

The business of ?doing? tourism

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Visitors come to an area to see, feel, experience and absorb a destination.

You might ask, ?Why should I care? I'm not in the tourism business.?

But if you engage with a visitor who simply buys a coffee, hikes a trail, or explores shops in a village, you are definitely in the tourism business.

The Tourism industry in Ontario generates more than \$29.8 billion annually and supports 372,000 jobs. In Caledon, we welcome more than 416,500 visitors who spend about \$32,614,000 while visiting.

Tourism is everyone's business. So how can you make a strong impression on visitors and keep them coming back for more?

In order to create memorable experiences, visitors need to feel special. There are many ways to make your business stand out, but providing first class customer service is the key. Here are some ideas:

? If you are offering a service that requires pre-registration, a confirmation message that mentions that you look forward to seeing that individual can set an initial positive tone and level of service to be expected.

? Work with other local operators to provide package deals for visitors who stay in the area. For instance, if you offer accommodation, why not partner with a resident historian to offer a local history tour? Restaurants can partner with local attractions to offer discounts if visitors attend each other's venues.

? If you interact with visitors electronically, follow up with a ?thank you? note after their visit and invite them to come back.

Tourism does not exist in a vacuum. Network and share ideas with other businesses to extend visitors' length of stay (and spend). For destinations that attract passing visitors, like restaurants and stores, provide helpful information about what other businesses and sights they can visit while in the area. Use your local expertise to encourage visitors to stay longer and explore other attractions.

Another important tip to keep in mind is having a great website. Make sure it's current and takes advantage of promotional opportunities available to you. For instance, list your business on visitcaledon.ca and make sure your special events are added to its events calendar.

Leverage the power of social media and utilize channels like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TripAdvisor. A picture tells a thousand words ? share your images and tweets with channels that will spread the word wider. If visitors use TripAdvisor to make a recommendation or offer a testimonial about their experience, thank them. Sadly, the odd person will say something negative on these channels and it is vital that you respond with empathy, say how the issue will be addressed and try to assure them that things will improve next time.

Stay up to date by subscribing to newsletters from Headwaters Tourism and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.

Tourism is an important and growing industry in Caledon. Tourists help to sustain local businesses, so remember ? every visitor with whom you interact will go away with an impression of Caledon . . . let's make it a good one and ensure they come back.