

Going Places

Saskatchewan's Tourism Industry Newsletter

Summer 2018

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TOURISM
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CANADA

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Saskatchewan and the province's
tourism sector. You will find
information on partnership
opportunities, upcoming events,
education and training programs
and more.

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Mark Your Calendar

Experts talk customer experience at Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference

The third annual Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference took place on June 13 in Regina at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Centre.

Nearly 100 tourism representatives, managers and frontline employees attended the forum. The day-long agenda included engaging presentations and workshops focused on a central theme – *Customer Experience: Take the Lead*. Networking opportunities encouraged the exchange of knowledge, ideas and success stories.

Keynote speaker Andrew Hiltz, 2017 Saskatchewaner, shared highlights of his year as the ultimate tourist – exploring Saskatchewan, connecting with residents and communities, and sharing his adventures on social media. Hiltz travelled approximately 46,000 kilometres and visited 157 locations throughout his year as Saskatchewaner. He observed three common characteristics among people who treated him to great customer service and remarkable experiences.

"No. 1 – they care," Hiltz said. "No. 2 – they are genuinely interested in you and naturally curious about where you are from, what brings you to the community, and what you hope to see while you are here. No. 3 – they take pride in what they do and where they live."

Hiltz ended his presentation with some sage advice: "Working in the customer service industry is not just about being reactive and solving problems, it's about being proactive and creating meaningful, memorable experiences."

Afternoon concurrent sessions included a Selling is Service workshop, led by Diane Cohoon, that demonstrated an effective blend of customer service and sales techniques. Communications expert Marielle Gauthier, in her presentation *Having the Right Conversations in High Trust Organizations*, shared tips for communicating more effectively in the workplace, initiating productive dialogue and gaining the trust of staff, co-workers and customers.



Andrew Hiltz

Marielle Gauthier

Tourism Saskatchewan acknowledges the generosity of conference sponsors: Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (breakout sessions sponsor); Saskatoon Hotel Association (lunch sponsor); QUASEP and Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (break sponsors).



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Tourism Saskatchewan takes research seriously. We rely on it to help us plan strategically and get the best return for our marketing dollars.

We approach research in different ways – through the work of our own research department, by commissioning projects with external consultants, or taking into consideration reports from other organizations, such as Destination Canada and Statistics Canada.

Research takes time to collect, process and evaluate. The information may be more than a year old by the time we receive it and can share with industry. Given expectations that people have for instant news or results, there can be misunderstanding about the relevancy of statistics for our industry that may be 12-18 months old.

This information is, in fact, very important. It pinpoints where growth has occurred, confirms the effectiveness of our marketing efforts, and reveals interesting trends or data that helps us with planning and decision-making.

In July, we received good news from Statistics Canada, which released numbers showing impressive tourism growth in 2017. Saskatchewan showed a 9.4 per cent increase in domestic visitation – meaning visits to and within the province by Canadians, including our own residents. This figure dramatically outpaced Canada's overall tourism growth of 2.1 per cent.

The fact that spending by these Saskatchewan visitors rose 10.4 per cent above the amount recorded in 2016 was reassuring. Three industries showed significant growth – entertainment (including events), food and beverage and hospitality/accommodations. Clearly, infrastructure investments, such as Mosaic Stadium and the International Trade Centre at Evraz Place, both in Regina, position Saskatchewan favourably for attracting and hosting national and international events. Flagship cultural attractions, such as Wanuskewin Heritage Park or the new Rемаi Modern in Saskatoon, generate global interest and attention. Great assets like these translate into more visitors who will be hungry, thirsty and need a place to stay when they are here.

Tourism Saskatchewan is working with our research partners to find efficient ways to collect timely and relevant tourism data. More and better information will help us make wiser decisions.

Mary Taylor-Ash

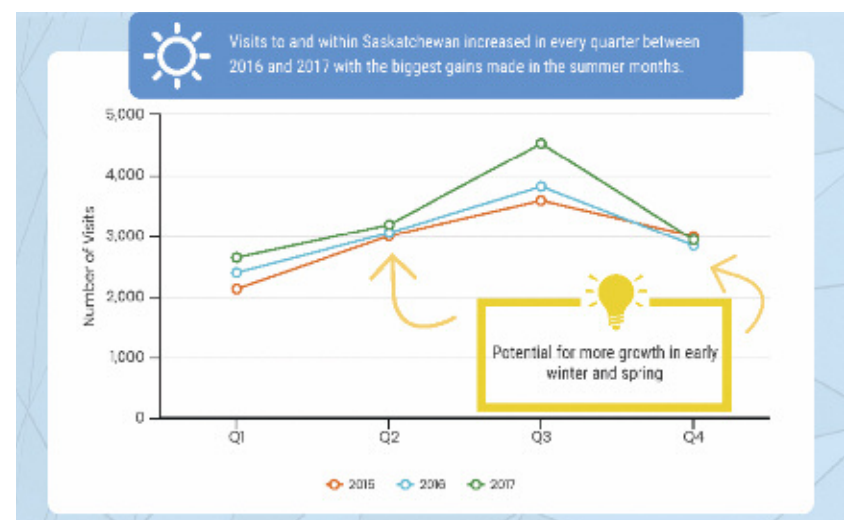
Statistics Canada numbers show strong tourism growth in Saskatchewan

In July, Statistics Canada released figures that affirmed growth for Saskatchewan's tourism sector in 2017. Visits to and within the province by Canadians increased by 9.4 per cent from 2016. Visitor expenditures increased by 10.4 per cent. Canadian visitors, including Saskatchewan residents travelling within the province, spent \$1.88 billion in 2017.

The most significant growth in spending occurred in the entertainment, restaurant food and beverage, and hospitality industries. Saskatchewan ranked fifth in the country for domestic tourism growth, and well-exceeded Canada's growth increase of 2.1 per cent.

Saskatchewan and Alberta continued to be the primary travel markets, with Saskatchewan residents accounting for 87 per cent of all overnight and same day visits. Alberta residents made up nine per cent of all visits.

Visits to and within Saskatchewan increased in every quarter of 2016 and 2017. Unsurprisingly, activity was highest in the summer; however, year-round visitation growth was evident. The findings emphasize the potential to attract more shoulder season travellers.



Content collection enriches Saskatchewan storytelling

Tourism Saskatchewan began implementing recommendations from a sweeping content strategy in mid-2017. The strategy outlined a clear path for transitioning from awareness-based, campaign-specific advertising to a digital-first focus that puts fresh, engaging content on the channels most popular with target audiences.

Quality content simply does not evolve on its own. It requires identifying stories that will resonate with key consumer markets, capturing video footage and photography, interviewing operators and curating the material.

Throughout the summer, Tourism Saskatchewan's marketing and communications professionals took to the road (and streets) to gather footage, images and stories. The photos below offer a behind-the-scenes picture of recent content collection efforts. Check out the compelling new videos and stories on [Facebook.com/TourismSaskatchewan](https://www.facebook.com/TourismSaskatchewan).



Top: Historic Reesor Ranch (Maple Creek), Tunnels of Moose Jaw (Moose Jaw)
Middle: Fort Carlton Provincial Park (Duck Lake), Wanuskewin Heritage Park (Saskatoon)
Bottom: Harvest Eatery (Shaunavon), Wascana Centre (Regina)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

June 13 was a momentous day for Tourism Saskatchewan's education department, the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC).

To begin, STEC hosted its third Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference for mid-level managers and

frontline tourism employees – people who are central to positive first impressions and high rates of guest satisfaction. Speakers and presenters addressed the conference theme *Customer Experience: Take the Lead*, and provided delegates with valuable knowledge, inspiration and tools to deliver on the promise of great service and remarkable experiences.

That evening marked a milestone in STEC's history with the 25th anniversary celebration of the Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner. The annual dinner recognizes hard work and commitment, and shines a spotlight on individuals who have achieved professional certification in a tourism occupation or Journeyperson status in a tourism trade. The occasion also acknowledges businesses that earned Employer of Choice designation. Tourism Saskatchewan is proud to be among the 30 Employers of Choice for 2018.

Another important anniversary was celebrated that night. For 25 years, STEC's renowned Ready to Work program has been opening doors to employment for people under-represented in the workforce.

Ready to Work provides a healthy environment for participants to gain skills and confidence, and transition to fulfilling careers in tourism. The program has been delivered in communities across Saskatchewan – in towns and cities, and on several First Nations. It can be tailored to address local employment needs or suit the available facilities.

Dinner invitations were sent to past Ready to Work students and facilitators, and it was a pleasure for Tourism Saskatchewan and STEC to welcome a number of these guests, some of whom travelled from as far away as Pelican Narrows.

The annual Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner celebrates dedicated, hard-working people who take pride in their efforts and are key to our industry. This special event also brings profile to STEC's superb work and to the valuable partnerships established with organizations and agencies committed to a highly skilled tourism workforce and to enhancing Saskatchewan's competitiveness.

Turn to page 12 for highlights of the evening and to read about honourees who received awards for their leadership and work in tourism human resources.

Norm Beug

Historic Reesor Ranch and Tourism Saskatoon named among Canadian Tourism Awards finalists

Tourism Saskatchewan extends congratulations to Historic Reesor Ranch (Maple Creek) and Tourism Saskatoon, which were named among the list of finalists announced by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) on September 12. The news marks the seventh consecutive year of recognition for the province.

Historic Reesor Ranch is in the running for the Hilton Worldwide Small or Medium-sized Business of the Year Award. Tourism Saskatoon makes the list for its involvement in the *Cities in Sync* initiative

with Tourism Victoria (BC) and Destination St. John's (NL). The collaborative program is a finalist for the Marriott Innovator of the Year Award.

The awards will be presented at a gala dinner ceremony at the Hilton Lac-Leamy in Gatineau, QC on November 28. The celebration is a highlight of The Tourism Congress, TIAC's annual industry conference. For a complete list of the 2018 Canadian Tourism Award finalists, visit tiac-aitc.ca.



Historic Reesor Ranch

Tourism Saskatchewan releases 2017-2018 Annual Report

Tourism Saskatchewan's *2017-2018 Annual Report* was tabled in the provincial legislature in July. The report offers an overview of the fiscal year spanning April 1, 2017-March 31, 2018, and includes financial statements for that period. The publication outlines results on committed strategies, actions and performance measures identified in Tourism Saskatchewan's Strategic Plan 2017-18–2021-22. Information is categorized under four strategic priorities:

- Market Saskatchewan Tourism Experiences and Stories
- Strengthen Saskatchewan Tourism Experiences
- Engage Stakeholders
- Nurture an Internal Culture Focused on Excellence

The *2017-2018 Annual Report* is a public document and can be viewed on Industry.TourismSaskatchewan.com. To request a printed copy, contact Belva Schlosser at 306-787-5488, belva.schlosser@tourismsask.com.



Tourism Trends

Decoding Customer Experience



Historic Reesor Ranch

In this two-part series, Tourism Saskatchewan will share some of the research and tools that can help businesses identify their customers, connect with them and gain their loyalty through great customer experiences.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER

Customer experience commonly has a different meaning for different people. Global media company Forbes offers an interesting explanation: “Customer experience can include a lot of elements, but it really boils down to the perception the customer has about your brand.”

Simply put, a business may have all of the confidence in the world that it is offering a superior experience. But if a customer feels differently, that perception defines the experience.

In today’s world of global connectivity, instant communication and brand competitiveness, a commitment to delivering on the promise of high-quality customer experiences is more critical than ever. This commitment is not limited to face-to-face encounters that occur at the place of business, but begins long before – from the point of initial awareness and engagement with a brand (largely in the digital realm). It is demonstrated during the actual transaction and in follow-up after a visit or purchase.

Putting the customer first during each stage keeps a business on track with delivering the satisfying experiences that consumers seek and will recommend to others.

Understanding your customers is fundamental. For businesses that take advantage of digital marketing, the tools are there to provide a clear picture of who wants what you have to offer. Knowing your customers in the early stage helps a business make a positive impression during that important first interaction.

Social media is more than “likes” and “shares”

All social media platforms offer insights and analysis that provide a wealth of information. The data can determine who is following and engaging with a business, identify age and gender ratios, and pinpoint where they live. It can track content that generates more likes, comments and clicks to websites, and distinguish the best time to reach followers, down to the day and hour. The information available through social media activities can help you understand your audience and maximize the content posted.

Google Analytics only sounds complicated

Google Analytics is a free tool that gathers valuable and comprehensive information about a business’s website. It can track the number of new

website visitors and return users, show which pages get the most views, identify how many people are viewing on a computer screen versus a mobile device, and much more. Used proactively, Google Analytics is an indispensable resource for gaining a clearer picture of your audience and ensuring a positive online customer experience.

People still read email

Email marketing should be in your arsenal. Like social media and Google Analytics, it provides important statistics, such as open/readership rates, click rates, subscriber demographics, and more. Programs such as Mail Chimp and Constant Contact are examples of user-friendly email marketing services that businesses can access.

An advantage of online marketing is having easy access to real time analytics and customer insights. For some businesses, that can be a bit overwhelming. The good news is there are programs and resources designed to make navigating the digital world easier.

For more information about digital marketing, visit Industry.TourismSaskatchewan.com/advice-and-resources/digital-marketing.

¹ Morgan, Blake. "What is Customer Experience?"

Forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2017/04/20/what-is-customer-experience-2/#12d0a50770c2

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR STANDING OUT IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Tourism businesses that are active on social media gain a competitive edge. More than 90 per cent of adult Canadians have at least one social media account, and 84 per cent are active on Facebook. For travellers, social media has become a standard tool for researching destinations, acquiring information and sharing their own travel experiences and stories. Here are five tips to help you gain attention and connect with consumers.

1. BE ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Having a presence on social media is great, but simply opening a Facebook account is not enough. It needs to be updated regularly to show that you are active and eager to engage with customers. To really stand out and connect with your audience, encourage conversations, acknowledge comments, reply to messages, and listen to what your customers have to say. Being active on social media can be time consuming, but worth the effort.

2. REFRESH YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is where your customer will go when they want more information about your products or experiences. Ensure that your site is up-to-date. If your latest blog is two years old, people may question if you are still in business. A website that is user-friendly and mobile responsive will engage visitors and keep them on your site. In this fast-paced digital world, your website needs to be simple to navigate or visitors will leave.

3. USE QUALITY IMAGERY

The digital world is a visual place. The images and videos on your website and social channels are what customers will notice first. Striking visuals capture their attention and imagination, keep them entertained and inspire them to explore further. Facebook posts with images see two to three times more engagement than those without. Tweets that include photographs receive 150 per cent more retweets. Quality imagery will keep visitors on your website longer and help your social media posts stand out amid the clutter.

4. EXPLORE EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing is a powerful, cost-effective tool to reach your customers. Create an email list by inviting your customers to provide their email address at various touch points, such as any time they are providing other personal information. Ask permission to send them updates about your business and activities. Tools like MailChimp and Constant Contact provide user-friendly templates to get you started in the right direction.

5. USE AVAILABLE TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Google Analytics all provide useful data that is free to access. This data can identify content that performs well on your social channels and websites. It can help you understand your followers/audiences, as well as determine their location and type of device. Knowing your customer better will enable you to provide better service.

World Tourism Day focuses on innovation and digital transformation

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) observes World Tourism Day annually on September 27. The occasion brings awareness to the tourism industry's "actual and potential contribution to sustainable development." Each year has a different focus, and the theme for 2018 is *Innovation and Digital Transformation*. In a news release, the UNWTO shared its position that recognizes "digital advances and innovation as part of the solution to the challenge of marrying continued growth with a more sustainable and responsible tourism sector."

"Harnessing innovation and digital advances provides tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment and efficient resource management," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said. "The digital transformation is about providing benefits to all, and we are making sure that tourism contributes to this global commitment."

For the full message and to learn more about World Tourism Day, visit wtd.unwto.org.



Selling Saskatchewan

National Angling Program brings outdoor media networks to Saskatchewan



Mark Melnyk, host of the *New Fly Fisher*, on location at Milton Lake Lodge



Jeremy Smith in a catch-and-release moment at Lawrence Bay Lodge

Tourism Saskatchewan is entering its third year as a partner in the National Angling Program. The program is a partnership between Destination Canada and a number of provinces and territories. It supports the promotion of Canadian angling products and experiences in the United States.

Involvement in the National Angling Program has extended Tourism Saskatchewan's reach into U.S. markets and helped build relationships with major outdoor media. In July and August, crews and hosts from three popular angling shows travelled to the province to experience the remarkable hospitality and fishing in northern Saskatchewan.

Mark Melnyk, host of *The New Fly Fisher*, visited Saskatchewan for the first time in July. For three days, Melnyk and his crew were guests at Milton Lake Lodge, where they captured footage for an episode that will air on the World Fishing Network, PBS and Rogers in 2019.

"For fly anglers, Saskatchewan is what northern pike dreams are made of," Melnyk said. "We were able to sight cast BIG northern pike well into the summer. They readily attacked everything we offered them."

With legitimate shots at trophy fish every day, Saskatchewan is where you can release your fish of a lifetime."

Melnyk added, "Milton Lake Lodge is five-star all the way in a wildly remote setting. You literally have the entire lake to yourself and can choose to fish trophy northern pike, world-class lake trout and even target the sailfish of the north, Arctic grayling, on fly! Our stay in Saskatchewan was, in a word, perfect."

In-Fisherman TV was in the province from July 29-August 3, filming at Scott Lake Lodge. Host Doug Stange was eager to reel in trophy-sized lake trout and enjoy northern Saskatchewan hospitality. Stange's adventure will air on the Sportsman Channel in 2019.

Jeremy Smith and Nick Lindner were in Saskatchewan from August 26-31 to shoot an episode for *Lindner's Fishing Edge*. Lawrence Bay Lodge provided the backdrop for their quest to pull giant northern pike and lake trout from Reindeer Lake. "We caught a number of pike over 40 inches in deep weeds and also experienced the best action for lake trout we've ever had!" Smith said. The episode will air on the Outdoor Channel in 2019.

TRAVEL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Tourism Saskatchewan and Parks Canada host Wild & Rare FAM

Tourism Saskatchewan's Travel Media team received an interesting inquiry in the spring from Guy Theriault, Parks Canada Senior Marketing Specialist. Theriault was curious about Grasslands National Park. Through his work with travel media, he knew that many journalists considered Grasslands a rare and special place. Theriault wanted to see for himself.

Parks Canada and Tourism Saskatchewan organized a four-day Wild & Rare FAM (familiarization) tour in June. Co-hosts Theriault and Jodi Holliday, Tourism Saskatchewan Travel Influencer and Brand Advocate Specialist, welcomed three Canadian travel writers on the FAM: James Ross, on assignment with

Explore Magazine; Karen Pinchin, representing *Canadian Geographic*; and Zack Metcalfe, freelance journalist from Prince Edward Island.

Parks Canada staff with the South Saskatchewan Field Unit assembled an itinerary that included experiences in both the East and West Blocks. The days were long, extending well past sunset to enjoy the full spectacle of the Dark Sky Preserve. Activities ranged from exploring the badlands of the East Block and horseback riding through the Valley of 1,000 Devils to examining species at risk in the West Block and viewing Plains bison at close range.

The Wild & Rare FAM left a deep and lasting impression on Metcalfe, a first-time visitor to Saskatchewan. "In my short time exploring this

park, I had the great pleasure of horseback riding through the Valley of 1,000 Devils, sleeping under famously starlit skies, checking extraordinary species off my bucket list and admiring some so close as to tempt fate. In articles I've written thus far, this park is described as otherworldly, unique and the upcoming destination for Canadian explorers. It's quite simply the finest park I've ever visited, and even now, months later, is the subject of considerable reminiscing."

Tourism Saskatchewan extends its appreciation to Parks Canada employees Samantha Fischer, Shelly Duquette Larson and Brenda Peterson for their assistance in planning and hosting the tour.

Saskatchewan experiences showcased to U.K. travel trade

According to a 2016 *United Kingdom Summary Report*, compiled by Destination Canada, 833,300 U.K. residents visited Canada that year. More than 80 per cent of long-haul trips from the U.K. to Canada were for holiday purposes or visiting friends and relatives.

The report identified top factors influencing destination choice, which included a longstanding desire to visit; opportunities to relax and unwind; the appeal of outdoor experiences, along with city and cultural attractions; and a wish to return, having previously visited.

Maintaining strong travel trade channels within this market is important. Despite an increase in direct online booking of flights, many U.K. visitors to Canada continue to consult with travel agents. Repeat visitors, female travellers and people in the 55-plus age range frequently use the services of travel agents.

Tourism Saskatchewan works closely with Destination Canada (DC) to establish a presence in international markets. A new U.K. initiative undertaken by DC provides options for gaining

profile among travellers in the U.K. and building relationships with travel trade operators. The partnership includes involvement in the Canada Specialist Program (CSP), which is designed to build a strong contingent of Canada Specialists – international sales agents who have comprehensive knowledge of Canadian travel experiences.

Heidi Wesling, Travel Trade Consultant, represented Saskatchewan at a CSP Roadshow in June, and participated in a series of events for CSP-accredited travel agents in the U.K. The roadshow made stops in Birmingham, Exeter, London and Manchester.

“The CSP Roadshow is essential to forging relationships with the U.K. travel trade and ensuring that Saskatchewan is on their radar,” Wesling said, noting that Tourism Saskatchewan made direct connections with 270 travel operators and agents. “Our participation provided a valuable platform to showcase Saskatchewan and impress international Canada Specialists with the province’s remarkable geography and travel experiences.”



Showcasing Saskatchewan to CSP sales agents

Tourism Saskatchewan recently partnered in DC’s key account trade program to advance the province’s marketing reach in the U.K. and Germany. The campaign is a performance-based model that focuses on fewer key accounts, but which deliver the highest volume and yield. Saskatchewan will be represented in Germany by leading travel trade companies America Unlimited and CANUSA Touristik, and in the U.K. by Titan Travel and Windows on the Wild. Promotional activities in these important international markets are scheduled for the fall.

Promotion Tours discovers The Battlefords and Saskatoon during three-day FAM

Tourism Saskatchewan organizes a range of FAM tours, often hosting travel media or international travel trade operators and agents. These guests are commonly seeing Saskatchewan for the first time. A well-organized FAM can make a deep and lasting impression, and yield compelling stories and wide-spread media coverage. Hosting travel trade representatives forges valuable connections and often leads to new Saskatchewan tour itineraries offered to North American or overseas travellers.

Not all FAM guests are unfamiliar with the province. In May, Tourism Saskatchewan hosted Sue Penman and Bryon Steinwand of Promotion Tours, based in St. Albert, AB. The company regularly schedules four- and five-day motorcoach trips to Moose Jaw and Regina. As participants on a three-day FAM that explored The Battlefords and Saskatoon area, Penman and Steinwand were introduced to local attractions, such as Fort Battleford National Historic Site, Allen Sapp Gallery, North Battleford Golf and Country Club, and the Western Development Museum (WDM) – North Battleford.

In Saskatoon, they visited the Remail Modern, Wanuskewin Heritage Park and WDM – Saskatoon, and enjoyed a healthy sampling of Saskatoon’s culinary scene. Other highlights included a sunset cruise aboard the Prairie Lily and a farm-to-table dinner at Farm One Forty.

Post-visit, Steinwand corresponded with Tourism Saskatchewan. “We were blown away and very surprised by all the hidden gems that we were shown,” he wrote. “The beauty and multiculturalism . . . amazed us. The people we met were so friendly and helpful, and the foods we sampled were second-to-none. . . . We are now working hard to create a special tour to showcase this area to our clients, and I am confident that they will love it as much as we did.”



Hosting travel trade guests at Farm One Forty, Saskatoon

For information about working with travel trade, visit Industry.TourismSaskatchewan.com/advice-and-resources.

In Development

Wheatland Express Excursion Train enlists Tourism Saskatchewan expertise and programs



Wheatland Express Excursion Train. Photography by Kevin Dunn.

The launch of a new tourism attraction is always cause for celebration. There was full fanfare on June 2 when the Wheatland Express Excursion Train left the Cudworth Heritage Museum Railway Station on its inaugural trek between Cudworth and Wakaw. The occasion was an impressive finale to Saskatchewan Tourism Week, which ran from May 27-June 2.

Wheatland Rail Inc. approached Tourism Saskatchewan's Product Development professionals in November 2017, seeking advice on bringing the vision of a tourism excursion train to fruition. The company had the infrastructure and a fully developed concept in place for an authentic "Made in Saskatchewan" tourism train experience. Tourism Saskatchewan's involvement helped them understand markets, customer expectations and the importance of delivering on the marketing promise. A series of meetings provided Wheatland Rail with research, recommendations and tools to help fine-tune details and ensure a seamless product launch in the spring.

The Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC) was enlisted to

identify appropriate customer service training for frontline staff. Employees who provide food and beverage services completed Serve it Right Saskatchewan (SIRS), the province's mandatory responsible alcohol service program. Excursion guides and event staff were enrolled in Service Best online training, which provided them with basic knowledge and techniques for delivering superior customer service. The training was augmented by a group workshop to reinforce the content and understand how Service Best can be adapted to address specific roles and situations.

Word quickly spread about the Wheatland Express Excursion Train following the ribbon-cutting on June 2. The popularity of themed tours, dinners and events required additional scheduling throughout the summer.

Check out the October schedule at wheatlandexpress.ca.

Industry feedback strengthens Tourism Product Development Strategy

In April, Tourism Saskatchewan and TEAM Tourism Consulting hosted industry workshops in four locations: Nipawin, Regina, Saskatoon and Swift Current. The sessions formed part of the research phase necessary to complete a comprehensive tourism product development strategy for Saskatchewan.

Jennifer Houillebecq, TEAM Tourism Consulting project manager, and colleague Steve Nichol led the half-day workshops. The sessions involved a series of exercises that required participants to identify barriers and opportunities for developing tourism experiences. The nearly 100 attendees represented a range of tourism stakeholders, including private operators, attractions, festivals, communities, city and destination marketing organizations, and government partners.

An industry survey, circulated in May, yielded additional feedback from Saskatchewan tourism operators and businesses.

In September, tourism operators in Maple Creek, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Prince Albert were engaged in a series of strategic framework discussions. In these sessions, consultants presented some of the findings of their research and shared draft frameworks that will inform the final report and recommendations, scheduled for delivery in December.

Tourism Saskatchewan extends its appreciation to all who attended the sessions, completed the industry survey or participated in the process. The insights gathered contribute to a clearer understanding of the tourism landscape in Saskatchewan and the challenges, as well as opportunities, that exist.

Roadside Attractions turn a Prairie road trip into a journey of discovery



Roadside Attractions installations: Yorkton: LEGO City, Kelly Litzenberger; Listen to the Land, Joi T. Arcand; Marido, Eleanor King. Photography by Carey Shaw.

Tourism, by definition, means travelling more than 80 kilometres from home for a purpose other than business. Road trips are a fact of life for many Saskatchewan residents, who frequently fit the description of “tourist,” whether they realize it or not.

The concept of the Saskatchewan road trip was the inspiration for Roadside Attractions, a series of contemporary art installations that created a sense of wonder and discovery across Saskatchewan from July 1-August 31. The ambitious project was organized by the Dunlop Art Gallery, a unit of the Regina Public Library, in collaboration with nine Saskatchewan galleries. By engaging the network of provincial libraries, communities were recruited to host public art projects inspired by local geography, history, culture and people.

Tourism Saskatchewan was a proud partner, supporting Roadside Attractions through its application-based Event Hosting Program, under the category of Special Tourism Projects. Funding was also received from the Canada Council for the Arts, under its New Chapter 2017 and Beyond program.

Works by 21 artists were exhibited in 15 Saskatchewan communities, from as far south as Estevan to the northern village of Cumberland House. Many were outdoor installations that added a temporary new feature to the local landscape and encouraged passersby to stop, view or engage with the work, and understand the inspiration behind each creation.

Roadside Attractions was a bold departure from traditional public art projects on many levels, including size, scope, subject matter and artist/community connections. “We wanted this project to be sprawling, because that is the nature of Saskatchewan – sparsely populated outside of the larger centres and geographically diffuse,” Jennifer Matotek, Dunlop Art Gallery Curator and Director, said.

The exhibition involved Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan artists. Each represented a different geographic region and brought a unique perspective to their work, based on individual backgrounds and experiences living and working in Canada. Commissioning artists from across the country sparked new friendships and discoveries, and ensured a sweeping range of artistic expression.

Several outdoor installations showcased the talent of visiting artists and became summer attractions in a number of towns. For example, Nova Scotia artist Eleanor King was paired with the town of Langham, where her billboard-size installation was displayed in the community park. King’s paintings reflected the techniques of renowned painters William Pehudoff (born near Langham in 1918) and Dorothy Knowles.

Montreal artist Vicky Sabourin became familiar with the community of Montmartre and its European settlement history. She responded to the flat topography and seemingly endless Prairie horizon by sculpting a four-metre-high mountain and incorporating poetry into the design.

City-based partner galleries worked primarily with Saskatchewan artists and included the projects as part of summer programming. The Godfrey Dean Art Gallery, in Yorkton, curated and exhibited a project by Kelly Litzenberger, who was raised in the Yorkton/Melville area. His sculpture *Yorkton: LEGO City* is a miniature recreation of the historic streetscape.

The Mann Art Gallery, in Prince Albert, commissioned Saskatchewan artists Heather Benning and Tim Moore, who captured the spirit of the road trip theme. Their two-metre-wide sculpture of a rear-view mirror reflects a collage of the North Saskatchewan River, with reference to defining locations and moments in Saskatchewan’s history.

An outdoor installation curated by the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery featured banners by Joi T. Arcand, a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. Arcand’s text-based work used Cree syllabics to speak to the history and significance of Moose Jaw to Indigenous peoples.

Like any major endeavour, there were interesting challenges. “Typically, projects like this are placed within the context of smaller spaces and happen within the boundaries of one or two cities or regions,” Matotek said. “This is definitely an ambitious project,” she added, citing the distance covered, the sizeable number of partners and artists involved, and the uniqueness of each installation.

Roadside Attractions expanded summer travel offerings in the province and inspired Saskatchewan residents and visitors to plan a road trip and make new discoveries.

STEC News

Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner celebrates 25 years



Jesse Tiefenbach receives the Distinguished HR Service Award from Philip Mondor, Tourism HR Canada



Kevin Sapp, Tourism Ambassador Award recipient



Ready to Work graduates and trainers

On June 13, Tourism Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC) hosted the 25th annual Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner in Regina at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Centre.

The annual celebration pays tribute to individuals who have achieved professional certification in a tourism occupation or have earned Journeyperson status in a tourism trade. The honourees included 56 who earned certification and 12 new Journeypersons. Thirty Employers of Choice were also recognized.

Since the first dinner was held in 1993, more than 5,000 tourism professionals have enrolled in certification. The number of certified occupations has grown from four to 25. In addition to celebrating achievement, the occasion highlights STEC's impressive work and the valuable partnerships with organizations and agencies committed to a skilled, service-driven tourism workforce.

The 2018 dinner marked an additional milestone – 25 years for the Ready to Work program. Twenty-eight Ready to Work graduates, along with a number of facilitators and community partners were among the guests that evening.

Ready to Work is acclaimed for providing a nurturing environment for people to acquire knowledge, develop skills, gain confidence and transition to a fulfilling career in tourism. The program has been delivered in over 50 Saskatchewan communities and has opened doors to employment for more than 5,600 participants. Graduates who attended the June 13 dinner travelled from as far away as the northern community of Pelican Narrows.

Evening highlights included presentations to two leaders in Saskatchewan's tourism sector. Kevin Sapp, Human Resources Manager at Gold Eagle Casino in North Battleford, received the Tourism Ambassador Award. The peer-nominated award is presented to an individual deeply committed to professional development in the province's tourism sector.

Sapp has extensive, well-rounded experience in human resources and a broad range of tourism industries, including recreation and entertainment, food and beverage services, and accommodation. Colleagues describe him as having a keen ability to empathize with all employees, along with a positive attitude and work ethic that are second-to-none.

He was lauded for going above and beyond to help co-workers succeed in their careers. Sapp recently enrolled seven apprentices in tourism trades, arranged special classes and study sessions, and coached them in preparation for exams. He adapted training experiences to accommodate individual learning styles and help them achieve their goals. His caring efforts were pivotal to their efforts to earn professional certification and fulfil Journeyperson requirements.

Jesse Tiefenbach, Chief Human Resource Officer for d3h Hotels, received the 2018 Distinguished HR Service Award from Tourism HR Canada. The national award recognizes leadership in advancing human resource practices that benefit tourism workers and strengthen Canada's tourism sector.

Tiefenbach has been with d3h Hotels for 11 years and is dedicated to achieving success for the company and its employees through innovative HR management practices. He is an advocate for training, certification and apprenticeship and encourages staff among the 14 properties to participate in training programs.

At 17, Tiefenbach began his career with d3h Hotels. Within three years, he was managing the Days Inn Regina Airport West. His success led to playing a role in the launch of additional properties, pursuing *emerit* Certified Hotel General Management credential and receiving a Tourism Ambassador Award. Canadian Traveller listed Tiefenbach among the 2018 *Top 40 Under 40*, which recognizes outstanding individuals in Canada's travel industry.

Tourism Saskatchewan acknowledges Tourism HR Canada for its generous sponsorship of the 2018 Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner.

In the Spotlight

Recipients of the Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence earn their place in the spotlight by demonstrating exceptional work and a commitment to treating visitors to great service and experiences. Throughout the year, *Going Places* profiles those who took top honours at the Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala in April 2018. In this issue, Tourism Saskatchewan salutes three award winners.



Ghostown Blues Bed & Breakfast, Maple Creek, Service Excellence Award

Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce

Operating since 2011, Ghostown Blues Bed & Breakfast has earned accolades for its eclectic accommodations – a collection of historic structures that includes restored pioneer cabins, sheep wagons, vintage camper trucks and an array of buildings from the past. Each meticulously decorated unit provides a comfortable, unique “home away from home” for visitors. Cabin expansion was undertaken in 2017 to better accommodate family visits. A website update, with an added online reservation system, enables travellers to determine the availability of their favourite cabin and reserve their choice. Property enhancements included the construction of a fully functioning outdoor kitchen for guest use and catering to large groups, weddings and corporate retreats. Taking customer feedback seriously, the property responds to every review and comment. Testimonials from satisfied guests speak to the efforts of owners and staff to provide exceptional hospitality and memorable guest experiences.



Saskatchewan Roughrider Football Club, Regina, Gil Carduner Marketing Award

Sponsored by Phoenix Group

The Saskatchewan Roughrider Football Club embraced the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build momentum for the highly anticipated opening of the new Mosaic Stadium. A dynamic campaign, *The Inaugural Season*, focused on several goals that included increasing ticket and merchandise sales, driving attendance to the team’s new home and re-energizing Rider fans after bidding a sombre farewell to historic Mosaic Stadium. The campaign harnessed the curious energy of Rider Nation by asking the question, “How green can it get?” Energy and excitement were highlighted in campaign statements – “It’s showtime!” and “I can’t wait!” A combination of traditional and non-traditional advertising, involving television, radio, digital and social channels, along with paid and unpaid marketing tactics proved effective. Ten Saskatchewan Roughrider home games in 2017 season sold over 96 per cent of seats, with more than 320,000 fans celebrating the stadium’s first season.



Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association, Saskatoon, Fred Heal Tourism Ambassador Award

Sponsored by Wanuskewin Heritage Park

By motivating and organizing competitive businesses, the Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association (SCBA) has fostered a collaborative craft brewing industry that manufactures superior products. The organization represents the interests of Saskatchewan craft brewers and endeavours to create a fair regulatory environment. Its work has inspired a boom in the industry, with the opening of new breweries and a shifting perspective of Saskatchewan as a high-quality manufacturer of craft beer. An ever-increasing beer selection delights food and drink enthusiasts. Stories shared by tourists, travel bloggers and national and international media amplify the momentum and achievements of the industry. The SCBA is a proponent of saskdrinks.com, a detailed interactive map for locating craft breweries, distilleries and wineries across the province. In 2017, the SCBA toasted unity among its 13 members with the first collaborative creation, the Saskatchewan Multigrain Pale Ale.

Around the Province

Northern Saskatchewan is a photographer's paradise

Submitted by Saskatchewaner Kevin Dunn



Missinipe



McTavish Lake



Turtle Lake

Although often dubbed a “flat” province, Saskatchewan is home to many diverse landscapes and an abundance of wilderness and beauty. This summer, I had the opportunity to pack my camera and adventure through northern Saskatchewan. For my first destination, I headed to Missinipe, a scenic and serene campground in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park.

With a long adventure ahead, I made sure there was time in the schedule for roadside stops and adventures along the way. In La Ronge, I recommend stopping at Robertson Trading Ltd. for fresh game meat and Indigenous art, or hiking to Nut Point.

After arriving at my Missinipe campsite, I set up my tent in the thick of the boreal forest. On this trip, I brought a drone to capture northern landscapes at a different angle. Images taken

from 50 feet in the air expose something you cannot see at ground level. This form of photography opens the doors to seeing our landscape in a different way, allowing for a unique representation of the pure beauty that exists in the north.

While capturing the beauty and taking in the views, I couldn't help but enjoy the tranquility, the fresh air, and the unique sounds of a floatplane flying above.

Hearing the quiet buzz of planes taking off and flying over your campground is an experience in itself, but going up in one takes it to the next level. That's why I hopped into a floatplane to see northern Saskatchewan from above with my own two eyes. The plane continued north to my second destination: Reel North Outfitters on McTavish Lake. McTavish Lake is known to be

rich in lake trout and northern pike, so I tested out my angling skills and enjoyed a fish fry on a remote island.

After this trip, I think it's safe to say that northern Saskatchewan is a photographer's paradise.

Join me on Facebook (facebook.com/skwanderer), Twitter (@[@skwanderer](https://twitter.com/skwanderer)) or Instagram (@[@saskatchewanwanderer](https://instagram.com/saskatchewanwanderer)).

Keep up with the latest blogs and videos on saskatchewanwanderer.ca and YouTube (youtube.com/user/skwandererofficial).

Introducing Porcupine Hills Provincial Park

Submitted by the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport

Take a drive just south of Hudson Bay and you will find yourself in a place of natural beauty and cultural diversity. Surrounded by dense forests, open grasslands and beautiful lakes, you have arrived at Saskatchewan's newest provincial park, Porcupine Hills, which received official designation in 2018.

Porcupine Hills Provincial Park is a place like none other to relax, enjoy the scenery, pick berries or take a hike. The area has long been popular for year-round recreation, offering great camping, hunting and fishing, as well as snowmobiling and other winter activities.

The new park is made up of five existing provincial recreation sites, including

McBride Lake, Saginas Lake, Pepaw Lake, Parr Hill Lake and Woody River. It consists of an east and west block, each with its own unique landscape.

The Porcupine Hills area, particularly the west block, has a rich Indigenous history, which continues to be celebrated today through cultural camps and celebrations. Park designation respects all Treaty and traditional uses, and protects the region's natural beauty and cultural features to ensure long-term protection of the landscape and cultural values. Management of hunting and fishing resources will continue as in previous years, and campgrounds will remain small and simple.



Porcupine Hills Provincial Park

Porcupine Hills is Saskatchewan's 36th provincial park and will continue to be a special place to enjoy for years to come.

Here & There



Future Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival site
Rendering by aodbt Architecture & Interior Design

Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival debuts *Staging the Future* campaign

On June 19, the Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival unveiled plans for redevelopment of its riverbank site in Saskatoon. The company's *Staging the Future* campaign intends to raise \$3 million for construction of a concrete amphitheatre and multi-use buildings that will house dressing rooms and a box office. The site improvements will enable the festival to extend its season and serve as a year-round venue for concerts, events and a range of activities. Work on the new space will begin after the 2019 festival season and the grand opening is scheduled for summer 2020.

Indigenous tourism regional forums held in Saskatchewan

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) hosted a series of regional forums throughout Saskatchewan in May and June. Meetings were held in Fort Qu'Appelle, Green Lake, Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon and Yorkton. Discussion topics included priorities and challenges for Indigenous tourism development in Saskatchewan. ITAC shared that participants expressed interest in creating an organization in Saskatchewan to lead Indigenous tourism development, and discussed support for the existing industry and opportunities for expansion. The sessions also addressed the 2018 International Indigenous Tourism Conference in Saskatoon on October 30-31. A pre-conference Saskatchewan Day will bring profile to the work underway to develop and promote Indigenous tourism experiences in the province.



RSM First Nations Gallery 25th anniversary celebration

Royal Saskatchewan Museum First Nations Gallery turns 25

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM) celebrated the 25th anniversary of its First Nations Gallery on June 26. Festivities on the museum grounds in Regina included performances by renowned hoop dancer Terrance Littleton and the Kawacatoose Boys drum group, along with activities led by the Buffalo People Arts Institute. The gallery's opening in 1993 signalled a "new era of showcasing Indigenous culture in the museum," and presented museum visitors, including thousands of students and educators, with valuable opportunities to learn about Indigenous heritage and traditions.

"Since its inception, the gallery has been a catalyst in bringing researchers together with Indigenous Elders, students and community members to work collaboratively on examining the past, interpreting the evolution of Indigenous cultures and presenting it in all its richness and diversity," Dr. Evelyn Siegfried, Curator of Aboriginal Studies, said.

New Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and Francophonie appointed

On July 17, the Honourable Mélanie Joly was named Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and Francophonie. She was elected as Member of Parliament for the constituency of Ahuntsic-Cartierville in 2015 and was appointed Minister of Canadian Heritage. In her new role, Minister Joly will work to "increase tourism to and within Canada, and harness the full economic potential of this key sector of the economy."

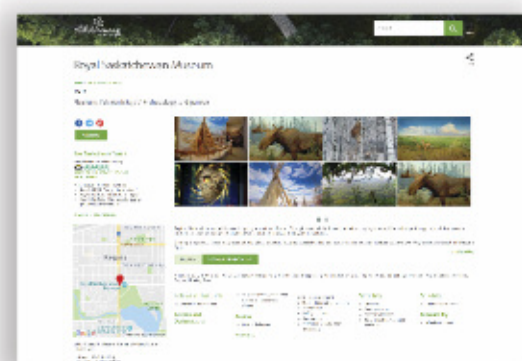
Take advantage of free operator listings on TourismSaskatchewan.com

Saskatchewan tourism operators, including businesses, attractions, accommodations, campgrounds, communities, etc., are encouraged to take advantage of **FREE listings** on TourismSaskatchewan.com.

Extensive customer research of key Saskatchewan tourism markets revealed that an overwhelming majority of travellers use online sources to find information and plan their vacations. Web, mobile and social media are now the most used and preferred information and search methods.

Ensure that your Tourism Profile is up-to-date. For changes to current web listings, contact Tourism Saskatchewan at 1-877-237-2273 or information.updates@tourismsask.com.

For more information about Tourism Profiles, contact Kathy Rosenkranz at 306-787-2312, kathy.rosenkranz@tourismsask.com.



Mark Your Calendar

PUBLIC EVENTS

Saskatoon Farmers' Market

Year-roundSaskatoon

RCMP Sergeant Major's Parade

January 3-December 2, 2018.....Regina

Government House Historical Society Victorian Teas

March 3-December 2, 2018.....Regina

Regina Farmers' Market

March 3-December 15, 2018Regina

Beechy Western Days Indoor Rodeo

September 21-23, 2018Beechy

Highway 1 Studio Tour

September 22-23, 2018Swift Current

Unity Agricultural Society Fall Fair & Trade Show

September 28-29, 2018Unity

Nipawin Vanity Cup

September 29-30, 2018Tobin Lake

Rosetown Harvest Family Festival

September 30-October 7, 2018.....Rosetown

Canada Soccer 2018 Toyota Nationals

October 3-8, 2018.....Saskatoon

Thanksgiving Indoor Powwow

October 5-7, 2018.....Prince Albert

Canadian Cowboy Association Finals Rodeo

October 17-20, 2018Swift Current

Saskatchewan Snowmobile Show & Sale

November 2-4, 2018Saskatoon

BHP Billiton Enchanted Forest Holiday Light Tour

November 17, 2018-January 5, 2019.....Saskatoon

Canadian Western Agribition

November 19-24, 2018Regina

Carlyle's Dickens Village Festival

November 30-December 1, 2018.....Carlyle

Home Hardware Canada Cup

December 5-9, 2018.....Estevan

INDUSTRY EVENTS

Tourism Town Hall

September 25.....Saskatoon

Interpride AGM & World Conference

October 4-7, 2018.....Saskatoon

International Indigenous Tourism Conference

October 30-31, 2018Saskatoon

The Tourism Congress

November 27-28, 2018Gatineau, QC

Canadian Tourism Awards

November 28, 2018.....Gatineau, QC

TRADESHOWS/MARKETPLACES/FAMS

Destination Canada FAM

September 5-9, 2018Saskatoon/Regina/Manitou Beach/Prince Albert National Park

Sure-Shot Game Calls Wingshooting media event

September 24-28, 2018North Battleford

GoMedia Pre-Tour FAM

September 25-30, 2018Missinipe/Prince Albert National Park

GoMedia Marketplace

October 1-4, 2018Calgary, AB

Canadian Inbound Tourism Association Asia

Pacific Winter Function

December 4, 2018Vancouver, BC

Information subject to change.

Is your event listed on TourismSaskatchewan.com?

Tourism Saskatchewan's consumer website, TourismSaskatchewan.com, receives more than 1.5 million visitors annually. The site is a popular resource for vacation planning and researching activities and events in Saskatchewan communities. Posted information ranks highly in Google searches.

Event organizers are encouraged to submit dates and details about upcoming festivals, community celebrations and tourism events. Simply use the submission form located at TourismSaskatchewan.com/things-to-do/events/submit-an-event.

Have dates or details about your event changed? Avoid disappointment and missed opportunities by updating your current information. Submit changes by contacting Tourism Saskatchewan at 1-877-237-2273, information.updates@tourismsask.com.

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:

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