecue not only makes great barbecue, it's a one of a kind experience to eat there. GQ Magazine rated it as one of the top 10 restaurants in the world to fly to. Does Huntsville promote it specifically? Absolutely! It's an "anchor tenant."



<p>TWO SISTERS CANDY & GIFTS 1071 Lakeside Drive, Ottawa Open Mon-Fri 10:30-5:30, Sat 10-4 815-433-4636</p> <p>Two Sisters Candy & Gifts is a family business providing custom-made gifts and unique personalized items for all occasions. From baby showers to wedding favors, we have everything you need to make your special day even more special. Our custom-made gifts include personalized cookies, cakes, and more. We also offer a wide variety of gift baskets for all occasions. Visit our website at www.twosisterscandy.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>	<p>UPTOWN GRILL CONTEMPORARY CUISINE 607 First Street, Cahoon 815-433-4342</p> <p>Open Mon-Fri 11am-10pm, Sat 11am-10pm, Sun 10am-7pm www.uptowngrill.com</p> <p>The great dining scene in the area and all areas of the city. From being the whole family, the city scene will have the best. We offer a wide variety of food and beverages. Our menu is constantly changing and we offer a wide variety of food and beverages. Visit our website at www.uptowngrill.com for more information.</p> <p>LAVALLE</p>	<p>JEREMIAH JOE SPECIALTY COFFEE 407 Lakeside Drive, Ottawa Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-5pm 815-433-2567</p> <p>Jeremiah Joe Coffee has been producing a high-quality coffee for over 20 years. Our coffee is made from the best beans and is roasted to perfection. We offer a wide variety of coffee blends and are proud to be a member of the Specialty Coffee Association of America. Visit our website at www.jeremiahjoe.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>	<p>SKYDIVE CHICAGO SKYDIVING 2014 E. 78th Road, Ottawa Open 7 days a week, 10am-6pm Call Tracy at 815-433-4636 or visit our website at www.skydivechicago.com</p> <p>Only in Illinois Chicago offers you the most exciting and fun skydiving experience. Our experienced instructors will take you to the edge of the earth and give you a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We offer a wide variety of skydiving packages and are proud to be a member of the International Skydiving Federation. Visit our website at www.skydivechicago.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>
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<p>COURT STRE CABARET THE! 618 Court Street, Ott Open Mon-Fri 10pm-1am, Sat 10pm-2am, Sun 10pm-1am 815-433-4636 www.courtstreetcabaret.com</p> <p>Court Street Cabaret and Entertainment is a premier entertainment venue in the heart of downtown Ottawa. We offer a wide variety of entertainment options including live music, cabaret, and more. Visit our website at www.courtstreetcabaret.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>	<p>RIVER ADVENTURE CANOE & BIKE RI 1023 East 19th St, Ott Open 7 days a week, 10am-6pm 815-433-4636 www.riveradventure.com</p> <p>River Adventure Canoe & Bike Rental is a premier outdoor recreation company. We offer a wide variety of outdoor recreation options including canoeing, kayaking, and biking. Visit our website at www.riveradventure.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>	<p>DÉ JÀ VU HOME & GARDEN BOUTIQUE 110 Lakeside Drive, Ottawa Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-5pm 815-433-4636 www.dejavu.com</p> <p>Déjà Vu Home & Garden Boutique is a premier home and garden store. We offer a wide variety of home and garden products including furniture, decor, and more. Visit our website at www.dejavu.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>	<p>WEBER HOUSE & GARDEN COTTAGE TOURS 815-433-4636 110 Lakeside Drive, Ottawa Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-5pm www.weberhouse.com</p> <p>Weber House & Garden Cottage Tours is a premier historical site. We offer a wide variety of historical site tours including the Weber House and Garden. Visit our website at www.weberhouse.com for more information.</p> <p>ST. LOUIS</p>	<p>CAJUN CONNECTION TASTE OF LOUISIANA 807 E. 28th St, Ott Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-5pm 815-433-4636 www.cajunconnection.com</p> <p>Cajun Connection Taste of Louisiana is a premier Cajun restaurant. We offer a wide variety of Cajun dishes and are proud to be a member of the Cajun Community. Visit our website at www.cajunconnection.com for more information.</p> <p>OTAWA</p>
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Suggestion:

Ask yourself: What do we have that people 100 miles or more away can't get or do closer to home? Of course, you've got the incredible beauty of the scenic Cabot Trail. But the benefit of tourism comes from those visitors spending money in the communities, and they aren't spending much money when they're driving along the Trail, or hiking, or taking photos of the scenery. You need to entice those visitors into your shops, your restaurants, your lodging facilities, where they'll spend time and money. You do that by showing visitors the truly one-of-a-kind experiences and businesses you have to offer. You need to promote specifics.

We heard more about the Dancing Goat than any other business around the trail! For sure, it would be an anchor tenant and promoted specifically (bottom left).

CONTINUING AROUND THE TRAIL

The views are incredible! (bottom right)

STARVED ROCK LODGE & CONFERENCE CENTER
1111 Starved Rock Drive
Tel: 718-771-1000
Open: 7 days a week (except Tuesdays)
800-867-7628
www.starvedrock.com

LANDERS HOUSE COUNTRY LODGING & COTTAGES
115 East Church Street, Lunenburg
NS B1N 8E7-8170
Open: 7 days a week
www.landershoused.com

CATTAILS GIFT SHOPPE TASTING ROOM & COTTAGE BOUTIQUE
46 E.A. 176, Lunenburg
Open: 7 days a week
815-467-4530
www.cottagescottage.com

Map of Cabot Trail:
1 Water Street & Seaside Inn
2 Federal Government
3 Starved Rock Lodge
4 Lunenburg
5 Lunenburg
6 Lunenburg
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Suggestion:

While it doesn't have great curb appeal (bottom left), the food and service were good at the Rusty Anchor restaurant.

Add some planter boxes and hanging baskets to make it more inviting. Play Cape Breton music inside. Sell CDs of the Cape Breton Sound. The fisherman (top right) was a great touch and fits the ambiance of the area.

There's an Enterprise car rental place here? (bottom right) What does the "E" signify? Explanation? French for interpretive display? Exhibit? We guessed, but weren't sure.

Consider a sign at the Cabot Trail entrance points that shows the icon and then states the meaning: "Lookout point," "Exhibit," "Hiking area."



Suggestion:

These interpretive displays (top right) are very well done and well placed.

Skyline (bottom left and right) seems to be one of the most popular attractions along the entire Cabot Trail. There were more than 100 vehicles here - most from outside the province. It is a powerful lure to the Trail and should be promoted as such.

If we would have had more time, we would have hiked the trail.

It's another "anchor tenant" that should be promoted specifically. Just looking at this scene (bottom right) makes people want to go there. It's breathtaking. While visitors aren't spending money while hiking the trail, it's a powerful lure and visitors will be famished when done with the hike. This is when the spending takes place. Add visitor information that lists places to shop, dine and stay while in the area. Take every opportunity, like this, to sell visitors on other things to do, and places to spend time and money.



Suggestion:

The scenery (top right), of course, is spectacular. But these days, that's not enough to sustain a world-class destination. People are looking for things to do, not just things to look at. The scenery provides a unique, world-class ambiance, but it's important to let visitors know what activities they can enjoy while in the area. Scenic vistas quickly become a "been there, done that" attraction. After a while you start to run out of visitors.

The National Park Interpretive Center (bottom left) is very nice and has a lot of great information - but no efforts are made on ways to spend money while traveling around the Cabot Trail.

Make this a working visitor information kiosk (bottom right) with brochure distribution. This does little to help visitors explore the Trail. Include brochures and information to cross-sell different areas around the Trail. Include shopping, dining, lodging, and entertainment information, not just rules and regulations. The brochure holders, by the way, were empty.



Suggestion:

CHETICAMP

Les Trois Pignons is a very nice facility, lovely museum, and is in a good location. Can this also serve as a general visitor information center? Instead of the question mark, put "Visitor Info."

Most of the merchants in Cheticamp (bottom left) do little to pull customers in their doors. Note the flush mounted signs. Retail signage should be perpendicular to the street so that drivers are able to see them. Think of the space outside your shop door as your entry hall - you want to make it inviting and attractive to entice visitors inside. The blank gravel isn't inviting - add pots of trees, shrubs, and flowers outside against the building to soften the facade.

Add hanging baskets, more pots, a bench or two here (bottom right). Consider a less commercial-looking sign - one with more character and warmth. Entice visitors into your restaurant!



Suggestion:

This merchant cares (top right). Good job, but consider adding even more. Consider adding additional planters along the front of the shop.

Good job here (bottom left) as well. Add even more shrubs and flowers. This restaurant really makes us want to stop in for dinner, just from the great outdoor appeal. It's colorful, well maintained, attractive, and inviting.

A darling restaurant (bottom right), but needs some curb appeal! Make it shine. Add some potted shrubs and flowers on each side of the bench. Locals said the pizza here is excellent, but as a visitor driving past, it does little to get us to stop. Pots and planters make it obvious that the business is open and gets our attention.

These shops could all benefit from perpendicular signage to make it easy for drivers to see what's here before they are simply driving past. Perpendicular signs can easily withstand 100 MPH wind loads.



20/20 Signage Equals \$\$\$ The rules of retail signage

As visitors drive into town, they look directly forward through the windshield to make sure they don't violate local traffic laws or cause an accident. They might be on the lookout for a parking place, a public washroom, or a place to stop and have lunch. It's very difficult for drivers to get detailed views of the buildings looking side to side when they need to keep their eyes forward.

Yet many shops in towns place their signs flat against the building parallel to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, on the doors, or on the windows. It's easy for drivers to miss those signs, thus missing the shops entirely.

The solution? Use perpendicular blade signs, like those shown on this page, which allow drivers to read them without turning their heads. These examples are from Leavenworth, WA (top right); Carmel, CA (bottom right); and Nantucket, MA (bottom left).



Suggestion:

Make sure the letters are tall enough to be seen from a distance, and are consistent in height and size. Limit the sign to less than four words. Make the signs decorative to fit the ambiance.

These examples are from Valparaiso, Indiana (top right); Winona Lake, Indiana (bottom left); and Lethbridge, Alberta (bottom right). The signs in Lethbridge are constructed to withstand high wind loads. In fact, this area is considered the “wind capital” of Canada.



The Retail Idea Book

Ideas to increase your bottom line

Beautification is an investment with a tremendous return and creates customer loyalty. People are attracted to beautiful places. Curb appeal is the number one process to enticing customers into your shops.

This antique store in Jonesborough, TN (top right) has a wonderful seasonal display outside. It's inviting. This was taken at the end of October.

Note the Trellis Cafe (bottom photos) in Hubbards, Nova Scotia. The climbing vines and arbors create a welcoming garden atmosphere. Note also the tall perpendicular sign. Doesn't it make you want to stop and eat there?



Suggestion:

This shop in Hubbards (top right) uses decorative baskets, outdoor furniture, and potted flowers to create a warm welcome for their customers. The merchant spends several minutes each day putting out the baskets, but it's worth the effort since it increases retail sales.

An ice cream shop and covered market in Mahone Bay (bottom left and right) uses a great combination of bright colors, flowers, furniture, and their own bountiful produce to create wonderful displays. How could anyone resist? This shop was incredibly busy.



Suggestion:

Plan a trip to Mahone Bay. Take pictures. Take notes. They are a provincial showcase. They look world class and it pays off. The town was the busiest place we saw in the province outside of Argyle Street in Halifax.

This page showcases additional shops and restaurants around the Bluenose Coast region of Nova Scotia. Note the painting on the side of the River Pub (top right). Hanging baskets and flags decorate the boutique (bottom right). And the restaurant (bottom left) has a colorful chalkboard and terrific plantings to entice hungry shoppers into the restaurant.

Organize a cooperative beautification effort. Work together to obtain bulk discounts purchasing pots and planters, shrubs and flowers, and outdoor furnishings. It doesn't even need to be annual color. Consider evergreen shrubs. The idea is to make it obvious you are in business, to get attention, to look inviting, ultimately increasing sales.



Suggestion:

A few more examples from Mahone Bay:

The folksy sheep sign and flowers (top right) create a very welcoming storefront.

Bright colors, flowers, and the canoe leaning against the building (bottom left) create a fun, and attractive, shop.

The bird store (bottom right) has created a welcoming front porch with flowers, chairs, and colorful flags.

Note: Women account for 80% of all travel spending. And women, more than men, are attracted to inviting, colorful, clean, and beautiful places. Notice that all three shops have good perpendicular (blade) signs.



Suggestion:

Benches. Think benches. Note the bottom right photo taken in Wickford, Rhode Island. What's happening here? Providing outdoor seating encourages leisurely shopping. Plus you provide a spot for husbands to wait patiently.

The quilt shop (bottom left) does an excellent job with its outdoor displays. It doesn't get much more inviting than this! The home accents shop (top right) also does an amazing job. No wonder Mahone Bay is becoming one of the province's primary visitor destinations.

Perhaps a few of these merchants could be invited to speak with businesses around the Cabot Trail, showing merchants what they can do to increase spending using their own businesses as case histories.



Suggestion:

Note how the use of color brings shops and restaurants to life. These photos, except for the near right photo taken in Wickford, Rhode Island, were all taken in Mahone Bay. These shops, with their outdoor decorations of flowers, benches, and decorative signs, are so attractive they easily pull customers in the door.

People are attracted to beautiful places. It really is an investment with a solid return. This kind of decorative ambiance raises the perceived value of the town, and makes people want to linger and spend at least the better part of the day here.

The key ingredients:

- Blade signs.
- Window displays extended to exterior spaces.
- Beautification.
- Colorful buildings, well maintained. Paint kept fresh.



Suggestion:

This merchant in Blaine, Washington (top right) sets up this display outside her shop every morning, and she says that the effort actually saved her business and sales have increased ever since. People walking by just can't help but want to come into the shop.

Maggie Mae Mercantile (bottom left) uses chosen store merchandise arranged in an artful display outside the shop door, rather than pots of flowers or shrubs. The effect is every bit as attractive. Once again, extend your window displays to exterior spaces.

This restaurant in Banff, Alberta (bottom right) has arranged their menu in a decorative display case to entice hungry customers.

Once again: Curb appeal can account for up to 70% of sales at restaurants, golf courses, wineries, retail shops and lodging facilities.



Suggestion:

This merchant in Grass Valley, CA (top right) has mastered the art of creating an appealing outdoor display. People walking by can't help but be drawn into her shop. The flowers, by the way, are silk. This can work year round.

The photos below show two creative and attractive sandwich board ideas. Note the A-board sign (bottom left). It is decorative to fit the style of the shop, and adds to the ambiance of the area. The seafood restaurant sign (bottom right) is very appealing and would be a great fit along the Cabot Trail. This was taken in Port Townsend, Washington. Your signage say a lot about your business; be sure to promote what it is you sell first, then the name of the business. Make sure your signs provide a good first impression!



Suggestion:

Seasonal Treasures (top) wins the award in Cheticamp for:

- Best signage.
- Best curb appeal.
- Best first impression.

And here's the runner up. (bottom left) Another great job. Love the color!

But they need some help from the neighbors. (bottom right) A handful of shops can't transform an entire town into an attractive destination - it takes the whole town working together. It takes a village. The potential is there.



Suggestion:

This restaurant and hotel (top right) is a great place - but would you know it from your first impression? The outside is stark, as opposed to the interior, which is very comfortable and attractive. Let people know what a great place you have even before they open the doors. Add some hanging baskets of flowers, some potted shrubs and benches against the building. Avoid the use of plastic banners if at all possible. Make the building more colorful.

The Red Barn (bottom left) has great curb appeal at one of the most important “corners” of the Trail.

But make sure you can “deliver on the promise.” If the Taste of Nova Scotia recommendation (bottom right) means superior food, be sure you live up to that recommendation. Don’t disappoint your customers. Our meal there led us to believe that the “Taste of Nova Scotia” was just a marketing ploy and had nothing to do with quality. Again, you MUST deliver on the promise.



Suggestion:

Flora's seems to do quite the business. It's clean, has good curb appeal, you can't miss the signage. Once inside you can watch artisans at work, making it interactive. People are four times more likely to purchase art when they meet the artist. Great shop!

Cheticamp (bottom left) has tremendous potential to become one of the two primary "hubs" for the Cabot Trail - if you weren't afraid for your life just trying to cross the street. This is a highway with considerable traffic. Add crosswalks!!! Pedestrian safety is critical if you want visitors to stop and spend money in Cheticamp. We were shocked that there are no crosswalks.

There are a number of ways to increase pedestrian safety when crossing a busy street. One crosswalk option is this brightly painting crosswalk (bottom right) taken in Lee, Massachusetts with a sign in the median to catch drivers' attention. Develop one of these every block or so in Cheticamp.



Suggestion:

Decorative crosswalks are another great option. They help improve safety for pedestrians crossing the street because drivers notice them easily. They also help to beautify a town, they can be designed to fit almost any theme, and they can be excellent “gateways.”

These crosswalks were created by StreetPrint, based in Vancouver, using their DuraTherm process. The process embeds decorative designs into the asphalt - this is not paint - that will last for decades. Imagine lobsters in the crosswalk design. Would that be fun?

Notice the work crew in the bottom left photo. They just completed the near side, and are now working on the opposite side of the street. Vehicles can drive on the newly embossed side immediately. The cost of this type of decorative crosswalk runs around \$6 per square foot, far less than actual paver-blocks and with much less maintenance.





DuraTherm
traffic tough
crosswalks

Community Stakeholders and Designers
No Longer Constrained by Paver Paradigm

Think about it ...

Brick and its faux cousins (pre-cast pavers and stamped concrete) are expensive and time-consuming to install. Installations cause undue traffic and community disruption. Uneven settling give Public Works and city attorneys headaches. From a design perspective, these materials constrain creativity!

In 2003, IPC introduced DuraTherm: This has given designers solutions of unprecedented originality, that are durable, easy to install and strikingly different. The streetscape design paradigm has shifted!

DuraTherm is intaid within asphalt surfaces. It is heat applied and its unique properties effectively fuse to and bind with the asphalt.

The result is a completely embedded, integral surface that is highly durable, requires minimal maintenance and lasts for years.





China Town :: Design Concept

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 money.

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.



Suggestion:

And Cheticamp has this most important of amenities! (top right) The public washrooms are easy to find and in a great location. Great job.

Merchants should never post signs that simply state “No Public Washrooms.” That just tells customers to go away. Instead, merchants should post signs telling shoppers WHERE they can find the public washrooms, as this shop (bottom left) in Wickford, Rhode Island does.

The boardwalk (bottom right) is a terrific amenity in Cheticamp. Not a hidden gem, but something that needs to be promoted as a “must do” activity while in town.

During the peak season on weekends, have musicians or artisans “working the boardwalk.” This will make it much more of an attraction and will keep people in town longer.



CABOT TRAIL ARTISANS

We visited nearly 20 galleries and artisans around the Trail. It was a great experience. Each shop we stopped in was another adventure. Many other people we met in the galleries were doing the same thing - following the artisan trail, which is well produced and a primary draw to the Cabot Trail. In fact, this is where we spent most of our time and money. You can easily spend an entire day just visiting these artisans, making the Cabot Trail a multi-day destination.

We used the Cape Breton Artisan Trail Map, and it was an excellent piece - it provided great teasers about each gallery, and it had plenty of information to enhance the journey. Well done.

There's a wonderful mix of fine art, casual art...



Suggestion:

..to the downright stylish but funky (top right)...

..to the questionable (bottom left).

Women account for most travel spending. Ladies: would you stop and shop here? (bottom left) This craft shop may carry wonderful wares, but it doesn't have much appeal from the outside. Consider cleaning up the items lying around and working to make the outside of the building more attractive.

Clear off the sign clutter - could the signs be summarized into just one? Place a bench beside the building instead of the miscellaneous stuff, and add a couple pots of flowers and shrubs beside the door.

Even stairs didn't deter us (or any of the other shoppers, bottom right). Wildfire Pottery has excellent signage at the shop and along the trail.



Suggestion:

This is a very nice sign and entrance. (top right)

Good enough to make navigating the driveway worth the trouble (bottom left). Visitors are frequently wary of approaching someone's residence when they're looking for a shop, so it's important to have a great looking sign and entrance, as this shop does.

A beautiful peaceful setting, (bottom right) but it was difficult to turn around in. We hope we can return sometime and visit this shop when it's open!



Suggestion:

One of our two top favorite places (top right). The quality of all the artisans and the shops was excellent. It was great fun to watch the woodworking in progress at Woodsmiths (bottom left). It makes it “experiential” a key in bringing customers back time and again.

And another personal favorite (bottom right). Leather Works should consider turning its sign so it's perpendicular to the street. We certainly knew they were open!

We were very impressed with the entire artisans trail. Nearly every shop had consistent operating hours, all were friendly and genuinely appreciative of the business. They even did a great job cross-selling each other.



Suggestion:

Great to see visitor information here. (top near right) Spread it around!

Every merchant should provide visitor information - giving visitors more information about what there is to see and do along the Cabot Trail. The more there is to see and do, the longer visitors will stay, and the more likely we are to come back.



Suggestion:

There were many other shops we visited that may not be shown on these pages - the whole experience was a lot of fun, and the artisan trail is one of your greatest attractions.

Wouldn't it have been easier to just take down the sign (top right) rather than put taped X's on the sign?

INTERPRETIVE & HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS

What a fabulous hidden gem. The Whale Interpretive Centre (bottom left and right) is a terrific museum. We visited it at the same time as a busload of visitors, and everyone enjoyed it. Great signage, a great location, good curb appeal.

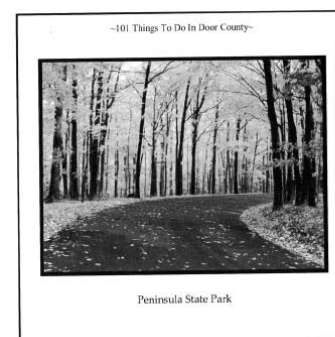
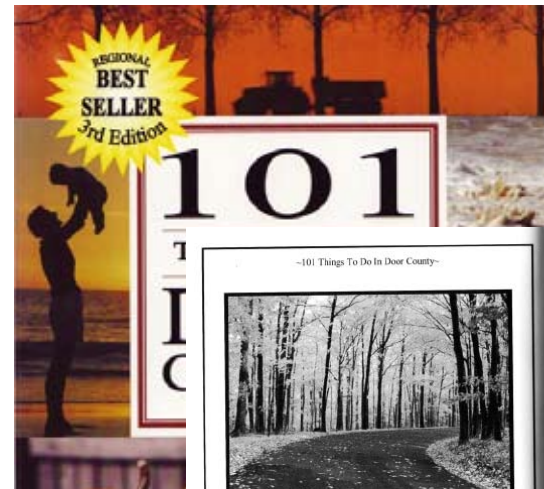


Suggestion:

Complete with handy whale watching tours nearby. (bottom left)

The displays are excellent (top right) and really captivate the visitor. The gift shop was also very good. Be sure to promote this as one of your anchor businesses.

Consider developing a book of “hidden gems” around the Cabot Trail. This privately published book (bottom right), *101 Things to do in Door County, Wisconsin*, has been very successful in attracting more visitors, and is a great example of how to develop such a book. Each “thing to do” describes a specific activity in detail, including the best place to watch a storm’s waves crash against the bluffs, where to pick up some great sandwiches for a terrific waterfront dining experience, and where to see a great fireworks display.



Suggestion:

Signage should ALWAYS be perpendicular to the street. It's very easy to miss this sign while driving past when it's parallel to the building, which happened to us.

This is a nice museum (all photos this page) for fishing enthusiasts, with a great collection of flies.

The sign (bottom left) is very well done - but should be perpendicular to the road.

Great overall curb appeal. Is there a way to make the museum more interactive? Fly tying classes? Demonstrations? Tell stories about some of the people who lived in the area and their fishing experiences. People love stories, and they help bring to life the objects that are on display. The more interactive it is, the less likely it will be to be a "been there, done that" attraction. Fly tying classes anyone?



Suggestion:

Is this the North Highlands Community Museum? (top right) Or is it the other building? (bottom right) Is it open during the day or only for presentations? “Community” doesn’t have a strong visitor draw, as it implies the museum only has things of interest to the community.

Looks like a nice museum. Is it open to the public? If so, when? Add hours and an open sign that are visible from the highway. Make it easy for visitors to decide to come back by letting them know when the museum is open.

Add hanging baskets, pots and planters.

Consider the following text on the signage:

- North Highlands Museum
- Fishery, Crafts Demonstrations
- Gift Shop - Visitor Information
- Open Tues.- Sat. 10:00 to 5:00



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

We were doing all right finding our way around (with the help of a navigation system) until we came into the Margaree Valley area where we had to get off the Cabot Trail to explore.

General rules of thumb for wayfinding signs:

- 6 inch to 8 inch tall letters.
- Use contrasting colors.
- No more than five lines on a sign.
- Complete the process of connecting the dots.

This sign (bottom right) is in a location where we can stop and scan the list. Great job. Now, continue developing the “system.” Especially in the valley! Include distances on the signs.



Suggestion:

Had it not been for those signs, we would have missed another artist shop. (top right) That would have been a sad loss! This is a real gem.

Because the wayfinding system was not completed, we found little in the Valley. Which way do we go? (bottom left)

We eventually found the fish hatchery. (bottom right) It was quite a distance down the road, and we almost gave up. That's why it's important to provide distances, and to "connect the dots" - making sure your wayfinding signs lead all the way to the destination. Sometimes it's necessary to put up "almost there" signs as well.



Suggestion:

But we gave up finding the lodge, quilt shop, and other attractions and activities. Several roads became dirt roads, and seemed to lead into the wilderness (top right). How far down the road is it?

A top priority should be to develop and implement a Cabot Trail wayfinding system. It should address:

- Wayfinding
- Gateways & entries
- Attractions
- Amenities
- Billboards and marketing displays

Less than 5% of visitors stop at visitor information centers - IF they can find that! So providing wayfinding is critical to help visitors find your attractions and amenities.

These signs below are great examples of effective wayfinding signage.



Suggestion:

The Lewis and Clark Trail in Washington State has an excellent wayfinding and signage system that is a great example for the Cabot Trail (photos this page and next page). The signs are all of the same style, so they have an easily-identifiable continuity. Simple, but attractive and well-done.

These were done in wood, but now these signs can be done in a weather-proof recycled composite - it looks like wood, but has far better longevity.





Suggestion:

Here's one last photo of the Lewis and Clark Trail signage. (top right)

BADDECK

Nice gateway sign. (bottom left) Suggestion: Add a snipe to it: "Shopping village - 5 km." Let visitors know that there IS a shopping district in Baddeck, and what the distance is.

These signs are great. (bottom right)

Get rid of the teaser signs heading onto Cape Breton. They send a "run down" perception of Baddeck. We didn't get photos of them, but there are at least two very poor signs that should be removed. They do nothing to entice visitors into the community.



Suggestion:

The Visitor Info Center in Baddeck (top right) is very good. Great location, helpful people. Suggestion: Add 24/7 brochure distribution outside the doors. Use weather-resistant brochure holders like those used by real estate agents.

This is a nice display (bottom left), but visitors would like to have something they can take with them.

What is Lobsterpalooza? (bottom center) Where is this? Does anyone participate? Locals don't seem to know what it is or where it's at. We asked lots of locals and front-line employees and they had no idea what it was. Is it a festival? Did we miss it? Were we too early? Where is it? Is it on weekends?

Baddeck seems to have some of the better lodging options around the Trail. (bottom right) A good variety and price points.



Suggestion:

Baddeck seems to be the “up and coming” community as the “hub” or “home base” for the Cabot Trail.

Successful downtowns combine several features. They have the “critical mass” of shopping, dining, and entertainment. They are attractive - the merchants and the city have made their shops and streets beautiful with decorative accents such as flowers, street trees, benches, etc. And they have “gathering places” - spaces for people to stroll, sit, dine, congregate together. Pedestrians feel comfortable.

Baddeck combines all three of those features, and that makes it very appealing for visitors. It was, by far, the busiest community we visited around the Trail.

The outdoor dining (bottom photos) in Baddeck is wonderful, and the shops (top right) are decorative and plentiful.



Suggestion:

Good signage - and welcoming (top right).

Baddeck's curb appeal winner (bottom left). Open late as well! Great job.

Even the courthouse is gorgeous (bottom right).

Baddeck can be considered an "anchor tenant" for the Cabot Trail - people will come to Baddeck because of what the town has to offer - plentiful dining, shopping, and entertainment in an attractive, pedestrian-friendly setting.

Make sure it's considered part of the Cabot Trail in all your marketing efforts.



Suggestion:

There are all kinds of hideaways to find and explore in town (top right).

Nightly entertainment here. NOTE: People spend the night where there are things to do after 6:00 (bottom left). This is important to remember. Another key fact: 70% of ALL consumer spending (both locals and visitors) takes place after 6:00 pm. Are you open? No wonder Baddeck is so busy.

There's lots of activity around town - lots to see and do. People are drawn to lively places. It was nice to finally find a place where we could experience the "Cape Breton Sound" in terms of music and culture.



Suggestion:

Another terrific activity (top right and bottom left). If we only had more time!

The more activities you have, the longer visitors will stay and the more often they'll be back. Baddeck would be a great location for a number of activities and business opportunities - maybe sailing lessons? Kayak rentals? Canoe rentals? Some additional boating activities would be great here (bottom right).

People want to be immersed in activities. Things to do. It will keep them longer and will bring them back sooner. Bird watching. Sailing excursions. Fishing guides. Culinary education ...



Suggestion:

Are these kayaks for rent? (top right) Where do we go? How do we sign up? Provide information here. Post a sign letting visitors know rates, hours, etc.

This is a terrific architectural masterpiece and interpretive center (bottom left). The pots add a lot of charm to the entry.

The Alexander Graham Bell Museum (bottom right) is another anchor tenant to be heavily promoted. The entrance and grounds are stunning. Create signage in downtown Baddeck to the museum. It can be easily missed by visitors who tend to stay in the core area of downtown. A couple of pedestrian wayfinding signs could easily solve this problem.



Suggestion:

This is just one of many places that make Baddeck the natural “home base” for the Cabot Trail experience. (top right)

With scenes like this (bottom right), plus the “critical mass” of shopping and dining, along with the number and variety of lodging facilities, Baddeck has a very important role to play for visitors coming to the Cabot Trail.

Since shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors around the world, Baddeck provides a place for the area to benefit from the visitors.

The Cabot Trail seems to have two great “bookends:” Cheticamp and Baddeck. These are the only two communities around the Trail that have the “critical mass” of dining, shops, entertainment, and lodging in a confined “community” setting.

Does it get any better than this (bottom right)?



Critical Mass is More Than a Religious Experience The 10+10+10 rule

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. 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 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 (bottom right).

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



Suggestion:

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. 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.



Suggestion:

This page shows some additional restaurants on Argyle Street in Halifax. People congregate on the street in the evening for the many dining options available and the chance to eat outside. It's active year round.

The awnings create a sheltered feeling, and the planters with greenery and flowers make it beautiful.

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.

You certainly aren't required to have more than 20 restaurants, but this example illustrates the power of critical mass of like businesses grouped together. Baddeck is doing this and it's paying off for them.



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 kiosk with weather-proof brochure holders at local attractions, parking areas, and visitor amenities. If you place them where visitors can also spend money, 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 (top right) has a weather-proof visitor information display that provides information on lodging, dining, events, and maps. There are several of these information kiosks along the Teton Pass Trail (bottom right). They've included maps and brochures so visitors can take the info with them.

This information kiosk (bottom left) is so dilapidated it's a shame. Remove it or replace it with a new one.



Suggestion:

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, is a great example, fitting the boating image of the community.

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 Cabot Trail could develop a unique style of kiosk to fit its theme, and erect several of them around the trail. They should all cross-sell the various areas around the trail, letting people know about upcoming entertainment, dining and lodging, events, and park information.



Suggestion:

Wherever you have provincial or district parks, add visitor information.

Margaree's visitor information is in a very good location (bottom left). Remove the extra white posts, the rocks, and wood.

Add a sign to the building (bottom right) that says "OPEN" to make it obvious. Add 24-hour brochure distribution so the centre is always working for you.



Suggestion:

Always include brochure distribution so it's working 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Here are some great examples of what other communities have done: This outdoor wall, protected by a roof overhand, houses a number of brochures that sell the area and cross-sell attractions in the region.

The small kiosk (bottom left) includes an easy-to-read map with two brochure holders so that visitors can take the information with them.

This great little kiosk (bottom center) carries a wide variety of information - some as displays, and some as brochures.

This simple information shelter (bottom right) houses a map and brochures, and enables visitors to step inside out of the weather.



Suggestion:

WHERE WE STAYED AND WHY

Develop a lodging guide complete with reviews and ratings. We stayed here in Ingonish, and it was fabulous (top right). Great hosts, incredible food, gracious accommodations.

Ingonish has beaches and a number of good trails - these should be promoted specifically, with details about what makes each unique. We didn't find a retail core with "critical mass" in Ingonish, but the area is definitely a destination for much of the outdoor recreation along the Cabot Trail - golfing, hiking, enjoying beaches, and skiing in the winter. It's stunningly beautiful.

Across the street from our lodging was a wonderful craft shop (bottom left). The shops all along the Cabot Trail are fabulous.

We spent two nights at the Keltic Lodge. (bottom right) What a beautiful setting and an excellent staff. The accommodations were mediocre, however. They could use some upgrading.



Suggestion:

The Keltic Lodge (top right) is a grand and beautiful resort. The common rooms are everything you could want, and it has a lot of potential if some upgrades were made to the individual rooms.

The Purple Thistle was fabulous. The Atlantic has great ambiance, but needs higher standards for their food. Having canned chowder didn't sit well with us.

The golf course at the Keltic is stunning (bottom left).

And the pool (bottom right) and grounds around the Keltic are first-class.



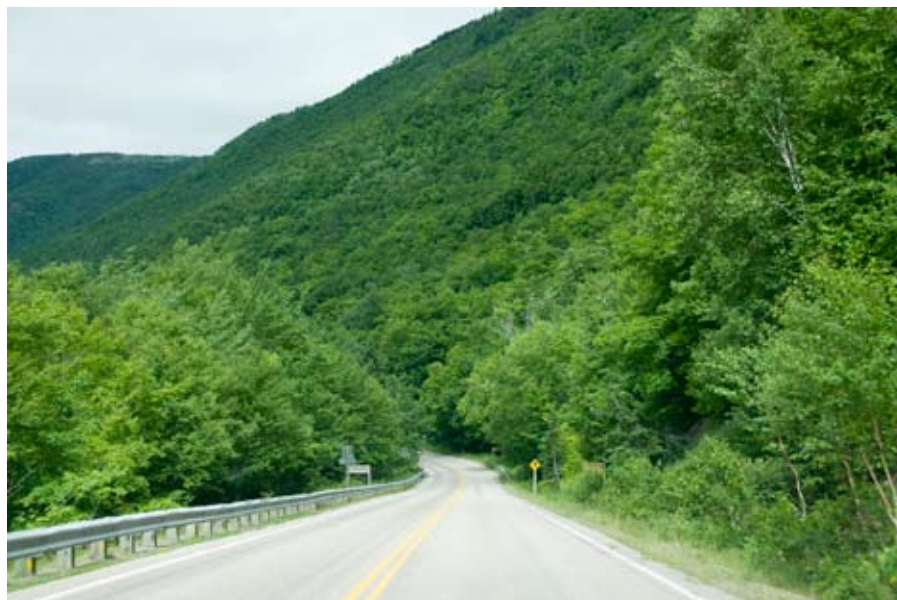
Suggestion:

Looks like a great ski area (top right). The views while skiing must be incredible.

WHAT MAKES THE CABOT TRAIL SPECIAL

The scenery may be world class, but it's not hard to find stunning scenery anywhere in the world. People are looking for experiences. Think theater: a stunningly beautiful theater. But if there are no actors performing on the stage, how long will you sit and look at the architecture?

Scenic vistas last just a few minutes. Activities can last for hours - or days.



Suggestion:

The Margaree Valley area is also beautiful - this pastoral scene (top right) could be from a painting.

Let's talk experiences.

On the way to the ferry, the nice lady in this shop (bottom left) provided lots of information and a discount ferry ticket.

The ferry (bottom right) was a fun little treat. However, we avoided it for days because we didn't know how long, how much, how often.



Suggestion:

A working waterfront is part of the charm. (top right) Are visitors allowed on the docks? Are there lobster harvesting trips? Could visitors go out in any of the boats? Consider adding these activities if they aren't already available. Visitors want things to do, not just things to look at. If visitors can go out on the docks, post a simple little sign saying "Visitors Welcome."

What can you say about Joe and his "theme park?" (bottom photos) Of course, we had to stop! Who could pass this by?



Suggestion:

Just jawing with the locals! (top right) This gives Peggy's Cove a run for the money for most photographed "icon" in the province.

The trip was complete with a close-up view of another one of the natives. (bottom left)

Locals encouraged us to four-wheel our way out to Meat Cove. (bottom right) We second-guessed the recommendations several times, but we continued on - this was an adventure!



Suggestion:

This gives new meaning to the word “rural” (top right). With a name like “Meat Cove,” this should be interesting.

But it delivers. How cool is this? (bottom right). This was an incredibly memorable experience - much more than a highway drive with a stunning scenic view - this felt like driving to the very tip of Cape Breton. Maybe a little dangerous, but definitely “off the beaten path.”



Suggestion:

After 30 minutes at Meat Cove, we were part of the family - and can't wait to come back. The chowder, by the way, is simply incredible. This was a wonderful experience.

The Gaelic College in St. Ann's (bottom right) should (and could) be one of Cape Breton's most revered attractions.

Redevelop the sign so that it is easy to read. Say "welcome." Make visitors feel like they're invited. Post information about the college and what there is for visitors to see and do there. This is a marvelous facility.



Suggestion:

Visitors are confused: (top right) Can we walk the grounds? Is there something to see other than the gift shop? Are there activities? Where can we find information?

Only two dates for the tour on the Cabot Trail (bottom left). Anything else coming? Consider developing a “Coming Attractions” readerboard, so that visitors will find out what’s on the schedule.

Give us more! Close the sale! (bottom center) This could be an awesome event. Any chances of doing this on a Friday evening? Saturday afternoon? Sunday? We were disappointed there weren’t more.

Are any performances open to the public here? (bottom right) If so, post a schedule. Invite us back.



Suggestion:

This is what we love about the Cabot Trail and Cape Breton (top right). The culture and the music! Although you can find stunning scenery all over the world, you can't find this rich cultural heritage and incredible music in very many other places.

A Cabot Trail “must do” activity - a Ceilidh.

You must attend a Ceilidh. This one was packed to the rafters and everyone had a great time, including us (bottom photos). This was such a rich experience - foot tapping enjoyment all around.

People are looking for experiences when they travel, and this is exactly the kind of experience many people want to find.



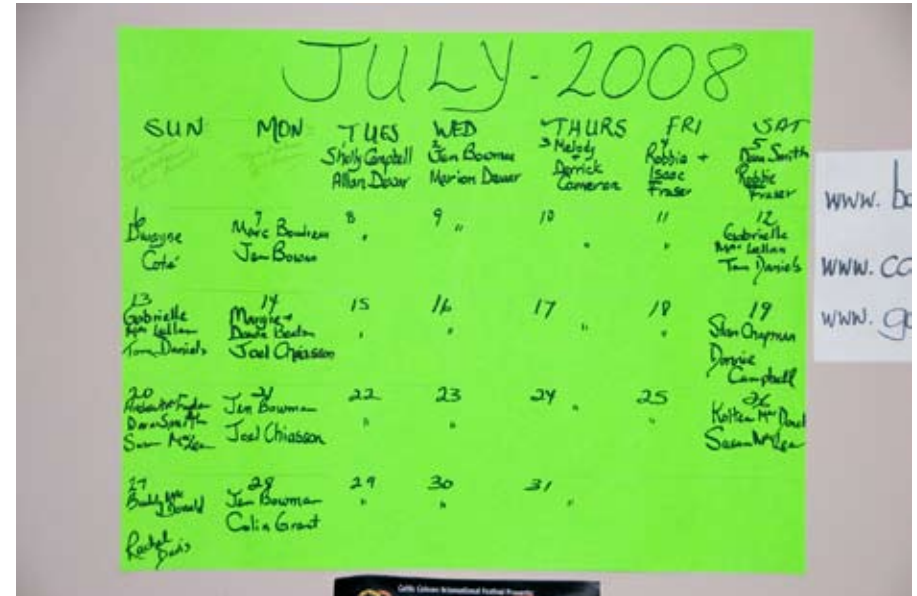
Suggestion:

These need to be heavily promoted around the Trail - by location (top right).

We felt very fortunate to have been able to see Buddy MacDonald while there! (bottom right)

The music and the culture are what sets you apart from anywhere else in the world. That is what makes you worth the time and money to get here. It makes you worth a special trip.

Promote the music and the culture - develop it further. Post locations and times for when visitors can come and enjoy the experience. Make it easy for visitors to find the rich culture and music of your incredibly beautiful piece of the world.



Suggestion:

WHAT TO DO

Product Development

- Develop a Cabot Trail Wayfinding & Signage System. It can be phased in over perhaps ten years.
- Develop a Trail-wide information kiosk system to complement the way finding system.
- Add crosswalks in Cheticamp.
- Merchants need to substantially raise the bar in terms of signage and beautification, and even merchandising.
- Make the focus of the Cabot Trail be about the music, art, culture and food. Scenery is just the ambiance. Welcome to the experience economy!
- Improve the lodging to accommodate the big spenders.
- Develop some nightlife and promote the heck out of it.

Marketing

- Create the “Hidden Gems of the World Class Cabot Trail.”
- Develop detailed itineraries.
- Start with Pick Your Season, then Pick Your Passion.
- Promote your “anchor tenants.”
- Promote the cultural experience, not just the scenic drive.
- Do a calendar of events: music, culture, art, learning opportunities.
- Jettison the generic in your marketing efforts. Promote specifics.
- Invite your visitors back with an e-newsletter. Make it worth a repeat visit.

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 for:

- Half day, full day, multi-day

The following pages show some sample itineraries.

great drives

Colorado
Peak Performance
From his Audi RS 6 supersedan, S
canyons, caravans, and an



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).

CHARGING 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 diverse 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—



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-e-r-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 corral-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

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. In my winter for 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 flocked 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; 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; 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; 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; entrées, \$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 porkey 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 criss 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, "If'hoon!"—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

DAY 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—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 car climber 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 signs, 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 past 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 ac-complishments 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, freeloader, the IRS, motor-vehicle bureau, 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.

DAY 5 "Alpine Loop Back Country Byway" to Lake City—and it will cut almost 100 miles from the normal route. The

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 the hospitality area at the Fisherman's Wharf. Enjoy the view of the bay from the ship.

You will be welcomed aboard the *Yorktown Clipper* with Champagne or Chateau St. Jean wine. You will cruise by the San Francisco skyline. Following a demonstration in the lounge for presentation. Overnight for a busy day in the Napa Valley.

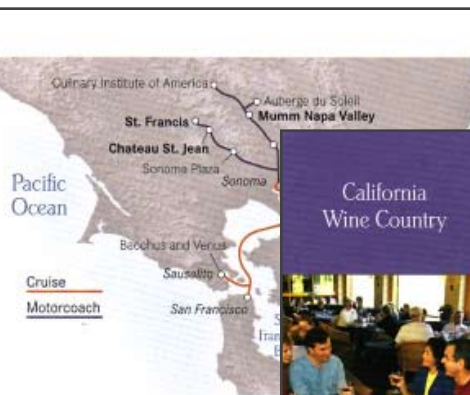
DAY 2 HIGHLIGHT SONOMA AND NAPA VALLEY

Note: you may visit today's alternate order. Winery schedule to change.

You will be treated to a demonstration, "Cook with the chefs at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Gre and have time to peruse an amazing cooking store.

Lunch at the world-renowned Auberge du Soleil restaurant on the slope of Rutherford Hill. An impressive view of the Valley. This exclusive lunch will feature food pairings explained by the chef.

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



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.

CRUISE 36 4-NIGHT WINE COUNTRY

SPIRIT OF YORKTOWN

MONDAY DEPARTURE	
October 9, 16, 23, 30, 2006	\$1,249
November 6	\$1,149

The cost of your cruise includes service charges per person which covers taxes/port charges/fees, and are neither required nor expected. Prices are per person. Single/Triples rates available upon request where applicable.

BLD = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Or... Tour the olive grove and the pond during the harvest season. See olive oil production.

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

Cruise the 3-Night Round Trip From San Francisco

DAY 1
FRANCISCO
FRANCISCO
FRANCISCO
Fishes
delight
boards

You will have a flight Champagne as you skyline dinner short conversation with

DAY 2
Note: alternate to champagne

Travel tour and wine tasting. As well as producing excellent wines, Clos

Enjoy cave listening live from the Cruise



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**

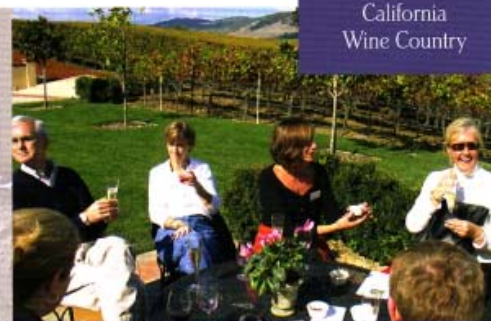
EXPLORE SAN FRANCISCO - EXTEND YOUR STAY PLEASE SEE VINTNER'S CHOICE ITINERARY.

CRUISE 37 3-NIGHT WINE COUNTRY

FRIDAY DEPARTURE	CABIN CATEGORY			
	A	AA	AAA	DLX
October 13, 20, 27, 2006	\$1,249	1349	1549	1849
November 3	\$1,149	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.

BLD = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



TANTALIZE YOUR SENSES WINE TASTING OUTDOORS.

California Wine Country

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



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 **boat cruise**. 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 FAMILYPLEASURES
Naperville

Head to Chicago's loads of family-friendly fun at **Schaumburg**, kids' reality games, and head for the **300 Center**. Experience **Naper Settlement**, **DuPage Children's Museum**, and **the Naperville Zoo**.



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 **Massbach Ridge wineries**. Snuggle 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 **Vermilion River Rafting**. Rent a speedboat from **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
Quad

The Quad Cities are a river town. The **45-mile Quad Cities River Trail**, a 62-mile **Mississippi River Trail**, and **Arsenal Island** that pass several **Arsenal Museum**, and other **Deer American Discovery Island County**.



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 **Mokawana** 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 \$100 or Less" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. **Gambit Golf Club** in **Vienna** features a par 71 course that meanders through rolling meadows and woodlands.

15 HIT THE ROAD
Carbondale

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



4 ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS
Eglin/Geneva/St. Charles

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

5 FAMILY FROLICS
Geneva

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 **Geneve 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 **Hull 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 getting 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 Run 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 **Aldeen Golf Club & Practice Centre**, featuring a challenging **Kupost-designed course**.



10 TIME TRAVEL
Quincy/Naucoo

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

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 **San Vadaabene Bike Trail**. Explore the miles of trails in the 8,000-acre **Pere Marquette State Park**, Illinois's largest state park. Splash the day away at **Raging 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**.



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 **Roscoe 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 **Grant 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
DeSoto/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 **Rockwood 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

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Suggestion:

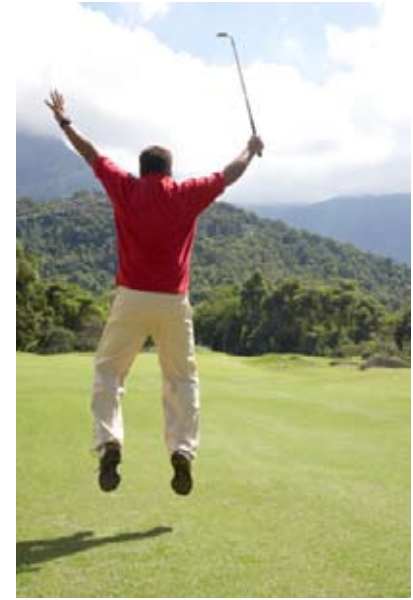
The final ingredient:

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



Cabot Trail Marketing Materials Review:

Official 2008 Guide – Travel Cape Breton

Very well done. I loved the details – the guide takes you on a “drive” around the Cabot Trail, giving information along the route including: activities, attractions, trails, picnic sites, beaches, and more.

Suggest taking this one step further – mention a few specific shops and restaurants – where’s the best fish chowder? Where can I find a Cape Breton tartan?

Consider adding locations of gas stations.

Add more about the music. When and where can visitors experience a ceilidh?

Also – give distances to some of the sites mentioned, such as the fish hatchery in Margaree.

Lobster Palooza 2008 – 101 Things to Do on the Cabot Trail

Unclear what Lobsterpalooza actually is: A festival? An organization?

I like the “101 Things to do on the Cabot Trail,” though. There are a lot of good specifics, i.e., “#43. Stretch your legs at the Clucking Hen Café in Indian Brook. Grab a homemade Scottish scone for the road.”

Some of the things to do need more information, though, such as the suggestion (#14) to mountain bike through a Boreal forest. Where to get mountain bikes?

The Lobsterpalooza Recommended Experiences are good too – Excellent, in fact!

These specific fun things to do are great. They really give visitors a lot of reasons to come, and help people imagine themselves doing them.

Cape Breton Artisan Trail Map

Very good – we used this to find and visit the artisans and shops, and it was very useful. Good map and good descriptions.

The Cabot Trail Brochure – with map.

This map is useful with its icons of amenities and brief descriptions of the areas as you go through them. The descriptions are too generic in general, though. The brochure needs to point out what makes each area special. For example, for Ingonish, the text begins, “The Ingonish area is a destination for all seasons.” What does that mean? Most of the planet could be a destination for all seasons. And then, “Be inspired by the breathtaking coastal and mountain scenery ...” Isn’t that true of the entire Cabot Trail? The text does go on to mention Cape Breton Seacoast Adventures Kayaking and other specific activities, which is good, but it would be beneficial, when describing the scenery, to point out one or two specific outstanding features to see in Ingonish that sets Ingonish apart from the rest of the Trail.

Village of Baddeck – bifold brochure

The cover could be improved by making the title more eye-catching. The brochure doesn’t give a reason to “stay-a-while.” It doesn’t give any details and specific reasons why Baddeck should be “your home on the Cabot Trail.” Tell visitors WHY – Baddeck has some great restaurants, shops, and lots of lodging options – name them and tell what makes them special. Also, most of the photos look like stock photos – Baddeck has so many great scenes – use photos of Baddeck.

The Baddeck Gathering Ceilidh

This is a simple green rack card about the Ceilidh at St. Michaels Parish Hall in Baddeck. This rack card did its job! It got us to go to the Ceilidh! It was simple, gave all the necessary information, and pulled us in. That just goes to show that marketing materials don’t necessarily have to be fancy – but they do need to provide enough specific information. Good job!

Gaelic College – Course Brochure

This isn't a visitor piece, but it did help us learn more about the college and have a greater appreciation for the culture and arts it teaches. And a visit to the college is a MUST.

Made by Hand on the Shores of St. Ann's – tri-fold brochure

This is a very nice brochure that does an excellent job of promoting the artists' shops. Beautiful photos. It makes me want to go shopping.

Cheticamp Visitors Guide 2008

Much more could be included in this guide to make it a more effective sales piece, and make it more useful for visitors.

The "101 Things to Do" section: Very few of these are specific to Cheticamp; a visitor could do most all along the Cabot Trail (or in many other places), i.e. #5 Enjoy horseback riding on the beach, or #15 Admire the fall colors. Also, much more information is needed, i.e. #2 Go whale watching. But where? From the shore? From a boat? Where do I go? When is the best time of year?

Or #10 Run the Mi-Careme. What is that? When is it? Tell me more!
Or #43 Sing along with Ca Chante Encore in Le Petit Cercle. What is that? Where do I go? When is it held?

The lists of restaurants, accommodations, attractions, shops, and amenities don't provide enough information to lure visitors or to help them plan. There are phone numbers, but no descriptions, no addresses. For the list of attractions, visitors may not know what the name of an attraction means, so they need a brief description. Visitors won't go down a list of attractions and call each one to find out what it is, when it's held, or where it is. For example, "Le Festival de l'Escaoette 224-2642." What is it? Why would a visitor enjoy it? Sell visitors on your attractions and events, and then give them enough information to plan their trip. Convenient access to the necessary information is critical.

Les Trois Pignons – tri-fold brochure

Museum of Accadian culture, history and rug hooking – nice brochure. Suggest making the interior photos larger and add a small map showing the location of the museum.

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

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) and the Marriott Harbourfront Hotel (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), the Atlantic Fringe Festival (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) 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) sends me right to Nova Scotia Vacation Resort page (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) 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, Shubenachadie 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

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. 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 LeForté Gallery. It’s a museum, art gallery and genealogy centre all in one. On display are the incredible works by rug hooker Elizabeth LeForté. 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, 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

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



**Riverview Plaza Suite 310
16000 Christensen Road • Seattle, WA 98188
(206) 241-4770 voice
(206) 241-470 fax
www.destinationdevelopment.com
TheTeam@destinationdevelopment.com
Prepared by the Team at
Destination Development, Inc.**

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