

FRONTENAC COUNTY

5-YEAR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

APRIL 2022



Acknowledgement

Frontenac County acknowledges that we are situated on the territories of many nations, including the Algonquin, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Highland Water Métis, Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, Snimikobi Algonquin First Nation and Ardoch First Nation.

As settlers, we are grateful that our ancestors were welcomed by Indigenous Peoples who are the original tour guides of this land. We express our gratitude for the environmental stewardship of First Nations and Metis peoples, which is the reason residents and visitors have this beautiful land to enjoy today. We are also thankful for the continued care, knowledge and cultures of the Indigenous and Métis communities that enrich the fabric of the region.

Frontenac County is committed to honouring Indigenous Peoples and moving forward will be mindful of listening and learning from the stories and knowledge they share.



Commitment

The Destination Development Plan was developed as a road map for our community that offers guiding principles around tourism in Frontenac County for the next 5 years. It includes a collaborative approach across all sectors and aligns tourism, community, economic development, and government priorities. It provides a strategy to increase sustainable destination competitiveness, visitor spend, and optimize overall quality of life for all residents.

This plan builds on the 2017 Accommodation Review and Strategy for Growth, the 2015 Charter for Economic Development in the Frontenacs, and recommendations from numerous meaningful conversations with local businesses and ambassadors throughout the region.

To implement this plan, Frontenac County will seek to balance tourism investment and increased visitation to the region with the objective of sustaining the pristine nature of the environment and the small scale of our communities. Sustainable tourism development is about building community and finding opportunities to collaborate, overcoming the distances and differences between our diverse community elements.

Tourism has been an important industry in Frontenac County for many years, and interest in our region has continued to increase. This Plan will set the foundation for our communities to support this interest and to continue to welcome visitors in a sustainable and managed way.

Frontenac County is committed to making space and engaging with the Indigenous community across all strategies outlined in the Destination

Development Plan. Frontenac County is committed to listening, learning, understanding, and amplifying the stories of the Indigenous community, while incorporating Indigenous ways of understanding the world and interacting with it. Through this commitment, the County will create opportunities for connections, experiences and understanding for all that engage with this region. Frontenac County will seek the leadership and knowledge of Indigenous residents, partners, and visitors for tourism initiatives in our region.

The implementation of this Plan includes strengthening the connection with all areas impacted by tourism, such as nearby First Nations, waterfront communities, attractions, and the many small businesses that seek to benefit from additional visitation to our region.

Continued consultation and areas for collaboration will be critical to the success of bringing our communities together to ensure a sustainable destination. Having a thorough plan is the first step to success.

Richard Allen
Manager of Economic Development
County of Frontenac



FRONTENAC



Steering Committee

The Steering Committee for the Frontenac County Destination Development Plan provided critical guidance and support throughout the entire project. The following community members provided thoughtful leadership, an inclusive vision, and invaluable contributions to develop the final strategic framework.

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Township of Central Frontenac

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Inclusive Voices / Lodge Pole Arts

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My Old Cher

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Township of South Frontenac

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Introduction

3 Directives / 6 Guiding Principles

The Frontenac County Destination Development Plan is a 5-year strategic road map that balances the needs of local residents and tourism businesses. Its primary purpose is to establish Frontenac County as a viable tourism destination by focusing on three key directives to inform all strategic decision-making:

- **Increase year-round revenue for small businesses involved in tourism**
- **Identify high-level strategies for the County to lead tourism and destination development in collaboration with industry and community partners**
- **Improve environmental sustainability and diversity, equity and inclusion**

The process to develop a strategic framework to accomplish the above was based on hundreds of hours of community engagement during 2021/22, facilitated by the MMGY NextFactor project team. Elected officials, industry stakeholders, community leaders and residents across all four Townships provided extensive input about where they saw the greatest opportunities for developing the tourism industry. Naturally, community members shared many diverse perspectives and priorities, but there were six overarching principles that most people agreed upon. That provided a common ground to help inform the development of this Plan.

1. Align the four Townships around common themes

This Plan was envisioned through the perspective of the visitor, who doesn't see municipal boundaries, to increase the benefits of visitor spending for as many residents as possible. It wasn't developed to provide a strategic framework for each individual Township. Rather, the Plan identifies common lifestyle passions and travel experiences that will encourage visitors to explore Frontenac County based on their personal interests. Those passions include: outdoor recreation and wellbeing; arts, culture and heritage; and culinary experiences. A County-wide perspective that targets individual personas helps engage consumers more effectively, and it helps disperse travellers beyond the most popular destinations.

2. Every strategy should benefit all visitors and locals

From the conception of this project, the foundation for all decision making was that every recommendation in the Plan had to benefit the vast majority of locals as much as visitors. Every goal and initiative in the strategic framework is designed to enhance local quality of life and

quality of place first and foremost, which then provides an elevated destination experience for visitors. During the community engagement process, residents and local business owners were very clear on this point — across all sociocultural and economic segments — that they should be co-creators of how their communities evolve.

3. Optimize clusters of existing infrastructure and community networks

This Plan does not recommend any significant capital expenditures to develop large-scale infrastructure projects. Instead, the goal is to optimize the existing infrastructure and industry ecosystem. That includes the many trails that connect the County, local events that already attract external tourism dollars, and the networks of existing businesses and community organizations that will benefit from increased promotion. Future investments in tourism development should capitalize on where the public and private sector are already investing to help support those initiatives and accelerate ongoing community and business development.

4. Weave an Indigenous narrative throughout the Plan

Indigenous tourism will not be identified as a standalone theme. Rather, there are many opportunities to tell First Nations stories throughout the Plan, because Indigenous cultures are the foundation for how locals and visitors navigate and experience Frontenac County and area today. It is also imperative that Indigenous stories be told by Indigenous Peoples. The travel and tourism industry today continues to evolve as a platform for connecting a more diverse scope of community members. Therefore, there is a priority to ensure the Plan includes a variety of perspectives and serves as an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between the local Indigenous communities and Frontenac County.

5. Maintain what makes Frontenac County special

Residents emphasized they don't want the County to become over-commercialized. The Townships enjoy a quality of life that makes them somewhat unique from busier, tourism-centric communities in other neighbouring counties. The long-term quality of the dense forests, pristine lakes and life-sustaining watershed are of paramount importance, as well. It is always a challenge to balance responsible and sustainable economic growth in ways that support the needs of business owners and the people they employ, while mitigating potential negative impacts on the environment and social fabric. That is why it was critical to ensure that all recommendations in this Plan about tourism development were based on an aggregate of community input.

6. Define the Frontenac County brand narrative

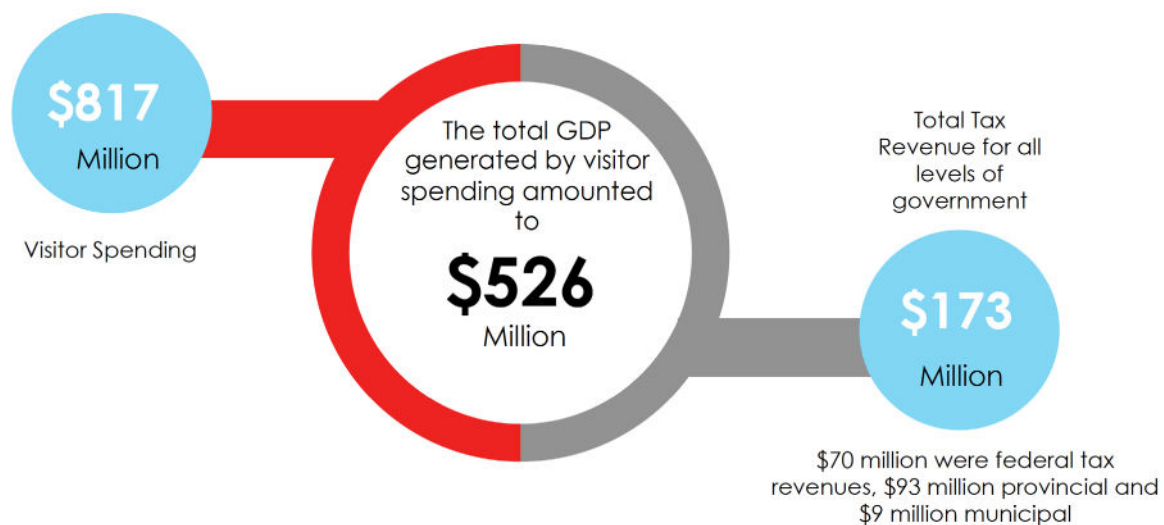
Frontenac County doesn't have a dedicated tourism department, although there are two Regional Tourism Offices that promote different parts of Frontenac County. Presently, the region lacks a defined brand narrative that captures its identity, values and spirit. This Plan should help to begin defining the destination's brand story by identifying the priorities of the community and local tourism leaders to inform marketing strategy.

State of the Industry

In 2019, visitors spent \$817 million in the South Eastern Ontario tourism region — a group of mostly rural communities and small towns that skirt St. Lawrence River between Kingston and Montreal. Regional Tourism Organization #9 (RTO 9) oversees tourism promotion for South Eastern Ontario, which includes marketing South Frontenac and the Frontenac Islands to domestic and international visitors. The Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organisation (RTO 11) is responsible for tourism promotion efforts in North Frontenac and Central Frontenac.

According to RTO 9, total GDP generated by visitor spending in 2019 was \$526 million. Additionally, tourism-based revenue delivered \$93 million to the Provincial tax base and \$9 million to local municipalities. Those numbers are the most recent pre-Covid-19, which provide the best baseline for determining long-term projections.

The County of Frontenac is focusing more intentionally on how to capitalize on that economic activity, as witnessed by the creation of this Destination Development Plan. The overarching goal is to increase the County's market share of South Eastern Ontario's visitor economy to support small business development.





Aligning Local & Regional Strategy

One key priority for this Plan was to align the tourism development strategies with existing planning initiatives at the provincial level. By doing so, Frontenac County can build on, and benefit from, the larger jurisdictions' significant ongoing investments in key tourism segments based on visitors' lifestyle interests.

For example, Destination Ontario oversees tourism development and destination marketing for the province. The organization outlined five Product Spotlights in its 2022/23 Ontario Market strategy, including: Outdoors, Wellness Retreats, Food & Drink, Family Attractions, and Arts & Culture.

Three of the four primary objectives in this Plan are aligned with three of Destination Ontario's priority areas focusing on outdoor recreation, culinary, and arts and culture.

Likewise, Kingston's existing tourism development strategy can help inform how Frontenac County increases its portion of the lucrative visitor economy in South Eastern Ontario.

Tourism Kingston developed an Integrated Destination Strategy in 2018, in collaboration with the City of Kingston and Kingston Accommodation Partners. A key part of the strategy focuses on leveraging the city's youthful energy to expand its cultural, culinary and entertainment assets.

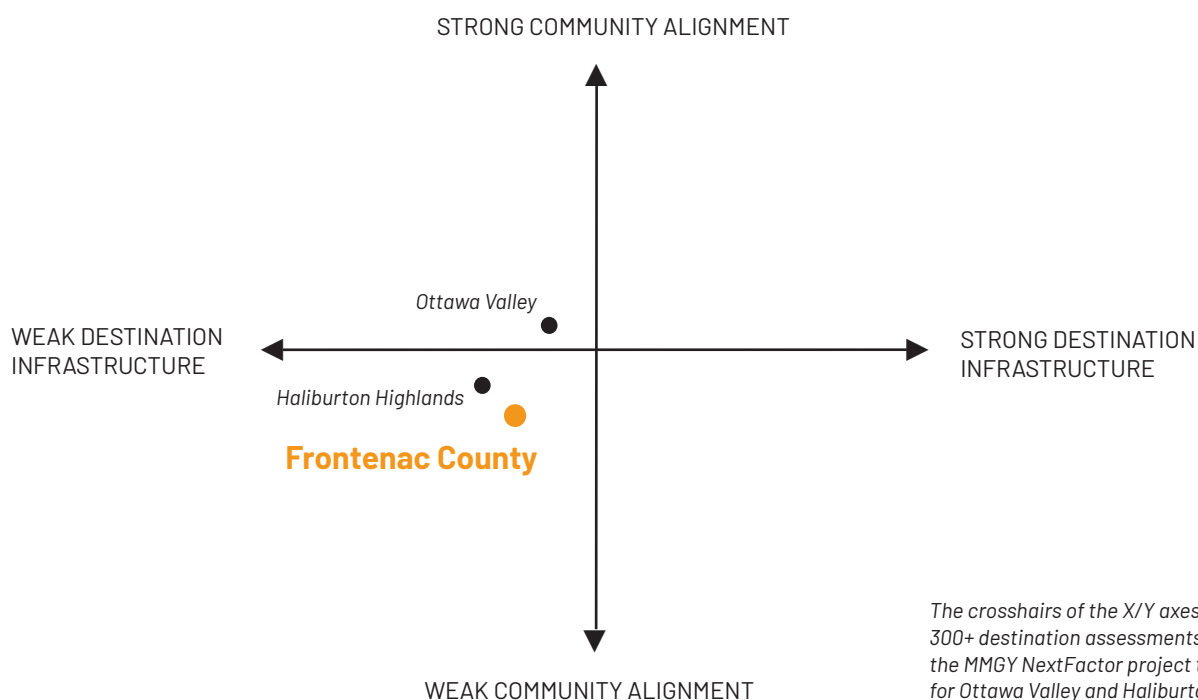
Culture and culinary-based tourism are often most effective at increasing average visitor spending during off-peak seasons. As Tourism Kingston expands those tourism segments, that increases opportunities for Kingston visitors to extend their stays and explore similar experiences throughout Frontenac County.

Destination Assessment & Community Engagement

The development of the Frontenac County Destination Development Plan engaged many community and industry leaders throughout the year-long process to ensure the widest breadth of input and collaboration as possible.

Destination Assessment

The project began in Q1 2021 when MMGY NextFactor conducted a comprehensive destination assessment survey with local elected officials, community leaders and industry stakeholders. The survey asked participants to rank the overall strength of the destination's infrastructure and the level of community alignment around 20 key variables. The data was aggregated and plotted in the scenario model below comparing Frontenac County against a national industry average. The County plotted lower than the industry baselines for community alignment and destination infrastructure, which is not surprising considering the relative newness of tourism being recognized as a major economic development engine. The results are also close with similar destinations nearby. That initial insight from the data provided the empirical foundation and general direction to begin developing the Plan.



The crosshairs of the X/Y axes is the average of 300+ destination assessments conducted by the MMGY NextFactor project team. The plots for Ottawa Valley and Haliburton Highlands are shown for comparison purposes.



Community Engagement

Following the destination assessment, the County of Frontenac Planning & Economic Development office formed a Steering Committee to guide the direction of the project. The group was comprised of public, private and civic stakeholders from the four Townships that comprise the County. The committee members were instrumental during the development of the Plan to ensure that all perspectives in the County were represented as much as possible.

The County and Steering Committee also assembled a comprehensive selection of community members to provide input on the Plan. More than 100 individuals participated in 1-on-1 interviews, focus groups, workshops, and town halls facilitated online by the MMGY NextFactor team. The following is an overview of the various community audiences who contributed valuable insight that shaped the strategies in this Plan.

Focus Groups & Workshops

- **Steering Committee (multiple)**
- **Accommodations**
- **Arts, Culture & Heritage**
- **Community Youth**
- **Food & Beverage**
- **Lake Associations**
- **Outdoor Recreation**
- **Sharbot Lake**
- **Wolfe Island**
- **2 Resident Town Halls**

1-on-1 Interviews

- **Government Leaders**
- **Economic Development**
- **First Nations**
- **Accommodations**
- **Short-Term Rentals**
- **Arts, Culture & Heritage**
- **Events & Festivals**
- **Food & Beverage**
- **Outdoor Recreation**
- **Regional Tourism Organizations**

13 Key Takeaways

Feedback from the Community

Hundreds of hours of community engagement with local residents and business stakeholders identified many different opportunities and challenges related to tourism development strategy in the next five years. These are the big themes that residents and industry leaders keyed in on, which provide a structured approach for developing and prioritizing the actionable strategies in this Plan.

1. Develop tourism strategy to increase visitor spending in anchor communities, which support ongoing local development initiatives that residents deem important.

The goal is to pool resources and cluster economic and tourism development investments. Also, from a promotional standpoint, those anchor communities can be connected as a series of vibrant hub-and-spoke networks to give visitors a visual road map to explore the County.

2. The four Townships have very different priorities, opportunities, challenges and visitor experiences.

Therefore, a one-size-fits-all tourism development and marketing strategy will not be effective. All of the Townships, however, can benefit from increased product development and marketing that highlights common lifestyle themes, which can be customized for each community.

3. The Trans Canada Trail network (including the K&P Trail) provides an established cross-County infrastructure to anchor and cluster investment opportunities.

The trails network is also an excellent platform for storytelling to elevate the destination brand, and it provides a compass and map to help locals and visitors navigate the County. That will require better wayfinding, including trail head markers and directional signage.

4. Government and locals want to maintain the County's quiet, natural appeal.

However, the region is undergoing rapid change with increasing numbers of new resident and visitor volumes exacerbating high-season spikes. To address that, the County can develop tools and materials to educate visitors and new residents about the values of the community.

5. It is critical to manage growth in a responsible way with the surge of visitors and new residents (and their impacts such as increased lake traffic) accelerated by Covid-19.

That will require a long-term sustainable tourism and development strategy that connects public and private sustainability organizations, and leverages their collective data.



6. There is a lack of full-service and four-season visitor accommodations.

Some of the challenges to provide an enabling environment for investment in lodging include: A lack of commercially developable land and public utilities; opposition to adjusting zoning and land use policy; and uneven seasonal visitor demand.

7. Some of the biggest challenges for visitors are very basic, but not all are easy to solve.

Challenges include a lack of: Comprehensive and up-to-date content about tourism businesses and experiences; wayfinding and signage; and basic public amenities. All of those are necessary to support community development and increase visitor spending.

8. There is widespread support for communicating Indigenous stories and strengthening the relationship between Frontenac County and the Indigenous Community.

That begins by collaborating with the official provincial and federal Indigenous tourism organizations (ITO/ITAC) across all aspects of the visitor experience. However, that is just a starting point for listening and understanding. This Plan also recognizes the many First Nations organizations at the community level, which must have influence on how tourism strategy is developed in their respective lands.

“*All of the pieces of the puzzle are here to develop tourism. We’ve been putting them face up for the last few years. Now we need to connect them.*”

— Resident of Frontenac County

9. Prioritize and promote three primary tourism development opportunities.

The three are: Outdoor Recreation, including waterways, lakes, trails and conservation areas; Culinary, including agritourism and artisan tours; and Arts, Culture & Heritage. Each should include an exploration into how they can be further developed with an Indigenous lens.

10. There is consensus that businesses across Frontenac County benefit from developing and promoting more diverse experiences for families and younger travellers.

Part of that includes collecting better data and business intelligence to define consumer markets more specifically for each Township.

11. There is significant opportunity and value for Lake Associations to share information.

This includes sharing research and messaging at a County-wide level, and working more closely with small businesses in their regions.

12. There are different perspectives among residents regarding how to manage the growth of short-term rentals.

There are concerns about short-term rentals and the impacts of their apparent increase in the region — both on the community and the overall housing market. Many Townships are investigating how to manage and/or regulate this growth.

13. There is widespread consensus that Frontenac County needs a dedicated tourism resource to optimize the visitor experience.

An established tourism department or County personnel will provide numerous benefits with clear return on investment. Those include promotion and brand development, new small business development, and acting as a liaison between industry and residents.



Strategic Framework

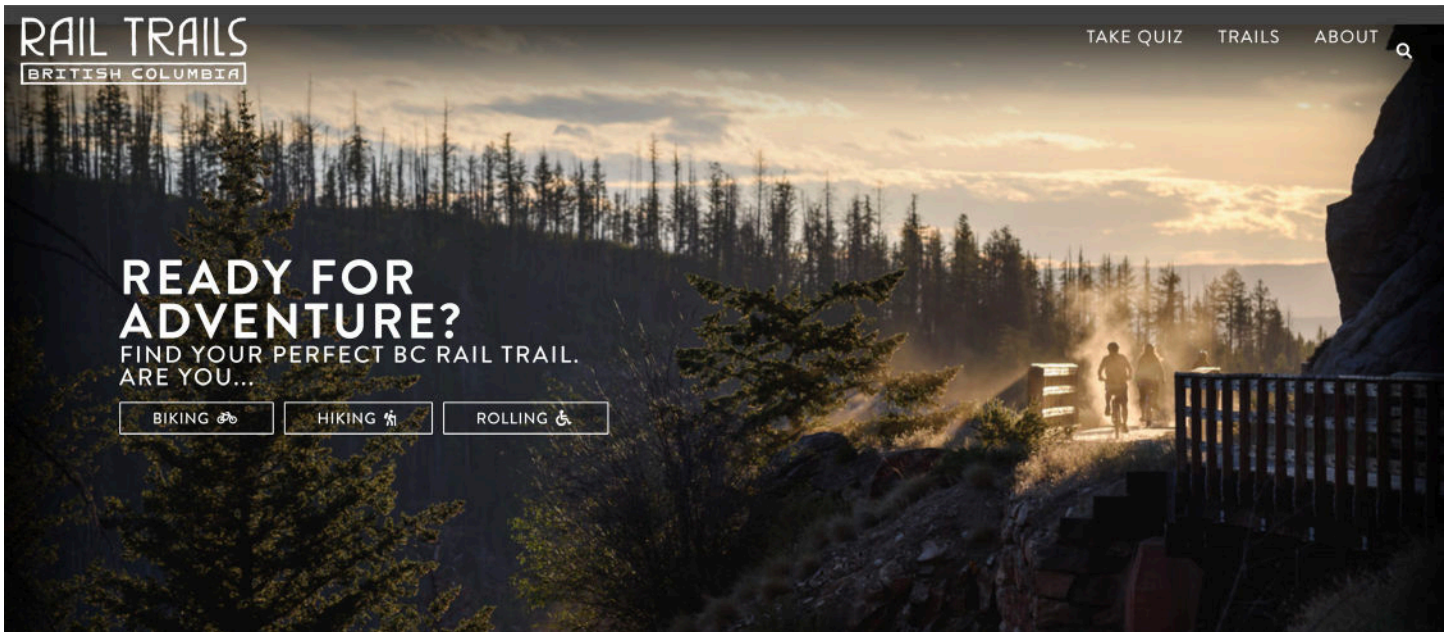
The four primary goals and actionable strategies in the Frontenac County Destination Development Plan present a shared vision for the future of all communities that host visitors. Together, they create a long-term road map for how the County balances the needs of local residents and industry stakeholders.

That includes all residents and stakeholders. The long-term vision for this Plan is to continually look for opportunities to connect with the Indigenous community for representation, collaboration, input, and/or partnership. At the same time, there was a conscious decision at the beginning of the Plan's development to not tack on "Indigenous Tourism" as a standalone theme off to the side. Rather, every element of this strategic framework provides opportunities to include First Nations businesses and organizations. There are also specific strategies for improving how Indigenous communities and the County of Frontenac cultivate a stronger relationship and identify shared opportunities in the future.

The four primary goals below are interrelated. The first goal emphasizes the need to develop a tourism entity with dedicated personnel at the County level to steward tourism development. The subsequent goals focus on optimizing three specific travel lifestyle segments: outdoor recreation; arts, culture and heritage; and culinary.

4 Primary Goals

- 1. Establish a dedicated tourism resource to promote local small businesses and optimize the visitor experience**
- 2. Develop and promote a trail-based, sustainable outdoor recreation ecosystem to help locals and visitors navigate the County**
- 3. Support local organizations and communities that promote the County's diverse identity, arts, culture and heritage**
- 4. Develop a County-wide culinary experience and educational road map that celebrates local producers and sustainable supply chains**




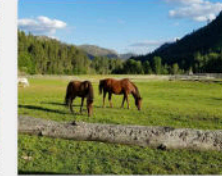



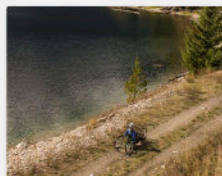

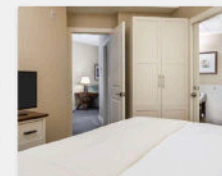
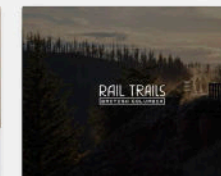
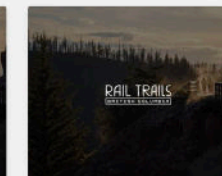


Tourism Trails = Travel Experience Networks

The #2, #3 and #4 goals are based on developing “tourism trails” to encourage travel throughout the County. They are an effective destination development strategy that links a variety of similarly-themed small businesses to create a robust network of travel experiences.

Together, they provide an easily navigable map to guide visitors toward local businesses that cater to their personal interests. Tourism trails also:

- Provide an enabling environment to spur economic development among the private sector in both new and established destinations
- Help disperse visitors into new areas beyond crowded tourism areas
- Encourage new business partnerships among a wide spectrum of entrepreneurs across all backgrounds and ethnicities
- Increase repeat visitation for people who want to return at a later date to complete other parts of a trail
- Provide opportunities for small businesses in remote areas to access a broader audience and increase annual revenue
- Support the development of high-impact travel content that enhances a destination's brand narrative
- Provide an easy way to develop travel itineraries and packages that help sell (and upsell) a destination
- Support small businesses during off-peak seasons, because culinary and arts/culture trails are not as seasonal or weather dependent as other activities
- Provide opportunities for local, regional and provincial tourism and non-tourism organizations to collaborate and co-fund content and marketing initiatives
- Provide a platform for 3rd-party app developers and data management companies to collect and share business intelligence with industry partners, elected officials and community leaders

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 <p>Hotels, Campgrounds & Rv Parks PARK LANE RESORT & MOTEL Christina Lake, BC (250) 447-9385 parklane-resort.ca</p>	 <p>KOOTENAY ADAPTIVE SPORT 409 Broadway Street, NAKUSP Info@KootenayAdaptive.com KootenayAdaptive.com</p>	 <p>SACRED RIDE 213B Baker Street, NELSON 1-250-354-3831 Info@SacredRide.ca SacredRide.ca</p>	 <p>Hotels SUMMERLAND WATERFRONT RESORT & SPA Summerland, BC (250) 494-8180 info@summerlandresorthotel.com summerlandresorthotel.com</p>	 <p>Food Provider ROCK CREEK TRADING POST Rock Creek Tripadvisor Reviews 250-449-8333 rockcreekcoffee@outlook.com</p>	 <p>Wineries & Wine Tours DEEP ROOTS WINERY Naramata, BC (250) 460-2390 deeprootswinery.com</p>

BCRailTrails.com connects visitors with local small businesses, including Indigenous-operated travel providers.

There are countless examples of successful tourism trails that anchor networks of small businesses in outdoor recreation; arts, culture and heritage; and culinary tourism.

For outdoor recreation, the British Columbia Rail Trails initiative (*above photo and previous page*) is an excellent case study. Local, regional and provincial tourism organizations co-invested in infrastructure upgrades to convert old railway corridors into biking and hiking trails. They also co-funded the development of sophisticated online mapping platforms with extensive content highlighting tourism-related small businesses.

That includes Indigenous-operated travel providers, as well as companies that cater to people with all levels of physical ability and other underserved communities. Furthermore, the platform provides extensive data to track

consumer engagement and fine-tune marketing strategies.

The Prince Edward Island Arts & Heritage Trail is a good case study for expanding cultural tourism to support local artists, makers, performers and various related organizations. Travellers can explore the online portal by geography or specific types of cultural experiences, including Heritage, Performing Arts and Visual Arts.

And in North Carolina, the award-winning Neck of the Woods Local Flavor Trail divides culinary tourism experiences into six categories: wineries and vineyards, craft breweries, farm-to-table dining, farm tours, farmers markets, and local products. The initiative has been highly effective at encouraging visitors in some of the state's popular cities to explore deeper into rural areas to meet with local growers and vendors.



Primary Goals & Strategies

Goal #1

Establish a dedicated tourism resource to promote local small businesses and optimize the visitor experience

The visitor economy in Frontenac County has reached a level of maturity in recent years that warrants dedicated personnel to oversee its future. The #2, #3 and #4 primary goals in this Plan are designed to optimize outside investment and visitor spending in the region. To direct those efforts effectively, some type of dedicated tourism resource should be in place to lead or co-lead initiatives, track outcomes, engage community organizations and industry partners, and report back to elected officials and the general public.

Presently, two regional tourism organizations — RTO 9 and RTO 11 — promote Frontenac County directly to the consumer, and everything in the Plan is aligned with and designed to supplement their strategies. A new tourism entity would work directly with those RTOs, but it would also have a more on-the-ground mandate and be exclusively focused on tourism and destination development in Frontenac County.

Tourism development is economic development. Visitor spending is foreign direct investment from outside the County that stays within the local communities. Therefore, there is direct return on investment for funding dedicated tourism resources and personnel, in terms of increasing the County's tax base, increasing employment, and increasing revenue for small businesses.

Additionally, long-term data to identify the economic impact of tourism specifically in Frontenac County is presently in short supply. A newly established tourism entity will also be

responsible for collecting and disseminating the necessary tourism-related business intelligence to support small business planning and public sector decision-making.

More than anything else, the priority for a dedicated tourism resource is to be a bridge between local residents, government, businesses, organizations, and domestic and international visitors. The Frontenac County Destination Development Plan is the first step toward optimizing how all of those audiences work together to develop a shared vision for the future.

Looking ahead, it is imperative for experienced tourism industry professionals to ensure that this is a living document that will benefit local communities for the next five years.

Goal #1

Strategic Initiatives

A. Hire personnel to steward all the elements in the Frontenac County Destination Development Plan

- Engage directly with community members, small businesses, and regional and provincial tourism partners
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities
- Develop travel packaging with industry partners
- Share data/business intelligence, industry information and progress
- Access tourism resources and funding
- Manage community portals and public forums

B. Align tourism and event development strategy with existing community and economic development initiatives

- Invest in wayfinding and public amenities to improve the destination experience for locals and visitors
- Leverage tourism to support Main Street improvement initiatives
- Develop strategy to address lack of year-round accommodations

C. Establish a consumer-facing, visitor-friendly tourism website as a central hub for promoting travel-related businesses, experiences and events

- Invest in data management tools to optimize marketing efforts
- Develop various formats of consumer travel content for all channels
- Develop community-facing content to educate residents about tourism

D. Enhance promotional partnerships within Frontenac County and with domestic and international source markets

- Collaborate with Tourism Kingston to encourage city visitors to explore rural areas
- Educate local industry suppliers about business strategy
- Host media and travel trade familiarization trips

Goal #2

Develop and promote a trail-based, sustainable outdoor recreation ecosystem to help locals and visitors navigate the County

There is an extensive network of trails and outdoor recreation opportunities in Frontenac County. These include almost 200 kilometers of converted railways, three provincial parks, an island beach getaway, and hundreds of lakes with endless shorelines. The County has been a leader in trails development over the past two decades, improving the trails system and celebrating the connection between trail and community. The purpose of this strategy is to leverage the trails network as a lens to help visitors discover experiences and attractions throughout the County.

Trails provide more than just outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, biking, off-roading, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, horse riding, etc. They also represent the geographical and socioeconomic backbone of the County throughout its history, which has attracted explorers and entrepreneurs for generations who forged communities and built businesses out of the wilderness.

There is a certain legacy imbued in the trails' history that should be celebrated with locals and visitors alike.

Today, there is ongoing foundational work to enhance trail infrastructure with initiatives such as those outlined in the K&P Trail Management Plan 2021. To support tourism development in alignment with trail upgrades, there should also be supplementary content and mapping platforms to encourage residents and visitors to explore deeper into the County for longer periods of time.

Some considerations for content development:

- “Rail Trail” branding and promotion is especially effective in telling the destination story by embracing the spirit of adventure and romance that the trails evoke
- Collaborate with partners to share Indigenous history and elevate the trail experience by highlighting how the original hosts of the land developed the earliest routes
- Focus on sustainability and the balance between man and nature to promote a trail experience that prioritizes healthy living

The County has a role in bringing together relevant stakeholders to maintain the quality of the watershed and wildlife as more people use the trails. It is anticipated that Frontenac County will continue to grow in the coming decade. The County should develop the necessary networks to pool information to update businesses and residents about the health of the environment.

Goal #2

Strategic Initiatives

A. Create dedicated industry content, mapping and consumer storytelling to inventory and promote County trails network, events and experiences

- Develop and curate related travel itineraries and packages
- Expand social media and user-generated content tools to help people imagine and book outdoor recreation and adventure travel
- Collaborate with 3rd-party tech companies that specialize in digital mapping for hiking and biking trails

B. Further develop and promote a branded “Rail Trails” network to help locals and visitors navigate the County

- Engage neighbouring counties and regional/provincial partners to support the development of Rail Trails-related content and marketing initiatives
- Support the development of educational content about the ancestral First Nations history of trails
- Work with local service associations to enhance trails, i.e., branded benches, gazebos, etc.
- Explore options for catering to the exponential rise in demand for e-bikes and other forms of e-mobility

C. Develop a public-private environmental sustainability taskforce to help steward sustainable tourism development

- Provide a County-level information hub for pooling and sharing sustainability data, including visitor tracking
- Develop educational materials to help locals and visitors travel more responsibly

Goal #3

Support local organizations communities that promote the County's diverse identity, arts, culture and heritage

Communities aren't just something we have. They're something we do. All of the towns and villages across Frontenac County have evolved over generations based on how people came together to live, work, visit, trade and share ideas. It is how we interpret place that defines our identity, and that identity is often communicated most powerfully through a community's arts, culture and heritage.

Of the four primary goals in this Plan, this one in particular requires a County-wide commitment to strengthen the relationship between municipal governments and the Indigenous community. The first step is identifying processes for listening to Indigenous communities more intentionally than in the past. Conversations with First Nations representatives during the development of this Plan emphasized that acknowledgements of the past require deliberate action in the future.

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) have the resources to help inform tourism development in Frontenac County through the history and culture of First Nations. According to ITAC: "Indigenous tourism is Reconciliation in action." Today, there is growing interest across Canada to elevate tourism as a platform for social progress more intentionally. Frontenac County is well-positioned to be part of the process.

More generally speaking, the County is home to an impressive and diverse community of local artisans, makers, performers, historians and other

members of the arts, culture and heritage sector in every Township. There has been significant work to develop artisan/maker tours, which have been successful in attracting visitors to destinations all sizes. However, the feedback from the community engagement process was that there needs to be an organized way for the arts, culture and heritage community to better connect, pool their resources, cross-promote each other, and develop new business partnerships.

To help steward that, the County could consider supporting the development of a new Arts, Culture and Heritage organization comprised of leaders across the public, private and civic sectors. Such a group would connect governments, the tourism industry, arts and culture organizations and the academic sector to map out related assets, businesses and organizations to develop new events and experiences.

There are many local creative people who are eager to work with the tourism industry, but it's up to the County to help bring them together to share their collective voice with the world.

Goal #3

Strategic Initiatives

A. Create dedicated industry content, mapping and consumer storytelling to inventory and promote arts, culture and heritage-related businesses, experiences and events

- Develop and curate related travel itineraries and packages
- Expand social media and user-generated content efforts to help people imagine and book arts, culture and heritage travel

B. Develop an Arts, Culture & Heritage organization to pool the collective resources of the public, private and non-profit sectors

- Collaborate with educational institutions and civic sector organizations to support the County's arts and maker communities
- Collaborate with regional, provincial and national Indigenous organizations (eg. ITO, ITAC) to celebrate Indigenous community members in arts, culture and heritage

C. Identify processes to engage with First Nations and other Indigenous communities

- Establish regular connections with Indigenous leaders to strengthen relationships with local tourism leaders
- Support the development of Indigenous tourism experiences, and integrate an Indigenous voice into existing travel experiences where appropriate with the help of public and private sector partners

D. Collaborate with the travel industry and Indigenous organizations to offer opportunities for training and awareness around the Truth & Reconciliation Report

- This is a long-term strategy but there is a new crop of tourism leaders nationally who are eager to leverage industry networks and resources to advance Reconciliation

Goal #4

Develop a County-wide culinary experience and educational road map that celebrates local producers and sustainable supply chains

Everyone is a foodie these days, and every destination has something to offer related to culinary tourism. Our food systems are a direct portal into the history and culture of any given region, which provide a wealth of content and programming opportunities to engage both locals and visitors.

Ontario has long been at the forefront of leveraging chefs, farmers, vendors and the entire supply chain to drive economic development in small towns and rural communities.

Based in Ontario, the Culinary Tourism Alliance offers an incredible wealth of business intelligence and unique programs like “FEAST: Growing Indigenous Food Tourism in Ontario.” The initiative was developed by Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO), who worked with partners across the province to create a 5-year plan to strategically advance the Indigenous food tourism sector.

Another program, Ontario’s Artisan Food & Beverage Region (FAB) is a unique economic development initiative by the Frontenac Community Futures Development Corporation. Its mission is to help entrepreneurs launch and operate an artisanal food and/or beverage business. The initiative provides a robust platform for building capacity in culinary tourism.

Frontenac County is also home to a growing series of grassroots organizations that are developing local, sustainable farming projects with an

educational component to share with locals and visitors. These efforts continue to expand the popularity of agritourism and artisan food providers. The County has an opportunity to unite these organizations to elevate knowledge sharing and increase outcomes for all partners involved.

Traditionally, tourism website pages themed around food and beverage drive some of the highest online engagement numbers, with the longest average reading times. The value of good video, written and visual content can’t be overestimated.

Today, the food-obsessed visitor, and even the merely culinary-curious traveller, are interested in much more than just restaurants. This consumer demographic is delineated by more than a dozen different passion themes, which Frontenac County can capitalize on. Food and wine/beer/cider festivals, farmers markets, artisan tours, farm stays and tours, specialty grocers and cooking classes, etc., are just a few of the purchase triggers that need related content to optimize visitor engagement and spending.

Goal #4

Strategic Initiatives

A. Create dedicated industry content, mapping and consumer storytelling to inventory and promote culinary tourism businesses, experiences and related events

- Develop and curate related travel itineraries and packages
- Develop specific “Buy Local” campaigns to promote small independent businesses
- Expand social media and user-generated content efforts to help people imagine and book arts, culture and heritage travel

B. Support the growth of the existing farm-to-table ecosystem to create new and innovative culinary tourism experiences

- Highlight Indigenous food traditions with dedicated content and events
- Increase investments in agritourism and brewery tourism, and develop educational materials to help more farms, breweries and related facilities become market-ready to service visitors professionally
- Develop dedicated educational and promotional materials to encourage private sector investment in culinary-themed businesses
- Highlight innovative food producers and sustainable growing collectives
- Develop gala culinary events

C. Collaborate with regional and Provincial organizations leading the food and beverage tourism industry, including the Culinary Tourism Alliance

- Support the growth of the farm-to-table ecosystem; encourage new partnerships with growers and tourism businesses; and develop new promotions and packages related to “Buy Local.”
- Leverage Ontario's Artisan Food & Beverage Region (FAB) program to increase and educate culinary tourism businesses



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