



## Experiential Tourism ... What is it?

*“A tourism product is what you buy . . . A tourism experience is what you remember”*

Source: Canadian Tourism Commission

### Authentic, meaningful, and memorable visitor experiences created by . . .

- making personal connections - physical, emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual
- engaging the senses - hear, feel, touch, taste, see
- being immersed in local places, culture, people & traditions
- storytelling – from locals & creating your own stories to share with others

### Delivered by . . .

- people in local areas that celebrate communities and places
- purposefully sequencing & staging activities, personal encounters & authentic experiences

### Designed to:

- create long lasting memories & customer loyalty

Source: Tourism Café

## Experiential Tourism ... How do I do it?

### 1. The event must be experiential: participative or interactive in some way

- a. Provide visitors with an opportunity to do as well as watch
- b. Provide visitors with an opportunity to learn and challenge themselves
- c. Use more than one interactive method or tool
- d. Think of three or four intriguing or potential activities that would interest guests. Remember, what maybe regular day to day activities for you may be exciting and new for your visitors.

*Example: Let visitors work with the bees at a honey farm, try on the beekeeper outfit and learn about how honey is made. Leave them with their own sample of honey to take home.*

## 2. It must be memorable: distinctive from the ordinary

- a. The more senses you engage, the more memorable the experience
- b. Provide tangible memorabilia

*Example: Let visitors see wine being made, try the wine making tools, smell the wine being made, taste the completed wine and hear the sounds of the winery. Give everyone a wine sample to take home.*

## 3. Personal: it must relate or be meaningful to the participants

- a. Focus on people- develop your story and your storytellers, be authentic
- b. Try to connect with every visitor on your farm
- c. Visitors want to connect with authentic, local people, they want to talk directly to the farmer
- d. Simpler activities, carefully planned, that focus on one or two main activities for visitors to take part in, are best.

*Example: Engage people at your U-pick by sharing your story about how you ended up on the farm and why you do what you do. Have your whole family there to tell their story and connect with all different visitors. Share your favorite family recipes and tips for picking fruit.*

## 4. Participants must be made to feel special

- a. Provide small group opportunities so visitors can interact with each other and have more hands-on opportunities
- b. Pay attention to the details
- c. Provide behind-the-scenes opportunities

*Example: Have visitors form teams to take on the corn maze and have them pick some corn throughout the maze to eat when they are completed. Let them BBQ the corn right on your farm to share with the group. Give them a behind the scenes look at how you came up with the maze for this year and why it is so challenging.*

## 5. Engage as many senses as possible, for as long as possible

*Example: Share the experience from start to finish of how that Alpaca sweater came to be. Let visitors try and shear the alpaca and turn the wool into yarn. Let them try on the alpaca sweater and give them some alpaca wool to take home. Share with them what makes a winning Alpaca!*

## 6. Ah Ha! Moments: it must have moments of revelation, provocation, or inspiration

- a. Implement some WOW aspects- local foods, talented storytellers, interactive learning, and a remarkable backdrop combined together create a powerful affect
- b. Incorporate the element of surprise

*Example: Make a special cake for those celebrating a birthday, have a special storyteller that can share the story of the farm with kids, share some interesting historical facts about the farm, dress as you would every day on the farm, and provide lots of opportunities for pictures.*

## 7. Develop a theme: do not just be a combination of facts and figures

- a. Work with your neighbors to develop a regional theme
- b. Keep it authentic

*Example: "Farming as a family", "Berries of Alberta", "The sweet tooth" etc.*

Sources: Peter Swain, Nancy Arsenault

# Experiential Tourism ... Who can help?

For more information contact the Open Farm Days team at (780) 427-2174 or email [info@albertaopenfarmdays.ca](mailto:info@albertaopenfarmdays.ca)