

**TWILLINGATE ISLANDS  
TOURISM MASTER PLAN  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Twillingate Islands, consisting of North and South Twillingate, are located in Notre Dame Bay, one of the most scenic bays on the island of Newfoundland's northeast coast. Two incorporated communities are located on the islands: The town of Twillingate is on both the North and South Twillingate Islands and the town of Crow Head is on the most northern part of the North Island. One local improvement district and four unincorporated settlements are also located on the two islands.

Twillingate Islands have been considered a provincial tourism destination for many years. The area's scenic rugged beauty; numerous natural harbours, coves and islands; stately historic homes and merchant premises, and friendly people have long attracted visitors. Although some other Newfoundland communities have similar attributes, the Twillingate area has a combination of additional factors that make it a popular tourism draw. Tourists, tour operators and provincial tourism authorities know the area to consistently provide more provincial icons (i.e. icebergs, whales, living fishing village, lighthouse, music/food and culture) in one place than most other Newfoundland communities. Tourists can also go there and be assured of experiencing a genuine Newfoundland outpost that is of sufficient size to offer accommodations, food, and activities as well as basic services such as a gas station, pharmacy, Laundromat, and groceries. Twillingate Islands are also strategically placed half way between St. John's and the west coast and are, therefore, a convenient, worthwhile and scenic stop over point.

Despite Twillingate Islands being considered a "diamond in the rough" by tourism authorities, other Newfoundland tourism locations (e.g. Bonavista, Newtown, Gambo, etc.), with some of the same comparable tourism attributes, have moved ahead because of united efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive tourism plan. The Twillingate Islands Tourism Master Plan is designed to address this situation.

The Twillingate Islands Tourism Association (TITA) has commissioned this study. The purpose of the Tourism Master Plan is to help Twillingate Islands increase its tourism visitation by strengthening its position as a provincial destination of choice through strategic tourism development of the cultural, heritage and natural assets of the two islands. The Plan is designed to match market interests with tourism product development (i.e. ensure that the Twillingate Islands tourism product matches the interests of the majority of tourists visiting the area) and to rectify weaknesses in the existing tourism product through results-oriented and cost effective methods.

The proposed Plan provides a clear direction for Twillingate Islands' tourism for the next ten years with specific directions for the next three to five years. It describes the existing product, analyzes its weaknesses in terms of tourism demand, provides practical methods for strengthening and enhancing the product, and outlines how, by whom, when and at what general cost tourism opportunities should be developed. These recommendations complement and build on the provincial tourism strategy and are based on a thorough understanding of Twillingate Islands as well as the Kittiwake Coast tourism product including its people, their heritage and environment. The recommendations are also based on national and international tourism trends, comparative research of success factors in other appropriate jurisdictions and proven market analysis.

## KEY MARKET SEGMENTS WITH POTENTIAL FOR TWILLINGATE

Based on extensive research for this Plan, as well as the recently completed Newfoundland and Labrador Marketing Strategy Review prepared by The Economic Planning Group, a number of market segments have been identified that may have potential for Twillingate Islands. These are:

- General Touring/Explorer Market;
- Eco and Adventure Tourism Market;
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism Market, including learning vacations; and
- Getaway Vacations.

Based on the research conducted, it is evident that, from a socio-demographic perspective, it is the affluent mature and senior market segment that generally offers the best potential for Newfoundland and Labrador, and for the Twillingate area. This market has the following key characteristics:

- It represents 3.5% of the Canadian market and 4.7% of the US market;
- 85% of this segment are between the ages of 35 and 65 years;
- 100% are university educated and have household incomes over \$80,000;
- They travel much more frequently than other market segments – an average of some 14 overnight trips per year compared to the Canadian average of 7.1 overnight trips per year;
- They are much more likely than most other market segments to travel to other states/provinces;
- They are generally more likely than other market segments to seek out the following types of experiences while travelling:
  - Exploratory experiences including to see and experience natural wonders, historical sites, different and distinctive cultures and unspoiled nature – things that are different from one's day to day experiences
  - Nature sightseeing – viewing wildflowers, bird watching, other wildlife viewing
  - Golf
  - Shopping and dining
  - Museums, art galleries and historical sites
  - High arts such as theatre, classical music concerts
  - Garden related attractions, botanical gardens and natural wonders
  - Seaside resorts
  - B&Bs
  - Touring by personal vehicle
  - Wine tours
  - Ocean cruises.

While some of these activities and interests are not products that Twillingate can provide, there are many that are an ideal fit with the natural, heritage and cultural resources offered in the Twillingate area.

Twillingate Islands and the entire central region of Newfoundland face tough competition from the Avalon Peninsula as well as Western Newfoundland, both of which have more tourism product and infrastructure in place, and better access for tourism markets, both for touring trips as well as getaways for non-resident tourists. So, for trips by non-resident tourists of a week or less in the province, these other regions have strong advantages.

For visitors on longer touring trips in the province, Central Newfoundland and Twillingate Islands are in a better position, particularly for trips involving cross-island travel. The kinds of tourism initiatives that can help build visitation from this market segment include:

- Suggestions for unique local self-guided itineraries and packages of a day or less in duration that can be readily added to touring trips;
- More outdoor adventure outfitters and operators;
- More shopping and dining opportunities, particularly involving local crafts and menu items;
- Conservation of heritage buildings, businesses and way of life;
- More opportunities to meet local residents and share in their entertainments and local events;
- More opportunities to learn more about the history and culture of the community; and
- More emphasis in marketing of the dinner theatre program in the community.

The 'personal explorers' and 'exotic tour seekers' segments of the leisure tourism and touring marketplace are of particular interest to Newfoundland and to Twillingate Islands, as these are people prepared to travel more, farther and spend more if the experience at the other end is worth it and of a unique character.

For the Newfoundland resident market, there are two opportunities: the getaway market and as a stop on a vacation trip. Newfoundland residents living within a reasonable driving distance (i.e. from Central Newfoundland) represent a potential getaway market for the Islands. However, limited potential is seen for more distant resident markets such as from the Avalon, and for off-island tourist getaway trips to the area. The kinds of planning that can help develop this market include:

- More unique events;
- Getaway packages involving experiences unique to the area and the community; and
- Value-added and off-season savings offers.

Twillingate Islands are also well situated to attract a portion of the Newfoundland resident vacation market – as a stopping point on vacation trips across the province or as part of longer stays in the Twillingate area.

Special interest and leisure-learning markets are less affected by logistical factors and represent a latent market sector for Twillingate Islands. However, excellent offerings are a prerequisite. Suggestions for the community include:

- Structured learning/enrichment packages based on culture, nature and heritage; and
- Guided interpretation tours based on local community history, natural features.

The rapid growth in role of the Internet as a trip planning aid for travellers presents a major new opportunity for places such as Twillingate Islands, in allowing them to reach external markets likely to have an interest in the area's unique appeals and products.

## **INSIGHTS FROM ELSEWHERE**

### **In-Bound Tour Operators**

All tour operators found Twillingate Islands to be a very good tourism destination, primarily as a day or side trip. They found the product to be of sufficient quality for their clientele with enough attractions for a good day or half day trip and well located within the seven or 14-day tour package of the province. Specific strengths of the Twillingate Islands product include the number of Newfoundland icons found in one place, the town of Twillingate's ongoing existence as an viable outpost community, its natural harbour, the quality of the attractions, and the friendliness of the people. A majority of coach tour operators from outside the province suggested that due to the unreliability of the Argentia ferry service and their own tight itinerary schedule, it would be unlikely that they would offer overnight stays, even if accommodations existed. However, tour operators providing individual "package" tours would continue to recommend Twillingate Islands as an over night stay.

### **Lessons Learned From Comparable Communities**

Several tourism-based communities were studied in Atlantic Canada to learn how they strengthened their tourism product. They offered a number of valuable lessons for Twillingate Islands including the following:

- Need critical mass of product and clusters of product;
- Develop partnerships among those involved in tourism in the community;
- Build a destination, not just accommodations;
- Create a destination-marketing program;

- Foster the hub approach (i.e. The community is the hub and the spokes are the things to do and see in the area);
- Build a good website – (This is now a basic, and critical requirement);
- Provide reasonable support infrastructure (e.g. Good roads, signage, visitor information services and publications, community tourism website);
- Develop quality accommodations (e.g. Too many operators build properties that are considerably below the standard the province's travellers prefer);
- Foster enthusiastic volunteers;
- Build capacity and quality first before taking the product to market;
- Emphasize quality in everything (e.g. Facilities, programs and services for tourists need to meet contemporary expectations of the affluent, urban North American traveller);
- Ensure good standards of hospitality and customer service;
- Create only genuine, authentic cultural and natural heritage (i.e. Today's travellers want 'the real thing'. Take care not to make an area too 'touristy/tacky');
- Design for the tastes of the market, not your own – (This is a particular challenge for Newfoundland, as the tastes and expectations of visitors are considerably different from island residents in a number of respects);
- Encourage entrepreneurship;
- Listen to your customers;
- Foster the growing tourism market among Newfoundlanders (i.e. Provincial residents are increasingly doing what visitors are doing);
- Seek Government support using a planned approach;
- Ensure funding is adequate to get the job done right (i.e. In Newfoundland, too much volunteer effort is expended on seeking insufficient funding to do the job well);
- Growth products (i.e. Tourists to Newfoundland are increasingly seeking soft adventure, scenery and interactive/educational experiences);
- Put in time and effort (e.g. The market development period takes years, and consistent effort);
- Bring people along (e.g. A special effort has to be made on a continuing basis to help people in the industry and the community to understand what it takes to grow tourism, and why it is worth the effort);

- Don't chase every market (i.e. Concentrate on those in which you can truly compete, and that can get to your destination easily); and
- Generate repeat visits through event-based programming.

## **STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS**

### **General Comments**

- The town of Twillingate's strength lies in it still being a genuine Newfoundland outpost with a working fish plant, natural harbour, historic buildings, friendly people and rugged beauty, yet of sufficient size to offer all the necessary amenities for tourists such as accommodations, food and activities as well as services such as gas stations, pharmacy, Laundromat, grocery and building supply stores, etc.
- Opportunities to see icebergs up close are more prevalent on Twillingate Islands on a consistent basis than in most other parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. The opportunity to also see whales is a value added experience for most tourists.
- The town of Twillingate's harbour as well as the many coves and bays on the two islands are still ringed with historic houses, wharves, fishing stages and sheds that are important tourism features to tourists discovering the area. Many outpost communities in the province have fallen prey to ribbon development due to lack of natural features as well as planning and zoning.
- Twillingate Islands offers consistently more of the provincial icons (i.e. icebergs, whales, living fishing village, music/food, lighthouses, etc.) in one place than most other Newfoundland or Labrador communities.
- Twillingate Islands are strategically placed half way between St. John's and the west coast and are, therefore, a convenient, worthwhile and scenic stop over point in an area somewhat underdeveloped in tourist attractions.
- The attractions and activities offered on Twillingate Islands match the interests of the primary market segments visiting the province (e.g. general touring/explorer market, eco and adventure tourism market, culture and heritage market and on island getaway vacations).
- Provincial and national tour operators agree that Twillingate Islands are a very strong tourism destination with good growth potential providing the islands enhance what they have and don't make drastic changes to the existing product.

## Human Resources

- Twillingate Islands has a small, but strong, energetic, and dedicated tourism organization.
- As a result of efforts of one B and B owner, all B and Bs are working cooperatively together in an informal manner to ensure that, whenever possible, tourists find a place to stay on Twillingate Islands.

## Transportation

- Twillingate Islands can be reached from either the east through Gander or west through Notre Dame Junction making it possible for tourists to drive a loop rather than backtracking, as is the case with many of the scenic side roads off the Trans-Canada Highway.

## Natural Tourism Attractions and Activities

- The region's rugged beauty has attracted tourists for many years. While other regions may have similar beauty, the combination of rocks and cliffs as well as numerous small islands, harbours, coves and bays sets Twillingate Islands apart.
- The drive through New World Islands and Twillingate Islands to the town of Twillingate is very scenic due to the many bodies of water that are crossed and the numerous small islands that dot the bays and coves.
- Opportunities for soft adventure (e.g. walking, hiking, kayaking, boat touring) experiences are numerous, varied and very scenic and have the potential to be of high quality.
- Boat tours to see icebergs, whales, coves, bays and islands are integral to providing a full suite of activities for the explorer and ecotourist market.

## Cultural Tourism Attractions and Activities

- Despite its relatively small size, the town of Twillingate has a good mix of attractions (e.g. dinner theatre, museums, living interpretation of the fishery, historic buildings) and a good base upon which to build. On a competitive basis with other provincial and national small-scale attractions, several of the Twillingate Islands attractions are of outstanding quality (e.g. Twillingate Museum, Long Point Lighthouse, Prime Berth).
- Tourists, tour operators and government officials have cited *All Around the Circle Dinner Theatre* as one of the best dinner theatres in the province.
- *The Fish Fun and Folk Festival* is one of the more stable and successful festivals in the province.
- The built heritage of the area has been well documented and offers a variety of styles and building types that have the potential for being an increasing tourism draw providing

that steps are made to preserve and enhance existing structures of merit before they further disintegrate.

- Community and street names are unusual and could be a value added attraction if given appropriate signage and interpretation.

## **WEAKNESSES**

### **General Comments**

- Often local tourism operators develop a product based on their own needs or interests without understanding the tourism market's needs or expectations. Twillingate Islands attract primarily a well-educated high-income clientele, but sometimes the product does not match those needs/expectations, particularly restaurants, bars, general infrastructure, and some B and Bs and activities.
- The unplanned approach to tourism on Twillingate Islands has resulted in inconsistency of product.
- The existing lack of cooperation among many of the tourist operators or businesses sometimes manifests itself publicly during tourism season. This lack of professionalism can do irreparable harm to an otherwise good product.
- No accurate method exists to track the number of tourists visiting Twillingate Islands or the contribution of tourism activity to the region's economy. Good information on current visitors is important when planning and preparing tourism attractions, activities and services.

### **Land Use and Infrastructure**

- The entrance to the town of Twillingate could be improved given that a tourist's first impression of a place is very important.
- One of several important and positive attributes of the Twillingate Islands tourism product is Twillingate Harbour, yet little has been done to build on that advantage.

### **Human Resources**

- Few local tour operators have received any formal tourism training.
- No tourism training programs are available in the region for residents.
- Despite some younger people recently entering the tourism/service business (e.g. restaurants), for the most part, younger people are not involved. In tourism, as is the case of all businesses, one always needs to build an industry for the future.
- Despite the efforts of TITA, a general lack of awareness exists about tourism within the general population of the area, about the opportunities presented by tourism and about

the realistic types of efforts, initiatives, activities and attractions that are needed to be undertaken to make it appealing to the type of visitors now frequenting the area.

### **Transportation**

- Motor coach tours have experienced ongoing difficulty in planning and delivering tours to Newfoundland because of the Argentia ferry's unreliable schedule. The result is that many of the coach tours are planning west coast tours only, using the more reliable Port aux Basques ferry.
- The roads coming into Twillingate are in poor condition.
- Clear signage to Twillingate; signs indicating upcoming bumps, sharp turns and intersections as well as centre lines do not exist on the main roads coming to Twillingate Islands.
- The instability of the airlines as well as the high cost of travelling by air to Newfoundland is an overall deterrent to tourism that also affects tourism to Twillingate. Airfares between St. John's and Gander are particularly prohibitive.

### **Natural Tourism Attractions and Activities**

- Twillingate Islands have begun the task of marking and interpreting trails connecting some of the more important natural attractions in the area, but they need to be brought to a higher level of market-readiness in terms of trail development, signage and interpretation.
- No standardized paths, signage or interpretation has been done within any of the towns or communities on Twillingate Islands which, to date, has been a missed tourism opportunity.
- A good quality, accurate interpretative map or maps of Twillingate Islands is lacking which would connect themes, icons, history and culture of the area with paths, roads and trails.

### **Cultural Tourism Attractions and Activities**

#### ***Built Heritage***

- No concentrated effort has been made to preserve, protect and promote the documented heritage structures of the two islands.

#### ***Museums and Archives***

- Each of the museums has plans for future cataloguing, interpretation and expansion, but limited funds. Little coordination of effort occurs between the organizations in terms of activities, exhibits, cataloguing or services.

## **Existing Tourist Services**

### ***Restaurants***

- Food of poor quality and limited variety is an ongoing and common complaint among tourists and in-bound tour operators. The primary criticisms include an over abundance of fried food, lack of fresh salads and fish, limited menu items reflecting Newfoundland's culture and lack of an upscale or atmospheric restaurant. Tour operators and tourists also noted the lack of coffee shops or small "stop in " places to get a cup of coffee and a homemade bun or cookie. They also said that a small quality bar was lacking in the summer time.

### ***Bed and Breakfasts and Inns***

- The number of tourists to Twillingate Islands is increasing, but the number and quality of B and Bs and small inns has not kept pace with demand resulting in the region losing valuable income.
- Ensuring that the quality and fit of services matches market needs and expectations is becoming an issue.
- Rooms with private baths are essential for most tourists. While the number of B and Bs in the area with private baths is increasing, any future B and Bs must have private baths.
- Most B and Bs close down during the winter months and some B and Bs have no method of taking reservations during those months which also happen to be the months in which most tourists and tour operators are making summer vacation plans.

### ***General Services and Infrastructure***

- A lack of a municipal signage policy and good signage hampers the tourists' ability to find attractions, accommodations, restaurants and other sites. An unsightly proliferation of signs has developed, particularly at the main intersection of town. This situation detracts from the overall scenic beauty of the area, which is the reason that many tourists visit Twillingate Islands.
- No heritage by-laws exist to protect the wealth of significant built heritage structures that are found on Twillingate Islands and are important, and could be of greater importance, to the overall tourism product.

## **THREATS /BARRIERS**

Threats or barriers are those events or occurrences over which a region has little or no control, but that could affect the tourism product. Outlined below are a few that are provincial, national or international in origin.

## **General Comments**

- World geo-political issues, declines in the North American stock market, increasing oil prices and a slow US economy will impact travel in the short-term.

## **Human Resources.**

- A declining population base, an exodus of young people and minimal young people entering the tourism industry represent a serious barrier to developing ongoing sustainable tourism.
- Growing competition in the tourism industry, especially among locations where a coordinated effort among tourism operators has produced a product of quality and value, presents a threat to tourism development on Twillingate Islands if a plan and coordinated effort to implement that plan does not evolve.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

The existing tourism product on Twillingate Islands has been considered a ‘diamond in the rough’ by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. In other words, the basic structure and product is good and does not need to be significantly altered, but rather enhanced. For the most part, it involves “tweaking” rather than substantial change. Most of the opportunities identified are based on knowledge of the market and recognition of weaknesses and gaps in the existing tourism product and marketing. Many of the opportunities have to do with a planned approach to tourism development; in other words “managing” the tourism product rather than haphazardly letting it happen. Other opportunities include enhancement of existing attractions (e.g. hiking trails, heritage buildings and the waterfront), better packaging existing sites and attractions (theming, interpreting, connecting, matching product to market), filling in service gaps so that they match market needs (e.g. more upscale B and Bs and high quality small inns, small upscale seasonal restaurants, bars and coffee shops) and improved municipal services to meet tourism demand (e.g. better signage, user friendly entrance to the town, a designated centre for all tourism information).

## **THE STRATEGY**

### **Introduction**

We first place the strategy in context by explaining why tourism is important to an area and then by showing the various steps or building blocks necessary to grow a tourism industry. This is followed by an explanation of how tourists make decisions to visit locations such as Twillingate Islands and how they choose to spend money while there. Finally, we match the potential tourist with the existing tourism product of Twillingate Islands. With this background, which should help in understanding why we have chosen this particular approach in developing the strategy, we present both the product development and marketing strategies.

### **Tourism Benefits**

Tourism is important to communities for a variety of reasons, but perhaps two of the more important are:

- Economic benefits including employment are spread throughout the community, as opposed to being located within a single business; and
- An area has the opportunity to show case its most attractive attributes, which contributes to a sense of community pride.

Specifically, the economic impacts of tourism include:

- Jobs;
- Purchase of supplies and services;
- Federal and provincial sales taxes;
- Other federal and provincial taxes including corporate taxes and personal income taxes; and
- Municipal business and property taxes.

Other benefits include:

- Providing additional markets for local businesses, helping to sustain small businesses for which there might not otherwise be sufficient market potential, and providing a wider range of opportunities for local residents, such as dining, shopping, entertainment, etc.;
- Helping to support community recreational and cultural amenities;
- Providing employment opportunities for people entering the labour force, and for seasonal and part-time workers;
- Contributing to creating a sense of pride in the community; and
- Helping to support business and industrial development because an attractive community to visit is also an appealing community in which to locate a business.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SUCCESSFUL TOURISM DESTINATION**

To attract visitors, a destination has to offer *highly unique, appealing experiences in which they have a competitive advantage and in which a significant number of people are interested*. General sightseeing is no longer valid as a sufficient appeal for more than a very limited visit.

Attractions and activities available at a destination - and the scope, intensity, uniqueness and appeal of the experience these activities offer compared to similar experiences available at competing destinations - will contribute strongly to whether a trip decision is made, and which destination is chosen. For the purposes of this strategy, we call such activities primary demand generators.

Other activities may not, in fact, contribute to motivating the visit at all, but they may be of sufficient interest to a market segment to motivate individuals to add it to their agenda while they are at the destination. In such cases, the activity functions as a demand supporter.

Successful tourism destinations can be generally characterized as having a combination of the following features, including both demand generators and demand supporters.

Demand Generators include such attributes as:

- A critical mass of unique and appealing attractions, events, cultures, entertainment and leisure activities;
- Quality, appealing experiences of special interest to visitors, different than those available at home;
- Scenery and natural areas for recreation, relaxation and enjoyment;
- Programming and packages to appeal to special interests; and
- A sufficient level of high impact marketing activities to highly targeted market segments.

Demand Supporters include such attributes as:

- Interesting and unique shopping, particularly for local indigenous products and crafts;
- Quality dining, including unique indigenous cuisine;
- Quality accommodations of different types;
- Easy access to information, reservations and visitor services;
- Quality travel routes and signage;
- Access to a well-developed tourism product distribution network (i.e. tour operators, packagers, travel agents);
- Convenient, fast and affordable transportation to access the destination;
- Trained, professional service and hospitable staff; and
- A safe environment.

### **The Overall Strategic Approach For Twillingate Islands**

In order to save time and money and to ensure some measure of success as a tourism destination, it is important that a community identify which of the markets available to them are the ones it wants and which of them are they most likely to get, and then focus the effort on those market segments. This is generally referred to as product-market matching.

In undertaking a product-market matching exercise, we have determined that the personal explorers and exotic tour seekers segments and the culture and heritage segment discussed in Volume I each fit well with most of the current and potential product on Twillingate Islands. Conversely, Twillingate Islands have a good mix of product to attract these segments.

Therefore, these segments should be given top priority in product development and marketing efforts in the future.

The next best market segment for Twillingate Islands is vacations for Newfoundland residents. Here we are looking at touring trips and extended stays of a week or so. Most of this would involve direct consumer marketing.

The third priority segments are adventure tourism, ecotourism and the short getaway market for Newfoundland residents. Twillingate Islands lack the product and the product potential to become a major destination for adventure and ecotourism. In the resident market, the long travel distance from the major market in St. John's is the major reason this segment didn't score better.

### **Recommended Priorities for Product Development and Marketing**

This strategy recommends that the greatest effort in product development be given to the most important products for the top priority segments. Specifically, the top priorities for the product development effort should include:

- Developing "clusters" of activities;
- Establishing a 'harbour experience' in Twillingate Harbour and making general townscape improvements;
- Completing the proposed development of the Long Point lighthouse property;
- Preserving designated heritage structures and expanding the scope of heritage programming and interpretation on the Islands;
- Expanding the scope of arts/cultural offerings and craft production;
- Developing suggested itineraries and packages for visitors; and
- Upgrading and expanding accommodations and restaurants on Twillingate Islands.

The top priority market segments, which we will refer to collectively as the 'explorers', generally have higher incomes, are empty nesters and typically travel in couples. They have high expectations with respect to quality of facilities and experiences, and they are certainly prepared to pay for better quality. In other words, they are not price sensitive and, in fact, they often seek to pay more to get better quality (e.g. they use price as a barometer of quality). So charging a higher price for something unique and of good quality is not a problem in this market. In fact, that is better.

The first priority in marketing should be given to this 'explorer' market segment. Second priority should be given to the Newfoundland resident vacation market.

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOR TWILLINGATE ISLANDS

With an understanding of what the benefits of tourism are to a particular area, what motivates a visitor to come to Twillingate Islands, who the visitors are and what they expect, and what is the product-market match, we can now turn our attention to the actual strategy.

On the following pages are the products that should be developed. The product strategies are grouped in broad concepts such as a “product clusters” or “infrastructure”. Within some of these broader concepts are specific strategies that flow from the broader ones.

### 1. Product Clusters

Develop a physical clustering of attractions, activities and services that create a critical tourism mass worthy of a visit. In this way visitors can leave their car, readily visit the attractions, etc. that are available to them and comfortably walk from one attraction to another.

- Develop the harbourfront on the south side of Twillingate Harbour into a primary cluster attraction by connecting the area from the abandoned building just east of Toulinguet Inn B and B to the Northeast Church through the use of walkways, interpretative signage, sitting areas, small private yacht marina, harbour activities, boat rentals, living interpretation and small scale business kiosks (Priority – High).
- Build on the success of Driftwood Gallery and Twillingate Museum by gradually converting other underutilized buildings on the north side of the Harbour into an arts cluster with programming, art galleries and studios for artists and craftspeople (Priority – Medium).

### 2. Infrastructure

Create two major professionally developed tourism focal points for visitors on Twillingate Islands using existing structures.

- Complete the plan for the refurbishment and interpretation of Long Point Lighthouse that was suggested in the 1991 Randolph Report since the lighthouse continues to be a popular destination for all visitors coming to Twillingate Islands. Focus on the interpretation of icebergs as that is the primary draft and icon of the area (Priority – High).
- Develop a one-stop visitor centre in Twillingate known as the *Twillingate Experience Centre*. Locate the Visitor Centre in or near the harbourfront development cluster as the anchor attraction. Plan the *Twillingate Experience Centre* to provide a complete menu of visitor services including, but not limited to, the following: information, maps, interpretative materials, public washrooms, showers and ice (for private yachts), public Internet access, pay phones, bookings in both off and on season, itineraries and an accurate visitor tracking system (Priority – High).

### 3. Living History Village

Create a 'living history museum without walls' by restoring as much of the community as possible while maintaining it as a living, working community, and to provide visitors with a full experience of the community's past history and present character through interpreted sites and traditional activity demonstrations (e.g. boat building, fishing, wine making, arts and crafts). Physical interfaces could be created between tourists and genuine enterprises operating in the community by:

- Establishing an interpretive and demonstration site at businesses, in a location readily accessible to visitors;
- Allowing visitors to view the work being undertaken; and
- Providing interpretive information on both the current process and the history of the activity in the community.

Two specific suggestions for enterprises within the living history village concept are:

- A craft centre or program for the production and marketing of local hand made craft items (Priority –Medium); and
- An ECONOMUSEUM® using the Weil Winery (Priority – Medium).

### 4. Itineraries and Packages

Develop a series of guided and self-guided packages since great experiences may be available to visitors at a destination, but normally it takes a lot of work and time for the visitor to find and organize them. This situation can be improved by presenting the visitor with suggestions, both in the form of suggested itineraries as well as packages that can be booked in advance. They can include the following:

- Self-guided suggested itineraries (e.g. trail walking) (Priority – High).;
- Self-guided packages (e.g. a combination of accommodations, boat tour and hiking) (Priority –Medium).;
- Guided group programs (e.g. boat tours, sea kayaking) (Priority – Medium).; and
- Guided group packages (e.g. outdoors, cultural) (Priority – Medium).

The guided and self-guided packages can include walking, driving, boating or biking and be developed and marketed under the banner of *Hidden Coves and Meandering Roads* (Priority – High) that targets general tourism and explorer, eco and adventure, cultural and heritage, and on island get away markets. Specific initiatives related to *the Hidden Coves and Meandering Roads* theme could include:

- Specific interpretative themes (e.g. *Premises, Stages and Sheds – The History of the Fishery; From Pride's Drong to Purcell's Harbour – What's in a Name; Arches and*

*Icebergs – A Natural History Tour*). This would include producing interpretive materials to communicate the interesting stories of Twillingate Islands that link to target markets (Priority – High).

- The hiking trails system, which would be improved and marketed through a strategic trail strategy, trail improvements, professional interpretation materials and signage. Trails should be located both outside and within communities (Priority – High).
- Boat tours offerings which would be expanded, especially when icebergs are not present, to include themes and specific itineraries (e.g. *All Around the Circle* to visit the communities named in the song; *Island Experiences* to visit the many islands in the area; *Inland Water Exploration* to visit the many bays and inlets in the area and *The Way We Were* to visit abandoned communities, etc.) (Priority –Medium).
- A distinct community identity and activities for each of the larger communities and coves on Twillingate Islands by identifying unifying characteristics in each location (e.g. *Back Harbour-Where History Began*; *Durrell – Stages of the Fishery*; *Crow Head – Copper mine*) (Priority –Medium).

As well as tours, activities need to be packaged and encouraged on Twillingate Islands, particularly for rainy days.

- Develop a *Discover Twillingate Islands Program* for individuals and families consisting of a self-guided interactive program that includes local sites and attractions (e.g. the Lighthouse, Prime Berth, *Toutons and Tea*, *All Around the Circle* Dinner Theatre, Twillingate Museum, Durrell Museum, Northeast Church Museum, Weil Winery) and interactive activities at selected sites (e.g. Lighthouse lecture and games in the basement of the craft shop; living interpretation at Twillingate Museum with 'Georgina Stirling'; historical movies/plays/concerts/craft at the Northeast Church Museum; demonstrations about Newfoundland and Labrador at the *Twillingate Experience Centre*; storytelling for children at the Durrell Museum; tour of school murals followed by a painting workshop for children at the school; wine/juice tasting at Weil Winery, etc) (Priority – High).

## 5. Heritage Tourism

Undertake and enhance a number of activities that appeal to the cultural/heritage tourism visitors that come to Twillingate Islands and that are, at the same time, important to the people of Twillingate Islands by:

- Coordinating the efforts of local museums and archives to provide more cost effective, focused, professional activities through exploring joint and coordinated displays, exhibits, activities, staffing, funding, standards and marketing (e.g. one brochure for all, a combined ticket price, staggered hours, etc.) (Priority –Medium);
- Preserving and protecting some of the most important of Twillingate Islands' 120 designated heritage structures by building on the inventory of heritage buildings on Twillingate Islands that was undertaken in 1998 through the hiring of a heritage tourism coordinator (Priority –Medium);

- Identifying and interpreting the six archaeological sites known to exist on Twillingate Islands (Priority –Medium); and
- Establishing an archival network for Twillingate Islands that contains not only recorded history of individuals (i.e. genealogy) and events, but also serves as a source of information for cultural producers (Priority –Medium).

## **6. Enterprises**

Develop several small business opportunities to service visitors to the area including:

- Providing increased opportunities for visitors to participate in outdoor experiences by providing rental services of bicycles, sea kayaks and outdoor equipment (Priority – Medium); and
- Developing outport vacation getaways modeled on the farm vacations of Prince Edward Island (Priority –Low).

## **7. Tourist Services**

Increase the number and improve the quality of accommodations and restaurants to better match the needs of incoming visitors by:

- Increasing the number of quality B and Bs in stages as the demand grows, encouraging the development of at least one four star B &B/Inn similar to Fishers Loft in Port Rexton or the inn in Battle Harbour, and encouraging the upgrading of a portion of the Anchor Inn (Priority –High);
- Increasing the quality and value of B and Bs to match the interest of the market segment visiting Twillingate Islands (Priority –Medium); and
- Expanding and enhancing the quality of restaurants in the area in stages as demand grows to meet the expectations and needs (e.g. fresh non-fried local food) of the tourist market segments visiting Twillingate Islands (Priority –High).

## **8. Municipal And Business Developments**

Improve Twillingate Islands as a tourism destination by undertaking several initiatives that fall within the responsibility of municipalities and local businesses such as:

- Providing opportunities for tourists in motorized vehicles to admire the many scenic vistas on Twillingate Islands or to stop for a walk or picnic without posing a traffic hazard to other individuals in motorized vehicles. This can be done by creating scenic look-offs, pull over places, and parking along existing road networks as a municipality undertakes annual road improvements (Priority –High);
- Developing a unifying identity for Twillingate Islands by creating a series of municipal icons to tie in with the area's strengths and the provincial icons (e.g. icebergs, whales,

lighthouses, living fishing village, culture and heritage) that would be placed on municipal property (e.g. street signs, disposal bins, banners, etc.) (Priority – Medium);

- Developing and approving a heritage by-laws in order to preserve, protect and utilize some of the 120 designated heritage buildings on Twillingate Islands before any more deterioration or removal occurs (Priority –Medium);
- Developing and approving an appropriate freestanding signage by-law restricting the display of tourism related signs both within and outside of Twillingate (Rte. 340) to only two free standing design types: a welcoming sign to Twillingate Islands and signs directing all visitors to the *Twillingate Experience Centre* (Priority –Medium);
- Enhancing the entrance to the town of Twillingate by making it better planned as well as more inviting, attractive and festive (e.g. repainting at appropriate times some of the businesses; installing planters, landscaping, banners, etc.; removing unsightly equipment to the rear of buildings; installing signs that reflect the period when Twillingate was at its height of importance (1850-1950), etc.) (Priority –Medium);
- Building on the existing mural program found on and in some buildings on Twillingate Islands by choosing a few small and well placed buildings in several of the communities throughout Twillingate islands to depict through murals either the icons or local historical interest (e.g. a painting of John Peyton or the Maritime Archaic in Back Harbour; a fishing dory in Durrell, lobster pots in Purcell's Harbour) (Priority –Medium); and
- Ensuring that Twillingate, Crow Head, Purcell's Harbour as well as other smaller settlements reflect the historical/cultural and thematic approach suggested for visitors by encouraging businesses to make any improvements to their property and signage thematic in approach (e.g. using local icon designs and products that will be developed - icebergs, whales, lighthouses, living fishing village, culture/heritage - where possible, developing any new infrastructure and signage in keeping with the heritage atmosphere of the towns and the proposed heritage by-laws) (Priority –Medium).

## **9. Organizational Structure and Human Resources**

### ***Organizational Structure***

Put in place an organizational structure that will help Twillingate Islands deliver on its potential for expanding the range and quality of its tourism experience products. This challenge cannot be overcome without a creative approach to mobilizing a business solution.

- Form an organization that would have the mandate to co-ordinate a program of tourism management including, but not necessarily limited to, the following: Twillingate Islands marketing; itinerary and package development as well as marketing of these products (Priority –High).
- Explore the option of having an established tourism operator take on the role of co-ordinator and marketing agent on behalf of the participating suppliers in the community, with a percentage of sales paid as a commission to compensate the organizer for the work.

- Explore also the option of forming a cooperative.

### **Human Resources**

- Initiate a *Team Twillingate* concept to underscore the importance of a cooperative approach to visitors among all groups and interests on Twillingate Islands in which local tourism operators and the people of Twillingate Islands would cooperate and be identified publicly as working together for the development and promotion of a quality tourism product. This would help in reducing some of the divisions that presently exist on the Islands (Priority –High);
- Build on the cooperative approach established by local B and Bs as part of the *Team Twillingate* initiative by strengthening and expanding it to other tourism services, attractions and activities (Priority –High); and
- Conduct on-going training in visitor services and product knowledge using local expertise as well as services offered by Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (Priority –High).

### **Other**

- Develop Twillingate Islands eventually into the tourism hub for the immediately adjacent areas (i.e. *Road to the Isles*) (Priority –Low).

### **Market Readiness**

In order for Twillingate Islands to position and advertise itself as a tourism destination that will meet consumer needs and expectations in a very competitive market place, a number of business and community practices, policies, strategies and tools need to be followed.

They include the following for tourism operators (Priority –High):

- Product standards;
- Hospitality Standards;
- Products that match markets;
- Marketing strategy and plan in place that is responsive to market opportunities having profit potential;
- Marketing Tools in place that will vary by type of business;
- Marketing partnerships and networks should be used with DMOs, tour operators, receptive operators – along with appropriate policies and practices for doing business with each of them; and
- Right pricing.

They include the following for the communities of Twillingate Islands (Priority –High):

- Tourism hub/spoke concept;
- Signage and directions;
- Single point of arrival;
- Visitor services; and
- Purchase point for tour packages.

### **Market Development**

Before undertaking marketing activities, it is important to establish various kinds of marketing relationships with the different marketing partners. In order of priority, these include partnerships within Twillingate Islands, with others in the Central Newfoundland region and in the province generally, and in external markets and in that order.

### **THE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR TWILLINGATE ISLANDS**

In order to understand the marketing strategy, it is important to understand how potential tourists think when they are planning a trip to Canada and then Newfoundland and Labrador and finally to Twillingate Islands. Only after understanding this approach can a marketing plan be put in place. The first question to answer is when should tourist providers partner and when should they compete. In order to arrive at the answer, it is important to understand how potential tourists arrive at a decision to visit Twillingate Islands and then how Twillingate Islands can position itself within that context. With that understanding, we then move on to how Twillingate Islands can best market itself using existing market networks. The following sections explore those ideas in more detail. The actual strategy builds on that understanding.

### **The Marketing Challenge In Tourism – Partners Or Competitors**

Before going to market, an effort needs to be made to develop partnerships with others in the community, the region and the province that have a common interest in promoting tourism to the province and Central Newfoundland as well. This brings up an interesting question and a challenge. Are Twillingate’s tourism operator’s competitors or partners in marketing to tourists? When should they partner and when should they compete?

The answer is that a marketing program needs to foster non-competitive collaborations on destination awareness and promotional marketing for the region and for the community. Competition should be limited to marketing to visitors when they are in the community itself, and only with regard to the particular offerings of one’s business in comparison to that of competing businesses. In other regards, everyone in the community should act like a partner in helping the visitor have the best experience possible.

It is vital to present a balanced and comprehensive presentation of information on all products available at the destination to the tour operator. So the industry really should work as partners in this whole effort.

## **The Marketing Network**

It is vital that the marketing effort be designed in a fashion such that, given the budget available, each initiative reaches the right audience and produces results. Each has to be cost-effective and show a return on investment in terms of new sales generated. This means that the effort needs to be limited to a few affordable initiatives that will be effective.

The greater the scope of the marketing agenda, the greater the budget needed to be effective. And the necessary increase in budget is exponential as soon as one moves into out-of-province marketing. Conversely, the smaller the budget available, the more limited the scope of marketing effort to be effective. In other words, one should spend first locally and then enough to do the job properly. Then, if more budget is available, spend enough to do a good job in the next marketplace. Then, move to the next step. The danger is in spreading limited dollars too thinly across more markets than a budget can address with the necessary level of effort to have the desired impact.

For community tourism promotion organizations, the first effort is promoting to people when they are in town, to encourage and assist them to do more, stay longer and spend more. Then, if budget allows, join in regional marketing efforts. And if more budget is available, participate in provincial co-op marketing programs. Beyond that, leave it to the regions and the province to get the job done.

The two exceptions are:

- the provincial travel guide which is an excellent vehicle to reach visitors planning a trip to the province as well as those travelling within the province; and
- a local website.

## **The Marketing Strategy**

The objectives of the marketing strategy for Twillingate Islands are:

- To grow tourism visitation to the Twillingate Islands from all target markets, on a long-term sustainable basis;
- To encourage existing visitors to Twillingate Islands to stay longer which results in more visitors, longer stays and higher spending, means more overnight and more same day visitors and should deliver a positive return on investment for all partners involved the area;
- To foster cooperative marketing efforts by the various partners involved in the Twillingate Islands tourism industry; and
- To maximize the impact of available marketing resources by focusing on the strongest market opportunities, and by working cooperatively to implement efficient and effective marketing programs.

## Positioning the Destination

'Positioning' the destination appropriately is an important element of the overall strategy, particularly in a case like this where the key target market are well-travelled, discerning consumers with high expectations. Positioning is essentially what the consumer is told about the essence of what a location has to offer, usually in a succinct marketing statement, with each word laden with meaning and imagery. For Twillingate Islands and the key target markets, words such as exotic, unique, quality, authentic, natural, historic, heritage, culture all have meaning that fits well here. So a positioning statement might be something like this:

*Twillingate Islands – A place of hidden coves and meandering roads offering a unique destination for discerning travellers seeking the authentic Newfoundland – come and experience the best of the Islands' nature, culture and heritage – and we have the best icebergs!*

It is vital that the community live up to the promise! So the promise must be made possible first.

## Target Markets

Based on the research and analysis presented earlier, the priority target markets for Twillingate Islands have been identified as:

### Primary Markets

- Non-resident visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador:
  - Explorers
  - Exotic Tour Seekers
  - Culture/Heritage Travellers  
(This would include independent travellers as well as those on FIT packages and group tours)
- Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador on vacation trips within the province.

### Secondary Markets

- Non-resident visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador having a strong interest in adventure and ecotourism experiences; and
- Residents of central Newfoundland on getaway trips.

## Promotional Elements - Consumers

A variety of promotional elements are recommended. Priority short-term efforts should focus on:

- Web site;
- Lure/Trip Planning Brochure;

- Map of Twillingate Islands;
- Co-op Ad in the provincial travel guide;
- Local and regional Visitor Information Services; and
- Local geographically accurate Twillingate Islands Map.

### **Future Research Needs**

Very little information is available on the visitor to the Twillingate Islands. An initiative should be undertaken over the next two or more years to conduct a survey of visitors to the area.

- In order to collect this type of information, the surveys will need to be undertaken when visitors are either finished their trip to the Twillingate Islands, or are at least well into their visit. Care should be taken to select visitors on a random basis, and to ensure a mix of same day and overnight visits. This could perhaps be undertaken through the *Twillingate Experience Centre*.
- Additionally, visitors should be surveyed every few years and a feedback form should always be available at the *Twillingate Experience Centre*.

### **CONCLUSION**

Often those involved in tourism initially believe in the adage, "Build it and they will come." They may come, at first. But they won't stay, return or necessarily have a positive experience. In this strategy, we have tried to show that a successful tourism destination involves many interrelated components, not just buildings, and that the basis for building any good tourism destination starts with well thought out planning, product market matching, product packaging and marketing. Only then will visitors come, stay, return, spend money and have a positive experience.

As has been indicated in Volume I of this strategy, the Twillingate Islands are blessed with many elements that make up a successful tourism destination including scenery, culture, heritage and location. However, if the Islands are to grow and remain competitive with other destinations, a number of actions or strategies need to be undertaken in a systematic fashion.

In this strategy, the rationale for a specific systematic approach is outlined. It is based on an understanding of the visitors that come and will continue to come Twillingate Islands and matching the interests of those visitors with the experiences that Twillingate Islands offers. This strategy focuses on creating and packaging a critical mass of unique and appealing attractions, events, cultures, entertainments and leisure activities based on the natural and cultural/heritage offerings of Twillingate Islands. The strategy also suggests providing quality, appealing experiences of special interest to visitors which are different from those available at their point of origination. Scenery, natural areas, culture and heritage are highlighted for recreation, relaxation and enjoyment. All of this is developed into programs and packages which appeal to the special interests of the visitors and which they can participate in easily.

This strategy tries to underscore the need to look at one's community through the eyes of a tourist as well as to determine what is important about the Islands for both residents and tourists in terms of what should be preserved, promoted, protected and enhanced. Thus, as an example, we have suggested that a living heritage village approach be undertaken in which many of the existing (and future) businesses and organizations (e.g. Boat building, fishing, crafts, wineries, arts) can be viewed that many residents take for granted, but, in fact, are different and appealing to visitors, especially in an outport setting.

Knowing that limited funding is available for infrastructure, the strategy has been designed to enhance existing structures rather than building new ones, which are costly to construct, operate and maintain. Most of what is suggested is the development of themed packages and itineraries that can be developed at minimal cost. Only two structures are suggested for major improvements, the Long Point Lighthouse and the Twillingate Experience Centre. Many other historical structures are in need of repair and any future efforts in terms of infrastructure should concentrate on those. Other infrastructure suggestions have to do with upgrading the visitor experience through by-laws and an overall heritage approach to any additional community improvements.

We also focus on strengthening the human resources of the area, particularly regarding ongoing training, and we point out the need for a new and creative approach to organization and management in order to ensure that all of the proposed activities, attractions and marketing take place.

Unfortunately, for many tour operators, marketing and knowledge of the markets are the last points contemplated in developing a tourism destination. In this strategy we place a strong emphasis on understanding of the market and how to attract the attention of that market. And we have tried to provide a time schedule that makes sense in terms of priorities.

If this strategy is followed, residents will not see a major change in their community, except in the enhancement of quality of life and economic benefits; yet visitors will come away from Twillingate Islands having participated in a very positive and lasting experience.