

Ag Tourism CLUSTER

AG TOURISM NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE AND BEYOND



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BRINGING ALBERTA TO YOU!

ER - YOUR MEASURE FOR SUCCESS

If your best measure of success is the fact that your ag tourism operation or cluster project is still in business, you may be in need of some “ER”! No, not Emergency Response, but perhaps as important to the ‘vitals’ of your ag tourism project is to continually EVALUATE AND REFLECT - “ER”.

You Cannot Manage What You Do Not Measure

How do you know if participating in an ag tourism cluster or project event is an effective use of your allocated time (Return on Effort) and money spent (Return on Investment)? Start by documenting your goals prior to an event and then reflect on your goals post event. What did you want to accomplish in your business by participating in the event and what did the group want to accomplish as a whole? For example, did you have 50% new customers and 25% return? Did you enhance your profile through media coverage? Or did your event partner with 3 new operators and keep 90% of the participating operators from last year?

You Survived Your Event, Now It's Time to Debrief

Debrief after the event to discuss if you accomplished your

goals. Adjust your goals for next season and reflect if your goals were realistic. To lay the foundation for next year's planning evaluate what worked well:

- The day of the event – i.e. effectiveness of event logistics
- The planning process leading up to the event
- Your post event strategy – i.e. visitor and operator feedback, final report

Take the time for “ER” – it will help your operation and cluster event to:

- Build credibility
- Communicate success
- Heighten ownership
- Document accomplishments
- Illuminate progress
- Identify problems

Visit <http://www.agtourism.ca> to download a template on Goal Setting and Evaluation

DON'T MISS THE BUS - GET OUTTA' TOWN

The Get Outta' Town promotion is sure to offer a unique experience for visitors this summer. The Lethbridge area cluster has evolved their summer event over the past 3 years and is excited about what 2008 has to offer.

The newest development in 2008 is the introduction of two different bus tours. Operators believe this will aid in scheduling of events and in tracking ticket sales prior to the event. Visitors will have the chance to sit back and enjoy the beautiful country scenery and not have to worry about navigating the country roads. A key aspect of the Get Outta' Town tour are the locally prepared meals. Friday's tour will feature a mouth watering buffet at Broxburn Café. Saturday's tour will incorporate a stop at the Wilson Hutterite Colony. Visitors will be able to tour the Colony's barns, workshops, and indulge in a tasty home-cooked lunch.

Marketing chief Allen Gibson says they are continually looking for “the perfect combination of elements that will capture the public's imagination and get lots of people out touring”. 2008 will showcase events including a cheese factory, a corn maze, a tractor and engine society as well as Broxburn Café and Vegetables. Operating on Friday, August 15 and Saturday, August 16, the Get Outta' Town tour mixes convenience with excitement in a promising way.



Contact: Allen Gibson at GOTLethbridge@shaw.ca

Aussi disponible en français.

INNOVATIVE MARKETING MADE EASY

A one day workshop geared toward farm direct marketers, ag tourism operators, farmers' market vendors and managers, and rural entrepreneurs. Get the marketing results you need without spending a fortune. Learn valuable & practical marketing and business concepts geared to increase your business immediately.

- March 11 - Camrose, call 780-679-5169
- March 18 - Grande Prairie, call 780-538-6208

TRAVEL ALBERTA'S REGIONAL MARKETING WORKSHOP SERIES

Free workshops are being held this winter in communities across Alberta on a wide array of marketing topics.

- Go to <http://www.industry.travelalberta.com> to check for workshops in your area, or contact Crystal Waldner at 780-423-6722 or crystal.waldner@travelalberta.com



GROWING RURAL TOURISM CONFERENCE

Join your tourism industry colleagues for an information-packed conference full of impressive key-note speakers, industry experts, informative sessions and panels, plus fabulous networking opportunities. Both educational and entertaining, this year's program will delve into key change areas being experienced throughout the tourism industry: Human Resources, Technology, Tourism Trends, Communication, Consumers.

- March 31-April 2, 2008
- Camrose Regional Exhibition
- For more information or to register go to <http://www.growingruraltourism.ca> or contact Colleen Reed at 1-800-296-8112



BRUNCH AT THE BEACH

Ag producers in Lacombe County have created a regional cuisine event sure to attract attention this summer. Brunch at the Beach will run on Saturday, August 16, 2008, and will be an opportunity for visitors to enjoy local foods while taking in the calming scenery at Gull Lake.

Organizers plan to pack this event with delicious product and elegant entertainment. A handful of local operators will be contributing product and the group is finalizing details with a local chef to prepare the meal. After enjoying the fine tastes of the area, visitors will be treated with a special guest speaker, a showcase featuring local producers and great entertainment. Combine all of that with the beautiful location and it holds promise to be an amazing event.

Michelle Pierson with the Lacombe Regional Cuisine group believes that Brunch at the Beach will attract those "who value shopping local and are health conscious of what they are putting into their bodies".

Contact: Michelle Pierson - piersonm@telusplanet.net

For tickets: Jeannette Jones – 403-782-0301 or Marcella Van Stryland - 403-784-3519.

For more information on Ag Tourism development in Alberta go to www.agtourism.ca
or contact an Ag-Info Centre New Venture Specialist at 310-FARM (3276)

OTHER CLUSTER PROJECTS TO BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR IN 2008:

Dames on the Range

A group of “Dames” in and around the Porcupine Hills area are crafting a vacation package for women from urban centres to experience life in the country – including landscape awareness, western lifestyle and rural appreciation. For more information contact Julie Walker at 403-933-4432.

Country Drive

Clustering of clusters is exactly what is happening in central Alberta. Recently two self-guided driving events – Country Drive (Red Deer & area) and Country Treasures (North Calgary) have joined together under ONE marketing campaign. They are in the midst of creating a new website that will act as the centerpiece for all their marketing efforts for the upcoming tourist season. Keep an eye on <http://www.countrydrive.ca> as things progress.



Visit Edmonton's Countryside

The Edmonton Regional Tourism Group (ERTG) was recently awarded a \$1.23 M grant over 3 years from the Alberta Rural Development Fund. This funding will allow for further enhancement and expansion of ag tourism and rural tourism efforts (Country Soul Stroll, Visit the Country, etc) in the greater Edmonton area. For more information contact Penny Frazier at 780-921-3219.

Open Gates on 28

A group of operators called “Open Gates on 28” are serving muffins at the Smoky Lake Farmers' Market at their Easter weekend market. The muffins will be made with local ingredients from Open Gates on 28 farms including wild blueberries, carrots, zucchini, rhubarb, honey and jam. This event will be a great opportunity for the public to meet the operators and learn more about their farms. For more information contact Elaine Breadon-Peiche at 780-383-2202.

Kalya Culinary Project

A group of operators in the Vegreville area have banded together to put on a regional cuisine event in conjunction with the Vegreville Fair in early August. Stay tuned for more information as things progress. For more information contact Tina Hunt at 780-998-7184.

CLUSTERING OF CLUSTERS

An action packed day was held on January 22 as representatives from each of the Alberta's 12 ag tourism cluster projects gathered for a “meet and greet.” Cluster coordinators and project champions shared smart practices (i.e. ways your project can become sustainable) and project learnings (i.e. always double check your map proofs!).

Staff from Alberta Agriculture and Food, and Travel Alberta were on hand to discuss resources that may assist cluster events and projects such as listing an event in the Travel Alberta Directory (TIS), partnering with Dine Alberta and learning more about tools available through www.agtourism.ca (ie. Tools for Tracking, Goal Setting Template, Regional Cuisine handout and Planning an Interactive Showcase).

Germinating ideas, questions and discussions included:

- Narrowing down and redefining a project's focus.
- Creating brochures, maps and print documents that have appeal and make sense to the customer.
- Technology – driving traffic to websites and if so, will your market find you online?
- Overcoming the geographic burden – creating packaged tours and unique day trips.
- Sponsorship – why investors are interested in giving dollars and donations.
- Measuring success – Evaluate and Reflect.
- Challenges and opportunities of creating and maintaining successful ag tourism promotions.

Although time and space was limited to only a handful of participants, we're confident that those in attendance will take back key learnings and share their enthusiasm, contacts and knowledge with their cluster projects.

If you would like more information on the January 22nd meeting contact Carmen Andrew, 403-340-5542 or carmen.andrew@gov.ab.ca

Investor Spotlight

The County of Lac St. Anne's Community Enhancement Fund was created to support community based programming within the area. Initially it was formed voluntarily by local gravel companies and has since become a mandatory levee payment to ensure ongoing community support. Many local groups have benefited from this resource.

In 2007, the Rural Rendezvous project was a successful recipient of funding through this community based resource. The Community Enhancement Fund of Lac St. Anne sees the Rural Rendezvous project as a positive partnership, increasing the general awareness of the local amenities resulting in an increase in agri-based tourism in their local area.

Trista Poffenroth, from the Community Enhancement Fund, says the general cross-section partnership involving a variety of tourist based businesses and organizations, rather than each individually working

on their own is an attractive feature of the Rural Rendezvous.

Carolyne Saumer of Rural Rendezvous values the support provided, as it was instrumental in allowing Rural Rendezvous to print and distribute 30,000 brochures in 2007.

Trista encourages cluster groups to have a clear vision prior to looking for investors. In knowing "who you are and where you're going," investors are able to see fully what their support will promote within the area. Both Carolyne and Trista encourage cluster groups to approach their local municipalities to find opportunities for support.

Contacts:

Carolyne Saumers - <http://www.ruralrendezvoustour.com>

Trista Poffenroth - <http://www.gov.lacsteanne.ab.ca>



FROM CHOCOLATE TO CURDS, COWS AND BEER

Themed Driving Tours

One hour east of Toronto, Northumberland Tourism has quickly positioned itself as "the ideal Saturday getaway destination". One of the many things they have done to capture this day trip market is some unique 'themed driving tours'.

Tours include:

- Chocolate Tour (including a chocolate shopping outlet, small town bakery)
- Curds, Cows and Beer (including a cheese farm, livestock sales barn and a local brewery)
- Outstanding Views/Fall Drive
- Lilac & Garden Tours

For more information on these tours, check out: <http://www.northumberlandtourism.com/en/getaways/themedtours.asp>

Northumberland Tourism is also home to the Rural Ramble Farm Tour who celebrates their 9th successful year this summer. Be sure to check out www.ruralramblefarmtour.com

What unique experiences can your cluster project capture to grab market attention? Sometimes these experiences may not seem unique to you, but they are to your target market.



RENEWAL.