



This month's newsletter will focus on how the pandemic has impacted **traveller values** and how local tourism partners can adapt to meet visitor needs. COVID forced us to shift gears, whether as travel providers or as travellers ourselves. People are more hesitant to commit to plans, have heightened expectations of travel experiences, and are more conscious than ever of their traveller footprint in the destination.

## What's Inside

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- [How To Connect With Us on Social Media](#)
- [Rainbow Registered Program](#)
- [National & Regional Employment Demand Projections to 2025](#)

## The Shift On Traveller Values

Not being able to travel reminded us all how important it is — for connecting with friends and family, for relaxing, for exploring new places and cultures. As travel reopened, people have been eager to make up for lost time. Though many resumed some regular travel in 2021, the desire to travel continues to increase as we head into 2023, with nearly half (46%) of people saying travel is more important to them now than it was prior to COVID. Among the main reasons to travel, changing scenery and seeking for physical and mental health benefits are key.

Traveller interests surrounding bookings and leisure activities are also changing, with nature-focused holidays being deeply woven into the future of travel. Travellers seeking to experience awe-inspiring landscapes, reduce their carbon footprint, and find rest and renewal will be drawn to these destinations. The future of travel, then, may see many travellers seeking more refined activities while on holiday. The classic sunbather may now want to book a beekeeping

course, while those who used to dine at restaurants for every meal may seek out culinary workshops and villas with full kitchens.

Among values in tourism that are here to stay, regenerative travel will support tourism as a key pillar for sustainable economic development for destinations – 83% of global travellers will make sustainable travel a priority in the future, while 66% want their travel spending to directly benefit local communities. At the same time, experiences are perceived as the new luxury, capitalizing on increased spending in destination. All of the above result into the boom of slow travel, with travellers booking fewer trips but increasing the length of their stay and in a single country or region, creating a unique opportunity to generate more revenue and disperse demand across a destination, while contributing to the economic growth of multiple locations, as well as broadening the range of products and experiences to upsell.

## How Can Tourism Partners Meet Traveller Values In 2023?

Travellers weigh many variables when they are booking elements of a trip: price, convenience, safety, flexibility, and more. Though the importance of each fluctuated throughout the pandemic, one thing hasn't changed: travellers prefer to book with providers that align with their personal values.

As a result, a destination or company's mission, values, and stance on certain issues play a role in whether travellers want to visit or book. Certain factors like price may have more of an impact on traveller decision-making, but in the end, whether a brand aligns with their personal values is a stronger influential factor.

These are some tips to align to traveller values in 2023:

- **Maintain your refundable rates and flexible policies:** Flexibility continues to be one of the top considerations for travellers, particularly those traveling internationally. Highlight your flexible options by ensuring your refundable rates and flexible cancellation policies are reflected in your listing content and any marketing materials.
- **Set realistic expectations with travellers — and have realistic expectations for your staff:** Only 15% of industry professionals say their business is currently providing full hours and services. Ensure the information you communicate to travellers pre- and post-booking and during their time with you accurately reflects what their experience will be like. Rebuilding trust is key.
- **Be thoughtful about discounts and perks:** Your customers may be more price sensitive now than they were a year ago, so consider what types of incentives will be most effective and include those in your

offerings and marketing and promotions strategy. Complimentary addons, discounts for advanced booking, and travel packages are effective tactics for encouraging consumers to book with you. If you offer a loyalty program, keep in mind that discounts and points are most important to members. Access to specific amenities may be more of a draw for business travellers, who can be convinced to stay for leisure as well.

- **Appeal to travellers' desire for relaxation:** Travellers are looking for a change in scenery and rejuvenation. Brands in the travel space have an opportunity to play into these motivations by highlighting their amenities and experiences that provide that sense of escape.
- **Lean into and showcase your brand values:** A third of industry professionals say they are promoting specific company values or priorities, like sustainability initiatives, to encourage bookings from their key traveller audiences. If you offer special accessibility amenities, make efforts to reduce your environmental impact, or have other inclusive practices, showcase them to travellers. Consumers will continue to book based on their personal values and will be loyal to the destinations and businesses that walk the walk in these key areas.
- **Keep a pulse on traveller feedback to understand how they perceive their experience:** Whether through reviews, social media, or your own channels, collecting and acting on feedback is key to optimizing the travel experience you provide. More and more organizations rely on customer reviews to measure guest experience, and make changes often due to feedback — meaning there is a big opportunity for more businesses in the travel space to be taking advantage of feedback loops. A positive travel experience attracts loyal customers.

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## RTO 9 News



## **Happy Holidays From the RTO 9 Team**

It's the final RTO 9 newsletter of 2022, so we wanted to sign off with saying thank you for reading our emails, joining the conversation, and sharing the love on social – you've made all of our days a little brighter! May the New Year bring new happiness, new goals, new achievements, and a lot of new inspirations!

To our Board Members, thank you so much for volunteering to serve on our Board for over the years.

RTO 9 will be closed as of 12:00 PM on December 23, 2022 and will re-open at 8:00 AM on January 3, 2023.





## **RTO 9 Welcomes Meg Dabros to the Position of Operations Manager**

Please welcome Meg Dabros to the position of Operations Manager with RTO 9 starting December 5th. In early 2018, Meg began working part time as the digital media coordinator for 1000 Islands Tourism in conjunction with her role at Kouri's Kopters Inc. before moving full time into the Executive Director role with 1000 Islands Tourism in 2021. In addition to getting to market the Thousand Islands region, the role also provided her the opportunity to work closely with the local business community and build partnerships with local organizations. When she's not working, Meg enjoys spending time with her family and friends, travelling and exploring different spots in the region. Meg can be reached at [mdabros@region9tourism.ca](mailto:mdabros@region9tourism.ca)

Join us in saying thank you and wishing Lori McIsaac the very best in her future endeavors. Lori has brought laughter, kindness and professionalism to her role here at RTO 9. We know whatever adventure she chooses to pursue in the future, it is sure to be filled with fun & excitement. We at RTO 9 wish Lori much success, prosperity and happiness.

## **Drive for Excellence in 2022**

RTO 9 once again was pleased to implement a funding program developed to help start, build or grow organizations' marketing programs.

The Drive for Excellence program was designed for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and Destination Marketing Program (DMPs) partners to support everything from strategy development to marketing campaign support, to operator training and many other options. Below are the support programs that have been initiated for each destination for the 2022/2023 season.

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## **How to Use Video Content to Connect with Your Target Market**

**Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2022 | Online**

Social media creator and consultant, Anna Ruck is facilitating this webinar and will show you:

- Why you should be prioritizing video content within your social media strategy (even if you feel like you don't have one).

- How to identify who your target market is on social media and how to attract and connect with them through video content.
- How to effectively provide value via video marketing to grow a following and convert sales.
- How to brainstorm and organize strategic video content ideas and streamline your video production process (like a pro!).

[REGISTER](#)

## Workplace Inclusion Charter Certification

RTO 9 is funding five tourism or hospitality businesses in South Eastern Ontario to get an EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) badge to use in your branding and help attract the workforce you need! Access will be provided to the following supports from KEYS:

- An assessment process that helps identify key opportunities and areas for improvement
- An action plan, developed with organizational priorities in mind and with tangible benchmarks that the organization can work towards
- Access to trained Inclusion Coaches to implement meaningful workplaces changes to improve inclusion
- Public recognition

Apply now to have the costs of the certification of your tourism or hospitality business paid for by RTO 9. Only five businesses will be able to be funded - first come first served!

Contact Katherine Hobbs at 613-325-8927 or [khobbs@region9tourism.ca](mailto:khobbs@region9tourism.ca) to learn more details on how to apply.

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## Snapshots of Success

### Snapshots of Success: FedDev Funding Recipients

The Government of Canada's Tourism Relief Fund, delivered by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) and RTO9, brought support to South Eastern Ontario, helping the region recover from the pandemic.

Seventy-nine projects benefited from this funding, resulting in growth and economic prosperity. Funding gave small businesses, Indigenous Tourism Ontario applicants, not-for-profit organizations, and municipalities the opportunity to enhance or develop new products and services to attract visitors and support future growth. **These are the snapshots of success.**

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## **Navigating 2SLGBTQ+ Diversity & Inclusion in the Tourism Industry**

Thank you to everyone that showed up for the Navigating 2SLGBTQ+ Diversity & Inclusion Workshop hosted in Oxford Mills. We had another amazing turn out filled with discussions and idea sharing. In case you missed the Workshop, you can access the presentation below.

[VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#)



## How To Connect With Us on Social Media

RTO 9 has invested in two brand concepts. Our industry (RTO 9) social channels, newsletter, and website exist to provide you (our tourism partner) with industry news, research, tips, and opportunities to help you attract your ideal customer and keep you informed.

Our consumer regional brand, South Eastern Ontario, gives a sense of place and the content found on our social channels, website, and newsletter, targets future visitors from outside of the region and locals that live within the region.

We encourage our tourism partners to share with us their stories, products, experiences, and packages through our South Eastern Ontario social media channels. Your input will help with our marketing needs. Read our blog post below on what our channels are and how to connect with us.

[LEARN MORE](#)

We also monitor and share key market trends to help you respond strategically on our [COVID-19 resource page on our website.](#)

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# Market Insights

## Destination Canada Fall 2022 Tourism Outlook

[Destination Canada](#) published its Fall Tourism Outlook (November 22, 2022) forecasting that despite ongoing challenges, the recovery trajectory for Canada's tourism sector is strengthening, bolstered by the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and resilience in travel demand. Here are the key takeaways:

- Full recovery of tourism spending in Canada is expected in 2024. However, in inflation-adjusted terms, real Canadian tourism spending will not fully recover to 2019 levels until 2026.
- Destination Canada's forecast has shifted since the spring, and now optimistically predicting that Canada is likely to hit closer to the upside of a \$129B to \$147B range in 2030.
- Domestic travel market spending is recovering and is expected to reach 92% of 2019 levels in 2022 and fully recover (in nominal terms) in 2023.
- The US market is poised to accelerate in 2023, with spending reaching 91% of 2019 levels as lifted border restrictions and a strong US dollar encourage recovery. Visits from the US will reach 82% of 2019 levels in 2023 and fully recover in 2024.
- Overseas markets are expected to recover more slowly with the effects of economic recession (Europe), travel restrictions (China), and weak travel sentiment (Asia) prolonged into 2023. Overseas travel to Canada will recover modestly to 64% of 2019 volumes in 2023 and will approach recovery in 2025 with 95% of 2019 volumes. Full recovery of overseas visits to Canada will occur in 2026.
- Asian markets, including China, Japan, and South Korea will remain sluggish through 2023 due to reluctance to travel long-haul. However, in the long-term China will outpace other international markets, with visitation reaching 134% of 2019 levels in 2030.
- While downside risks to the forecast are notable, Canada is well-positioned to continue its recovery due to a resilient domestic market, competitive regional position, and pent-up demand for both leisure and business travel.

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# National & Regional Employment Demand Projections to 2025

[Tourism HR Canada](#) released National & Regional Tourism Employment Demand Projections to 2025. Here are the key highlights:

- Employment demand in Canada's tourism sector is projected to surpass pre-pandemic levels by 2025 growing by 2.5% over 2019 employment levels.
- Tourism's share of overall employment in Canada in 2025 (10.5%) will fall just shy of its share in 2019 (10.8%).
- Tourism employment is projected to surpass pre-pandemic levels in Ontario (827,849 jobs = 5.1% vs. 2019), the Prairies (388,359 jobs = +4.8% vs. 2019), Atlantic Canada (124,215 jobs = +3.8% vs. 2019), and the Northern Territories (6,461 jobs = +5.6% vs. 2019).
- However, tourism employment is expected to remain below pre-COVID levels in Québec (442,472 jobs = -1.7% vs. 2019) and British Columbia (344,916 jobs = -0.9% vs. 2019).

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## US Sentiment for Travel to Canada

[Destination Canada's](#) latest US Sentiment Report reveals how US residents feel about travelling to Canada (October 14-22, 2022). Here are the highlights:

- With all remaining Canadian border restrictions easing on October 1, 2022, US sentiment towards travel to Canada has reached its highest level this year, with 60% of respondents indicating confidence in travel to Canada.
- 43% of US travellers currently feel that transport costs are a consideration that would prevent them from visiting Canada, a stable trend since August as inflation arises as a global travel issue.
- At the same time, 65% of respondents indicated that they consider Canada to be easy and safe to travel to, while 81% are excited to embark in a leisure travel trip within the next 12 months, both being positive trends compared to the previous months.
- As a result, likelihood to travel to Canada in the next 9 months (November 2022 – July 2023) increased to 53% showing a positive trend throughout this period, but with half of US travellers (26%) choosing June 2023.

- For those who were likely to travel to Canada, 24% are likely to visit Ontario, with the province being ahead of BC (19%) and Québec (16%).

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## Understanding the Barriers to Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Recovery and Building Toward Resilience

Tourism and Hospitality Emergency Recovery (THER) project sought feedback from industry leaders from multiple destinations across Canada on the challenges they faced in their recovery efforts. The project developed a playbook of tools, resources, and models to help address those challenges. This report highlights the findings and lessons learned alongside industry stakeholders and policymakers. It is a reference point for ideas, insights, tools, and solutions that can support tourism recovery and help shock-proof the industry against future disruption.

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# Media Spotlight

## **Federal Government to Invest \$10 Million in Tourism in South Eastern Ontario**

The Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario announced a total investment of over \$9.8 million for 37 projects in Kingston, Frontenac, Lanark, and Lennox and Addington that will support community infrastructure enhancements, tourism recovery and economic development in the region. The investment will be channeled through the Tourism Relief Fund and Canada Community Revitalization Fund.

Filomena Tassi, minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario emphasized that support for tourism operators and communities allows these to bring back visitors, enhance public spaces, share knowledge and experiences, and prepare for a strong future.

The Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston received a non-repayable investment of more than \$300,000, through the Tourism Relief Fund, to renovate the historical building at the Kingston Dry Dock national historic site. Other funding will include projects for the Friends of Bon Echo Park, the Smith Falls Heritage Museum, as well as Wolfe Island.

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## **Winners Announced at TIAC's 2022 Canadian Tourism Awards**

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) announced the winners of its annual Canadian Tourism Awards. The gala ceremony took place on November 23 at The Westin Ottawa, after two days of TIAC's annual Tourism Congress.

Now in its 22nd year, the Canadian Tourism Awards featured nine categories of distinction, in addition to a Lifetime Achievement Award. It was open to all businesses operating in any of the full suite of sectors that comprise the tourism industry i.e., accommodations, transportation, recreation, travel services, and food and beverage.

A special congratulations to Tourism Kingston who was named Tourism Employer of the Year and Lexy Correa, Digital Marketing and Communications Coordinator at Tourism Kingston who was recognized with a Tourism Industry Association of Canada 30 Under 30 Achiever Award.

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## Destination Canada and Trans Canada Trail Form New Partnership

Destination Canada announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with [Trans Canada Trail](#), steward of the world's longest recreational trail network.

A first-of-its-kind national initiative, the MOU between Destination Canada and Trans Canada Trail is focused on sharing resources, knowledge and expertise, including identifying opportunities and maximizing connections with destinations and communities. This announcement is a first step in creating a long-term relationship with the objective of enhancing Canada's trail network and ultimately generating wealth and well-being to the communities as well as visitors.

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## Ontario Motorcoach Association and Indigenous Tourism Ontario Partner to Boost Indigenous Tourism

The [Ontario Motorcoach Association \(OMCA\)](#) and [Indigenous Tourism Ontario \(ITO\)](#) signed a memorandum of understanding to grow indigenous tourism throughout Ontario. The partnership aims to increase tourism engagement, educate tourism operators, and promote indigenous tourism experiences across the province.

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## **Tourism Campaign Lures Aussies with Sounds of Canada via Spotify**

Destination Canada has partnered with Spotify for a campaign that invites Australians to discover Canada through sound and music. The choose-your-own sound adventure allows visitors to the Destination Canada website to “select their vibe” – they can either ‘Turn It Up’ or ‘Take A Breath’.

Depending on what they click, users end up with a Spotify playlist featuring the sounds of Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary or Toronto. Attractive assets and descriptions of the cities accompany the playlists on the website, including musical histories of the local areas. Cities are given memorable personalities like “The Trendsetter”, “The Bohemian” and “The Maverick”, offering niche insights into these destinations.

For something more relaxing, users can opt to ‘Take A Breath’ in the Canadian wilderness with guided walks and meditations. Travel content creators like Jeanne Rondeau-Ducharme take listeners on auditory journeys through serene countrysides, with backdrops of trickling streams and chirping birds.

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## **Workforce Development**

**IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism**

**Date: January 22-25, 2023, Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, BC**

The focus for the 2023 IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism Conference continues to be on uncovering resources, building skills and showcasing solutions-based thought leadership, as the conference celebrates its sixth year on January 22-25, 2023.

IMPACT brings together a wide variety of leaders from travel and tourism, government, academia, First Nations and NGOs to share knowledge and dive deep into the issues of sustainability and innovation.

Plenary and breakout sessions will also follow key themes of reciprocity and partnerships, capacity building, climate action, and diversity. New sessions this year will address how to build careers with purpose, funding the transition to a more sustainable destination and tourism operation, how to develop effective partnerships to reach your sustainability goals and a deeper look into KPIs and metrics while exploring ESG best practices.

In addition to the 2.5-day conference, IMPACT offers a Day of IMPACT on Sunday, January 22, 2023, with delegates experiencing sustainability in action across the Greater Victoria region.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)





## Rainbow Registered Program

Rainbow Registered is a national accreditation for LGBT+ friendly businesses and organizations. When you see a Rainbow Registered symbol, you know the business or organization meets a stringent set of standards to ensure LGBT+ customers feel safe, welcomed, and accepted.

The accreditation program grants a time-limited recognition to businesses and organizations for demonstrating compliance with the quality standard. Accredited businesses are deemed market ready for the LGBT+ customer and given the right to be associated with the program's prestigious Rainbow Registered designation mark.

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[CGLCC D&I TRAINING OPTIONS](#)

## The Lift Program by GMIST

GMIST is providing training and development opportunities to support Canadian Operators on Experience Development. They will be holding a LIFT information session on Dec 8th at 2 PM ADT.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

## Challenge Factory Links

Take advantage of all the available tools and research to attract, engage and retain staff offered by the Challenge Factory via the links provided below. The Challenge Factory have been working to close the gap between employers and the hidden talent pool of Canada's military Veterans.

[Hiring Military Veterans Resources](#) – This includes the resources of over ten years of work in the area. Under hiring resources, specifically focus on the Canadian Guide to Hiring Veterans. This is a free download with lots of great information and resources on where and how to attract Veterans.

[Retain and Gain](#) – A practical playbook of thoughts and ideas that small businesses can take right now (some in only 10 minutes a day) to attract, engage and retain staff.

[The Flip Newsletter](#) – Their free, monthly newsletter.

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## Featured Operators/ Destinations

### Ontario Government Strengthening Tourism Industry in Northern Ontario

The Ontario government is providing \$4.9 million through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) to 24 tourism projects in Northern Ontario. The investment aims to help create jobs, expand business operations, stimulate economic development and attract visitors to the north of the province.

The NOHFC promotes economic prosperity across Northern Ontario by providing financial assistance to projects of different size and nature that stimulate growth, job creation and skills development. Since June 2018, the NOHFC has invested more than \$575 million in 4,835 projects in Northern Ontario, leveraging more than \$1.86 billion in investment and creating or sustaining over 7,770 jobs.

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## Opportunities



### **'Safe Travels' Stamp Application**

The specially designed stamp will allow travellers and other Travel & Tourism stakeholders to recognise destination authorities and companies around the world that have implemented health and hygiene protocols that are aligned with WTTC's Global Safe Travels Protocols.

[LEARN MORE](#)

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Every month, we'll be sending you the latest insights, research and thoughtful perspectives on the issues that matter most to tourism businesses and operators in RTO 9.

If there are any topics you want to read about in a future newsletter, please email [Imedeiros@region9tourism.com](mailto:Imedeiros@region9tourism.com) with your ideas.

Did someone forward you our newsletter?  
[Subscribe here!](#)

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## Get Social With Us!

Connect and engage with our industry brand 'RTO 9' on social media.



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### OUR INDUSTRY PARTNERS



DESTINATION  
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