



The Valley News

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ACOA Heritage Rivers and Communities Mission Focuses on Eco-Tourism

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A highly successful Tourism Atlantic ACOA trade mission has returned from South Carolina after exploring parts of the National Heritage Corridor and examining many of the “best practices” and eco-tourism sites along the Savannah River watershed. Simon Mitchell, Technical Services Officer of The Lower River Passage, The St. John River Society and The Meduxnekeag River Association, and Arthur Slipp, of the SJRVTA and Town of Woodstock, were among the participants.

The primary goal of the mission was to enable local tourism operators and associations to obtain industry knowledge from tourism experts and to experience model tourism products first hand. Hopefully, the information acquired will allow these participants to assist in the development and pursuit of new ideas for improving and expanding tourism products within the Upper St. John River Valley and Atlantic region.

The success of the mission can, in part, be attributed to the quality of discussion with National Heritage Corridor senior management staff, municipal leaders and local Chamber of Commerce officials. As the mission progressed, it became clear that partnerships were an integral part of the success in developing the corridor as an exemplary tourist destination.



**Carolina Heritage Outfitters
“putting in” on the Edisto River**

As the mission travelled to several key eco-tourism sites along the Savannah River, participants had the opportunity to discuss the issues and challenges faced by each site as it developed its own unique product and marketing plan within the context of the larger regional plan. The outfitters on the Edisto River, in particular, commented on the value of the exposure resulting from “cross promoting” with the State Parks Service and the Heritage Corridor.

One of the most critical attributes in the success of each site was a realization that it was necessary to “Get the story first...” before any attempt was made to develop an interpretative plan. Only after the research has been completed and the partners and participants have agreed on the story, should work begin on the marketing and site development plan.



**Tour by Interpretive Guide-The Great
Swamp Project-Walterboro, SC**

“Leveraged funding” from federal, state, county and municipal governments was utilized to supplement private sector funding from “incorporated” trusts, volunteer organizations and even private operators. The strong partnerships which resulted from this coordinated approach now support and drive the corridor’s regional marketing plan.

Important lessons were learned at each site on the itinerary. Although varied in size, location, and budget, all shared a common theme - eco-tourism and a relationship with the river. Each site was part of the Corridor’s master marketing plan and each was “tied” by common signage - utilizing a standardized template - to the story of the region. Along the way, Discovery Centers provided interpretive displays to present a thematic overview of the area’s history, culture and economic development.

Gathering of the Scots Festival– May 30-June 1, 2008

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to go back in time to when the glens of Scotland were ruled by the keen edge of a Clan Chief's broadsword and tartan-clad warriors were led into battle with the stirring haunts of the highland war-pipes?

The Gathering of the Scots Festival will deliver all of this and so much more to hundreds of visitors as they converge on Perth-Andover, NB May 30 to June 1, 2008. In just six short years, this unique festival has firmly established the Village of Perth-Andover as the "Celtic Capital" of Western New Brunswick. Recognized as one of the fastest growing cultural events in Maritime Canada, the Gathering of the Scots Festival literally transforms this beautiful community in the Upper St. John River Valley into "A little Piece of Scotland" for three amazing days of Celtic celebration!

Visitors become totally immersed in the festival's strong mandate of "education through celebration". The weekend is jam-packed with performances by dozens of Celtic musicians, Scottish pipe bands and highland dancers. Athletics are always front and centre with rugby matches, Scottish back-hold wrestling and the ever popular Scottish heavy events. Celtic retail vendors ply their wares and genealogical kiosks abound at the festival site (Baird's Memorial Campground) on Saturday. Tantalizing choices of food and refreshment sooth the pallet like York's famous "corn fritters" and the Gathering of the Scot's own "haggis pups"!



The real secret with the Gathering is how you can transform your visit from "spectator to participant". Events such as the kilted golf tournament, fly casting competition and March of the Clans, to name a



few, offer the unique opportunity to become directly involved in the culture. Informative workshops open to the public on such topics as beer and whisky tasting, highland dance, an introduction to the bagpipes, Gaelic language and traditional Scottish athletics are very popular as well.

The Gathering of the Scots is so much more than just a festival for Scots! Organizers stress that participation in the festival by those without even a drop of Scottish blood is very important: Many historic traditions of the Irish, Welch and even our own First Nations people are fundamentally very similar. The early tribal origins of the Scottish people parallel many other cultures around the world.

To preview the schedule of events for 2008, access the festival website at www.gatheringofthescots.com or call Rod MacIntosh (273-6710) for more information.

From Haggis to Heavyweights and Clans to Fly Casting - it's all at "the Gathering". Mark your calendars now - why not take a weekend in May and visit one of our Province's best kept secrets in beautiful Perth-Andover, NB. The Gathering of the Scots - *a little piece of Scotland!*

Carleton Victoria Arts Council

The final show of the season is a contemporary acoustic bluegrass concert. Hungry Hill (www.hungryhill.ca) will perform on Thursday, April 17, at the Carleton North High School in Bristol at 8:00 pm. Tickets are available for \$20 at Nissen's Market– Perth-Andover, Brennan's Contractors– Bristol, Andrew & Laura McCain Art Gallery– Florenceville and The Owl Book Store– Woodstock.

The Carleton Victoria Arts Council is celebrating its twenty-ninth season of performances. For more information visit their website at www.cvarts.ca

Villages of Bristol, Florenceville and Centreville

Mark your calendar for upcoming events in the middle of the Valley. The Village of Centreville will host their Community Yard Sale on May 19th and the Super Power Pull (Tractor Pull) on June 20-22.

The Village of Florenceville-Bristol Community Wide Yard Sale is May 24th. Two events in the planning stages are Canada Day Celebrations on July 1st and “Wine up the Valley” Festival on August 23rd. Look for more information on these events in the Summer Edition of “The Valley News”.

Kings Landing Upcoming Events



Saturday, June 7 & Sunday, June 8 - Opening Weekend
Costumed staff will be in all of the homes and farms. The trade areas will open their doors to welcome visitors to this special opening weekend! Activities, entertainment and festivities will take place throughout the site.

Saturday, June 28 - Tuesday, July 1 - Confederation Debate
To celebrate Canada Day, step into the past and discover how our ancestors created this great nation. In 1865, citizens were struggling to decide whether Confederation was the way to improve their lives, or if it was the first step towards ruining the economy and their future. Cast your vote in the election as the debates that formed our country leap off of the printed page of the history books.

ACOA Heritage Rivers and Communities Mission ...continued from page 1

A second principle to emerge from the visits was the need for some form of interactive experience to actively engage the visitor. On the site tour of The Great Swamp Project in Walterboro, SC, a naturalist guide accompanied the group and offered a detailed commentary on native vegetation, birds and wildlife. This clearly illustrated the value of “interactive interpretation” in enhancing the educational impact of the site.

The importance of the Heritage Corridor as a successful tool for rural economic development was also evident. The visit to the small rural community of Springfield, to the Silver Bluff Audubon Center and to the Aiken State Natural Area served to illustrate what can be done by a small group of passionate individuals with a “vision”. It was clear that over time, with a clearly defined plan and in spite of limited resources, high quality festivals, attractions and products can be developed.

In addition to eco-tourism sites, the mission included visits to points of interest in Aiken, North Augusta and Charleston. Even in these urbanized areas, the importance of the river as public space was highlighted; tours focused on waterfront development, waste water treatment planning and wetland reconstruction projects. Visits to traditional sites such as Drayton Hall, a National Trust preservation property near Charleston, and the North Augusta Living History Park afforded participants another opportunity to discuss funding and marketing issues with members of the National Heritage Corridor Board of Directors and management team.

Mission participants return with ideas that are immediately adaptable to the St. John River Valley and Atlantic Canada. Several eco-tourism opportunities currently exist here but the private sector must make the capital investment required to seize the moment. Perhaps, in partnership with different levels of government, the entrepreneur might be more willing to undertake this risk. Clearly, there is a leadership role for government in promoting and developing these opportunities.



Aiken County Historical Museum and Trolley -Aiken, SC

Are you interested in doing business with tour operators, or are you interested in capturing increased business from them? Are you already doing business with tour operators, but want to know how to make the partnership more successful for your business? Isn't it time you considered joining TradeSmart?

If you are interested in promoting and selling your tourism product to the travel trade sector, we encourage you to attend the next annual **TradeSmart Introductory Seminar "Working with the Travel Trade"** as the first step in becoming TradeSmart Certified. This two-day seminar will be held at the Delta Fredericton, April 21 and 22. This year, we are pleased to have three leading experts participating: Christine Alestra of Collette Vacations; Patricia Donnelly, Kings Landing Historical Settlement; and Kim Ganong of Coastal Inns.

TradeSmart is a program that certifies AND PROFILES tourism suppliers who understand the importance of establishing and employing travel trade friendly business practices and demonstrate their compliance with these business practices. It is designed to make it easier for tour operators to do business with tourism suppliers in New Brunswick.

This is an introductory level seminar designed for the owners, managers and staff of tourism businesses that have had limited experience to date in working with tour operators and others in the travel trade. It presents valuable information on the "How To's" of travel trade business and also introduces the benefits of becoming TradeSmart Certified. Attendance at the seminar is a requirement if you intend to participate in the Trade Smart Certification program. Being TradeSmart Certified is a requirement if you intend to participate in Atlantic Canada Showcase and Rendez-vous Canada.

"TradeSmart has offered us an instant credibility within the motor coach market by allowing us to work with our potential clients on their level and on their terms. By understanding their way of doing business, it has allowed us to make instant in-roads with clients. I would strongly recommend this certification to anyone considering doing business in the motor coach market."- *Paul McGraw, Miramichi Kitchen Party*

"I better understand our tour operators' needs as well as the appropriate value of the services my business provides. I don't feel so intimidated and that I need to give my products and services away to the travel trade and I'm now more comfortable in negotiating appropriate arrangements with the trade."- *Kathy Weir, Broadleaf Guest Ranch*

The deadline for registration is Friday, April 11, 2008. To register, please contact Rose Arsenault at rose.arsenault@gnb.ca or toll free at 1-888-817-5577 or call 457-6754.

TIANB Training Opportunity



TourismTechnology.com is offering support to tourism operators who are not sure what to do with their website this year. In a one-on-one mentoring session we discuss how to offer accommodations online, evaluate your current website and provide suggestions (based on market research) on how to make improvements.

The session lasts about 3 hours and costs \$125. I will come directly to your place of business or home and offer customized tips on your specific website and business situation. The session can take place anytime during the week. If you are interested in this one-on-one session, contact Beth at (506)451-0173 or beth@tianb.com

