

2017 – 2018 Annual Report

Dear Tourism Partners,

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton had another banner year! As you will read in this report, the Visitor's Centre Retail Store reached \$10,000 in sales, and almost 85,000 people stopped by to visit us. Social media continues to grow, as does the desire for Sarnia-Lambton maps and tour guides. Click on some of the blogger links, they'll take you on an amazing journey. If you thought you knew Sarnia-Lambton, the fresh eyes of these folks will let you see it in a whole new way.

Thank-you to our wonderful staff, most especially Joy Sim-Robbins, who has officially retired. Joy was an incredible asset to TSL. We are thankful for all of her hard work and the effort that staff put in each and every day. Also, a big thank-you to the TSL Board of Directors and the County of Lambton for their support to enhance tourism throughout Sarnia-Lambton.

Sincerely
Mary Jean O'Donnell
Chair, TSL Board of Directors

Visitor's Centre

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton's Visitor's Centre Retail Store has continued to grow since opening in the spring of 2017 with total sales of \$10,000.00 in the first year. Purchasing research is ongoing in order to offer new and unique items to encourage our visitors to shop and keep the retail store a continued success going forward.

The most frequently asked for retail items are local logoed products (i.e. coffee mugs, fridge magnets, and key chains). The Ontario Travel Information Centre's statistics confirmed that 84,520 visitors came into the centre in 2017, an increase of 1,800 visitors over 2016.

Assembly Room Rentals

The Assembly Room was rented in the 2017-18 period by a number of local organizations/businesses and generated an income of \$1,860 with 10% of the income being paid to the Federal Bridge Corporation as per our Lease Agreement.

Summer Student Program

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton received three summer students through the Canada Summer Jobs program from May to August 2017. The students assisted with Tourism Marketing & Social Media, Visitor's Services and Special Events. Additionally, a fourth student was hired through the Grants Ontario Summer Experience Program to assist with Visitors & Social Media.

Welcome Packages

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton distributed 7,859 Welcome Packages to regional and provincial tourism events, as well as tournaments, conventions, meetings and newcomers in 2017.

Travel Guides/Maps

TSL printed 55,000 Experience Guides and 35,000 Sarnia-Lambton Maps in 2017. Bulk distribution was 35,600 guides and 18,500 maps to Ontario Travel Information Centres, regional and provincial tourism events, welcome packages for conventions, newcomers and sports events, with distribution throughout Sarnia-Lambton, Canada, the U.S.A. and internationally. The Travel Guide secured 30 new advertisers for 2017-2018.

Social Media

Each year the excitement grows for TSL. In 2017-18, the organization continued to grow its reach across social media while introducing new marketing elements to keep things fresh. Highlights include:

Twitter - Continuing on the success of the previous year, in 2017-18 TSL grew its Twitter following by 28% and increased its average number of monthly Impressions by 35.57% to 39,900 per month.

Facebook - TSL continued to expand its reach across Facebook, growing its audience size by 25% and achieving an average monthly reach of 122,584 unique users.

Instagram - The newest addition to TSL's social media channels, Instagram received the most growth with an increase of 85%. The hashtag #OntBlueCoast received an average 13,300 monthly impressions. TSL's Engagement Rate on Instagram was 5.11%, 2 points higher than the platform's average.

Website

TSL continued to focus on generating maximum visitation to its website. With over 2,000 pages of partner listings, information on regional and core attractions, and access to our printed publications, our dynamic website received a total of 231,532 page views and was visited by 83,972 new users in 2017-18.

We continue to drive traffic to our partners by offering free, linked listings to their website, ticket sales website, and social media channels. Listing data collected from this database is used externally with our Regional Tourism Office and other Regional Partners for themed publications, editorial, and newsletters which we submit on our partner's behalf.

Consumer and Partner Newsletter

Consumer - Email marketing continued to be a large focus for 2017-18, with the organization sending monthly consumer e-blasts to its growing consumer database of more than 2,400 subscribers. The average monthly open rate for 2017-18 was 24.9%, 4.9 points higher than industry average, while the average monthly click rate was 5.5, 3 points higher than the industry average.

Partner – Over 750 tourism partners continued to receive important industry news and partnership opportunities through ongoing strategic partner communications.

Influencer Press Trips

TSL continued to focus on bringing qualified travel writers to our region to share what we have to offer with their audiences. In 2017-18, TSL brought in a total of 10 social media influencers from across Canada with a combined following of more than half a million social media followers.

Check out some of the blog posts below:

[A Summer Weekend in Sarnia Ontario - Lauren Marinigh, Twirl The Globe](#)

[Where to Eat in Sarnia, ON - Lauren Marinigh, Twirl The Globe](#)

[A Weekend In Sarnia, Ontario – Travel Review - Marcy McMillan, Toronto Communications Gal](#)

[How to Plan the Perfect Girls Trip - Marissa Anwar, Chic Darling](#)

[Girls Weekend in South Western Ontario - Sunshine & Whiskey - Annika at Fernweh Society](#)

[Ultimate Guide to Lambton County, ON - Amber at Canadian Fashionista](#)

[Travel Guide: A Girls' Weekend in Lambton County - Natalie Taylor, The Lifestyle File](#)

[Why You Need To Visit Ontario's Blue Coast - Natalie Preddie, The Adventures of Natty P](#)

[A Weekend Escape To Sarnia, What To Do In Lambton County - Marc Smith, Marc My Travels](#)

[A Romantic Getaway at the Oakwood Resort in Grand Bend, ON - Angelie Sood, The Lifestyle File](#)

Sports Tourism

Sports Tourism is an active industry for TSL and it not only contributes significantly to the economic impact of tourism but also raises the community's profile, heightens community spirit, and increases the usage of community infrastructure.

2017/2018 Sports Tourism highlights include:

- Bluewater International Granfondo
- World Curling Tour U17 Men's Championships
- CCM World Invitational Ice Hockey Tournament
- Ontario Girls High School Curling Championships
- Bluewater Triathlon, Duathlon & Ironkid Triathlon
- Simon Warder Memorial ProAm Squash Tourn.
- Hockey Day In Canada - Toronto Furies vs. Les Canadiennes de Montréal
- Rockstar Energy Triple Crown Series Motocross
- Provincial Fastball U14 Qualifier
- Provincial Petite Ringette Tournament
- National Gymnastics Training Camp
- Ontario Girls & Boys Juvenile Golf Championships
- Stan Slack International Wood Bat Tournament
- Ontario Senior Games Association 55+ Southwest Regional Games
- Plus additional hockey, baseball, soccer, curling, rugby, football, golf, etc. tournaments and events

2017/2018 Festival & Event highlights include:

- Inaugural Bluewater Borderfest
- Forest Fall Fair
- Sarnia Kinsmen Ribfest
- Summer Sunset Sounds Concerts
- Sarnia Greekfest
- Sarnia Artwalk
- ARTZscape by the Bay
- Country Campout Jamboree
- Sarnia Street Machines
- Distinguished Gentleman's Ride Sarnia
- South Western International Film Festival
- Antique & Classic Boat Show
- Sailfest Sarnia
- National Tourism Week Event

Meetings and Conventions

One of our key goals is to market the Sarnia-Lambton area as a preferred meeting and conference destination.

2017/2018 Conference, Workshop & Meeting highlights include:

- Western Ontario Drama League Conference
- Sarnia Technical Conference
- Village of Bluewater Reunion
- Canadian Maine Anjou Cattleman's AGM
- Branch 62 legion District A Convention
- Canadian Institute of Management Conference
- Retired Workers Regional Council Meeting
- Ontario Registered Music Assoc. Conference
- The Royal Order of Jesters Conference
- Lake Huron Hatchery Managers Meeting
- Showdance Clogging Workshop
- Naval Association AGM
- Steam Threshers Reunion
- PetroChem Canada Expo & Conference
- District Euchre Tournament
- Ontario Contact Conference
- Hand Weavers & Spinners Conference
- Chamber of Commerce Provincial Conference

Motor Coach

TSL works directly with tour operators and group travel influencers to market and promote Sarnia-Lambton as a worthwhile group travel destination. In 2017-2018, our travel centre received 47 motor coaches with 1,949 passengers between April 2017 and March 2018.

TSL continues to support associations, organizations, tour operators and sports associations throughout Canada and the United States while effectively building relationships with industry associations through our memberships with Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA) and Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA).

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Product Development

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton has been active in creating better alignment with partners, through a strong creative platform and coordinated efforts to target Product Development. Acting as a facilitator in partnership with local municipalities, business stakeholders and Tourism organizations, TSL helped coordinate several workshops in 2017-18 focused on such topics as “Discovering Success in Tourism”, “Social Media” and “Product Development”. 2017-18 saw further development of the experiential focused campaigns, with staff attending a three-day South West Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) Experiential Tourism Training in Haldimand County.

In addition, two successful Grant Writing Workshops were held featuring Ontario Trillium, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport, SWOTC, and the Creative County Grant Program representatives, as well as two workshops with the Sarnia Lambton Business Development Corporation about Bill 148.

Staff has been working hard to ensure the promotion of Sarnia-Lambton’s tourism offerings, by securing and confirming all sponsorships for the only Canadian port of call stop on the WJR Radio-Detroit Annual Harbour Tour enroute to Mackinac Island, and by beginning to develop a Drink Trail Map featuring breweries and wineries of Lambton County. This continues to further our two major experience marketing campaigns in 2016-17 of Beer, Wine, and Culinary, and Waterfront.

Group Tour Market

In addition to our marketing efforts, staff worked with 35+ tour operators to recommend and assist in creating group tour itineraries to showcase Lambton County. The “Come Celebrate Canada’s 150th” group tour itinerary was also developed, and was distributed to more than 40 tour operators. Over 2,000 people participate in the Shunpiker Tour 2017, which is a self-driving tour itinerary organized by the London Free Press that this year featured a May 13th tour of Lambton County. During the annual Ontario Motor Coach Association Marketplace & Conference in Toronto, staff conducted 30 pre-qualified sales appointments with tour operators.

Familiarization Tours

TSL hosted Christian Fellowship Tours, Hamilton in April 2017

TSL hosted a SWOTC Staff Tour of Lambton County in July 2017

TSL hosted American Bus Association travel writer, Bob Hoelscher of Destinations Magazine Dec 2017

TSL hosted travel writer, Marc Smith, 30 Day Adventures in December 2017

Tradeshows/TSL Booths/Conferences attended:

- Food and Wine Show – London
- Motorcycle SuperShow – Toronto
- Toronto International Bicycle Show
- Progressive International Motorcycle Show - Cleveland, Ohio
- Ontario Motor Coach Association Conference – Niagara Falls
- TIAO - Ontario Tourism Summit - Toronto
- Tall Ships Conference – New Orleans
- Art Walk – Sarnia
- Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance –Ottawa
- SWOTC Conference – Leamington
- Travel Information Services Conference - Windsor

With Support From:

ONTARIO
Yours to discover

Ontario's
Southwest
Shaped by nature

TSL Staff List

Joy Sim - Robbins – General Manager (Retired October 2018)

Melissa Mullen – Acting Manager (November 2018)

Vicky Prail – Special Events & Sports Marketing Coordinator

Bev Horodyski – Product Development Coordinator

Leona Allen – Information & Visitor Services Coordinator

Kyle Morrison – Social Media & Website Development Coordinator

Shelley Ambrose –Special Projects Coordinator

