



# Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

EASTERN SHORE, NOVA SCOTIA



## Opportunity Assessment

### INTRODUCTION

In July of 2013, an Opportunity Assessment of the Eastern Shore, Nova Scotia was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop in October. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the Eastern Shore 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 Eastern Shore 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 constraints, future plans, or reasons why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the communities, leading them to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

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

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

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



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

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

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

### SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

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

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

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

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





## THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

### 1. Visiting friends and family

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

### 2. Business travel

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

### 3. Leisure travel

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

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

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





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

## THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

### 1. Status quo

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

### 2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in your communities would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes there – 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 your communities, 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 to enhance 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 could build on the results of this assessment, by adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today. RBI's Branding program helps build your branding plan from the ground up - with local input, brainstorming, research, and creative planning. We can work with you to guide you through the process, helping create a plan that has local champions and community buy-in.

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

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

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

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

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

A 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



## Halifax to Cole Harbour: confusion on how to find the Eastern Shore



- 1 Develop a wayfinding system through Cole Harbour and to Marine Drive. Sheesh!



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 destinations attractive to visitors, also make the communities attractive to residents and new business development - and investment - making them better places 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 Eastern Shore.

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

We started our Eastern Shore adventure in Halifax, looking for wayfinding to take us to the Eastern Shore and Marine Drive through Cole Harbour (top right). It was difficult and confusing.

Suggestion: Develop a wayfinding system to help visitors find the Eastern Shore and navigate through Cole Harbour, including the local attractions.



Suggestion: Avoid outlined text on signage.



Suggestion: Create a good first impression. Weeding, beautification.



Suggestion: Keep the guide book stocked!



Suggestion: Add some pedestrian wayfinding around the farm.



We looked through the “do and dream Nova Scotia ... Eastern Shore” travel guide, and found the Don’t Miss Attractions, so we started out in Cole Harbour looking for the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm. There was some wayfinding signage to help guide us there.

The entry sign was nice (top left), except it’s best to avoid using outlined text on a sign, because it is difficult to read from a distance.

From what we read about the Farm, we were expecting to see more. The

entry (top right) needs some upkeep and beautification to create a good first impression. The brochure holder was empty of guidebooks (bottom left), which was a disappointment.

When we entered, there weren’t any signs to help guide us around, so we weren’t sure what was even there that was open to the public.



Open? Closed? Offices? Museum?



Suggestion: Add a neon OPEN sign in the window. Something to pull us in.



Suggestion: Add some interpretive signage. What is this stuff?



Suggestion: No dogs. No feeding. Consider positive messaging: "Please don't feed or touch the animals and please keep dogs outside the barn."



Pedestrian and interpretive signs would help make the experience of visiting the Farm more positive. We didn't see anyone else around, and never found the collections of antiques. The only animals we saw were two pigs and six sheep. It was a disappointing experience, and we only spent 25 minutes there.

Funding is almost always difficult for community museums. Try some inexpensive solutions and look for donated labor to create some wayfinding and interpretive signs. If all the animals are out in a field, add signage to let visitors know. Interpretive signage could explain what the buildings were used

for, what animals are kept on the farm, what the farm grows, and what life on the farm was like. People like to hear about stories - stories of the people who once lived there, what their lives were like, and any interesting events that occurred to them.

If there is a cafe and gift/antique shop, invite visitors in with easy to see welcome and "open" signs.



Suggestion: Use the readerboard – “Open 10 - 5 Mon-Fri. Terrific cultural exhibits”



Suggestion: Add a brochure holder outside the doors with more information.



The Bruce Peninsula, Ontario



Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia



We found the Black Cultural Centre, which looks very nice (top left and right).

Be sure to take advantage of the readerboard, using it to promote any upcoming events or exhibits, and to tell when you're open and what visitors will be able to see. Lure visitors inside.

Add a bench or two outside the entry, open the doors in nice weather, mow the lawn. Make it inviting!

Add a brochure holder by the front doors to offer more information. This

would also be an excellent place to provide more visitor information to cross-sell other activities in the town.

Note the weather-proof brochure holder outside the Central Bruce Peninsula Visitor Centre (bottom left) and outside the Mahone Bay Visitor Centre (bottom right).

Suggestion: Add an arrow AND distance. This is not very helpful.



While trying to find the route to the Eastern Shore, we stumbled on Fisherman's Cove.



A beautiful setting, great harbour, great first impression.



Excellent interpretive displays.



After looking around Cole Harbour, we wanted to find Marine Drive and the Eastern Shore. We also wanted to see Fisherman's Cove, which was mentioned as a "Don't Miss Attraction" in the Travel Guide, but we had a hard time finding any wayfinding to direct us.

Eventually we did find Fisherman's Cove. It's in a beautiful setting, and our first impressions were excellent, except that it was so hard to find.

Add wayfinding signage to Fisherman's cove, as well as a clear, easy-to-see

"Welcome to Fisherman's Cove" sign.

The interpretive displays (bottom right) are very interesting and well done.



Well done. Suggestion: Make sure you maintain these every six months or so.



What is "The Fish Basket"? Restaurant? Seafood retailer?



Loved the cute shops. This is the only one with a "blade sign." Suggestion: Others, follow suit.



Seems to be suffering from lack of maintenance. Suggestion: Add beautification: pots/planters



We loved the brightly painted little shops. Suggestion: Retail signage should always promote the "lure" first, then the name of the business. For example, "The Fish Basket" (top right) could be a retail merchant selling seafood, or a restaurant, or even a gift shop. Make it obvious - promote what it is you are selling.

It was hard to see what was in all the little shops without walking down the entire boardwalk and looking inside. Suggestion: Lure visitors to your shops with "blade" signs - signs that are perpendicular to the walkway, so that visitors

can see what you are offering. Blade signs should be a consistent height and size, and be decorative to fit the local ambiance.

After walking around a while, we thought Fisherman's Cove was a fun place to visit, but it didn't seem to be doing well. Maintenance of some of the buildings was suffering, and many of the shops lacked beautification.



Suggestion: Use the readerboard or take it down. What is this place? Add signage!



Suggestion: Weeding for a start. Create a permanent sign. This could be charming.



Nicely done. And was one of the busier places.



Awesome job.



We weren't sure if this building (top left) was a restaurant, or if it was even open to the public. Add signage to make it obvious. Signage is the best form of advertising there is - if merchants aren't letting people know what they have to offer, they're missing a lot of potential customers.

70% of first-time sales at restaurants, retail shops, lodging, and golf courses come from curb appeal. Making the outside of a shop or restaurant beautiful is an investment with a great return. Keep the grounds weed-free and looking good, and add pots, benches, outdoor tables and chairs, and attractive

displays. Signage should be attractive and professionally produced.

These two shops (bottom left and right) look great - the merchants have used attractive displays of their merchandise to encourage visitors to come into their shops. Good job!





Vinyl banners should never take the place of permanent signage (top left), and they should only be used for short, temporary promotions. They tend to make a shop look second-rate.

Fisherman's Cove has tremendous potential to be an active and successful visitor destination. Get the "Mall Mentality." Work together to increase success: Every shop should be open consistent hours and days, and the business mix should be destination visitor oriented (retail shops and restaurants). Social services don't attract visitors, and you need a "critical mass" of destination retail and dining to attract visitors.

The boardwalk looked great (top right) - we weren't sure how long it was or what there was to see along it. Add signage to encourage visitors to make the walk. If you can get people to stay at least two hours, spending will increase.

We finally found our way to the Eastern Shore and decided to follow Highway 207.

Note: The Saltmarsh Trail was promoted on the map, but we couldn't find it. Even Yelp says it is "easily missed on the way to Rainbow Haven ..." Better wayfinding signage would remedy that.

Fabulous beach!



Seems to be one of the best - and most popular - beaches in the province. Very nice.



2

Promote your "anchor tenants" -  
The Very Best of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore



When we approached Lawrencetown Beach (top left and right), we knew we had found one of the Eastern Shore's best attractions. It is gorgeous! We came by the first time on a Sunday, and it was busy!

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

Rapid City, SD created a "Best Of" brochure featuring ten of their "anchor tenants" - things visitors couldn't get closer to home (bottom right).

We think Lawrencetown Beach is one of the Eastern Shore's Best Of's.





Suggestion: Signage should ALWAYS be perpendicular to traffic.



Awesome place. We LOVED the art! A "must see" stop along the Eastern Shore.

Alpena, Michigan also created a "Best Of" brochure featuring their "anchor tenants" (top left and right). They used strict criteria to select their best of's.

Here's a sample criteria for developing a list of your "Best Of's":

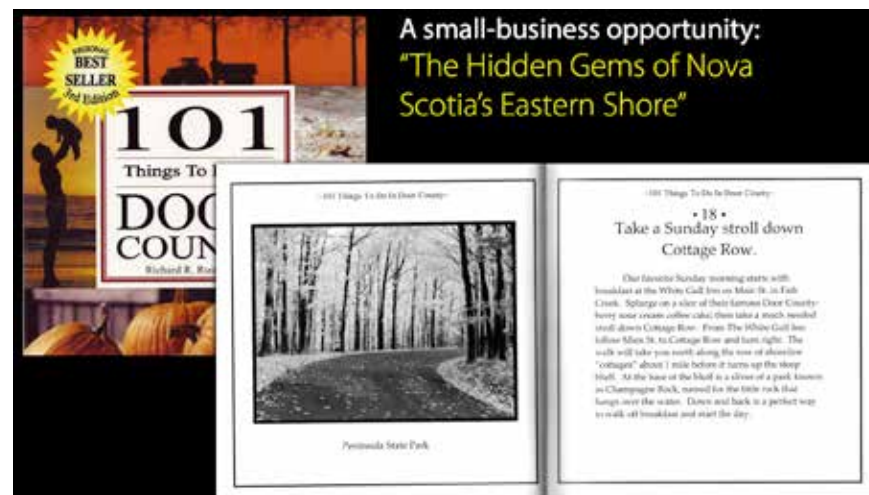
- Highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, TripAdvisor, Yelp, regional publications.
- Good curb appeal.
- Open at least May through October (to start)

- Open until at least 6:00 pm.
- Open six days a week.
- Unique to the region.

We saw Happy Dude's (bottom left and right), and we thought it was great. Really a unique type of place, and it could be a great "hidden gem."



### 3 Create "The Hidden Treasures of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore"



Suggestion: Black on green is very difficult to read. Less text would be better.



We assumed this was not a tourist attraction. Suggestions: If so say "Visitors welcome!" Signage was not very helpful and we had no idea of where to park.



A gentleman in Door County, Wisconsin created a small book "101 Things to do in Door County," (top right). 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.

Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. It will entice visitors to the area and keep them busy, so they will stay longer and spend more money, while enjoying the area even more. One of these hidden gems could be Happy Dude's Surf Emporium.

We saw Hope for Wildlife (bottom right and left) and stopped to see if there were things for visitors to enjoy - it is listed as an attraction in the travel guide. Some of the staff was working in the road, but they weren't interested in us. It looks like it is primarily for rehabilitating wild animals, but it didn't seem like a visitor attraction.

Create one of these books for the Eastern Shore - The Hidden Treasures of



Suggestion: Use English too. We figured it was an historic site - only. Lettering should be larger.



A beautiful setting. Is there a restaurant here? Coffee shop?



Suggestion: Consider a sandwich board: "Coffee, pastries, sandwiches..." Use the chalk board.



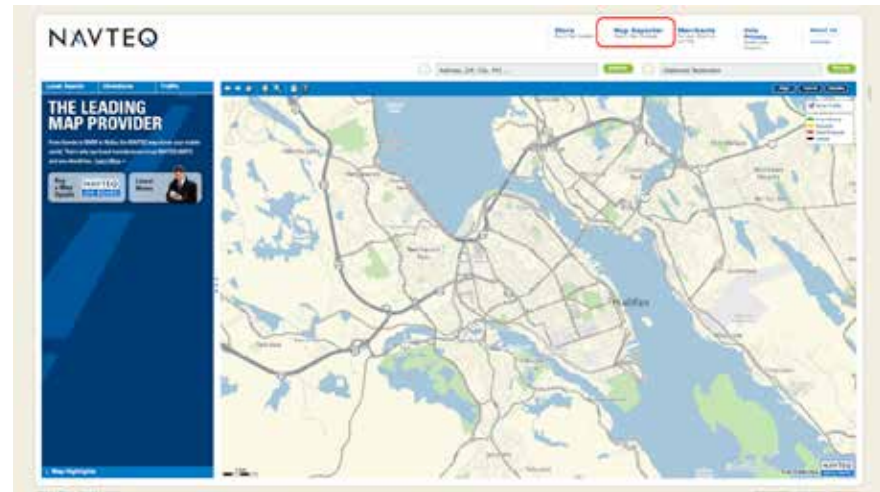
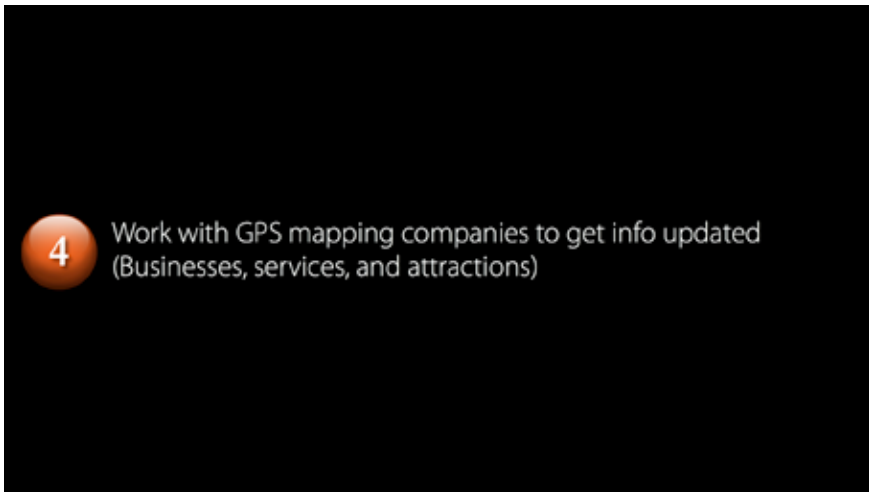
Make sure your attractions' signs are easy to read from a distance and include English as well - even the Acadian attractions. L'Acadie Historic Site is very attractive (all photos this page).

Consider offering more encouragement for visitors to come in - it looks like there is a cafe or restaurant. Promote your food; list a few menu items on a sign to tempt visitors.

The Eastern Shore's Hidden Treasures:

- Happy Dude's Surf Emporium
- L'Acadie Historic Site

Looks "ok." Decided to check TripAdvisor, Yelp, navigation system.



We continued on and decided to look for a place to have lunch. We looked at Trip Advisor, Yelp, and at our navigation system in the car. 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, and don't underestimate the power of peer reviews. Visitors trust peer reviews far more than they trust ads.

20% of people now use navigations systems - on their smart phones, built into new cars, and as separate devices such as Tom Tom, Garmin, and Magellan.

It's important to make sure all your businesses, services, and attractions are included and locations are correct.

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



Its main competitors are Google and the Dutch Company Tele Atlas, which was purchased by TomTom.

- TomTom provides data for TomTom and Apple's iOS 6 "maps"
- Google maps provides its own data

The appropriate URLs to add businesses to GPS databases:

- NAVTEQ: [mapreporter.navteq.com](http://mapreporter.navteq.com)
- Tele Atlas: [mapfeedback.teleatlas.com](http://mapfeedback.teleatlas.com)
- Google Maps: [www.google.com/placesforbusiness](http://www.google.com/placesforbusiness)

Suggestion: Make the sign readable from a distance. Museum or private collection?



Suggestions: Cut back weeds. Add beautification around the front door. Fix the entranceway.

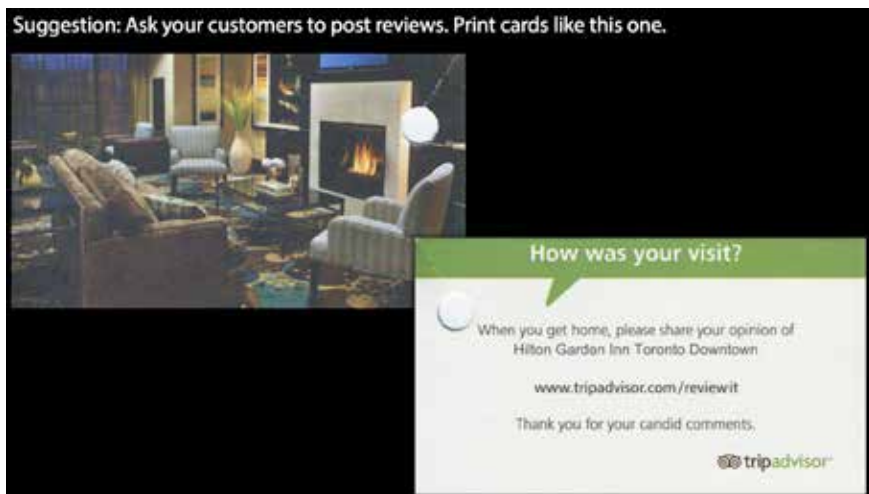
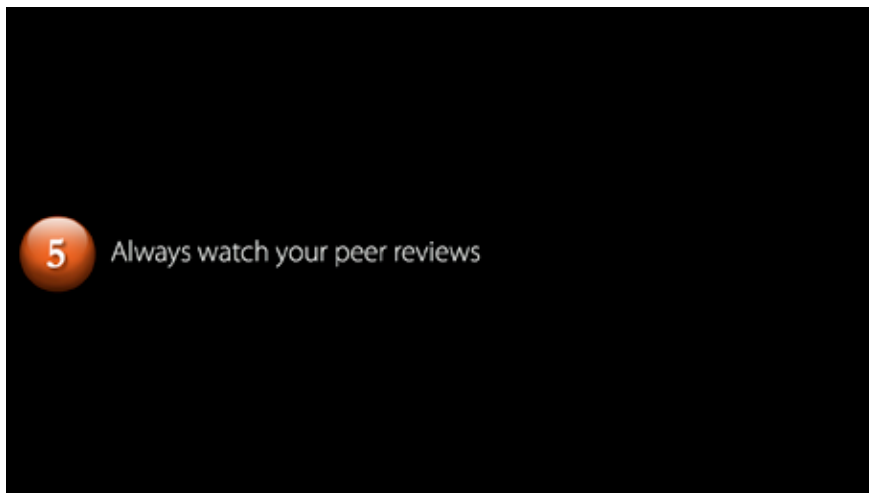


Navteq handles the maps for Garmin, Lowrance, NDrive, as well as for web-based applications such as Yahoo! Maps, Bing Maps, Nokia Maps and Mapquest, and for radio: XM Satellite Radio and Sirius Satellite Radio. Navteq's main competitors are shown top left.

Can you read the sign in the photo top right? We couldn't read it until we got up close - when people are driving, that's too late to get them to stop. Make sure signs are readable from a distance.

The Polar Bear Express (bottom left) is very cute. Does it offer lunch? What does it offer? It's not clear. Add signage to promote what you have to offer - menu items in addition to barley bread.

The Bear Den (bottom right) does a good job promoting its yummy banana splits, milk shakes, and root beer floats, but it could use some more beautification.



More and more travelers look at peer review websites for travel planning. Make sure those visitors can find your businesses and attractions.

Provide the information to peer review sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp! about your locations and businesses. Feel free to ask your customers to post a review - first make sure they are happy with your service. Consider printing business-card size cards (bottom left) to hand out to customers who have had a good experience reminding them they can post reviews.

It's critical that merchants, restaurants, and lodging facilities monitor peer review sites and make a response if necessary. It costs nothing to reply to a

review, and it shows people you care.

When you receive accolades from TripAdvisor, another peer review site, or a magazine or travel writer, let the world know about it! The Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site in Baddeck (top right) has this sign posted in their entry hall.

We decided to try The Tourist Trap (bottom right) for lunch, based on location and the TripAdvisor reviews, but it looks like it's closed - no indication that it would open again.



Black Sheep Gallery: A great sign others should emulate. Questions answered in a few seconds.



This also looks like a great little place. Meals for guests only? Parking?



Suggestion: All of these signs should include the key, arrow, name and DISTANCE. Fix 'em all!



YES!!!! This should be noted on a map of the Eastern Shore. Promote your washrooms!



We were still looking for a place to eat lunch, so we continued on. We looked at every sign we passed to see what shops, restaurants, and lodging were along the route. The Black Sheep Gallery's sign was great (top right). All the information we needed was right there: name of the business, what it was (folk art gallery), distance away, hours and days open for business. Perfect!

This inn (top right) looks very nice. They must serve food, but we weren't sure if it was for overnight guests only. If there is a restaurant here open to the public, add signage to make it obvious.

Make a list of all of the attraction signs (bottom left), photograph each one, and list what needs to be fixed. They should all have the name of the attraction, an arrow, and the distance.

The number one reason visitors stop is to use washroom facilities. They can be a great lure - promote them! You'll give visitors a reason to stop. If you place public washrooms in a location where visitors can spend money (such as near shopping and dining), spending will increase.





Suggestion: Keep the weeds down, fewer graphics and words on the sign.



Very good signage. Well done!



We visited the Fisherman's Life Museum (top left and right), and the people there were very nice. Museums are a mainstay of cultural tourism, and they can enchant visitors with stories about local culture, history and life. However, museums are rarely the primary attraction for visitors - they are usually a complementary activity. Something a visitor does while they're in the area to see something else. What makes a museum successful is its ability to tell stories, either oral, written, or visual. Artifacts without stories aren't very interesting to most people. But a story brings the artifact to life, making it real and memorable. Keep your community museums vital and entertaining by

always having them tell great stories that will captivate visitors and develop an emotional connection.

We drove on to find Memory Lane Heritage Village. We almost couldn't see the sign (bottom left) because of the sign clutter and weeds. Never allow more than 14 words for signage - more than that is very difficult for drivers to read.

When we arrived, the attractive welcome sign let us know everything to expect (bottom right). On this sign, it works to provide a lot of information because drivers will be slowing down in the parking lot and be able to read it.





Memory Lane Heritage Village (top left) looks like a great attraction, and it is highly regarded. It does a good job portraying the 1940's. We noticed that the museum responds very well to each reviewer on TripAdvisor - good job!

Memory Lane Heritage Village makes it on our list of "Best Of's" for the Eastern Shore.

We've always dreamed of someday going sea kayaking, so we wanted to check out Coastal Adventures (top right).

We followed the sign, and turned down the dirt road, but we had a hard time finding where Coastal Adventures was. The sign (bottom right) doesn't have an arrow or an indication that there is an adventure shop up the grassy drive. Make it obvious.

We saw Prince Albert Arch, which is very picturesque, and the interpretive sign is good (bottom left).



The retail counter seems more of an afterthought. Suggestion: Expand it. Tell us more. Offer samples. Sell crackers, napkins, spreads, plastic cutlery, etc. We're on the road!



The shortest distance between two points is a good time



By this time we still haven't found a place for lunch, and we're very hungry! We saw the sign for Krauch's Smoke House, and headed down the road to find it. There is a nice picnic bench outside, and we went in hoping for some tasty smoked fish. There wasn't a lot for retail sales, though, which was disappointing. We did buy some fish, and it was very good. Consider expanding the retail counter sales to include some crackers, spreads, napkins and plastic cutlery. And, since there are different flavors and types of smoked fish available, offer a few free samples. Visitors will love it!

For our list of the Eastern Shore's Hidden Treasures, we would add Krauch's

Smoke House.

We noted a sign for the Gold Mining Museum - 40 km away. We felt it was too far to meet the Four Times Rule. People will go somewhere if you have activities - that cater to them - that will keep them busy four times the amount of time it took to get there. So, if it takes one hour to drive someplace, will there be four hours of activities that I want to do at the destination? The average person spends only twenty minutes in a museum, so a 40 km drive would be too far for most people, unless you can show that it will be an experience "worth the drive."





We drove on to Sheet Harbour, and we came to the MacPhee House Museum and Visitor Centre. Good job with the attractive and welcoming sign (top left). The visitor centre is very nicely done. Add an outdoor brochure holder to provide after-hours information too.

We went inside, and the staff was very friendly, and as helpful as they could be. One issue with many visitor information centres is that they will only promote their paying members, or they will not give specific information and advice about restaurants and lodging facilities. They won't give visitors

the information that visitors really need, because they have to be "politically correct." But how does that help visitors?

Produce "The Very Best of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore" guide - it will help solve the "political" pressure of trying to be "all things to all people."

With the advent of technology, if your visitor services don't offer anything more than what someone can get online, then spend the money in online content instead.

**6** Develop 24/7, 365-day visitor information with brochure distribution



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

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

The visitor center in Oxnard, California (top right) provides visitor information

in several brochure holders on their door. Note how the bench and pots create a welcoming ambiance.

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





This looks like a nice place to eat. Great reviews.



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

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

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

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

We weren't able to get any recommendation for a good place for lunch from the visitor centre, so we took a look around and looked at reviews on Yelp and TripAdvisor. We decided to try the Henley House Pub & Restaurant. It had great curb appeal (bottom left) and looked very nice on the inside as well (bottom right). Sure enough, it was very good!

Henley House makes our list of "Best Of's."



The Fairwinds Motel and Restaurant (top left and right) has very good curb appeal and signage. Curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales at lodging facilities.

We stayed at Liscombe Lodge, which was promoted as “Nova Scotia travel at its finest.” The photos on the website looked great (bottom left). We stayed in one of the cabins, which was rustic and old, but had a comfortable bed. But it was hot, and there was no air conditioning. We had also been assured there would be WiFi, but there wasn’t.

Suggestions:

- WiFi should be a top priority throughout the resort.
- Make it easier to find activities. Can we rent boats? Canoes? Bikes? Where?
- Don’t oversell and under-deliver: food, internet access, cabins, etc.
- Have air conditioning units available for rent. You could have made a fortune last summer.

Bottom line:

The marketing is simply top notch, but the product needs investment. Currently the Lodge over-promises and under-delivers.





Look carefully at your marketing messages. If you promote yourself as "more than just a B & B," what do you mean? Be specific. Tell us what makes you more than a B & B; tell us what makes you better than the others. (top left)

Make a list of all of the attraction signs (top right), photograph each one, and list what needs to be fixed. They should all have the name of the attraction, an arrow, and the distance.

The sign for the Port Bickerton Lighthouse (bottom left) should be larger and

have fewer words so that travelers can read it easily. No more than 14 words on a sign, and it's better to use no more than eight.

Can you read this sign? (bottom right) Always use contrasting colors on signs. Put the sign up on the building.





Suggestion: When not open, put the flags away.



Suggestion: Post the hours and days on the sign. Open on Saturdays - peak season.



The Sherbrooke Village Inn has good curb appeal (top left) and looks like a nice place to stay. The signage is well done.

Suggestion: Work on your website; it should be good enough to close the sale. TripAdvisor has the Sherbrooke Village Inn listed under "specialty lodging." It should be listed with hotels, so that it doesn't get missed when visitors are searching. Be sure to respond to any negative comments posted by reviewers on TripAdvisor. This shows that you care and that you are addressing the problem.

We saw the St. Mary's River Smokehouse, and we were looking forward to buying something there. It looked like it was open with the flags out front (bottom left). But no. It's not open on Saturdays - not even during the peak season. Consider being open Saturdays during peak season - you're missing customers!



What a charming little town! We loved it.



Absolutely fantastic job with the signage. Love the logo!



Sherbrooke is a great little town. It has a few little shops and restaurants that are unique and charming. The post office (top right) is beautiful! We love the hanging baskets, the pots, and the bench outside.

Beanie's Bistro (bottom left) looks very fun. The large umbrella is a great touch.

We thought Beanie's Bistro should be one of the "Best Of's."

Of course, we were looking forward to visiting Sherbrooke Village. The signage is excellent, and we loved how the welcome sign is placed in an attractive planter. Great logo.



Excellent signage. Best in the province. Period.



Why isn't this back at the Inn? We're confused.



Everything is easy to find.



Suggestion: Make this a printed map for the area. And then do another one for the western area of the Eastern Shore - or double-sided.



We were impressed by the signs as we entered Sherbrooke Village's parking area (top left). But when we saw the sign for Sherbrooke Village Inn (top right), we were confused. We knew we had passed an inn of that name, but this sign made us wonder if there was another Sherbrooke Village Inn. We later realized that they were one and the same. Suggestion: Put this sign at the actual Inn - or have a duplicate at the Inn so it's easier to tell they are the same place.

Sherbrooke Village is top-notch. Everything is well organized and a pleasure to see.

This map (bottom right) is excellent. Consider reproducing it as a printed map for visitors to use.





What a great place! A visitor could spend an entire day in Sherbrooke Village. It must be one of the best attractions in Nova Scotia - even in the Atlantic Provinces.

The buildings and grounds are beautifully maintained, and the costumed interpreters are very knowledgeable and entertaining. We learned a lot from the blacksmith and the potter, and we enjoyed learning about how so many beautiful things were made in this little self-sufficient village.



Suggestion: Signage should be maintained at least once a year. Businesses too!



Fantastic way to get us to come back.  
Always promote upcoming festivals and events.

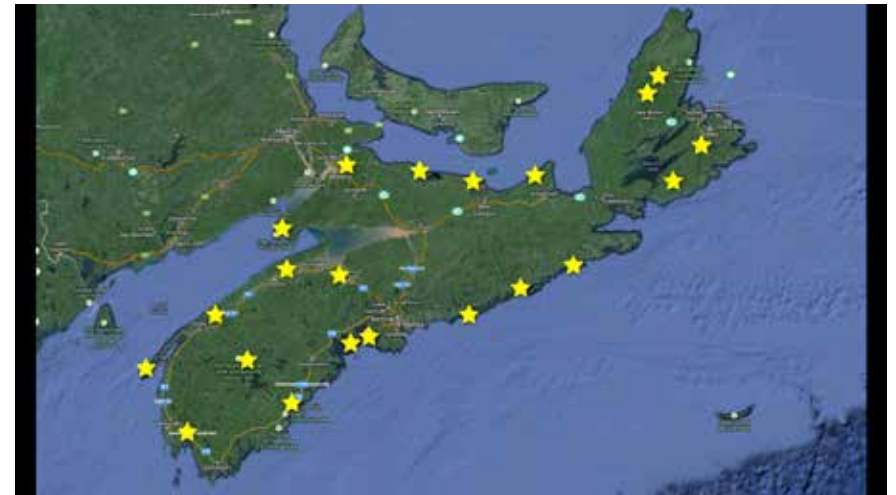
The interpretive signage (top left) was informative. Be sure to keep the signage well maintained - it should be refreshed every year.

We loved how the gift shop sold many of the items that were being produced in the village (bottom left) - what a great way to bring home the memories!

It's great that the Village lets visitors know of upcoming events, such as the Show & Shine (bottom right). That's a great way to invite visitors back.

Sherbrooke Village definitely goes on our list for the Best of the Eastern Shore.





We were surprised to see the sign for purchasing a pass to 27 Nova Scotia museums (top left). We'd never known about this before, and it's a great idea. Promote the pass at all the museums - let visitors know about it!

Extend the season for Sherbrooke Village - the "baby boom" generation prefers to travel during the shoulder seasons.

We made a list of our own ideas for the top 12 "must visit" historical attractions in Nova Scotia (map - top right; list - bottom left), and two of them are on the Eastern Shore.

Sherbrooke Village, by itself, makes the Eastern Shore worth a special trip and an extended stay. Add the hidden treasures in the central coast area, and you've got an amazing destination.

Moving on, we came to St. Mary's Salmon Museum (bottom right). Be sure to promote the Museum and Interpretive Centre first - not the name of the association. Visitors aren't coming to see the association.

Suggestion: If more than 5km, include days and hours to the sign.  
"A collection of tools and machinery" won't close the sale.



For the "key" signs (top left), if the attraction is further away than 5 km, include the hours and days it is open to the public. The Tradesmen Museum is 17 km away - quite a distance. It would be a big disappointment to drive that far and find out it is closed for the day.

When promoting museums, avoid the following words:

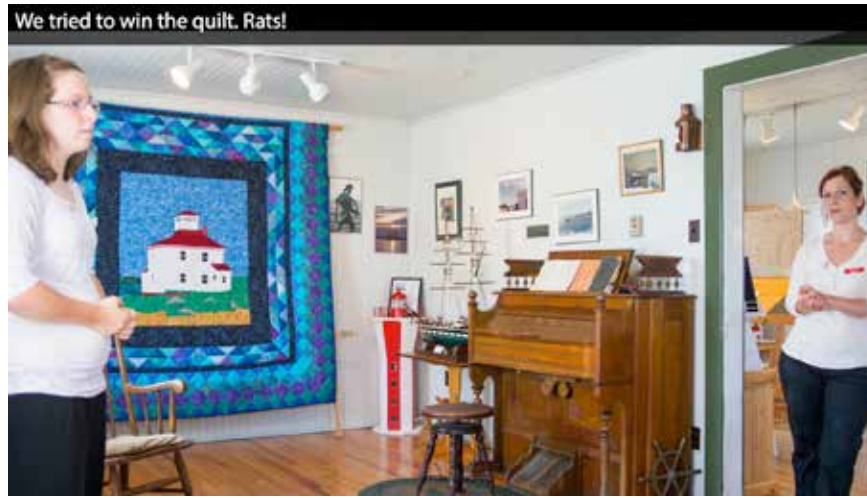
- Collections
- Artifacts
- Displays

These are all static. If your description doesn't sound fun, don't use it.

The signage for the Port Bickerton Lighthouse was great - it told us what it was, the distance, and what to expect. Another sign (top right) even gave parking information.

What a beautiful spot! (bottom left) It was charming - another "Best of the Eastern Shore" attraction.





The museum in the lighthouse was great, and we tried to win the beautiful quilt (top left).

Suggestion: In the Travel Guide, make a note that it's a gravel roadway so that RV's and other large vehicle drivers are prepared (top right). Promote it as "easily worth the drive, which is part of the adventure."

As we approached Country Harbour Ferry, we were shocked at the sign clutter (bottom left). This information should be consolidated and summarized to be easier to read and understand. Even with all this information, though, there's nothing that tells you where the ferry takes you. It would be helpful to post a map.

After crossing on the ferry, the roads east must be the worst in the province. It would be very good to warn travelers about this.



After the ferry crossing, we followed Highway 316 and came to the Goldboro Interpretive Centre, another museum with “displays of artifacts and photos of the mining and fishing history.” The ice cream cone sign (top left) looked very appealing.

There are many provincial parks, so it’s hard to know if there’s anything special about each, and when no distances are included on the signage, visitors are hesitant to just go see. (top right). Suggestion: Provide more information - on signs and in the Travel Guide. Give distances from highways, tell one thing

that’s special about the park to entice visitors.

We drove on to Sea Wind Landing (bottom left), which looked very nice. The reviews on TripAdvisor (bottom right) were excellent. There aren’t a lot of lodging choices for the Eastern Shore, and most travelers are willing to pay a little extra for good quality, so it’s important for hotels, inns, and B & B’s to live up to high standards. From what we’ve seen, Sea Wind Landing does, and benefits from repeat customers as well.



Suggestion: Once again, add 24/7 visitor information and brochure distribution.



There are boat tours but no real information. This was very confusing and not well organized.



Suggestion: Make sure you promote things like this. The Parks Canada site is awful.



The Stan Rogers Folk Festival looked great. The community could be more hospitable.



We were looking forward to seeing Canso - because of its coastal location and the Stan Rogers Festival, we were expecting a very cute town with lots to see and do.

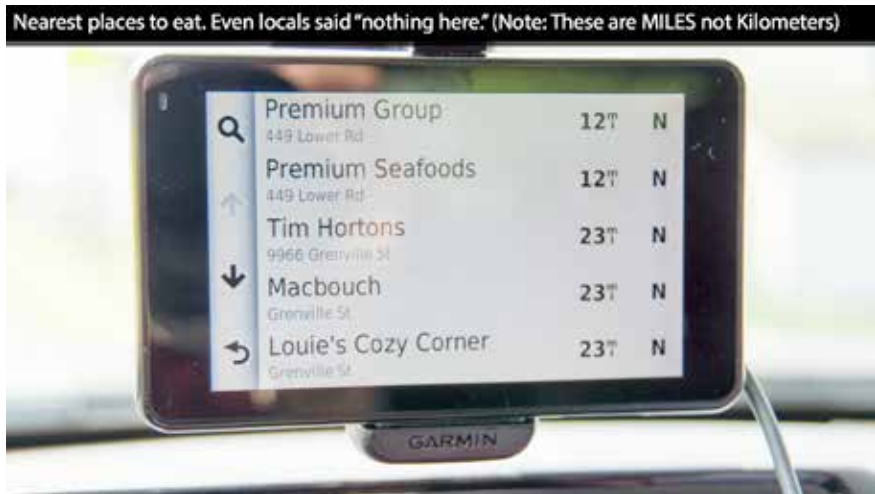
The visitor information centre (top left) looks very nice, but needs the addition of outdoor brochure holders for those travelers who stop by after business hours.

We wanted to check out the Canso Islands National Historic Site, but we

weren't sure where to go. We found the visitor reception centre (top right), but they weren't doing the tours that day. They didn't have much information available.

We were hungry, so we drove around looking for a cafe or restaurant, but didn't have much luck. The Stan Rogers Folk Festival was in full swing, but would be closing in a couple hours.





The streets were lined with parked cars, so we weren't able to find any place to park. So we drove around to look at the rest of the town. We saw a sign to the Gully Trail (top right), but we couldn't find it or any other information about it. Be sure to "connect the dots" with wayfinding signs that lead visitors all the way to the destination. Also, make it easy to find information about trails.

We wanted to find a place to eat, so we looked at our navigation system (bottom left). Nothing nearby showed up.

One of the locals we asked told us about this restaurant (bottom right). He said it was about the only place in town, but the lack of curb appeal gave us second thoughts about dining there.

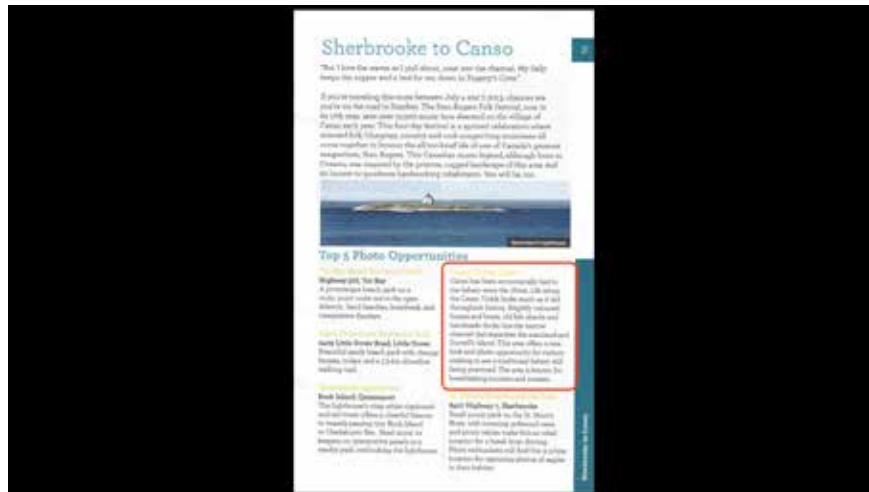
Curb appeal accounts for 70% of first-time sales at restaurants. How many times have you said, "That looks like a good place to eat"? We all tend to judge a place by its outward appearance. Suggestion: Make the outside of the restaurant appealing - add a nice sign, some landscaping, a few tables and chairs for outdoor dining.



Suggestion: "Top one-of-a-kind shop." Only promote what people will go out of their way to see or do.



Suggestion: Not too sure I'd put this sign here. If "preserving our past is key to our future" you've got some major work to do to live up to that promise.



We used the Eastern Shore Travel Guide a lot to see what attractions and shops were recommended. Be sure that your "top one-of-a-kind" shops and attractions are truly special - what people will drive a distance to visit. These should be your "Best Of's," and they need to be vetted - for curb appeal, great third-party reviews, and be something people can't find closer to home. For the shop (top left), add planters, hanging baskets, and benches out front to add curb appeal

We searched and searched for the Canso Tickle - the "historic fishing village" written up in the Travel Guide as one of the top five photo opportunities

(bottom left). We never could find it. There was no signage or wayfinding of any kind to help visitors locate it.

Be sure to only include things in the Travel Guide that visitors can find. If there are some "hidden" gems, give detailed instructions about how to find them.

We were really hungry by this time, so we decided to head to Guysborough. We were in for a real treat - the drive from Canso to Guysborough is perhaps the most scenic portion of the Eastern Shore. This museum (bottom right) was charming.



Suggestion: Where is Guysborough? Which way? Complete the key signage.



Suggestion: Include info on the "Nature Tour." We couldn't find anything anywhere.



We're not too sure what this is, but the landscape is stunning. Suggestion: Better signage, hours, etc.



As we got closer to Guysborough, there were signs to a monastery, Mulgrave, an historical attraction, and visitor information (top left). But which way to Guysborough? And what is the "key" sign for? How far away are these? Finish the wayfinding signage.

Good wayfinding is an investment - it can help visitors find what they are looking for, inform them (and locals) of what attractions and amenities you have, and add to the ambiance by the use of decorative, professionally produced signs. Good wayfinding increases visitor spending.

We weren't sure what this building was (bottom left and right), but it and the gardens are beautiful. It took a bit of looking, but then we noticed the small sign (top right) "Welcome to Old Court House Museum." Make the welcome sign for the museum more prominent - it's easy to miss. Add weather-proof brochure holders to the map-kiosk to provide visitor information that travelers can take with them.





Within 5 minutes of arriving in Guysborough, it was one of our favorite towns.



Suggestion: Turn this into a printed guide. We can't take this with us! QR code or app?



We drove past DesBarres Manor Inn (top left), and it is gorgeous. The reviews on TripAdvisor were generally quite good (top right). Any place can receive some negative reviews, so it's important to always respond with respect and consideration. Travelers pay attention to these review websites. When the business owners respond, it shows they care.

We loved this shop (bottom left), and the whirligigs and beautification are great. It was busy, too.

We found Guysborough charming! Even though there are only a few shops and places to eat, they are outstanding, and the setting is beautiful.

We were excited to see a walking tour of the town as well (bottom right). It's almost impossible for visitors to remember all this information, though, so a brochure and/or QR code or app would be very helpful.



What a fantastic spot!



We were so disappointed to see that the Rare Bird Pub & Eatery was closed (top left). What a great building! But when we went into the Skipping Stone, they told us we could still get food from the Rare Bird - they just didn't have space inside because they had to use it for storage temporarily. So we placed our orders and sat at a picnic table outside (top right), enjoying the view, and some of the best locally-brewed ale ever! We were glad we had arrived in Guysborough so hungry, because we were able to enjoy some great food!

We learned Guysborough has ceilidhs on the waterfront during July and August - that is great. Suggestion: Post signs in town to let visitors know - chances are they'll come back if they know the days and times.

We also read that Guysborough has a Farmers' Market on Saturdays in the summer. What a great town!





EQUIPMENT RENTALS			
	hourly	daily	weekly
<b>WATERCRAFT</b>			
<b>Kayaks - VALLEY</b>			
Alouette, Robin, Aquanaut	\$12	\$40	\$200
Paddle	\$4	\$11	\$55
Spray skirt	\$2	\$5	\$25
Solar PFD	\$3	\$6	\$30
<b>Canoes - LANSFORD</b>			
Prospector	\$18	\$60	\$300
Peddlers (2)	\$2	\$5	\$25
Solar PFD	\$3	\$6	\$30
<b>Accessories</b>			
Water safety kit	\$1	\$3	\$15
<b>BICYCLES</b>			
Bicycle	\$4	\$15	\$75
Helmet	\$2	\$5	\$25
All rental equipment is provided at sole risk to user who agrees that they are knowledgeable in the use of such equipment. Activities using rented equipment may lead to injury to user or to others. Skipping Stone Store assumes no liability to user or third parties.			



The view from the patio behind the Rare Bird is spectacular (top left).

We looked around inside the Skipping Stone. It's a great shop, and has a lot of terrific art and merchandise that people would drive at least an hour - maybe two - to see. Guysborough makes our list of Nova Scotia's top 10 "must visit" towns.



We went into the Days Gone By Bakery & Restaurant (and Antique and Gift Shop) (top left, right and bottom left). Another great shop, and the bakery had plenty of tempting treats.

Here's our list of the Best of the Eastern Shore:

- Lawrencetown Beach
- Memory Lane Heritage Village
- Henley House Pub & Restaurant

- Beanie's Bistro
- Sherbrooke Village
- Canso to Guysborough scenic drive
- The Rare Bird Pub
- Skipping Stone Cafe & Store
- Days Gone By Bakery & Restaurant

After leaving Guysborough, we drove on to Mulgrave. The welcome sign looks sad (bottom right). Suggestion: Repaint the sign or replace it entirely.



What and where is the Parkway? A beautiful spot!



Love it!



Suggestion: Add 24/7 visitor information with brochure distribution.

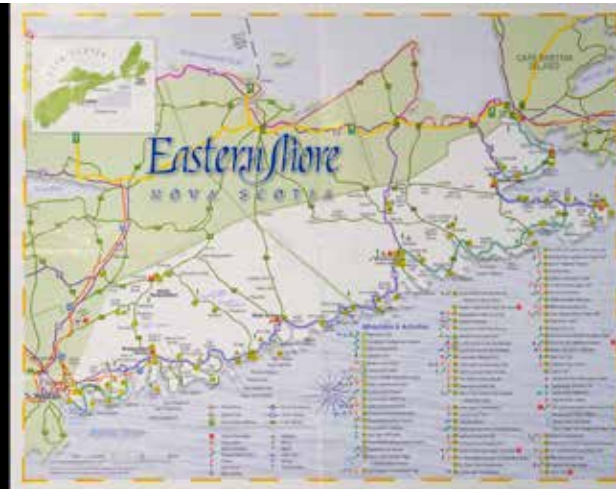


We saw Venus Cove, with the park little boardwalk (top left) and marina. It's a very nice spot.

The visitor information centre (top right and bottom left) is great! There are some outdoor maps to provide some information after hours, but we suggest adding some weather-proof brochure holders so visitors will be able to take information with them.

End of the trail! (bottom right) Our journey along the Eastern Shore had some great highlights. It's a long drive. We felt that most of the drive didn't have enough attractions and scenery to make it a good scenic drive - and it would take all day to drive the whole route. It would be better to promote specific areas for their attractions, rather than the whole route.

## 8 Suggestions for the Eastern Shore map



Here are a few suggestions for the Eastern Shore map:

1. Add more detailed road information.
  - Narrow the road lines so you can add more details and side roads. Eliminate the blue background along Marine Drive - it takes up too much space.
  - Add distances from the highway, i.e. Moose River Gold Mining Museum - 40 km from Hwy 7.
  - Note the ferry crossing between Port Bickerton and Goldboro on the map.
  - No need to include every park in the numbering system. The tree on the map is sufficient, unless you want to add details about special features.
  - Note washroom locations on the map! And gas stations!

2. We love the fact that the attractions are in directional order! Thank you!
3. Show lakes on the map. There are several beautiful lakes along the route.
4. The map shows "Stormont Ferry." What is it and where does it go?
5. For the seasons, BOLD the names of the activities within the text to make them stand out. Such as **World-class Surfing** in the Winter section.
6. Use larger, but fewer, photos on the front and back. Text is too generic - consider highlighting several "Best Of" attractions instead.





We also saw the "We are Your Gateway!" map (top left and right), which shows the western-most portion of the Eastern Shore. Since it covers a smaller area, it provides more detail than the other map, including some businesses.

We liked that it includes some businesses - after all, the benefit of tourism is realized when visitors spend money in your shops, restaurants, lodging, and attractions. We suspect that the map only includes those businesses and attractions that have paid for advertising, though, which limits the maps usefulness for visitors.

Suggestions: Add locations to the Events listing. Include all the attractions

along the route, and show the locations of washrooms. Good job showing the locations of gas stations.

We used the Eastern Shore Travel Guide extensively. It is well done, but consider a few suggestions:

- Change the focus to an "Activities Guide" rather than a travel guide. Visitors are looking for activities, so that title has stronger appeal.

[illegible]

The collage features several pages from The Economist:

- Top Left:** A photograph of a historic building.
- Middle Left:** An article titled "Engineers pour sunshine" with a photo of a sunny outdoor scene.
- Bottom Left:** An article titled "Spring" with a photo of a landscape.
- Center:** A large photograph of a field with yellow flowers under a blue sky.
- Right Side:** Several smaller articles with headlines like "The new... of...", "The new... of...", and "The new... of...".

## Don't-Miss Attractions

For more heritage and cultural attractions along the Eastern Shore, see pages viii-vi.

### Historic Town

**Old Pocomoke**  
 Pocomoke, Md. (Pop. 1,000)  
 Pocomoke is a small town with a big history. It was founded in 1639 and is one of the oldest towns in Maryland. The town is known for its historic architecture and its beautiful views of the Pocomoke River.

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## Suggestion:

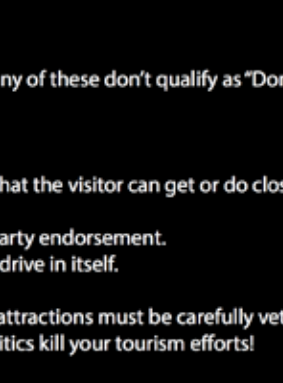
Well done but many of these don't qualify as "Don't miss attractions."


## Criteria:

- Different than what the visitor can get or do closer to home base.
- Better by third party endorsement.
- Worth an hour's drive in itself.


## Your "Don't Miss" attractions must be carefully vetted.

Don't let local politics kill your tourism efforts!







**Beaumaris Village Festival**  
 Beaumaris  
 at 10am from Beaumaris  
 10am to 10pm from Beaumaris  
 Beaumaris Village Festival  
 Beaumaris Village Festival  
 Beaumaris Village Festival




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Suggestion: Keep the advertising to just the Eastern Shore communities, businesses and attractions. We were surprised to open up the Guide and see a full-page ad for an activity in Pictou. Cross-selling is important, but not in a Guide for a specific area - you don't want to send people away.

Don't try to make everyone happy - promote what will make for a great visitor experience. It does the whole area a disservice if you promote shops or attractions as "not to be missed" when they aren't really very good.

Reduce the amount of text and add more photos, or detailed itineraries. Make sure the photos are different, exceptional, and show people enjoying activities - not just scenic vistas.

Marketing only paying advertisers or members only must stop. It makes your guide worthless for visitors. Having a "Best Of" guide helps promote those businesses, attractions, and activities that are truly unique.





**Sherbrooke to Canoe**

"We have the water, we have the canoe, now we're missing the trip. The trip is the water and a lot of fun. It's a great way to see the province and enjoy the outdoors."

If you're looking for a way to see the province, canoeing is a great way to do it. The province has a lot of water, and a lot of fun. It's a great way to see the province and enjoy the outdoors.

**Top 5 Photo Opportunities**

**Highway 101, the Bay**  
A picturesque view of the Bay of Fundy, with the highway and the water in the foreground, and the hills in the background.

**Little Island, New Brunswick**  
A beautiful view of the Little Island, with the water and the hills in the background.


**Beaver Island, New Brunswick**  
A beautiful view of the Beaver Island, with the water and the hills in the background.

**St. John's, New Brunswick**  
A beautiful view of the St. John's, with the water and the hills in the background.

**Suggestion:**  
**Queensport Lighthouse: "Read about its keeper on interpretive panels in a nearby park overlooking the lighthouse."**

What nearby park? Where? We never found it.

- 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?





**WELCOME TO OUR WORKSHOPS**

Explore the creative spirit of Atlantic at work.

**AGRICULTURE**  
Experience the creative spirit of Atlantic at work.

**ECONOMUSÉE**  
Experience the creative spirit of Atlantic at work.



**Workshops and Activities**

**Agribusiness**  
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**Art and Design**  
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**Business and Industry**  
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**Education and Training**  
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**Health and Wellness**  
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**Recreation and Leisure**  
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**Science and Technology**  
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**Energy and Environment**  
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**Food and Agriculture**  
Experience the creative spirit of Atlantic at work.

Provide specifics - not generalities. Consider using QR codes to link to more detailed information on your website. The easier you make it, the longer people will stay, and the more often they will come back.

A good example of providing specifics can be found in the Econumusée Workshop brochure (bottom left and right). Ask what information a visitor would need to know to take advantage of your attractions and activities. For example, for fishing, the photo top right has a list of questions. Visitors should be able to find the answers - either in a brochure or on your website, or both.

We love the "top 5 photo ops," "Must-visit attractions," and "Don't miss" shops and activities. But they MUST be vetted. Criteria: Would you drive an hour out of your way for it by itself? If not, then it isn't a "best of."

Include area codes with the phone numbers - even if it's the same throughout the province or the Eastern Shore. Visitors don't usually know what it is.

NOTE: You have one of the better guides in the province! These suggestions will simply help you perhaps double your visitor spending.

10

Quit promoting the Eastern Shore as a "scenic drive"

It would take 7 hours to drive the route without stopping.



11

Consider marketing three distinct areas:

- Cole Harbour to Sheet Harbor (The West End)
- Sherbrooke, Liscombe, Port Bickerton (Central Shore)
- Guysborough, Canso (The East End)

12

Rework the Trails Information site ([www.trails.gov.ns.ca](http://www.trails.gov.ns.ca))

Don't promote the Eastern Shore as a "scenic drive."

- Highway 211 (and most of the others) are so rough you should warn RVers and other visitors.
- The drive, while scenic, doesn't compare to most other shoreline drives in the province.
- The route is so long that a visitor spends so much time driving that it reduces the opportunity for them to spend money - which is the benefit of tourism.
- There are few spending opportunities along the route.
- The route is promoted as 325 km long when it's actually 452 km.
- "Marine Drive" is not a very "sexy" name, considering the others: "Lighthouse

Route," "Bluenose Coast," "Cabot Trail," "Ceilidh Trail."

Market three distinct areas of the Eastern Shore:

- The West End
- The Central Shore
- The East End

Each area has its own unique attractions that can provide their focus.





#### Suggestions to pass on:

1. Add info on wildlife, precautions
2. Add outfitter info for seakayak routes
3. Canoe waterways: More info on each route, guides, rental info, etc. Link to NS Geomatics Centre doesn't work.
4. Snowmobile trails: Maps but no other info.
5. Create downloadable PDF maps and guides: where to park, location of trailheads, length of trail, degree of difficulty, amenities, what we'll experience, precautions, seasonal considerations, outfitters & guides...

13 Create detailed itineraries



Provide specifics, not just generalities, on your websites. Create specific, detailed itineraries. Find local writing talent and local club members to help write up itineraries.

The Muskegon, Michigan CVB has some excellent itineraries on their website that can serve as good examples (bottom left and right).

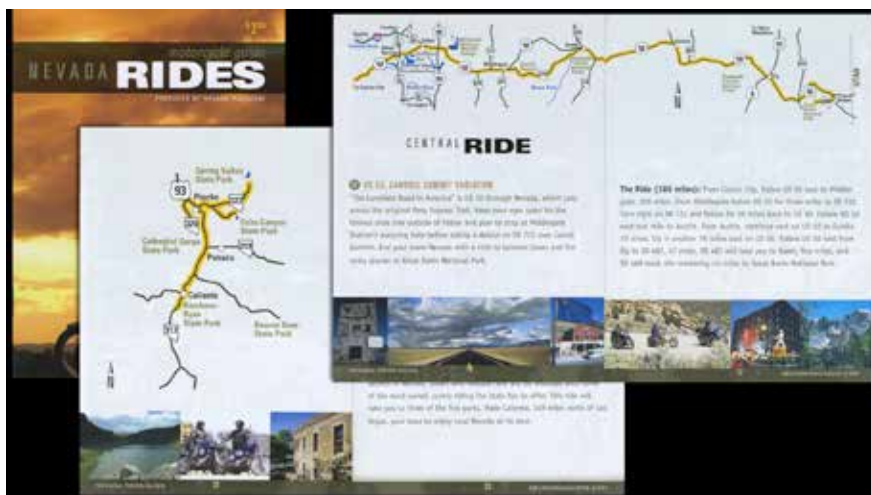
Detailed itineraries can be an excellent sales tool - they show potential visitors a variety of things to do, organized to be easy to follow, and with directions and specifics so that visitors can get the most out of their time. Good



itineraries also help potential visitors imagine themselves doing those activities, and that's the first step to getting people to commit to making a visit.

Itinerary ideas:

- 1 day: Lawrencetown Beach getaway
- 1 day: Guysborough on the way to Cape Breton
- 3 days: The Central Shore (Liscombe, Sherbrooke ...)
- 3 days: Halifax to Sheet Harbour
- 3 days: Eastern Shore's "East End"
- 5 to 7 days: The full Eastern Shore experience



Create itinerary booklets. The cost to produce would be about \$2 each. Distribute them at local outlets and stores that cater to the type of enthusiast each itinerary appeals to.

Itineraries can be organized by mode of travel (example top left), education, shopping and dining, culture, adventure, and more. They can also be designed for different groups of people: families, seniors, couples, girls weekends, etc. And they can be designed for one day, two days, and more. Itineraries need to provide specific details! (bottom left)

The Seafood Trail idea doesn't really give visitors a reason to visit. Visitors are looking for things to do - not just things to look at. They quickly become "been there, done that" attractions. While the idea would provide photo opportunities, they don't provide activities, and wouldn't be why we'd visit the Eastern Shore.

To make it work, it would be essential to have a number of excellent seafood restaurants (to be worth the drive) and tours of how seafood is caught and prepared. There are already so many excellent seafood restaurants all over Nova Scotia, why would people make the drive along the Eastern Shore for that? You would have to be either different, or the best - by third-party endorsement.



## 15 Bay of Islands: "More" is not a reason for the trip.

This should be Nova Scotia's  
Sanctuary Coast

Having four times more islands per kilometer than anywhere else is great, but how does that really make a difference in what a visitor can do? Would that provide more activities for visitors?

To make the Bay of Islands become a visitor destination, there would need to be a lot of product development: Places to eat, stay, shop, activities with the vendors necessary, etc.

Differentiation: Is it different than what the target market can get closer to home? Other than quantity?

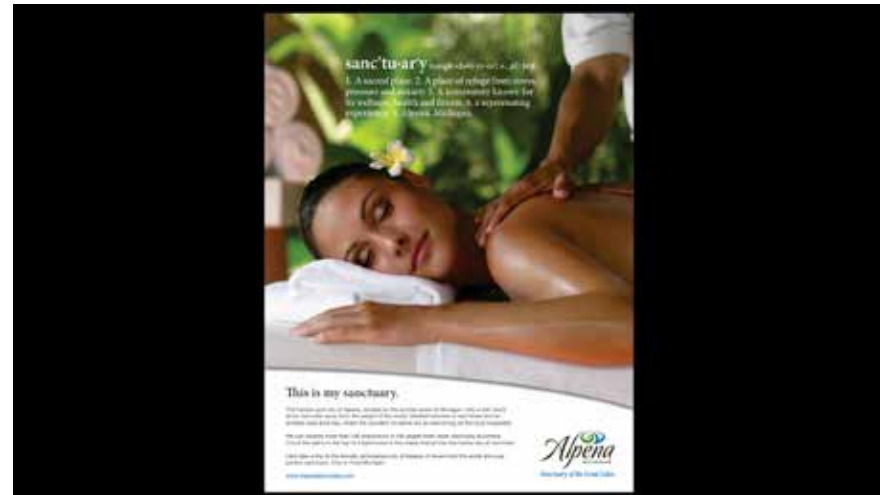
## 16 Find a focus: The Art of Branding

The Liscombe Lodge should be  
The Sanctuary Inn & Resort



Finding a focus: Imagine a series of Sanctuary Retreats, founded on three pillars:

- Learning opportunities: heritage, culture, the environment, wellness.
- Wellness: Fitness, silent sports, recreation, diet, training and empowerment. Recruit a spa.
- The environment: Photography, birding, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, voluntourism (trail building, etc.)



Imagine a series of Sanctuary Retreats.

- Kayaking school
- Quilters Retreat
- Raku, pottery
- Culinary
- Canoeing, paddle boarding
- Sailing
- Writers' conferences
- Wellness

- Spas
- Romance
- Girls' weekends
- Fishing, fly fishing"
- Artisan workshops
- Self-improvement
- Photography
- Hiking, biking
- Birding
- Guide services





The ads shown on the opposite page and top left and right were created for Alpena, Michigan, to promote their new brand focus of being a sanctuary. Some of these ideas might benefit the Eastern Shore, which has a serenity that makes it a perfect sanctuary for people looking for rejuvenation and a peaceful enjoyment of coastal living.

## 17 Make digital your #1 marketing priority

## 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

## 18 Website suggestions

Suggestion: Promote experiences first - not the organization (it's last if at all).



88% of destination marketing and economic development organizations spend more on printed materials than on internet marketing. They have it backwards. The web should be your number one marketing priority. But remember: It must be good enough to close the sale.

Take advantage of YouTube. The world watched 1.46 trillion YouTube videos in 2012 - and its popularity is growing. Post short, fun videos (30 seconds to 2 minutes). Invite visitors to post their videos of fun times they've had on the Eastern Shore as well.



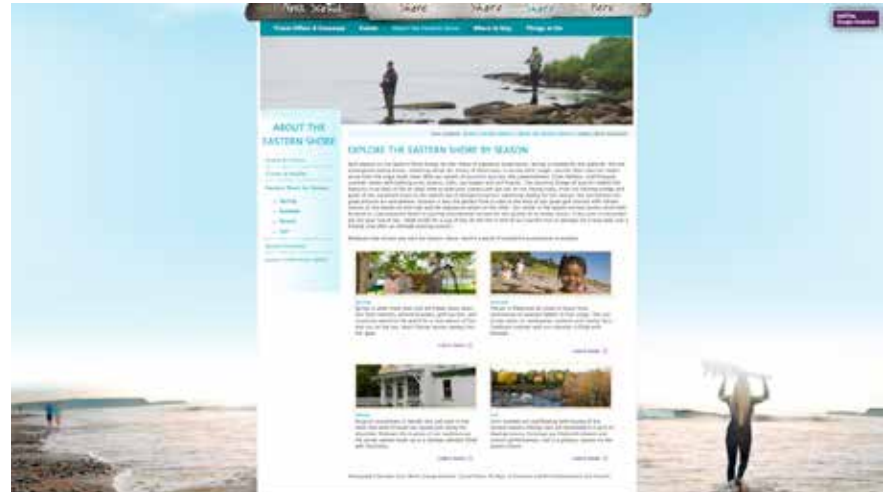
Suggestion: We are looking for experiences, not regions and geography.



Suggestion: This is "sort of" helpful, but not very useful. Make the map full-page.



Suggestion: Less generic text. Use bullet points. Larger photos. Promote what's unique to you.



Other suggestions for the website:

- Put the Best of the Eastern Shore front and center.
- Then, as part of that, add the "Hidden Treasures."
- Video is the future. User-shot videos are great.
- Create an Eastern Shore YouTube channel.
- Avoid using lists of attractions, shops, restaurants. Visitors need details.
- Include sample itineraries.
- Photography really is worth a thousand words.

Suggestion: Bullet points: Weather, what to wear, what to bring, what to expect, and why...



Suggestion: Close the sale on this site. Reduce links to other sites. Check them monthly.



NOVA SCOTIA

#### Fisherman's Life Museum

This webpage was developed for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be used for commercial purposes. Please contact your local business or community group for more information.

This page will automatically take you to the Fisherman's Life Museum website in 10 seconds (click to go).

The website to emulate: novascotiabackyard.com



Remember "The Hidden Treasures of the Eastern Shore?"

May of the historical attractions, small retailers, etc. can be perfect Hidden Gems. But don't include everyone just to make them happy - you want to do what's right to best promote the area!

Our list (which is just a beginning):

- Happy Dude's Surf Emporium
- L'Acadie Historic Site

- Fisherman's Life Museum
- Krauch's Smoke House
- Canso Islands National Historic site (?)

You could probably come up with 50 or so, but they must be real treasures worth going out of our way for.



19

Make a list of the previous "suggestions" and spread them out to businesses and communities along the Eastern Shore

20

Repeat after me

*"A diamond is merely a lump of coal  
that did well under pressure."*

*"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.  
The second best time is today."*

"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

### **Additional notes regarding the Eastern Shore Marketing Assessment**

Review of Eastern Shore website – threeshoresnovascotia.com

The overall look and feel of the site is nice - beachy and fresh. I like the use of color and beach elements in the graphics. I think it is a very pretty website. Attractively laid out. The colors and design are very pleasing.

The basic navigation is easy to use, dividing the area into the three regions (shores).

Under each of the shores, I'd suggest changing the order of the secondary navigation and featuring "Things to Do" first.

The lists of attractions follow a similar pattern you often see on travel websites – simple lists. Listing all the attractions isn't the best way to attract visitors, however. Highlighting the best of the best will draw more interest than listing everything there is to do. At least focus on the top attractions in each category, especially those that deliver on the promise of your brand. Other attractions, accommodations, etc. will benefit from the increased traffic, even when they don't take center stage in the marketing effort.

I think they still need to include all of their attractions PLUS have a separate section (or maybe at the top of each category) for their "Best-of" attractions, restaurants, etc. The site provides good information about each attraction including descriptions and contact information and links to other websites.

That goes for dining as well – promote the best dining options in each region. Give your star players center stage.

Too many of the attractions, etc. that are listed don't have an accompanying photo. Work on providing great photography of everything you are promoting on your website (more reason to promote the best of the best in particular).

Photos of people enjoying the activity or attraction are preferable to scenery.

Eastern Shore section:

Landing page top photo includes arrows at each side, so I would expect to be able to scroll through additional photos. But there aren't any other photos there.

Link to "10th Annual Road to Celtic Colour Ceilidh" doesn't have any information.

The video is pleasant, but not compelling.

Events listing is good, but include more specific, detailed information. And ALWAYS include the area code when you list a phone number. Remember, this information is for visitors, who may not be from Nova Scotia. Also, include at least one photo of each event.

"About the Eastern Shore" text should be edited – most website visitors won't read lengthy descriptions. Bullet-points are better. If you do want introductory paragraphs, edit them to be as short as possible, and speak each sentence out loud as you edit. A person should be able to read a complete sentence out loud with one breath. Avoid run-on sentences.

The Climate page has good information and is well done.

"Explore by Season" section includes too much text as well, without giving specific information. Keep it brief – you basically want to tell people what type of weather they can expect, what activities are best that time of year, special festivals, things like that.

The map and its search feature are good. Add more specifics to the descriptions of items that are searched for.

"Where to Stay" is easy to use. Try to include a photo of each lodging facility.



“Things to do” is nicely laid out. Again, include a photo of each place, as well as more details, such as when they are open.

I see that Sample Itineraries are in the works – they will be a huge help for visitors who are thinking of coming to the Eastern Shore.

The Photo Gallery doesn’t seem to have any contents.

Overall section “How to Get Here” should also include a road map.

The photos throughout the website are good – most of them include people enjoying activities, which is the goal.

To sum up:

- Add more photography – especially for the specific places, activities, shops, etc. that you are trying to promote.
- Edit down the text.
- Add specifics and the details potential visitors need to actually plan their trip.
- Add itineraries.



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