



September's newsletter focuses on how seasonality affects tourism, tourism workforce, and how local tourism partners can combat against the challenge of seasonality.

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Strategies to Overcome Seasonality

Seasonality in tourism refers to the cyclic nature of tourism whereby certain times of the year see a peak in tourist numbers while others witness a dip. This fluctuation can be due to factors such as climate conditions, sunshine duration, public or school holidays, or special events or festivals. Though seasonality cannot be completely erased, its effects can be reduced. By employing specific strategies, both destinations and operators can still attract visitors during low and shoulder season. Here are six effective strategies to overcome seasonality:

- **Target slow travellers:** This group of travellers, including digital nomads, retirees, and those on a sabbatical, tend to seek deeper connections to a destination's culture, history, and people. Offering experiences that delve deep into these aspects can be attractive to them. For instance, offering food tours that connect travellers with local producers and teach them traditional recipes can be a big hit.
- **Attract locals:** In the wake of the pandemic, domestic tourism has seen growth, with many rediscovering local attractions. Catering to the local community by offering unique local experiences like birthday or team-building events can be beneficial.

- **Offer discounts and promotions:** Innovative promotions, limited-time offers, and loyalty programs can be effective in luring visitors. For instance, offering a free voucher during the peak season that can be redeemed in the off-season or launching a "Refer-A-Friend Program" can incentivize more bookings.
- **Redesign your experiences:** Adapting tours according to the season or upcoming events can generate interest. Offering unique experiences targeted at specific groups, like seniors who prefer off-season travel, can also be beneficial.
- **Invest in virtual products:** Virtual tours became popular during the pandemic and continue to be in demand. They can be pre-recorded tours, live stream tours, semi-immersive tours involving both virtual and physical elements, or 360-degree tours. The biggest advantage is they can be sold year-round and are unaffected by typical seasonality.
- **Partner with local businesses:** Forming collaborations with local businesses that aren't in the tourism sector can be a win-win. For instance, trekking tour operators could partner with local sports stores to provide discounts for each other's customers.

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Elevating Canadian Experiences: Developing Winter and Shoulder Season Tourism

[TIAC's "Elevating Canadian Experiences: Developing Winter and Shoulder Season Tourism"](#) toolkit, developed in partnership with [Twenty31 Consulting](#), explains that seasonality in tourism arises due to a combination of natural factors, like conventional seasons, and human activity and behavior patterns. The toolkit explains that there are four factors impacting tourism businesses in terms of seasonality:

1. **Insecurity of Decision-Making:** Travel is a significant commitment for consumers, primarily due to the unpredictability of their experience. A trip's value can only be ascertained once it's over.
2. **The McDonald's Effect:** To counteract this uncertainty, tourists often choose familiar summer destinations, even if they aren't the best, over the less predictable shoulder seasons.
3. **Bragging Rights:** Tourists seek stunning visuals for social media sharing. While summer offers vivid landscapes and trendiness, the shoulder season or winter might appear gloomy.
4. **Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO):** Travellers fear missing out on experiences exclusive to summer, prompting them to prioritize the peak season over winter or shoulder seasons.

According to the toolkit, while seasonality has its downsides, it can also offer advantages:

- **Experience Diversification:** Seasonality allows for the development of unique experiences tailored to each season.
- **Audience Engagement:** Different seasons might attract various tourist demographics.
- **Community Relief:** Off-peak seasons can provide communities respite from constant tourism.
- **Flexible Employment:** The cyclic nature of tourism can offer job opportunities for mobile youth and seniors.
- **Operational Breaks:** Gives businesses time for planning, restoration, and maintenance, ensuring improved services.

In summary, while seasonality presents challenges to the Canadian tourism sector, understanding its impacts and potential advantages can help operators turn these cycles to their benefit.

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Market Insights



Six key global travel trends for 2023

[Simon-Kucher's](#) recently released report on the six key global travel trends for 2023 explains how the global travel landscape in 2023 is undergoing notable changes. Factors such as increasing costs and looming inflation threats are leading to shifts in consumer travel attitudes. There is a marked rise in the popularity of personalized travel experiences as opposed to the previously preferred all-inclusive holidays. Additionally, the landscape of business trips is also changing; they are becoming shorter and are incorporating more train journeys in place of flights. Sustainable holidays have become the talk of the town, with many travellers now being willing to pay an extra amount for options that are eco-friendly.

Here are the six trends identified:

1. Summer Holiday Bookings:

- a. 84% plan to go on a holiday, undeterred by higher prices.
- b. 20% will not go on vacation due to financial constraints.

- c. Rising living costs push people to travel outside peak holiday seasons.
- d. UK and Netherlands residents have mostly booked holidays; US residents are least likely to have booked.

2. Inflation & Advance Booking:

- a. Inflation's looming threat is influencing consumers' booking habits.
- b. The data from 2023 mirrors that of 2022, wherein 41% of holiday planners are booking their vacations well in advance.
- c. A deeper dive into the reasons reveals that 37% of these early-birds are doing so to avoid potential price hikes due to inflation

3. The Rise of Personalized Travel:

- a. Increase in the preference for personalized holidays.
- b. 50% of US holidaymakers chose a personalized trip recently.
- c. Personalized trips up by 5% globally from 2022.
- d. Travel agents' popularity remains consistent, being more prevalent in the UK and UAE.

4. Holiday Spending:

- a. Leisure travel budget for 2023 expected to rise by 8% despite inflation.
- b. Increase in personalized trip bookings from 42% to 60%.
- c. Travellers plan to save on souvenirs and local experiences but will spend more on food and accommodation.

5. Business Travel:

- a. Business travel budgets are shrinking.
- b. 20% of respondents are not traveling for work.
- c. Shorter business trips are becoming the norm.
- d. A significant shift towards train travel, especially in the Netherlands, France, and the US.

6. Sustainable Travel:

- a. A growing emphasis on sustainable travel.
- b. 1 in 3 travellers are ready to pay extra for sustainable options.

c. UAE (46%) and US (33%) are most willing to pay for sustainable holidays.

d. Travellers are ready to spend 55% more on sustainable food, accommodation, and flights.

e. Only 20% would agree to pay for carbon emission charges on flights.

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Canadian Tourism Trends in Q1 2023

The first quarter of 2023 saw a positive uptrend in Canada's tourism sector, according to Statistics Canada's recent National Tourism Indicators report. There was an overall growth in tourism spending, led primarily by domestic tourists. The tourism industry also witnessed a rise in both its contribution to the GDP and employment rates. Here are the key findings:

- **Tourism Spending:** The first quarter registered a 2.6% growth in overall tourism spending. This surge can be attributed to a 3.5% increase in domestic tourism spending by Canadian residents. The momentum was further buoyed by growth in passenger air transport by 2.9%, food and beverage services by 4.7%, and accommodation services by 2.2%. When compared to the levels before the COVID-19 pandemic (Q4 2019), the current tourism spending has reached 86.7% of that benchmark.
- **Tourism GDP:** There was a 2.3% increase in the tourism GDP in Q1 2023. This growth rate matches the one from the last quarter of 2022. The food and beverage sector and the accommodation services industry were the primary contributors with growth rates of 4.3% and 2.1%, respectively. In contrast to the nationwide GDP growth rate of 0.8% in the same period, the tourism sector's contribution increased by 0.04 percentage points, bringing its share to 1.65%. The overall tourism GDP stands at 84.4% of its level before the pandemic.
- **Employment in Tourism:** Jobs in the tourism sector saw a 2.7% increase in Q1 2023, which was a notable improvement from the 1.4% growth in the previous quarter. Both the food and beverage services (+3.6%) and accommodation services (+3.2%) industries significantly contributed to this rise in employment. In a broader context, there was a 1.7% growth in employment across all sectors in Canada during this period. Consequently, tourism's share of the national employment pie expanded to 3.30%.
- **Spending by Canadians:** Canadians upped their tourism spending by 3.5% in the first quarter of 2023. This is especially significant when juxtaposed against the 1.3% dip witnessed in the last quarter of 2022.

The primary drivers for this uptick were increased expenditures on passenger air transport (+4.6%), food and beverage (+6.1%), and accommodation services (+4.4%).

- **Spending by International Visitors:** Contrary to the domestic trend, tourism spending by international visitors in Canada saw a marginal decline of 0.1% in Q1 2023. This comes after a robust performance in 2022, marked by double-digit growth rates in its last three quarters. The decrease in Q1 2023 is mainly due to reduced spending on passenger air transport (-3.2%) and accommodation services (-0.6%). This downturn was partially counterbalanced by an increase in expenditures on non-tourism products (+2.7%), vehicle fuel (+7.5%), and vehicle repairs and parts (+6.8%). There was a minor drop in overnight travel by non-residents (0.4%), but the same-day travel by non-residents surged impressively by 10.5%.

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Opportunities



Image credit @Stone Crop Acres Winery

Tourism Development Fund 2023 Now Open for Applications

Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport has initiated the 2023 Tourism Development Fund, a revamped version of the prior Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund. This fund is designed to bolster innovative tourism projects, facilitate tourism investments, and strengthen the province's tourism infrastructure. An enticing aspect of this fund is its offer to match up to 50% of the project costs, with a cap at \$25,000, for novel tourism initiatives.

The primary objectives of the 2023 Tourism Development Fund are:

- **Innovation in Tourism:** The fund encourages the creation of unique tourism products and experiences.
- **Boosting Tourism Investment:** It aims to increase both domestic and international private sector investments in Ontario's tourism.
- **Enhancing Industry Capabilities:** The fund's goal is also to empower the tourism sector with the requisite skills, resources, and capabilities to usher in or support new tourism investments.

For interested parties, the window to submit applications is currently open and will remain so **until September 14, 2023, closing at 5pm ET.**

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Workforce Development



TIAO National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

The [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario \(TIAO\)](#) has announced a session centered on the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. This day, observed on September 30th in Canada, is dedicated to honoring the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities. The day aims to raise awareness and promote the ongoing process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Participants will explore how tourism can contribute positively to the journey of healing and understanding, ensuring that Indigenous histories, cultures, and rights are acknowledged and respected.

Date: Wed, 13 September 2023, 12pm - 1pm ET

Location: Online

[REGISTER](#)

TIAO Tourism Day at Queen's Park

The [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario \(TIAO\)](#) is hosting its paramount advocacy event, "Tourism Day at Queen's Park" (TD@QP) on Tuesday, September 26th, from 8am to 5pm. This event, exclusive to TIAO members, offers them an opportunity to engage directly with key government figures, including MPPs, Ministers, and their staff, at the provincial legislature. Though the day is a significant member benefit, attendance is by invitation only. TIAO members that want to attend need to express their interest in participating.

In the lead-up to the main event, TIAO will provide members with specific messaging and details about the meetings. Moreover, there will be a "Taste of Ontario Reception" held on the preceding day, Monday, September 25th, at 5pm. This gathering, organized by the [Culinary Tourism Alliance](#), is open for registration to all TIAO members.

Date: Mon, 25 September 2023, 5pm ET; Tue, 26 September 2023, 5pm ET.

Location: Queen's Park, 111 Wellesley St W, Toronto, ON M5S, Canada

[GET TICKETS](#)

Featured Operators



Image credit: Crane's Lochaven Wilderness Lodge

Honda Indy Toronto: A Key Tourism Draw Awaiting Contract Renewal

The [Honda Indy Toronto](#), a premier racing event, significantly boosts Ontario's tourism. In 2022, it attracted 148,000 attendees and pulled in even larger crowds this summer. Recognized as a staple summer event since its inception in 1986, its fixed date makes it a reliable draw compared to variable events like Blue Jays games or major concerts. Green Savoree Race Promotions, responsible for four of the 17 annual IndyCar races, is currently concluding its contract with Penske Entertainment for this unique Canadian event. While race organizers remain positive about future negotiations, the tourism sector is eager to see its continuation, given the event's considerable economic contribution, which stood at \$26.94 million for Ontario in 2022. The 2023 figures are anticipated to surpass the previous year's, supported by the strong turnout on Honda Fan Friday and during the weekend. Although direct correlations between hotel and restaurant spikes and the Indy event remain challenging, 2022 data indicated a 4% growth during the Indy weekend compared to other July weekends.

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Holiday Weekend Bolsters Ottawa Tourism with Notable Events

Ottawa is witnessing a surge in tourists during the Colonel By Day long weekend at the peak of summer. The [Ottawa International Busker Fest](#) on Sparks Street is a highlight, marking its biggest turnout in recent years. With about 10,000 attendees, the festival, celebrating its 30th anniversary, showcases over 20 performers from across North America. Buskers, such as Daniel and Kimberly Craig, emphasized the event's intimate nature, allowing direct interaction with the audience. The Busker Fest is one of many events attracting thousands of tourists to Ottawa, resulting in bustling restaurants and fully booked hotels. Notably, the Lieutenants Pump in Centretown reported significant tourist inflow from the U.S., Europe, and Quebec. Additionally, the Les Grands Feux du Casino Lac-Leamy, a fireworks event at the Canadian Museum of History, had Italy showcasing the theme 'Evolution in Motion' over the Ottawa River on its second night.

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Media Spotlight



Impact of Wildfires on Canada's Tourism Sector

Due to rampant wildfires and smoke enveloping a significant part of Canada, many travellers are cancelling their summer plans, dealing a blow to Canada's tourism sector. Madison Simmons of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario revealed that both domestic and international tourists are pulling back from their planned visits. Drawing a parallel, Simmons referenced a 2018 study related to California, where during its most catastrophic wildfire season, the state suffered a loss of around \$20 million in July due to 11% of travellers aborting their trips. Ontario's tourism sector had been hopeful of a revival after a double blow from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, but the current wildfire situation, combined with high gas prices and border delays, is proving detrimental especially for businesses in northern Ontario. Canada's tourism sector was predicted to almost entirely bounce back this year post the pandemic, but with the worsening wildfire situation, this looks bleak. Canada's emergency preparedness minister highlighted that 2023 could be the worst year in terms of wildfires, with 428 fires presently active, of which 231 are uncontained.

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The Federal Tourism Growth Strategy



New Federal Tourism Growth Strategy Launched

The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, has announced a new Federal Tourism Growth Strategy. This strategy, unveiled in Niagara Falls, aims to guide the growth, investment, and stability of Canada's tourism sector. This development is the culmination of extensive consultations involving a plethora of stakeholders, industry partners, and entities across Canada. A significant contribution has come from Destination Canada, which worked closely with various partners to create united recommendations for this strategy. The Canadian Government has outlined five strategic priorities for the growth of the nation's visitor economy. These priorities aim to capitalize on high-growth segments of the tourism sector, driving Canada to achieve challenging targets and enhance its international reputation and competitiveness. The five key priorities of the strategy are:

1. Invest in Tourism Assets: This involves strengthening infrastructure, services, and attractions to boost the overall tourism experience.
2. Embrace Recreation and the Great Outdoors: Leveraging Canada's vast and beautiful natural landscapes to attract tourists who are seeking outdoor and recreational experiences.

3. Partner to Grow Indigenous Tourism: Collaborating with indigenous communities to promote their rich culture and history, providing visitors with unique cultural experiences.
4. Attract International Events: Ensuring Canada becomes a prime destination for hosting international events, which can attract global audiences and enhance the country's international profile.
5. Improve Federal Coordination: Streamlining various federal initiatives and activities to ensure a coherent and integrated approach towards achieving the strategy's goals.

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Updates of RTO 9's paid media strategies

This year, RTO 9 worked with Tourism Kingston, 1000 Islands Gananoque, 1000 Islands Rideau Canal Waterways and Le Boat to bring Andrea Traynor, Mommy Gearest back to the area once again to explore the 1000 Islands Region and the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site. Andrea covered the southern section of the Rideau Canal in 2021 while [on a holiday with her family with Le Boat](#). Andrea's most recent blog centred around visiting South Eastern Ontario [with her pet](#).

In 2023, Mommy Gearest was named the No. 2 Best Toronto Mom Blog in Feedspot. Mommy Gearest was named one of the Top 25 Product Review Moms on Circle of Moms, and voted a “blog to watch” in its first year; she was also heralded as one of Toronto’s top 30 ultimate mommy bloggers and has been a Top Mommy Blog.

UPCOMING: [Destination Ontario](#) and RTO 9 are working together to bring a freelance Travel Writer, Jocelyn Mary Pride and guest to South Eastern Ontario for a nine-day adventure covering 4 destinations; September 14-22, 2023.

Jocelyn will be pitching to various Australian / New Zealand travel magazines including MiNDFOOD (thinking person’s monthly glossy magazine – sustainability a focus), Escape – (wide audience, weekly Sunday newspaper supplement and online), Explore (regional Australian weekend supplement – wide audience print and online), Selector (high end Food /Wine glossy magazine) and New Zealand Herald (NZ and Australian audience – online / print supplements).

We would like to thank Tourism Kingston, 1000 Islands Gananoque, 1000 Islands Rideau Canal Waterways and Prince Edward County for their continued collaboration and support.

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 Lesley McDougall lmcdougall@region9tourism.ca with your ideas.

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