



Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Ceilidh Trail, Nova Scotia





Opportunity Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In September of 2012, an Opportunity Assessment of the Ceilidh Trail, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the Ceilidh Trail area - how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public washrooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the Opportunity 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. The towns and surrounding area were "secretly shopped." Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

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

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)

- 2) Websites
- 3) Brochures and printed materials
- 4) Publicity (articles)
- 5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

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

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

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

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or "complementary" activities.

Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for what makes your community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale?

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

The area benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-

site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

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

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

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

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point



out things that you are aware of but can't mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.

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

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

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

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

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

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

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



THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

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

2. Business travel

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

3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary

activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

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





watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

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

2. Getting people to stop

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

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

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

3. Becoming the destination

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

Overnight visitors spend three times that of

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

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

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

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

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

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

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their

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

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

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

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

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

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

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

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An

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

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

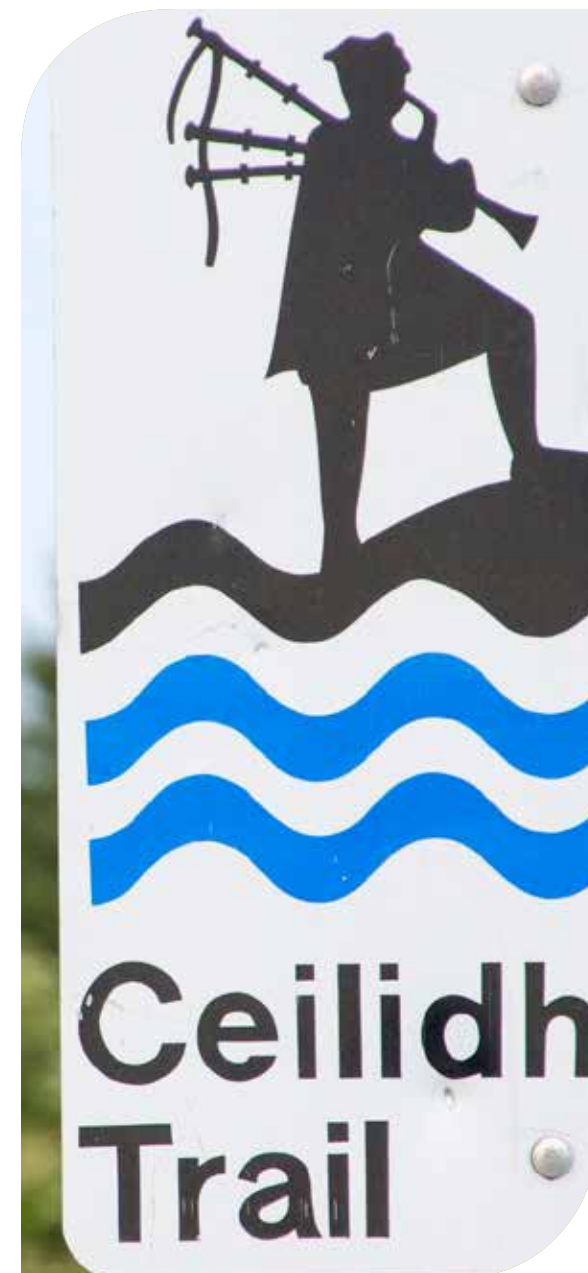
Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

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

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

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





restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

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

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

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

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



CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

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

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

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

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

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

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

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

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



NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





Findings & Suggestions



The primary goal of tourism development is to increase the amount of cash that is “imported” into the community. Fortunately, many of the same ingredients that make a destination attractive to visitors, also make the community attractive to residents and new business development - and investment - making it a better place to live, work, and play.

This is not just about tourism, but tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. During this assessment, we examined 60 key elements about the Ceilidh Trail.

Make it easy, first, to find the Ceilidh Trail, and second, to navigate throughout the area by promoting and directing people to your attractions, amenities and services through effective wayfinding.

Rather than referring to the Ceilidh Trail area as the Sunset Side of Cape Breton, refer to it as Cape Breton's Sunset Coast. “Coast” has stronger appeal.

We started our Ceilidh Trail adventure at the Causeway, looking for Port Hastings (bottom right).

Visitors are focused on the visitor info center and traffic around the circle.



2

Include the Ceilidh Trail sign on the overhead signs, or create a MUCH larger sign so it's not so easily missed.



The signs at the traffic circle at the Causeway direct visitors to Port Hawkesbury, Antigonish, the Canso Causeway, Inverness, Port Hood, and Margaree Forks. Drivers need to focus their attention on the traffic in the circle, so the wayfinding signs need to be particularly easy to read. There is no mention of the Ceilidh Trail or Port Hastings on the overhead signs, so we were immediately confused. Visitors would need to know in advance that the route to Inverness is the way to the Ceilidh Trail.

Make it easy for visitors - include the Ceilidh Trail on the overhead signs, or

make the Ceilidh Trail sign (bottom right) much larger so that it's not easy to miss.

This is a great sign (bottom left), but it is located too far after the point where visitors have to make their decision about which road to take.

There are no signs to the town of Port Hastings. Even the Ceilidh Trail is hard to find.



The museum is really easy to miss.



Suggestion: Put the A-board in the traffic circle so the people heading north can see it.



We drove around the traffic circle a few times, and finally noticed the museum with its "Port Hastings Historical Society" sign. So we figured we must be in Port Hastings. But we weren't sure if there was an actual town that we were missing.

We visited the museum, and we enjoyed the exhibits. The ladies there were very helpful and friendly.

We also visited the Visitor Information Center at the Canso Causeway, asked

a lot of questions, and received a lot of excellent information. The staff volunteered a lot of additional information, telling us about many different parts of Cape Breton Island, what there was to do, and helping us make plans.

3

Create a colorful Ceilidh Trail sign and have them placed every 5 km throughout the trail.

Not too sure how fixed you are on the logo, but to us it seems as though it should be a fiddle.



Make them 25% larger than these.



There are a few Ceilidh Trail signs placed along Highway 19, and they feature water and the silhouette of a man playing bagpipes (top right). We suggest creating a more colorful sign, slightly larger, with a graphic that is easier to identify and still symbolizes the Ceilidh Trail, such as a fiddle.

Place these about every five km along the trail.

4

Sell the Ceilidh Trail road signs (really!)
It can fund placing them along the Trail.



5

If funding becomes available consider reworking some of the exhibits - stories instead of facts, figures & artifacts.



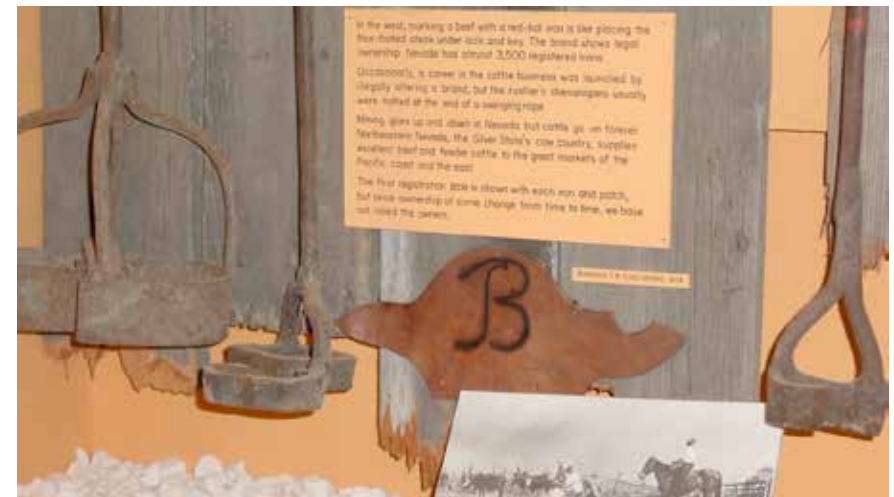
Produce extra Ceilidh Trail road signs to sell. Visitors will buy them! This can help fund placing the signs along the highway. People are stealing the Cabot Trail signs (top right), so we recommended that they also produce more signs and sell them. What terrific souvenirs!

We enjoyed the Port Hastings Historical Society museum, and suggest that, if funding becomes available, some of the exhibits could be redone to make them more engaging and interactive. Visitors would stay longer, learn more about the area, and develop a stronger connection to the area. Plus, the longer

a visitor stays, the more money he will spend.

The average museum visit lasts between 20 and 40 minutes, but if you can captivate the visitor for two hours, spending will increase. When visitors stay for two hours or more, they will usually want to get a snack or a meal, and are more likely to visit local shops and galleries.

To captivate visitors longer, museums need to tell stories, not just display artifacts with facts and figures.



Museums that engage visitors by demonstrations and learning experiences can become primary attractions to a region, and can keep visitors entertained all day.

Great stories bring the artifacts to life. The Northeastern Nevada Museum does an excellent job telling stories - so much so that people will spend hours there. Their cattle branding display includes a story about Crazy Tex who wore the cattle-hoofed shoes (bottom left) to help keep him from getting caught rustling cattle.

The Veterans Museum in Huntsville, TX (bottom right) brings in veterans to talk to visitors about their experiences during the wars. Their stories are amazing and heart-wrenching, and they make for an incredible memorable experience.

Bring museum displays to life by telling the personal stories.



Other great examples of bringing history to life include two places in Nova Scotia - Fort Anne National Historic site in Annapolis Royal and Grand-Pre National Historic site.

Fort Anne shows a unique style of 1600's French fortifications, and visitors can learn the details of how the men built this fort made of earth. We learn how the people lived, and we learn why some of the structures seem unusual. We

also learn the history of the fort - from very personal perspectives - and how the changing political control over the area affected the people's lives.

This is a fascinating historic site - worth spending several hours.



Grand-Pré National Historic site presents exceptional displays and video of the lives and deportation of Acadians from the area. Visitors see how the Acadians lived, and they make a personal connection with the hardship and tragedy to the families who suffered from deportation. It is an excellent historic site, and visitors can spend hours there.

Signage is a direct reflection of the business. This one doesn't help the business.



Red on blue is a no-no. Suggestion: Change "coastal cottages" to yellow. Make it the priority.



Retail signage says a lot about you. Merchant signage is usually a potential customer's first introduction to your lodging facility, restaurant or shop. What impression does your signage give?

When a retail sign is worn, faded, or just plain not attractive, it casts the business in a poor light.

The sign for Paul Bunyan's Cottages (top left) is worn and leaning over - the impression it gives is that the cottages might be worn and in poor condition

too. A closer look shows the cottages looking very nice (top right), but visitors might not take that closer look. The sign gives the first impression - make sure it's a good one.

Chisholms Coastal Cottages' sign is fairly attractive, and the cottages look great, but the sign is difficult to read (bottom left and right). Red letters on a blue background don't stand out. Suggestion: Change the red letters to yellow.

6

The rules of business signage

Red on blue is a no-no. Suggestion: Change "coastal cottages" to yellow. Make it the priority.



Out of business? Closed for the season? The day?



Business signage is one of the most effective ways to advertise your business - make sure it is done right. Some rules:

- No more than eight words on a sign.
- Use only one simple graphic.
- Promote the experience (what you are selling - your primary lure) before the name of the business.

- You have only four seconds to "hook" your customer.

Applying these rules, see the changes we made to Chisholms Coastal Cottages sign (before - top right; after - bottom left). The new sign promotes the experience - luxury cottages - first, with large letters in bright yellow. Then it promotes the name of the business.

We drove past the Storytellers' Gallery, which looks closed. But we weren't sure when it would be open again (if ever).



Create invitations, not rejections. Always invite people back. When you put out a sign that just says “closed,” people don’t know if you’re closed for lunch, for the day, for the season, or forever. They also don’t know when to come back. Your “closed” signs might as well just say “go away.”

Instead of posting a “closed” sign, use signs like these (bottom right). Tell the customer you want them to come back, and let them know when.

We LOVED the Judique gateway signs.



Change the text on the sign to black or a dark color.

Consider: "Celtic Music Centre • Tours • Restaurant • Gifts • Live Music"



Gateway signs provide people with a sense of arrival, and they are a visitor's first introduction to your community. Always put your gateway signs where they will make the first, best impression.

Judique's sign (top left) is very attractive, and gives a great first impression of the town.

The Celtic Music Centre's sign is difficult to read. There's not enough contrast between the white letters and the yellow background. Note our suggestions in the before (bottom left) and after (bottom right) examples.



The Celtic Music Interpretive Centre is a wonderful facility, and looks like it. As we drove into Judique, we were getting hungry for lunch, and we were surprised to find that lunch was being served there. Not only that, but there was live music! Our first day on the Ceilidh Trail and we already were able to experience the music! We were thrilled.

While in the Centre eating lunch, we saw the Tom Rankin Exhibit Room. We didn't know what we would find, but we went to check it out.

The Exhibit Room was full of great information about musicians from Cape Breton, about the music, the dancing, and how it all evolved on the Ceilidh Trail. We wished we could have spent several hours there.



We were thrilled when we saw the interactive, educational exhibits! We got to take our first lessons in step-dancing (top left) as well as fiddle-playing (bottom left). Those are the kinds of activities visitors really want to find - it makes a connection with the local culture (besides being very fun).

The most important activity visitors want to experience along the Ceilidh Trail is the music and the dancing - and we felt so fortunate that we found it so easily!

Add signage to tell us when - and if - it will be open.



10

Make it obvious when your businesses - and attractions - are open: days and operating hours.



We drove past the Chestico Museum & Gift Shop (top left), and it was deserted - obviously closed. We thought it was probably closed for the season, and would reopen next summer, but we weren't sure.

Always invite visitors back - post information about when you will be open again; post your operating hours and days.

We visited Port Hood - wonderful gateway sign (bottom left). It looked like a very pleasant seaside community - the boardwalk is great, and the setting is

beautiful. We understand that the beaches along this stretch of coastline have the warmest water in eastern Canada, and that's a great selling point.

The lodging in town looks very nice (bottom right), and the Haus Treuburg Country Inn caught our eye. The beautification makes it look like a comfortable and lovely place to stay. Good job.

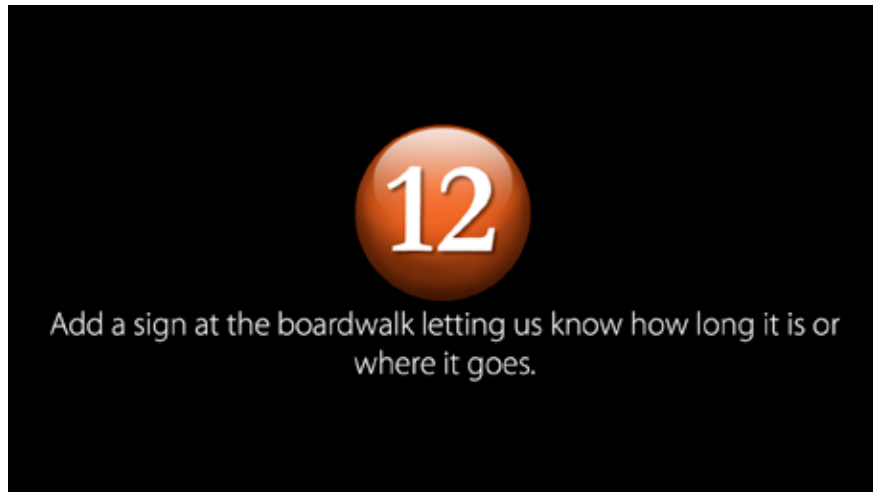


The Hillcrest Hall Country Inn, sitting up on the hill, looks very impressive (top left). It also looks like a very nice place to stay.

We were impressed with Port Hood - even the Ceilidh Fishermen's Coop (top right) was decorated with flower baskets.

The importance of beautification can't be overstated: 70% of first time sales come from curb appeal at restaurants, retail shops, lodging facilities, and golf courses.

The Clove Hitch and Four Mermaids do a very good job with their curb appeal (bottom right). Their signage is good, too, letting visitors know when they're open, what specials they offer, and that they have free WiFi.



Port Hood's Day Park is very nice. The interpretive signs (top left) are well done, providing good information in an attractive format.

Consider adding more information about the boardwalk, to let visitors know how long it is or where it goes.

Beautiful area!

Suggestion: "Next Left" instead of Justin Road. Great logo! Forget the phone number.



Visitors don't know the names of the roads, so it's much easier to direct them to your business by telling them where to turn (such as "Next Left.")

Add distances to your signs. We followed the signage for Bellemeade Farm for quite a ways, but didn't have any idea how much farther it was, so we gave up. It turns out that the Farm wasn't much further, but we didn't know. Adding the distance to your signs would prevent that.

It isn't necessary to add the phone number to your signs (top left). Visitors may

not know the area code, and are unlikely to call anyway.

One of our favorite things about the Ceilidh Trail (and the Cabot Trail):

- Dancing Moose
- Clucking Hens
- Galloping Cows
- Dancing Goats



We LOVE the Mabou logo! This is a great gateway sign (top left) - all along the Ceilidh Trail the communities have great gateway signs.

Sell logo gear with these great logos!

Develop a series of QR code posts to provide information for visitors. Quick Response Codes provide simple and quick access to a website or webpage, through the use of a Smartphone equipped with a QR reader, which is easily downloadable free of charge.

QR codes can be added just about anywhere - added to a visitor information sign, interpretive sign, or even on a stand-alone post.



You can use QR codes to provide more information for visitors at overlooks or view points (top right). They can link to a webpage that gives information about what the visitor is looking at from the site, as well as promoting and cross-selling other nearby attractions.

We saw the signage for the West Mabou Beach Provincial Park, and drove out towards the coast to take a look. Along the way, we saw these floats in the water (bottom left) and wondered what they were. We thought other visitors might want to know about them too, so this would be a good opportunity to

post a QR code to link to a webpage with information.

When we reached this turn off the main road (bottom right) we weren't sure if it was the Provincial Park, since the signs didn't indicate that it was. So we kept on going, thinking it was still ahead.

We drove on and enjoyed the incredible scenery along the coast, but eventually turned around, realizing that this must be the entry to the Provincial Park after all.

15

Create a better sign and gateway - this is perhaps one of the provinces best beach locations!



West Mabou Beach is one of the best beaches in the province. Consider creating new signage to make it a better gateway, and eliminate any confusion. Be consistent with what you call the park - if it is a Provincial Park, make sure the gateway sign indicates that.

The information on the interpretive signs is very well done. It would also be helpful to provide brochures (in a weather-proof brochure holder) that show the hiking trails and give distance and difficulty levels for each, so that visitors can take them with them.

We loved West Mabou Beach, and we even picked out a house we would love to buy! What a wonderful place to live!



We drove past Strathspey Place and this facility (top left), and we weren't sure what it was. Add more information to indicate that this is a performing arts center, and indicate where the box office is located. You could also add a QR code that links to the Strathspey Place website. Make it easy for visitors, who would love to attend some of the performances!

We stopped at the Nest (top right). It looked very welcoming and fun with the signage, open flag and great beautification outside (bottom left). The merchandising was excellent (bottom right).

The wide variety of merchandise (much of it with a bird theme) made it easy to find several things to buy. Some of the shops we have seen offer a very limited array of merchandise, making it harder for visitors to find something they like and want to buy. Merchants should keep this in mind - provide a variety of offerings with a variety of price points.



We went to see the Mother of Sorrows Pioneer Shrine in Mabou (top left), and it exceeded our expectations. We wished the gift shop had been open. The sign on the door (top right) indicated that it would be open during the time we were there, but it wasn't. We were very glad the Shrine was open, though.

What a beautiful spot, and a lovely experience! We were even able to climb the tower and ring the bell!

The Ceilidh Trail is simply
Cape Breton's Sanctuary for the Soul
Incredibly culturally rich.



We felt that the Ceilidh Trail, with its cultural offerings, beautiful settings and seascapes, and charming towns, is Cape Breton's Sanctuary for the Soul.

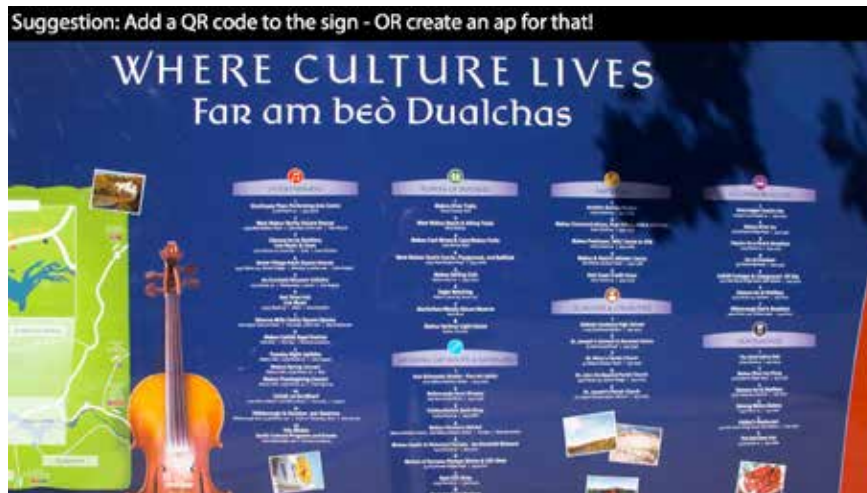
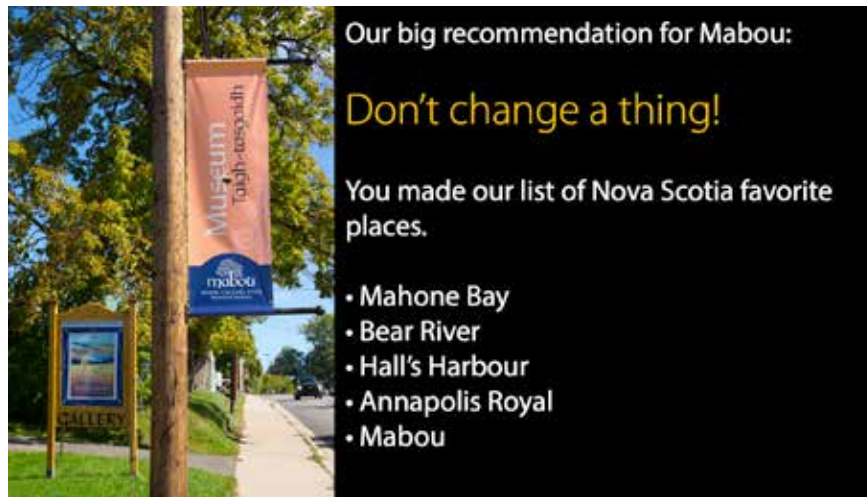
The Town of Mabou is idyllic. Some of the buildings could benefit from a little more beautification, but on the whole, they look great.



We went into the Mabou Village Gallery, and we visited with artist Suzanne Chrysler MacDonald for quite a while (top right). When people meet the artist, they are four times more likely to buy art, so it is wonderful to have artist-run galleries. We are normally hesitant about entering a business that looks like it's in someone's home, but the "open" signs made us feel so welcome that we didn't have any qualms about it.

The Mull Cafe (bottom left) does a great job with beautification.

The famous Red Shoe Pub (bottom right) also does a fantastic job with beautification, and we saw that they offer outdoor dining in the summer, which is excellent.



Mabou is charming. We've found that Nova Scotia has several of our very favorite towns, and Mabou is now on that list.

The sign "Where Culture Lives" is great. But as visitors, we're not familiar with everyone and everything on the sign. Add a QR code to the sign, so people can quickly get more details. Or, create an app that gives visitors the details.

It's apparent that the community of Mabou takes great care of their town, and feels a great deal of community pride. Their efforts are definitely worth it!



We were impressed that even the Mabou Freshmart had a terrific looking facade and beautification (top left).

Driving further north along Highway 19, we came to the Glenora Distillery. Its gateway (top right) was impressive, giving the feeling that this was a destination worth spending time in.

The distillery building itself (bottom left) is gorgeous.

We arrived at the Glenora Distillery for lunch, and we were fortunate to be able to enjoy live music while we ate! (bottom right)

The Ceilidh Trail was living up to its promise of great music and food!



Suggestion: Consider a small-sized bottle - instead of the \$100 bottle.



We weren't sure what or where this is. If it's not obvious, visitors tend to say "next."



We went on the distillery tour (top left), which was enjoyable and informative. At the end of the tour, everyone was able to sample some of the whiskey, which was a real treat.

Consider offering smaller sized bottles of the whiskey for self-bottling - maybe half-size for \$50. No one from our tour purchased the \$100 bottle, but we think several would have been willing to spend \$50 for a smaller bottle.

We saw the sign for the Scotsville School of Crafts (bottom left), but we weren't

sure how far it was or if there was anything there for visitors to see and do (bottom left). Consider adding to the sign: distance; open to the public? types of crafts?

The Town of Inverness has an excellent gateway sign (bottom right).



We went into the Visitor Information Centre (top left), which was so easy to find heading northbound. It's very attractive, and the staff was friendly, knowledgeable, and very helpful.

We suggest you develop a sign for the “back” of the VIC. When heading southbound, there are no signs, so it's very easy to miss. Consider either a pole banner or a smaller, low sign, as shown in blue in the example (bottom left).

We saw the directional signage for the attractions (bottom right), so we immediately turned left to check everything out.



We drove down the road and easily saw the Inverness Cottage Workshop and Bakery, which was closed (top left). The sign for the Miners Museum was right in front of the Cottage Workshop (top right), so at first we assumed it was in the same building, and that it was also closed.

Later we found that there is an arrow on the sign, under the words, pointing to the right. It would be good to move the sign so that it is just prior to the drive, so that visitors will see that they need to turn right to get to the museum.



We found the boardwalk easily, and it's beautiful. Suggestion: Add a QR code here (top right) to link to more information about the boardwalk and the area. Consider creating an app for Inverness that helps visitors explore everything in the town.

The new golf course runs right next to the boardwalk. With the golf course on one side, and the water on the other, it's a fabulous walk!



18

Add a trail directory sign at the trail head.
How long is it each direction? Does it connect to the resort?



We hope there are plans to connect the boardwalk to Cabot Links.



We weren't sure how long the boardwalk was or where the other end was. Add a trail directory sign to give that kind of practical information.

The boardwalk doesn't currently connect to Cabot Links, and there is no other access to the boardwalk except at the one trailhead. We recommend continuing the boardwalk (or as a trail) to connect with Cabot Links as well as with other public access past Cabot Links.



The Inverness Beach Cafe (top left) was closed. Be sure to post signs inviting people back when you're open.

The Inverness County Centre for the Arts (top right, bottom right and left) is a wonderful facility for the community as well as for visitors. It is inviting, attractive, and the displays are very enjoyable. Great asset!



We followed the signs to Doug Fraser's Studio, and it was getting close to the end of the day. We weren't sure if the studio would still be open, so we didn't go in. Visitors have a natural reluctance to "intrude" into someone's home/work space, so if it's not obviously open, we'll hold back. Consider putting out a bright "open" flag during open hours, just to encourage visitors.

Driving through Inverness, we could see a lot of good points, and a lot of potential. The little park (top right) was charming, and frequently the benches were full of people.

Inverness has some good "bones" - good beginnings for becoming a destination for visitors. The Coal Miners Cafe has a great facade (bottom right) and signs.

19

Develop an Inverness "Downtown Development Plan."
Work on the 10+10+10 Rule of "critical mass."

We see places like this as a great opportunity.



Same here - but with an effort to raise the bar in terms of quality.



The heart and soul of every community, besides its people, is its downtown. The number one complementary activity of visitors is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting, and that is where 80% of visitor spending takes place. People want downtowns now more than ever.

Inverness has a number of buildings that aren't much right now, but they do have the potential to become so much more. For example, the building top right could be renovated into a farmers/craft market. It could have booths inside, as well as kiosks, booths and tables outside. Produce could be sold, as well as local crafts, art and prepared foods. Musicians could perform during

lunch and/or dinner hours, while people gather to browse and eat. Public markets attract visitors as well as locals.

We surveyed 400 successful towns and districts in the U.S. and Canada and found the 20 most common ingredients for their success. Many communities' biggest challenge was thinking that beautification of streetscapes would revitalize their downtown. That's only half of the equation - the other half is having the right mix of businesses inside the buildings. It needs to have "Critical Mass." Would you go to Carnegie Hall and sit for two hours if there was nothing happening on the stage?



When like businesses are grouped together, they attract more customers - people are attracted to the choices. For a downtown to be successful, it needs to fit the **Ten + Ten + Ten Rule**. It needs "Critical Mass." It needs to have within three lineal blocks:

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

Antique malls do 10 times the business when they are grouped together. People are attracted because there are so many choices.

If a downtown has a focus, such as many great restaurants grouped together, it will have the critical mass of restaurants to make it a destination. Consider Halifax's Argyle Street (bottom right). Within 2.5 blocks, there are 22 restaurants. It has become a major gathering spot rivaling the waterfront, and has become "the" place to hang out. The restaurants are all doing very well, and a new convention centre will soon be built there.



Argyle Street's restaurants are allowed to provide outdoor dining on decks built over the sidewalks (all photos this page). They lose a few parking places, but outdoor dining attracts more customers, and the restaurants (and city) feel that it's a good trade. Because there are so many restaurants, people are willing to walk a distance to reach them.

It is frequently necessary to orchestrate the effort to achieve critical mass. In the case of Argyle Street, one of the restaurant owners led the effort to recruit more restaurants. He now owns three of them, and they are all doing well.

It helps a downtown become successful if the property owners and merchants develop the "mall mentality." They are working together, and the success of one helps the others succeed as well.

They have consistent opening hours and days; they are open late into the evening. They recruit "like" businesses to be clustered together; they know the importance of "anchor" businesses, and work to have an anchor that they will promote specifically. And they provide a central gathering place, so that a feeling of community and activity can be created.



Again, sometimes critical mass needs to be orchestrated. Begin by working with the property owners, not the tenants. When one third of the property owners work with the recruitment effort, the rest will gradually join in.

One of our favorite towns is Mahone Bay. It provides a great example - one that Inverness has the potential to emulate.

Mahone Bay offers a critical mass of restaurants and destination shops, all in a pedestrian-friendly, very attractive setting. Beautification efforts among all the shops are outstanding. Note the bright, colorfully painted buildings - typical of Nova Scotia, and very appealing. The blade signs are decorative and add to the

charm.

- The Dog Shop (top left) looks fun and vibrant with its bright colors, cute sign, and greenery.
- This tea shop (top right) uses window boxes, planters, color, and great signage.
- The yarn shop (bottom right) uses a very creative and appealing blade sign. In addition, the sandwich board is decorative and carries the same theme. Note the flowers and bench outside as well.
- The Quilt Shop (bottom left) displays some of its quilts and other wares outside among the flowers.



The Scarecrow Festival lasts all of October. The town is packed with visitors.



This restaurant in Mahone Bay looks very inviting (top left). Posting its menu in bright colors outside invites people to stop and take a look. Their Scarecrow Festival (top right) attracts hordes of visitors throughout the month of October.

Cabot Links is Inverness's new "anchor tenant" - attracting high-spending visitors to the town and region from all over the world. The unique links-style golf course and beauty of the area are an incredible draw. The lodging facilities are high-quality, catering to the golfing clientele.



The baby boom generation: 1946 - 1964



Demographics of the boomers

- 400,000 people turning 50 - every month (US/Canada)
 - ...for another three years (just turning 50!)
 - They control 70% of North America's wealth
 - Mindset: Individuality, emphasis on youth, self-absorption
 - They will pay more for quality - but still want a good deal. They are savvy travelers.
- TripAdvisor is at the top of their list.

The travel demographic is changing. With more than 400,000 people turning 50 every month in the US and Canada, the baby boom generation affects travel more than any other group. This group prefers to travel during the shoulder seasons: in April, May, September, and October.

Baby boomers stand to inherit about \$8.5 trillion from their parents, and they put their comfort and enjoyment high on their list. Travel is one of their top activities. They will pay more for quality, but they still want a good deal.



When businesses close at the end of August, and don't open again until June (or July), they miss out on these baby-boomer travelers.

What kinds of activities does this group of people want most? They like culinary tourism: traveling for great food, restaurants, learning new cooking skills. Be sure to offer a variety of culinary experiences.

They are interested in art and seeing artists in action. They want to learn new skills and hobbies. They don't want to just watch; they want to join in and

learn. Be sure to provide a variety of these experiences.

They are interested in learning about and experiencing other cultures: Aboriginal, Gaelic, Acadian, as well as others. They want to enjoy the cultural offerings of different people: food, music, dancing, art, crafts. Providing these cultural experiences will attract these folks and keep them longer.



Baby boomers are interested in home and garden: garden tours, learning.

They will visit farmers markets and public markets while traveling - these markets are a big attraction for visitors.

Baby boomers also want to spend time with their families, their grandchildren, and will sometimes travel with them.

But they are interested in their own comfort as well, and when visiting family, they prefer to stay in a hotel. The top 15% of accommodations, in terms of

quality, command 85% of the leisure travel business with boomers.

These travelers have the most money to spend, and prefer to travel during the shoulder seasons. Be sure to do your best to attract them and cater to their interests!

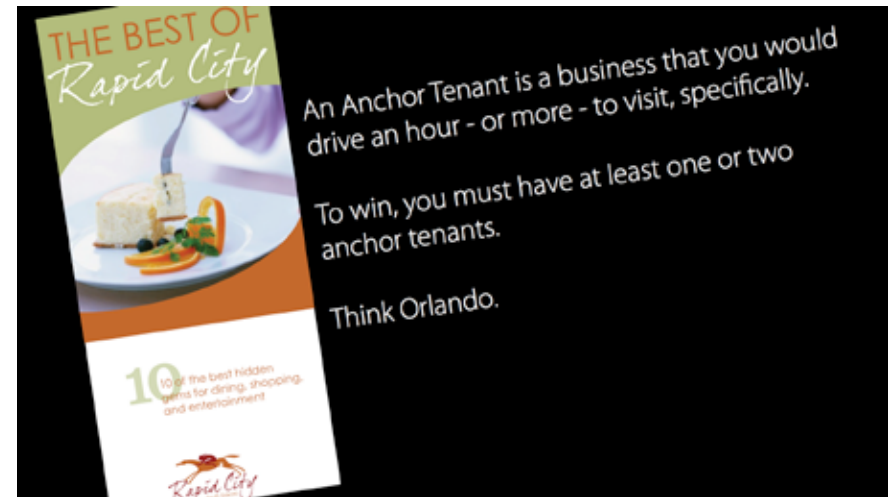
Cabot Links is a perfect attraction for this group of travelers. Inverness has the opportunity to take advantage of this.



When we arrived in Inverness, we saw the “Harness Racing Today” sign. This was something completely new for us! We weren’t even sure what it was, but we wanted to find out. We followed the sign, and we were able to enjoy our first harness races! It was a great experience, and we were glad we had seen the sign on the highway. Many visitors would love to attend those races.

We had dinner at the Red Shoe Pub, and, sure enough, there was great music! We had seen the piano player already - at Glenora Distillery - so we felt like old friends.

We had a great time. The Ceilidh Trail really lives up to its image, and fulfills its promise of Celtic music and culture!



A “Best Of” guide can have a dramatic impact. Its purpose is to promote your “anchor tenants” - those businesses and attractions that your visitors can’t find closer to home - those you would drive an hour or more to visit.

It’s important that the brochure NOT look like a bunch of ads. Use an advertorial format; include lots of photos with specific, descriptive text.

It’s critical to establish criteria to select the very best that you have. Market the Ceilidh Trail’s top three: restaurants, retail shops, activities, and attractions. Sample criteria:

- Must be highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, regional publications)

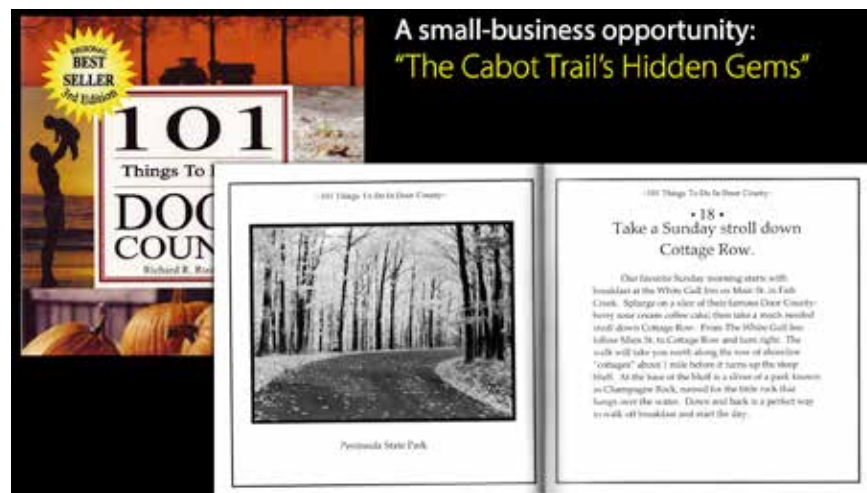
- Must have good curb appeal
- Must be open June through October (to start)
- Must be open until at least 6:00 pm and be open six days a week
- Must be unique to the Ceilidh Trail

Some initial ideas: The Celtic Music Interpretive Centre; Glenora Distillery; Cabot Links; The Red Shoe Pub; West Mabou Provincial Park; Inverness Centre for the Arts; The Nest; Dancing Goat Restaurant; Mabou Village Gallery; Inverness Boardwalk; The Mother of Sorrows Pioneer Shrine.

Don’t include more than 24 items!

21

Create a book of "Ceilidh Trail Hidden Gems"



22

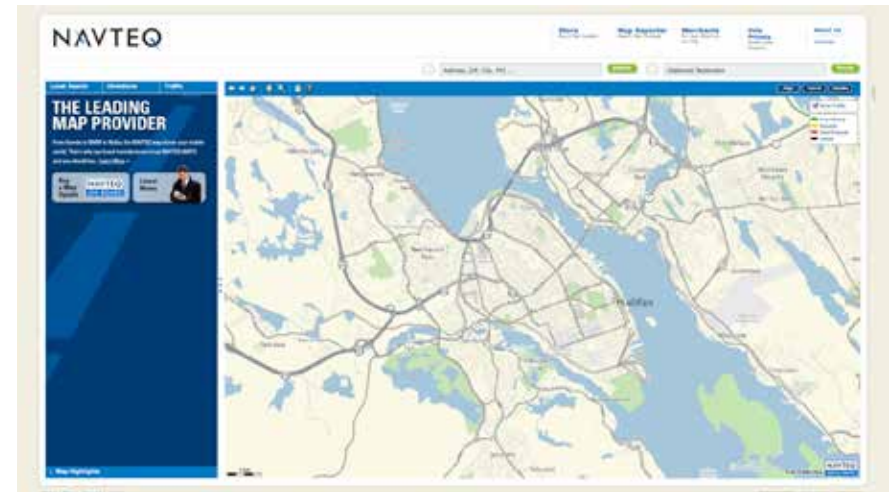
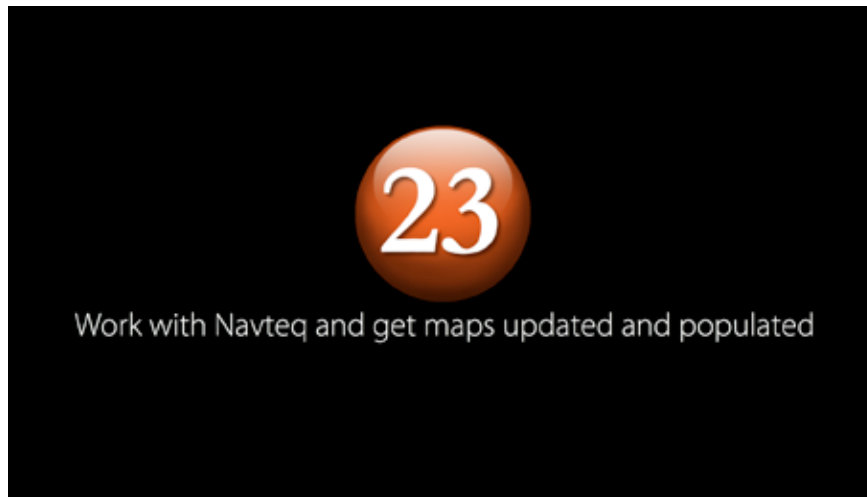
Create detailed itineraries from local residents

- ☒ 3 Where can I get the best dessert around the Cabot Trail (name the place & the dish)?
- ☒ 1 Where will my partner and I have the best dining experience?
- ☐ What is the one thing I MUST do while there?
- ☒ 2 Where will I find the best cup of coffee in a great atmosphere?
- ☐ Where is the best place (specifically) to take a memorable photo that says I was really there?
- ☐ Where can I check my e-mails?
- ☐ Where can I get the perfect gift? Something locally made.

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

Create one of these books for the Ceilidh Trail - The Hidden Gems of the Ceilidh Trail. It will entice visitors to the area and keep them busy, so they will stay longer and spend more money, while enjoying the Ceilidh Trail even more.

Visitors need itineraries to help them know what to do while in your area. Locals are the best ones to write itineraries, and can provide insight and specifics that are really helpful. Be specific! Write two-day, three-day, and week-long itineraries filled with the specific information travel writers provide. Post these on your websites.



Technology is providing many new ways to promote businesses and attract visitors, and much of this just needs the investment of time to make a difference.

Navteq creates the maps and information for navigation systems. They want their information to be detailed and accurate. Work with them to make sure they have correct, complete information for the Ceilidh Trail, including the names and locations of your restaurants, lodging facilities, attractions and amenities.

24


Get rid of business signs more than 10km from the business



Signs promoting businesses are an important part of advertising, but sometimes business signage can cause problems. Don't allow any business to place a sign more than 10km from the location of their business.

We saw many signs, along both the Ceilidh and Cabot Trails, that promoted businesses that were 34km to 40km away. This hurts businesses that are nearer, and it creates confusion and sign clutter. Limit the distance signs can be placed from their location to a maximum of 10km.



- 
- A person is standing in a river, fishing. The river is surrounded by a dense forest of tall trees. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants, and is holding a fishing rod. The background shows a steep bank with more trees and some fallen logs.
- What will I catch?
 - Where do I get a fishing license?
 - How much is it?
 - What are the limits?
 - When are the fishing seasons?
 - What time of day is best?
 - What kind of bait should I use?
 - Is there a bait and tackle shop in town?
 - Fishing guide services?
 - How do I get to specific fishing spots?
 - Is there a place to park?
 - Anything else I should know?



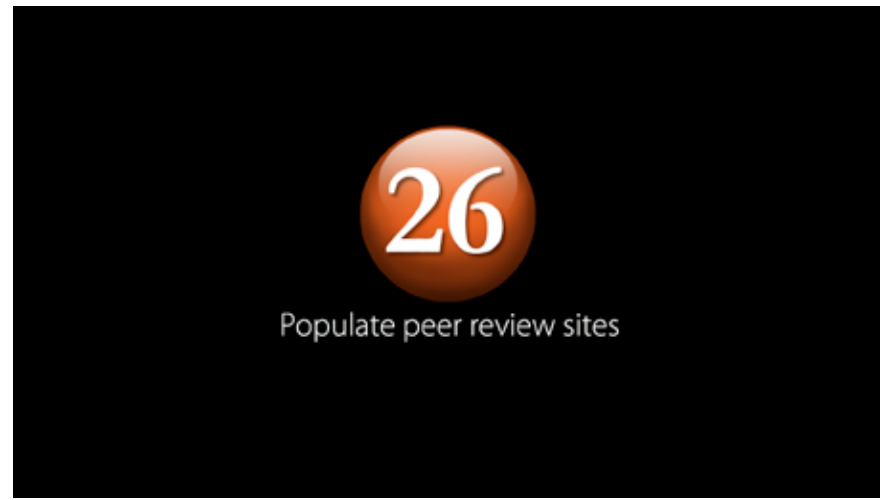
In most of your marketing materials, the biggest missing ingredient is specifics. Specific information. Virtually all of your guides, brochures, website, signs and kiosks are too general. Visitors need specifics to plan and enjoy your area, and they're not finding it. The website with the most useful information right now is www.NovaScotia.com.

Try to answer the practical questions a visitor would have for each activity, such as the questions top right for fishing. Visitors to the Ceilidh Trail might have the following questions:

- What is a Ceilidh? How do you pronounce it?

- Where do they happen?
- What do they cost?
- Do I need reservations?
- How long do they last?
- What happens during a Ceilidh?
- Where can I get more information?

The Economusee brochure (bottom left and right) is a good example of how to provide specifics.



Cape Breton Centre for Craft and Design does an excellent job providing specific information in their Trail Map, The Creative Island (top left).

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

Provide the information to peer review sites such as TripAdvisor about your locations and businesses. You can set up the information yourselves

- a customer doesn't have to do it, and it'll be much easier for your happy customers to post a good review.

The Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site promotes its standing with TripAdvisor - good peer reviews are an excellent selling point.

TripAdvisor lists six hotels or B & B's in Mabou (bottom right).



When guests leave your hotel or restaurant, be sure to ask them how everything was. If they respond that everything was great, ask them to share their opinion on TripAdvisor. You can even hand out cards such as the one shown bottom left to help remind them.

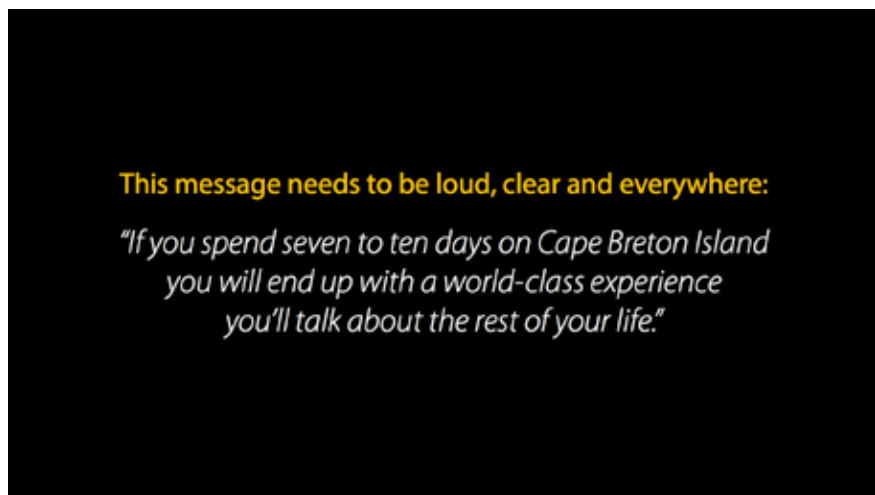
Anyone can get a negative review sometime. The important thing to do if your business receives a negative review is to respond. Point out that you are always trying to improve, and that you appreciate the visitor's comments. Apologize if necessary, and explain the situation, and what you are doing to remedy any

problem. Just responding courteously and respectfully will help alleviate the problem of having the negative review. It shows you care.

The Four Times Rule:

We will travel a distance if there are enough activities for us that last four times longer than it took us to get there. For example, if I drive one hour, do you have four hours worth of activities that would appeal to me?

Would you fly to Orlando if all there was to do was visit Epcot Center?



The more you have for visitors to do, the longer they will stay, and the further they will travel.

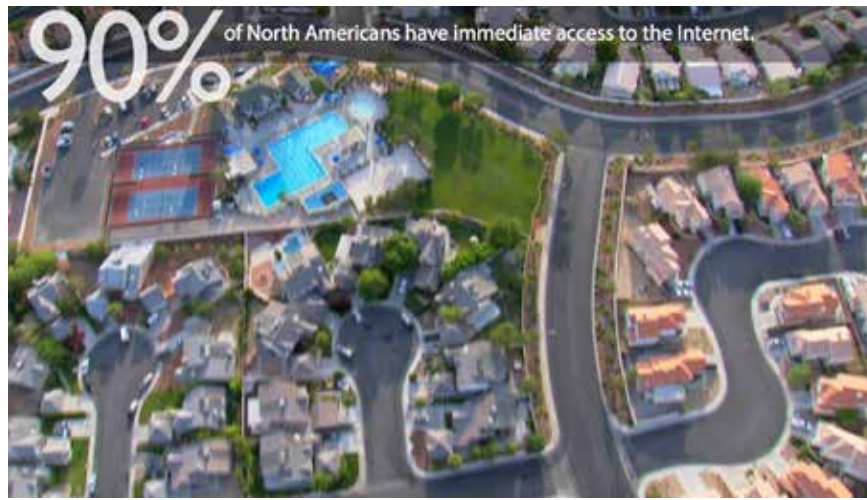
Several museums in the South Sound region of Washington State got together to produce this brochure (top left and right). Each panel promoted one of the museums, but they marketed them all together - make a day of it, and visit five or six museums within an easy drive of each other. It worked - more people came from further away, and they visited several museums. Their marketing budget decreased because of this partnership effort, and attendance at all the museums went up.

The same principle holds true for Cape Breton Island. You are stronger as one loud voice rather than several small voices.

Cape Breton Island is a world-class destination, and it offers visitors a wealth of activities - enough to keep visitors happy for many days. Change the focus from "drives" and "recreation" to music, food and the arts.

As soon as visitors cross the Canso Causeway, they should be told to turn LEFT.

They should begin their Cape Breton experience on the Ceilidh Trail, then go to the Cabot Trail. Their experience will be richer and more enjoyable.



Rework your marketing budgets - individually and collectively.

88% of destination marketing and economic development organizations spend more on printed materials than on the Internet. They have it backwards.

The vast majority of people do their travel planning on the Internet, and most of those do it at work. They want immediate results, and 86% of search engine users don't go past the second page of search results.

Search engine optimization should include experiences, activities, and

opportunities more than just the place. People search for activities first, then the location.

If you want new business, residents, or visitors, it starts in front of a computer screen.

Your marketing dollars at work:

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





Natalie MacMaster
Professional Musician

To say that Cape Breton has shaped my music would be an understatement. It's where I grew up and where I learned to play the fiddle. It's a big part of my life, and a big part of my heart.

There's a cultural vibe there that you just can't get anywhere else. What's great is the people are humble, gracious, and they always give more than you expect. Whether it's learning square dance steps at a community hall, trying your hand at rug hooking in Cheticamp, or singing along at a Red Shoe Pub ceilidh, Cape Bretoners want you to love their island as much as they do. So getting you to join in the fun is just part of who they are.

The Ceilidh Trail adds so much to the Cabot Trail experience, making the entire region a truly world-class destination.

You should work together; you need each other to make Cape Breton a must-visit destination from anywhere in the world.

This comes with a heavy responsibility: To be the Standard Bearer for all that Nova Scotia - and Atlantic Canada - stands for.

This means that you need to continue going from World Famous to being truly World Class.

THE GOAL:

To be 95% occupied in
July, August, September & October.

Then add June, and then May to the mix.

And to increase visitor spending by
200% in two years, 300% in five.



"Forget about all the reasons why something may not work. You only need to find one good reason why it will." - Dr. Robert Anthony

"Many a false step was made by standing still." - Fortune cookie

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

You have a high standard to uphold. And that's the "promise."

Additional notes regarding Nova Scotia Marketing Assessment

NovaScotia.com website

Nova Scotia is a large area with a number of diverse regions and variety of attractions. Dividing the province into regions seems like a natural way to differentiate the various areas and make the entire area much more accessible to potential visitors.

One possibility would be to additionally divide up the province by areas of interest, in addition to geographic region. People don't choose destinations based on location or geography- they choose based on experiences. Perhaps branding each region with their own particular focus would be one way to accomplish this – focusing on what each region is known for or can offer that is particularly unique. Focusing on experiences over geography will draw more people in and right away answer the question, "What is there for me?" People want specifics and they want to know how your message applies to them directly. We're all so overexposed to marketing and advertising messages, we're very good at tuning things out if we don't think it applies. That means if your message is too generic, people aren't going to think it applies to them and hence, won't pay attention.

The Nova Scotia website (novascotia.com) includes a lot of good photography, which is critical. The design and functionality are good; the site is easy to navigate and the look and feel convey a sense of natural beauty.

In many sections of the site, such as accommodations and attractions, there are simply lists of options. Consider highlighting the best of the best with more information and photos. Showcasing the best of what the region has to offer will only serve to strengthen the appeal of the entire area and all businesses, whether they are featured or not, will benefit from increased visitation.

I did notice a few instances of links that switched the language of the site to French (not intentionally).

Best of the Cabot Trail section:

There's a bit of a disconnect with the Best of the Cabot Trail section and the Scenic Travelways: Cabot Trail section. The Best of portion is great because it highlights the things that make the Cabot Trail worth a trip. However, the information about what the Cabot Trail really is (a road trip/driving tour destination) and where it is, is on a separate page in a different section. Is there a way to meld the information from both pages? If someone didn't know anything about the Cabot Trail, and found it by way of Regions-Cape Breton Island Region- Cabot Trail, would they "get it"? I'm not sure if they'd realize what the Cabot Trail really is – there needs to be some kind of introduction or further information to preface the Best Of stuff.

Best of the Ceilidh Trail section: This section of the website has the same issue – if you didn't know what the Ceilidh Trail was to begin with, you wouldn't quite know how to frame the Best Of highlights. You'd have to find the section again under Scenic Travelways, which the web visitor may or may not wind up doing.

2012 Cape Breton Island Travel Guide – “do and dream... Cape Breton Island”

This piece is a typical travel guide, with lists of activities and attractions, and lots of ads. It makes for a busy brochure. Consider an Activities Guide and/or a Best Of Guide. These would be advertorial style pieces that would showcase the best Cape Breton has to offer. Instead of offering ad space, the featured attractions, accommodations, etc. would pay for their space in the piece, but it would be written in advertorial style and include great photography. That way, instead of wading through pages of ads and heavy copy, the brochure would highlight the best attractions, shopping, restaurants and accommodations in the area, putting Cape Breton's best foot forward in a format that is easier to read, and therefore more likely to be used.

Sunset Side of Cape Breton

This is the 2012 Visitors Guide to Inverness County, which is essentially the entire western portion of Cape Breton Island. It includes the Ceilidh Trail and the western portion of the Cabot Trail.

This brochure has a lot of interesting information organized by each community/town. The layout makes it a bit difficult to sort through the articles and ads to find the type of information a visitor would need to plan a trip, though. If the information was organized by activity, it would be easier to find the information a visitor needs.

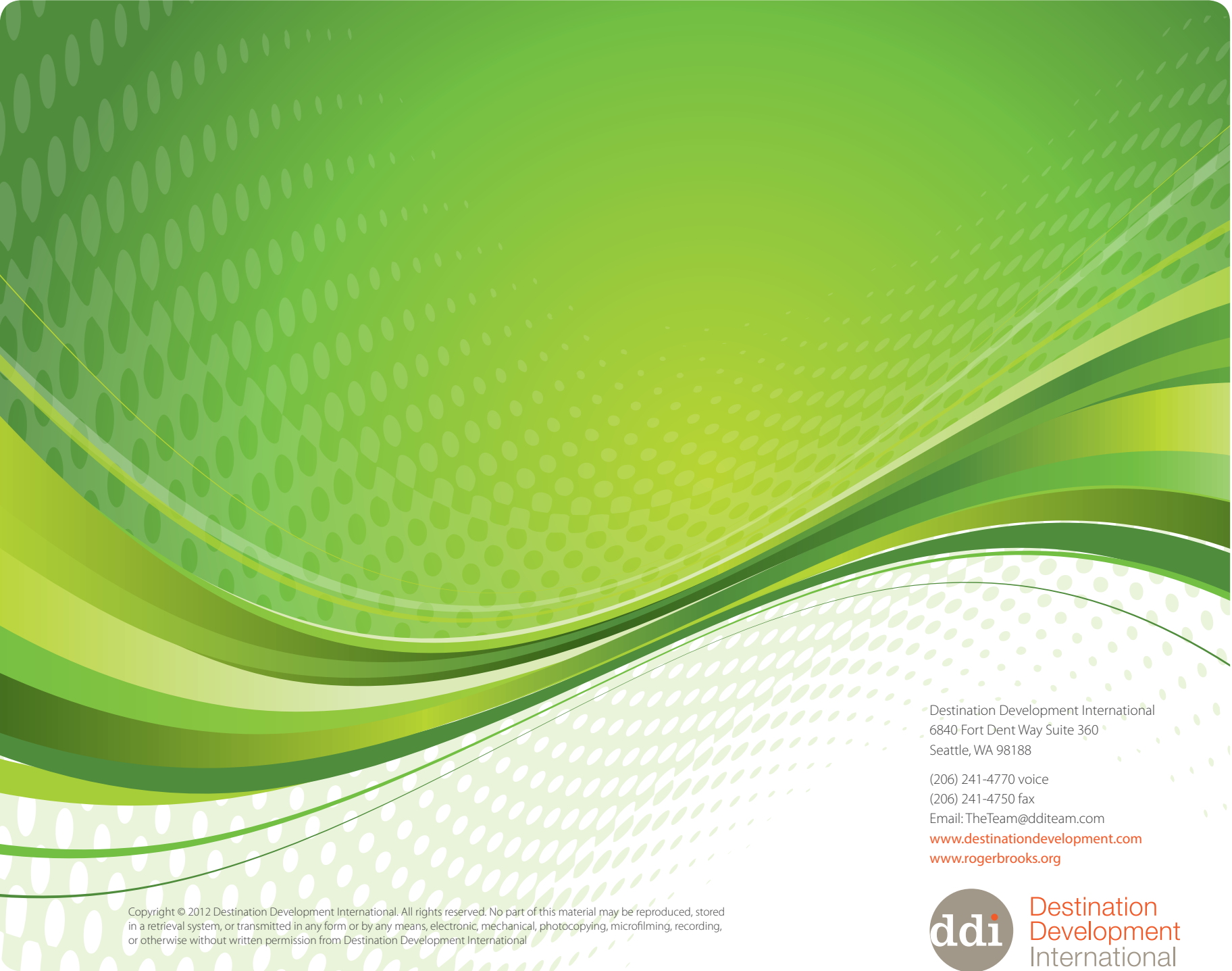
Add itineraries. Itineraries can show visitors what activities they would enjoy better than any ad or article is able to. Itineraries can be written for specific

groups (families, couples, girls' getaways, etc.), and they can have a specific focus, such as food (sampling the best food on the Ceilidh Trail), or music (enjoying Ceilidhs along the Trail), or hiking, or the arts (shopping along the Ceilidh Trail).

Other printed materials

There are a number of other printed brochures and maps. Individually, they are nice pieces. However, going back to the idea of an Activities Guide and a Best Of Guide, a lot of these could be consolidated into one piece that promotes the best of what the region has to offer.

Consider working with the Cabot Trail to create a complete guide and website for the Ceilidh Trail and Cabot Trail combined experiences. Focus on the culture: the music, food and arts. Create week-long itineraries with specific information.



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