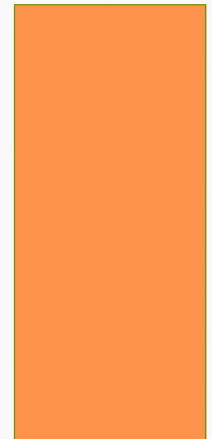


EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

PRESENTED BY THE
VERMONT ATTRACTIONS ASSOCIATION



VAA MEMBER PRESENTERS

- Eloise Beil, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes
- Beth Krusi, Montshire Museum of Science, Norwich
- Todd Paton, Rock of Ages Granite Quarry Experience, Graniteville/Barre
- Nick Monte, The Chocolatorium/Village Peddler, Arlington/Bennington

WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL?

- Experiential travel engages visitors in a series of memorable travel activities, in which they are actively engaged and immersed; providing a deeper richer, unforgettable experience.
- Opportunities for self-discovery will always exist, but many travelers prefer to directly purchase individual or multi-day experiences in advance
- *“Seeing the sights is no longer enough. Experiential travelers want to venture beyond the beaten tourist paths and dive deeper into behind the scenes, authentic local culture, the arts, music, cooking and food, sports, adventure and nature...People are traveling their passions.”* Joe Diaz, Afar Magazine.

THIS IS NOT A TREND

- Experiential travel represents a new layer of opportunity beyond delivering traditional tourism products based on goods and services.
- The foundation of Experiential Travel was introduced in 1999 by Joe Pine and James Gilmore in their book, *The Experience Economy: Work is theater and every business a stage*. They demonstrated that there is a fourth level of economic value called “experiences” and that customers are willing to pay a premium for them.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Over the past decade, increasingly, companies have embraced experiences as an opportunity for their business because of the benefits which include:

- A new value proposition that can be developed in almost any destination
- A response to market demand that generates new revenue
- An opportunity to be innovative, creative and truly responsive to the reasons why people travel
- A competitive advantage to differentiate your business
- An opportunity to create advocates for your business with guests that rave online or via word of mouth about their time with you
- An opportunity to introduce value-based pricing and attract higher yield customers

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TOURISM PRODUCT AND A TOURISM EXPERIENCE?

A tourism product is what you buy.

A tourism experience is what you remember.

In developing tourism experiences the focus is on emotions, feelings and sensations that travelers will have on their journey, the stories they will learn about at the destination and the connections they will make.

At the core of an exceptional visitor experience is your company's ability to purposefully and thoughtfully combine your physical assets with the emotional interactions that travelers experience.

Word of mouth is a strong marketing tool.

Provide exceptional experiences and
travelers will share their stories.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING VISITOR EXPERIENCES

- What type of experiences do you offer that your guests enjoy?
- Does your destination attract visitors with common interests?
- What stories do your guests share with others about their time with you? What do they blog about? What do they post in social environments?
- What are they taking pictures of when they are with you?
- Do you have or can you create a product that offers something special to your guests that you can deliver?
- Who can you partner with to develop and deliver the types of experiences travelers are seeking?

RESOURCES AT YOUR DESTINATION

- Are there people at your destination that visitors may be interested in seeing, learning about or engaging with?
- Who are your storytellers – people who love to talk and can engage visitors with their stories?
- Who are the musicians, artists and artisans, chefs, farmers, historians, writers, poets, etc. who live in your community or region?
- Are there under utilized buildings, trails or other interesting places to host a group activity?

Remember, a great customer experience is a combination of the physical and emotional value delivered.

KEY ELEMENTS IN DESIGNING EXPERIENCES

- Step 1: Know your customers
- Step 2: Know your destination
- Step 3: What experiences make sense for your business?
- Step 4: Enhance your theme or story or choose a theme or story
- Step 5: Plan the experience
- Step 6: Select experience providers –those that will help you deliver the experience (Coach everyone involved, test-run)
- Step 7: Think about marketing positioning (for everyone or niche, customized)
- Step 8: Set the selling price (You can add a premium for the experience based on perceived worth to customers.)
- Step 9: Marketing and communication
- Step 10: Prepare the team and pilot the experience
- Step 11: Deliver and evaluate the experience.

THESE DESTINATIONS HAVE CREATED EXTENSIVE EXPERIENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Canada and it's provinces with the Canadian Tourism Experiences Toolkit. A nationwide program to integrate experiences unique to each region and destination.
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Shreveport, Louisiana
- Columbus, Ohio
- The state of Maine

VERMONT ATTRACTIONS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENTIAL EXPERIENCES...



Lake Champlain
**MARITIME
MUSEUM**



Montshire
Museum of Science



®

The Village Peddler
East Arlington, VT

