

PIXELS TO PROSE

Creating Scroll-Stopping Stories: A practical guide for tourism, hospitality and guest-facing businesses

By Tannis Miller (Tannis Miller Creative Studios)

Good social content follows five steps. Use them in order every time you plan a post, and the scrollstoppers start to write themselves.

1. FIND YOUR STORY

You don't need something new to post about. You need fresh eyes on what's already happening. Lots of places have a lake, a sunset or great coffee. Only you have your people, your quirks and your moments! Dig in these five places, then pick one angle and go deep:

- **The people:** owners, staff, regulars, the guide with all the stories.
- **The process:** how it's made, grown, groomed, cooked or cleaned. The process is surprisingly watchable!
- **The local secret:** the spot, the order or the time of day only insiders know.
- **The moment:** what's only true right now. First frost, harvest, the ice going out, opening day.
- **The "wait, really?":** a surprising fact, a record or a quirky bit of history.

Test your angle: if you could swap a competitor's name into the post and it would still work, it isn't an angle yet. Make it specific: a person, a time, a detail, or a reason to be curious.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"Come visit our lake!"	**The 6 a.m. dock nobody else knows about**
"Fresh pasta daily"	**Meet the chef rolling pasta before sunrise**
"Book your facial!"	**What a facial actually looks like, start to finish**
"Book your stay today"	**The room our staff secretly fight over**

Real Saskatchewan examples: In 2019, when a statue in Norway took the "world's tallest moose" title, Moose Jaw turned Mac the Moose into a playful international rivalry. It ended in a "Moose Truce," and Tourism Moose Jaw estimated about $7 million in marketing value (MooseJawToday). At Manitou Lake, the water is salty enough that you float without trying (overview), a ready-made "wait, really?" hook.

Try it now: jot down answers to three questions. What do guests always say surprised them? What happens here that nobody gets to see? What's true here only this month?

2. FRAME IT

The first frame is the whole pitch. Viewers decide almost right away whether to keep watching, so lead with your best moment and explain after.

Win The First Second:

- Start mid-action. Skip the slow intro, the logo and the pan across the parking lot.
- Show a face or hands. People stop for people.
- Move right away: a pour, a splash, a door opening, a first bite.
- Put a hook on screen as text. Many people scroll with the sound off.

Phone Composition Cheats

- **Rule of thirds:** turn on your camera grid and put the subject on a line, not dead centre.
- **Foreground layer:** shoot through a branch, a window or past a mug for instant depth.
- **Leading lines:** roads, docks, fences and rivers pull the eye in.
- **Human scale:** a person in a big landscape shows how big it really is.
- **Get close:** textures, steam, sizzle and hands stop thumbs.

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- **Golden hour:** early morning and evening light does the editing for you.

Hook lines to adapt: "POV: you found [your area]'s best-kept secret" · "Things I didn't expect at [your place]" · "The locals-only guide to [your town]" · "Save this for your next road trip"

3. FLEX IT

Platform-native content means one story, shaped for the job each format does. You don't have to start from scratch every time, and you shouldn't paste the same post everywhere.

FORMAT	ITS JOB	MAKE IT WORK
Reels	Help new people find you	Best moment first, text on screen, trending or original audio
Stories	Build connection with followers	Raw and real-time, polls and questions, link sticker to book
Carousels	Earn saves and shares	Slide 1 is a headline, one idea per slide, the ask on the last slide
Photos	Your highlight reel	Hero shots of the place at its best

Shoot once, post all week. Write a shot list for every format before you go: vertical video, a few stills, a detail close-up and a short clip of someone talking. For example, one morning at a bakery becomes a Reel (dough to first bite), Stories (behind the counter at 6 a.m. plus a poll), a carousel (five things to order before you leave town), a hero photo and a "meet the baker" caption.

4. FEEL IT

Polish gets attention, but real moments build trust! The easiest content to make is the content that's already happening.

- **Show the backstage:** opening up before guests arrive, prep and set-up, staff favourites, bloopers, and why you started.
- **Hand the mic over:** let a staff member take over your Stories, share guest posts and reviews (with permission), collaborate with local creators, and tag the partners.
- **Tell seasonal stories:** spring thaw and first patio day, summer lake days and festivals, fall harvest and colours, winter northern lights and snowshoe trails. Plan a season ahead!
- **Respect whose story it is:** some stories belong to a community. When you share them, use that community's voice and get permission.
- **Use #ExploreSask:** Tourism Saskatchewan encourages operators to use the hashtag, tag Tourism Saskatchewan, and invite guests to do the same.

5. BOOK IT

A great story still needs a clear next step. Use the postcard caption to move people from watching to visiting:

- **The picture (hook):** a first line that earns the "more" tap.
- **The message (story):** one small, specific moment.
- **The address (details):** where, when, how much and how to get there. This is the line most people skip.
- **The stamp (ask):** one clear, easy next step.

EXAMPLE CAPTION (FICTIONAL)

We didn't expect the loons to follow us the whole paddle. Sunday's sunrise canoe tour was glassy, quiet and honestly a little magical. Tours run weekend mornings until [date], two hours, all gear included. Tap the link in the bio to grab a spot this weekend!

SWAP THIS...	...FOR THIS
"Link in bio"	**Tap the link in bio to grab a Saturday spot**
"Visit us!"	**Save this for your next road trip**
"Book now"	**DM us "CABIN" and we'll send this weekend's openings**
"Come check it out"	**Tag the friend you're bringing**

One post, one ask. Not every post needs "book now." Saves, shares, tags and DMs are all steps toward a visit.

QUICK START

Before you hit start

Find: is there a specific angle, not just "come visit"?
Frame: does the first second move or make me curious?
Flex: is it built for this format, not just copy-pasted?
Feel: does it sound like a real person from here?
Book: is there one clear, easy next step?

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
List 10 story angles using the five places to dig	Shoot one story for every format	Post the Reel	Post behind-the-scenes Stories (with a poll)	Post the carousel	Share a local voice: staff, guest or partner	Check saves, shares and DMs: who is thinking of visiting



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tannis Miller

Tannis Miller is a social media strategist with over a decade of experience in marketing and communications. Since founding Tannis Miller Creative Studios in 2021, she has partnered with lifestyle, hospitality, tourism, and beauty brands across Canada and beyond, helping them tell stories that stop the scroll. Known for her straight-talking, fun teaching style, Tannis has led workshops for organizations including Discover Saskatoon and Tourism Saskatchewan, training teams to use social media with confidence so their businesses, and personal brands, truly shine.