

A Transformational Opportunity – Itinerary and Package Development for International Markets

An experience development project for Explorers' Edge: Final Report



For more information please contact:

Twenty31 Consulting Inc. (Head Office)
2178 West 15th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6K 2Y5
+1 604 376 6341
gregk@twenty31.org
Mr. Greg Klassen, Partner

Twenty31 Consulting Inc. (Branch Office)
303 Armadale Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6S3X5
+1 416 721 3544
oliverm@twenty31.org
Mr. Oliver Martin, Partner

www.Twenty31.org
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© The recommendations reported herein are provided on an exclusive basis to Explorers' Edge and their government and industry partners in the RTO12 region. The recommendations found in this report are current as of the date of submission and subject to change given market forces and external variables. The report is meant to serve as a business plan to enter the US and UK international travel markets.

September 21, 2016

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Explorers' Edge (RTO12) retained Twenty31 Consulting in the Spring of 2016, to act as a Project Lead in the development of regional itineraries specifically for the US and the UK consumer markets. The intention of the proposed project was to move long-haul visitors around the region (RTO12), thereby extending their stays (i.e., 1+ nights) in the region, and fostering greater purchasing.

The itineraries outlined in this report are based on segmented interests, on rational routes, and on authentic Canadian Wilderness experiences, aligning with the needs of high-value "Authentic Experiencers" and "Free Spirits" travel consumer segments developed by Destination Canada (i.e., the Explorer Quotient (EQ) Segmentation). Together these two segments represent 26% (US) to 29% (UK) of the total travelling population.

The itineraries are meant to serve as examples on what is possible and build interest and awareness for operators to either partner with Explorers' Edge and/or develop their own offerings. Criteria-driven package development based on the consumer segments and, USPs is an end goal.

The itineraries have been developed via a comprehensive review of the product and experiences on offer, interviews and site visits with operators in the Explorers' Edge region and a detailed review of EQ travel consumers' trip appeals and drivers matched against

Explorers' Edge's brand positioning.

The Itineraries

A total of ten itineraries were developed ranging from two to five+ nights and incorporating one or more of the unique selling proposition (USP) categories deemed important for EQ travellers and on offer within the Explorers' Edge region:

- Active Adventure
- Award Winning Cuisine
- Connecting with Locals
- Personal Journeys
- Vibrant Communities

Additionally, each of the itineraries focused on one or more of the Explorers' Edge regions:

- Algonquin Park
- Almaguin Highlands
- Loring-Restoule
- Muskoka
- Parry Sound

Executive Summary, cont'd

Export vs. Market Ready

All operators included in the itineraries were deemed to be Export Ready with a definition developed using elements from Destination Canada's criteria. Additionally, analysis was conducted to identify the next stage in tourism product/experience offering, namely Market Readiness. These are criteria governing product and service standards and maintaining a high level of quality to meet and/or exceed EQ travel consumer expectations.

The Market Ready criteria were identified leveraging best-practice standards from a number of Canadian and international jurisdictions. Further discussion and refinement will be needed on these criteria and if agreement is in place to move forward, Explorers' Edge will need to engage their industry partners on possible adoption (i.e., via a pilot, voluntary adoption, etc.).

Why Itineraries?

Identified travel itineraries are vital to both stimulate interest in the Explorers' Edge region and engage prospective travel consumers. Furthermore, itineraries present an opportunity to disperse travellers beyond traditional routes and experiences and interact and engage myriad operators.

With Explorers' Edge engaged in comprehensive content and digital marketing and communications efforts to increase destination awareness and drive visitation to the region, these example itineraries will provide viable trip ideas helping to move high-value Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits through the Path to Purchase and ultimately plan and book a trip to the region.

What's Next?

As with all itinerary development, the next phase will involve communicating and presenting the draft itineraries to the recommended operators and outlining the steps on how to get them 'market ready'.

Once completed, it will be up to Explorers' Edge to outline a plan of action to market and sell the itineraries either directly to travel consumers via content marketing and/or in partnership with key travel trade. Various options have been outlined in the report on the pros and cons of each approach.

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Part 1: Why the US and UK Markets?



Why the US and UK Markets?

The United States and the United Kingdom represent Canada's number one and two largest respective international source markets for leisure travellers (i.e., with China likely to surpass the UK by 2017).

Benefiting from historical and cultural ties, long-standing economic relationships and trade agreements and extensive and frequent air (and road in the case of the US) access, both markets continue to present prime growth opportunities for Canada's regional destinations and tourism operators.

Furthermore, with the recent decline of the Canadian dollar vs. the US dollar and to some extent the British pound, a vacation within Canada is increasingly economical.

Destination Canada's research has clearly identified two travel consumer market segments, namely Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits in both the US and UK who value Canada's product and experiences and especially Explorers' Edge's brand offering (i.e., Canadian wilderness).

The US Market – Quick Facts

- 12.5 million overnight visitors to Canada (2015)
- Key US origin cities to Canada (i.e., higher-spending, longer-stay EQ profiled consumers): New York, Boston, Dallas/Fort Worth, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle
- Key US origin markets to Ontario (i.e., higher-spending, longer-stay EQ profiled consumers): North Eastern States, California, Texas
- 10% year-to-date (2016 January to June) growth rate in arrivals
- Average trip spending (per night \$CDN): \$160 to \$225
- Average length of stay: 2.5 nights

The UK Market – Quick Facts

- 715,000 overnight visitors to Canada (2015)
- Key UK origin cities to Canada (i.e., higher-spending, longer-stay EQ profiled consumers): Metro London, Metro Manchester, Midlands Region
- Key UK origin markets to Ontario (i.e., higher-spending, longer-stay EQ profiled consumers): Metro London
- 8% year-to-date (2016 January to June) growth rate in arrivals
- Average trip spending (per night \$CDN): \$200 to \$275
- Average length of stay: 6.5 nights

Part 2: The Ideal US and UK Target Audiences: Explorers' Edge Appeals vs. Drivers



The Ideal US and UK Target Audiences

The Explorer Quotient (EQ) provides a deep understanding of the profile and travel behaviours of a destination's best prospective customers. EQ enables us to understand why people seek out certain types of travel experiences in order to help develop more insightful truths about how a destination can be relevant, engaging and meaningful as a vacation destination. It also helps in the development of integrated marketing campaigns that best resonate for a destination and its partners.

While there are up to 13 different EQ types depending on the source market, those that hold the most promise fall into two broad categories: Enthusiastic Indulgers (Free Spirits) and Learners (Authentic Experiencers). These groups of prospective travellers are the most indulgent travellers, are most likely to hold a passport and to engage in more hands on experiences offered through travel than the other groups. These travellers comprise approximately 26% to 29% of the total potential travel market in the US and the UK.

Overall EQ helps address the underlying question: Why an individual travels.

Why EQ?

While Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation has developed its own segmentation model, many of Canada's travel trade and major operators, including Air Canada have at minimum partially embraced EQ both in terms of how they market to and communicate with consumers and how they purchase, select and utilise media to engage with those consumers (i.e., directly and indirectly via Destination Canada marketing and communications partnerships). Furthermore, by adopting EQ, Explorers' Edge will:

- Be able to more effectively communicate with Canada's receptive target audiences in the US and UK
- Possibly re-engage with Destination Canada and other industry partners (e.g., Air Canada, etc.) to develop joint marketing and communications partnerships
- Leverage the in-market activities and programmes developed by Destination Canada including the UK representative office

Of note, Explorers' Edge's own segmentation, largely developed for the domestic Ontario market, contains very similar profile characteristics to EQ, including demographic and psychographic:

- Underlying beliefs in 'exploration' while on vacation
- Higher education and income levels
- Less destination proximity focused vs. more experience focused

Case Study – Air Canada and EQ

Air Canada regularly partners with Destination Canada in most of Destination Canada's international markets through common advertising, public and media relations, social media and travel trade engagement.

All of these channels, marketing and advertising for Destination Canada are informed and filtered through EQ and targeting the three high-priority EQ audience groups (i.e., Authentic Experiencers, Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers). Through these partnerships, Air Canada buys into these media and channels effectively targeting the same EQ audiences.

While it is assumed Air Canada likely targets consumers in international markets based on demographics, through the Destination Canada partnership marketing and communications programme, they are utilising the EQ segmentation.



The advertisement features a woman in profile, looking out over a scenic view of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent map of the world, with the Golden Gate Bridge area highlighted. The text reads: "TOURISTS CARRY MAPS. TRAVELLERS CARRY CURIOSITY." The Air Canada logo and slogan "AIR CANADA your world awaits" are visible in the top left. A small "A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER" logo is in the top right.

An example Air Canada creative advertisement for the San Francisco market, utilising the EQ positioning targeting travellers interested in a sense of exploration, not 'typical' tourists.

Travel and Tourism Experience Design – EQ Travel Consumers

Experience Design Rationale for Authentic Experiencers

Authentic Experiencers (AE) are typically understated travellers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a focus on their history and culture. (Canadian Tourism Commission Explorer Quotient Profiles, 2012).

Authentic Experiencers have a slightly higher percentage of those retired (i.e., vs. other EQ segments), with more than 46% of this group considered mature. This group does not seek out group travel, and unlikely to be luxury seekers. It is notable that AE's seek to live as locals, and are unlikely to search for the comforts of home. Value for money is important to both UK and US Authentic Experiencers, as is the ability to incorporate foreign cultures into their lives. A further differentiation from Cultural Experiencers sees AE's as less inclined to need any pampering, however, the US market may show a greater propensity to seek out unique gourmet experiences.

Experience Design Rationale for Free Spirits

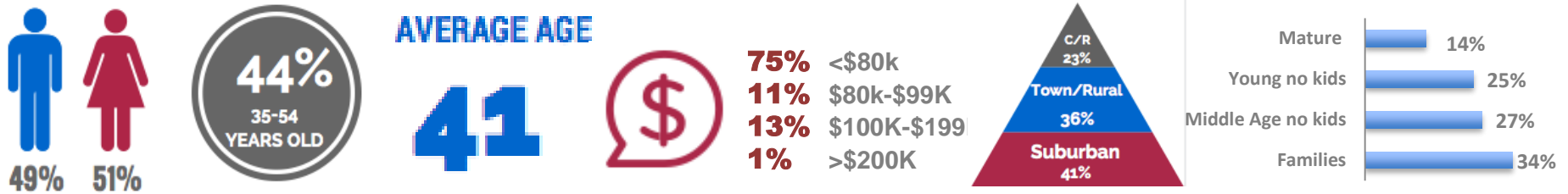
Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they bask in high-end hedonistic experiences that are shared with others. (Canadian Tourism Commission Explorer Quotient Profiles, 2012).

A contrast to Authentic Experiencers, Free Spirits are consumers who enjoy consumption. Notable traits of both the UK and US Free Spirits are their tendency towards brands, their enjoyment of shopping, and their attraction towards large group (i.e., social) atmospheres.

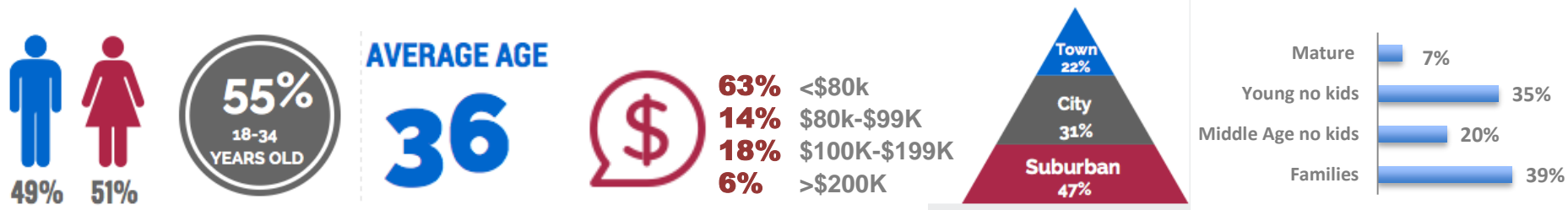
EQ Demographics – Free Spirits

Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they enjoy experiences that are shared with others.

UK Free Spirits (UK FS) - **13%** of UK Market



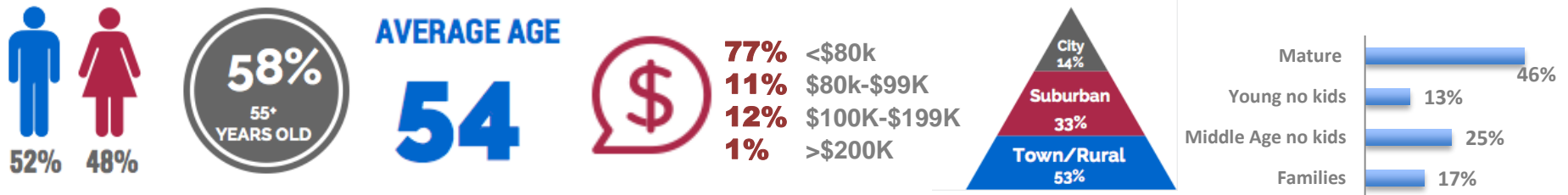
US Free Spirits (US FS) – **14%** of US Market



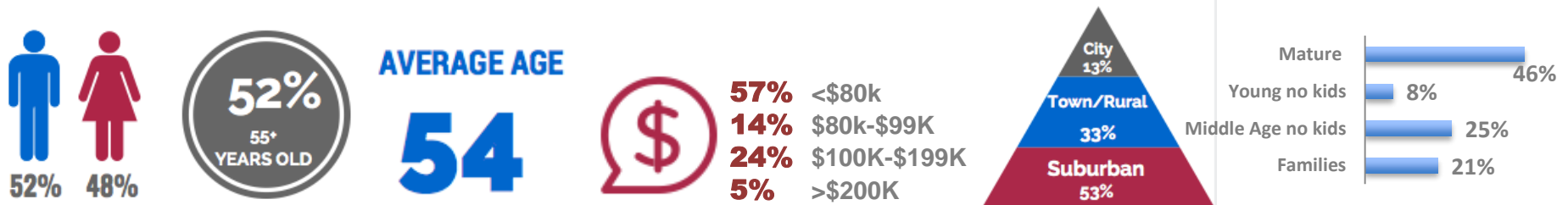
EQ Demographics – Authentic Experiencers

Authentic Experiencers are typically understated travellers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a focus on their history, arts and culture.

UK Authentic Experiencers (UK AE) - **16%** of UK Market



US Authentic Experiencers (US AE) - **11%** of US Market



Experience Appeal & Driver by USPs

The EQ identifies 117 Canadian tourism activities and experiences classified into Canada's five USPs. There is great alignment between what Destination Canada promotes and what is offered in the Explorers' Edge region. Indeed, Explorers' Edge with its brand positioning, "The Great Canadian Wilderness North of Toronto", might be considered a Canadian experience microcosm. The five USPs are:



The following pages identify the level of appeal for each of the activities (i.e., less those activities deemed of less relevance for Explorers' Edge given no available offering) and the level that each experience would be considered a main reason, i.e., driver for a long-haul, extended-stay vacation, categorized by USP for each one of UK Free Spirits (FS), UK Authentic Experiencers (AE), US Free Spirits (FS) and US Authentic Experiencers (AE). The key strength of Explorers' Edge offering has been outlined for each experience.

The following data was used in the development of the itineraries linking EQ appeals and drivers with Explorers' Edge's product and experience offerings.

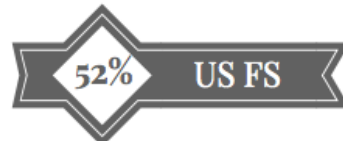
The data is extremely useful in being able to craft messaging and tactics to target US and UK EQ profiled travel consumers to the Explorers' Edge region.

Experience Appeal & Driver by USPs – Relevance for Explorers' Edge

The data is extremely useful in being able to craft messaging and tactics to target US and UK EQ travel consumers to the Explorers' Edge region. However, the data, like all research does include some caveats:

- Apart from the demographic differences between the Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits, the actual trip appeals and drivers specific to each segment are rather subtle – Explorers' Edge can likely use the same content marketing strategies, tactics and messaging when engaging both groups (i.e., they can be treated as not mutually exclusive).
- Travel motivators are based on myriad criteria, as such multiple activities and experiences could be combined within one campaign or communications tactic to stimulate interest in the Explorers' Edge region (i.e., focus on highlighting a 'basket' offering).
- Those activities and experiences deemed Very High appeals and/or drivers (i.e., dark red in the following tables) are deemed to be very important in building awareness (stage 1 in the travel path to purchase), firmer interest (stage 3) and possibly booking an Explorers' Edge trip (stage 5). These themes are key for Explorers' Edge to focus on when promoting and marketing the itineraries.
- To be clear:
 - Appeals generally relate to awareness and favorability of a destination and/or experience
 - Drivers relate to interest and/or likelihood to visit a destination and/or engage in an experience

USP #1: Active Adventure



- The percentage on the left is the average appeal of the experiences that have been classified in the USP Active Adventures for each of UK Free Spirits, UK Authentic Experiencers, US Free Spirits and US Authentic Experiencers.
- Summary of experience appeal and experience drivers for Active Adventure:

Top experience appeals across all four categories:

- *Visiting national and/or provincial parks to view wildlife and surrounding nature and/or to participate in adventure experiences*
- *Seeing beautiful coastline, beaches*
- *Seeing autumn leaves*

Top experience drivers across all four categories:

- *Visiting national and/or provincial parks to view wildlife and surrounding nature and/or to participate in adventure experiences*
- *Visiting national and/or provincial parks to visit interpretive centres/museums*
- *Seeing beautiful coastline, beaches (i.e., including lakes and rivers)*

USP #1: Active Adventure – Experience Appeal

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
All terrain vehicle use					X
Canyoneering					
Climbing (rock or ice)					
Cycling - mountain					X
Cycling - road					X
Dog sledding					X
Eco-touring					X
Fishing - Fresh or Salt Water					X
Flight seeing (Plane/helicopter tours)					X
Geocaching					
Golfing					X
Hiking - Same Day Excursion while on a trip of one or more night					X
Horseback riding					
Hunting					X
Kayaking or Canoeing (Paddling)					X
Participating in hang gliding, hot air ballooning, parachuting					
Seeing autumn leaves					X
Seeing beautiful coastline, beaches					X

USP #1: Active Adventure – Experience Driver

Experience	Very high High Very Low Low				EE Strength
	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	
All terrain vehicle use					X
Canyoneering					
Climbing (rock or ice)					
Cycling - mountain					X
Cycling - road					X
Dog sledding					X
Eco-touring					X
Fishing - Fresh or Salt Water					X
Flight seeing (Plane/helicopter tours)					X
Geocaching					
Golfing					X
Hiking - Same Day Excursion while on a trip of one or more night					X
Horseback riding					
Hunting					X
Kayaking or Canoeing (Paddling)					X
Participating in hang gliding, hot air ballooning, parachuting					
Seeing autumn leaves					X
Seeing beautiful coastline, beaches					X

USP #1: Active Adventure – Experience Driver, cont’d

Experience Driver	Very high High Very Low Low				EE Strength
	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	
Skiing - Cross-Country (Nordic)					X
Skiing - Downhill/Snowboarding					
Snowmobiling - Day use on an organized trail					X
Snowshoeing					X
Spelunking					
Staying at a health destination spa or resort health spa					X
Staying at a waterfront resort					X
Staying at a wilderness lodge					X
Sunbathing					
Swimming, tubing, waterskiing, etc.					X
Taking a day cruise					X
Taking a wilderness skills course					
Tent Camping					X
Viewing Norther/Southern Lights/Aurora					X
Visiting national, provincial parks to view wildlife and surrounding nature and/or to participate in adventure experiences					X
Visiting well-known natural wonders					X
White water rafting					
Wildflowers/Flora Viewing					X
Wildlife viewing - land based animals & bird watching					X

USP #2: Award Winning Cuisine



- The percentage on the left is the average appeal of the experiences that have been classified in the USP Award Winning Cuisine for each of UK Free Spirits, UK Authentic Experiencers, US Free Spirits and US Authentic Experiencers.
- Summary of experience appeal and experience drivers for Award Winning Cuisine:



Top experience appeals across all four categories:

- *Dining at restaurants offering local Canadian ingredients*
- *Dining at restaurants serving your home specialties with a Canadian twist*

Top experience drivers across all four categories:

- *None outstanding*

USP #2: Award Winning Cuisine – Experience Appeal

Experience	Very high High Very Low Low				EE Strength
	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	
Agri-touring (visiting farms)					
Attending food and drink festivals					
Breweries for day visits and tasting					X
Dining at high-end restaurants of an international reputation					
Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients					X
Dining at restaurants serving your home specialties					X
Food related factory tours (Cheese, chocolate etc.)					
Shopping - gourmet foods in retail stores					
Staying at a country inn or resort with a gourmet restaurant					X
Wineries for day visits and tasting					X

USP #2: Award Winning Cuisine – Experience Driver

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Agri-touring (visiting farms)					
Attending food and drink festivals					
Breweries for day visits and tasting					X
Dining at high-end restaurants of an international reputation					
Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients					X
Dining at restaurants serving your home specialties					X
Food related factory tours (Cheese, chocolate etc.)					
Shopping - gourmet foods in retail stores					
Staying at a country inn or resort with a gourmet restaurant					X
Wineries for day visits and tasting					X

USP #3: Connecting with Locals



- The percentage on the left is the average appeal of the experiences that have been classified in the USP Connecting with Locals for each of UK Free Spirits, UK Authentic Experiencers, US Free Spirits and US Authentic Experiencers.
- Summary of experience appeal and experience drivers for Connecting with Locals:



Top experience appeals across all four categories:

- *Visiting small towns, villages*
- *Visiting well known historic sites and buildings*
- *Shopping at local arts and craft studios or exhibitions*

Top experience drivers across all four categories:

- *Visiting well known historic sites and buildings*

USP #3: Connecting with Locals – Experience Appeal

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Attending aboriginal attractions and events					X
Farm Stays					
Interacting with the local inhabitants, people					X
People watching					
Shopping at local arts and craft studios or exhibitions					X
Staying at a bed and breakfast or pension					X
Taking courses to learn another language					
Taking creative skills courses (ex. Quilting, photography, etc.)					
Visiting Paleontological/Archaeological sites					
Visiting religious monuments & buildings					
Visiting small towns, villages					X
Visiting well known historic sites and buildings					X
Visiting World Heritage Sites					X

USP #3: Connecting with Locals – Experience Driver

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Attending aboriginal attractions and events					X
Farm Stays					
Interacting with the local inhabitants, people					X
People watching					
Shopping at local arts and craft studios or exhibitions					X
Staying at a bed and breakfast or pension					X
Taking courses to learn another language					
Taking creative skills courses (ex. Quilting, photography, etc.)					
Visiting Paleontological/Archaeological sites					
Visiting religious monuments & buildings					
Visiting small towns, villages					X
Visiting well known historic sites and buildings					X
Visiting World Heritage Sites					X

USP #4: Personal Journeys



- The percentage on the left is the average appeal of the experiences that have been classified in the USP Personal Journeys for each of UK Free Spirits, UK Authentic Experiencers, US Free Spirits and US Authentic Experiencers.
- Summary of experience appeal and experience drivers for Personal Journeys:



Top experience appeals across all four categories:

- *Touring, sightseeing in rural areas*



Top experience drivers across all four categories:

- *Taking a cruise*



USP #4: Personal Journeys – Experience Appeal

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Boating (Sailing, Motor craft, Houseboat)					X
Motorcycling					X
Multi-day touring on your own by car					X
Overnight hiking trip					X
Participating in multi-day guided group tours by bus					
Participating in multi-day organized tours by train					
Snowmobiling as an overnight touring trip					X
Taking a cruise					
Taking an overnight touring trip by bicycle - road or mountain					
Taking motor home/RV trips					X
Touring, Sightseeing in rural areas					X

USP #4: Personal Journeys – Experience Driver

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Boating (Sailing, Motor craft, Houseboat)					X
Motorcycling					X
Multi-day touring on your own by car					X
Overnight hiking trip					X
Participating in multi-day guided group tours by bus					
Participating in multi-day organized tours by train					
Snowmobiling as an overnight touring trip					X
Taking a cruise					
Taking an overnight touring trip by bicycle - road or mountain					
Taking motor home/RV trips					X
Touring, Sightseeing in rural areas					X

USP #5: Vibrant Communities



- The percentage on the left is the average appeal of the experiences that have been classified in the USP Vibrant Communities for each of UK Free Spirits, UK Authentic Experiencers, US Free Spirits and US Authentic Experiencers.
- Summary of experience appeal and experience drivers for Vibrant Communities:



Top experience appeals across all four categories:

- *Attending music festivals*
- *Multi-cultural experiences*
- *Strolling around a city to observe its unique buildings and architecture*
- *Touring, sightseeing in urban areas*
- *Visiting city parks and green spaces of interest*



Top experience drivers across all four categories:

- *Touring, sightseeing in urban areas*



USP #5: Vibrant Communities – Experience Appeal

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Attending cultural & seasonal festivals					X
Attending film festivals					
Attending gay pride parades					
Attending literary festivals or events					
Attending museums					X
Attending music festivals					
Attending nightclubs/lounges					
Attending performing arts - Dance					
Attending performing arts - Music					
Attending performing arts - Theatre/Musical					X
Attending theatre/comedy festivals					
Multi-cultural experiences					
Participating in amateur sports & Leisure tournaments and competitions					
Participating in paid city day tours (guided/non-guided)					
Shopping - clothing or jewelry (brand names)					
Staying at a Boutique hotel					X
Staying at an International brand hotel					
Strolling around a city to observe its unique buildings and architecture					

USP #5: Vibrant Communities – Experience Appeal, cont'd

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Touring, sightseeing in urban areas	High	High	High	High	X
Viewing outdoor/street performances (free)	High	Very Low	Very high		
Vising amusement/theme parks	High	High	Very high	Very high	
Vising art galleries	Very Low	Very Low	High		X
Visiting a health or wellness spa (day visit while on a trip)	High	High	High	High	
Visiting botanical gardens		Very Low		Very Low	
Visiting casinos		High	High	High	
Visiting city parks and green spaces of interest		High	High	High	

USP #5: Vibrant Communities – Experience Driver

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Attending cultural & seasonal festivals					X
Attending film festivals					
Attending gay pride parades					
Attending literary festivals or events					
Attending museums					X
Attending music festivals					
Attending nightclubs/lounges					
Attending performing arts - Dance					
Attending performing arts - Music					
Attending performing arts - Theatre/Musical					X
Attending theatre/comedy festivals					
Multi-cultural experiences					
Participating in amateur sports & Leisure tournaments and competitions					
Participating in paid city day tours (guided/non-guided)					
Shopping - clothing or jewelry (brand names)					
Staying at a Boutique hotel					X
Staying at an International brand hotel					
Strolling around a city to observe it's unique buildings and architecture					

USP #5: Vibrant Communities – Experience Driver, cont'd

Very high High Very Low Low

Experience	UK FS	UK AE	US FS	US AE	EE Strength
Touring, sightseeing in urban areas	High	High	High		
Viewing outdoor/street performances (free)	Low	Very Low		Very Low	
Visiting amusement/theme parks	High	Low	Very High		
Visiting art galleries		Low			
Visiting a health or wellness spa (day visit while on a trip)		Very Low		Very Low	
Visiting botanical Gardens		Low			
Visiting casinos	Low	Very Low	Very High		
Visiting city parks and green spaces of interest		Low	Low	Low	

Analysis of Current Explorers' Edge Offerings Aligned with Destination Canada USPs

The following tables provides an analysis of current Explorers' Edge product and experience offerings aligned with Destination Canada USPs. These are meant to serve as a starting point for “basket” package development and for segmented lead nurturing for marketing purposes. It is also the foundation for targeted content marketing based on EQ consumer interests and appeals.

Analysis of Current Explorers' Edge Offerings Aligned with Destination Canada USPs, cont'd

Explorers' Edge Persona 1 OUTDOORS	Explorers' Edge Persona 2 ARTS & CULTURE	Explorers' Edge Persona 3 CULINARY
<u>ACTIVE ADVENTURES</u>		
Water Taxis	GOSOG Tour w/ or w/out Gerry	Farm workshops
Canoe Lessons	Parry Sound Artist Stations	Boards Honey Farm
Guided Canoe Trips	Ryde Barn Quilt Tour	Cranberry Marsh
Kayak Lessons	Algonquin Park Art Centre	Maple Trail
Guided Kayak Trips	South River GOS Paddling	Craft Beer Trail
SUP Lessons	Tom Thomson Canoe Lake and Cairn	Henry's Fish Restaurant
Guided SUP Lessons	Studio Tours	Session Muskoka
Mountain Bike Rentals	Muskoka Arts & Craft Show	Muskoka May 24 Beer Fest
Fishing	Cranberry Marsh	Muskoka Edibles
ATV Guided Tour	Painting in the wilderness etc.	Muskoka Leek Festival
Tree Top Trekking	Fall Colour Viewing	Into the Bush Gourmet
Day Trip Parks		Cooking Outdoors
Camping Trip/Learn to Camp		Camp Cooking
Dark Sky Viewing		Cranberry Festival
Hiking Trails		Parry Sound Honey Festival
Lookout Points to Climb		Cornfest in Port Loring Restoule
Outdoor Yoga/SUP Yoga		Smores
Bonfires		
Fall Colour Viewing		
Wildlife Workshops		

Analysis of Current Explorers' Edge Offerings Aligned with Destination Canada USPs, cont'd

Explorers' Edge Persona 1 OUTDOORS	Explorers' Edge Persona 2 ARTS & CULTURE	Explorers' Edge Persona 3 CULINARY
<u>AWARD WINNING LOCAL CUISINE</u>		
Cranberry Marsh	Session Muskoka	Food Trucks
Sugar Bushes (year round)	Maple Festival	Griffin Gastro Pub
Henry's Fish Restaurant	Muskoka Lakes Winery	Breweries
Board's Honey Farm	What's Cooking Bracebridge	Muskoka Lakes Winery
Brooklands Farm	Sweet Honey Festival Parry Sound	Savour Muskoka
Muskoka Edibles (workshops)	Craft Beer Trail	Bartlett Lodge
Maple Trail	Cranberry Festival	Henry's Fish Restaurant
Craft Beer Trail	What's Cooking Bracebridge	
Session Muskoka		
Muskoka Leek Festival Workshops		
Muskoka 24 Beer Festival		

Analysis of Current Explorers' Edge Offerings Aligned with Destination Canada USPs, cont'd

Explorers' Edge Persona 1 OUTDOORS	Explorers' Edge Persona 2 ARTS & CULTURE	Explorers' Edge Persona 3 CULINARY
<u>PERSONAL JOURNEYS BY LAND, SEA, AIR (TOURING)</u>		
ATV Guided Adventure	GOSOG Full Tour	Craft Beer Trail
Cruising - Island Queen, Bigwin, etc.	Tom Thomson Canoe Lake and Cairn	Maple Trail
Air Tours	Fall Colours by Air	Henry's By Air
Motorcycle Routes (US)	AP to GBBR	Dinner Cruises
Paddling Expeditions	Lake Bernard & The Villages of Almaguin	Into the Bush Gourmet
Parkbus	Cruises	
Classic Tin Fishing boat		

Analysis of Current Explorers' Edge Offerings Aligned with Destination Canada USPs, cont'd

Explorers' Edge Persona 1 OUTDOORS	Explorers' Edge Persona 2 ARTS & CULTURE	Explorers' Edge Persona 3 CULINARY
<u>CONNECTING WITH LOCALS</u>		
Moose Viewing/Expeditions	Peter's Players	Griffin Gastro Pub
Wolf Howls	The Kee to Bala	Muskoka Edibles
Park Interpretive Programs	Huntsville Festival of the Arts	Muskoka Leek Festival
Muskoka Discovery Centre/Boats	MAST	Muskoka Lakes Winery
GOSOG Guided Tour w/ Gerry (outside H)	AHAC Studio Tours & Exhibits	Breweries
Cranberry Marsh Bog to Bottle	Artists of the Limberlost Studio Tour	Savour Muskoka
Muskoka Heritage Place Village/Train	Nuit Blanche	Boards Honey Farm
Bike Shops Group Rides	Makers of Parry Sound	Artisanal Bakeries
Pedaling for Parkinsons	Bala Museum - Lucy Maude Montgomery	Parry Sound Honey Festival
Spin the Lakes	Bethune House	
AIM Group Rides	G'Zaagin Gallery	
Bonfires	Painting Workshops	
Smores	Brewery Tours & Tastings	
	Historic Inns (Windermere, Cleves, etc.)	
	Historic Cruises with Commentary	
	Muskoka Heritage Place	Personal 2, cont'd
	Muskoka Lakes Museum	Festival of the Sound
	West Parry Sound Museum	18 James Street
	Bobby Orr Hall of Fame	Art Galleries
	Logging Museum AP	Artist Studios
	Visitor Centre AP	Muskoka Chautauqua
	Visitor Centre French River	Live Music
	Stockey Centre	Dockside Festival of the Arts

Part 3: Travel and Tourism Itinerary Design

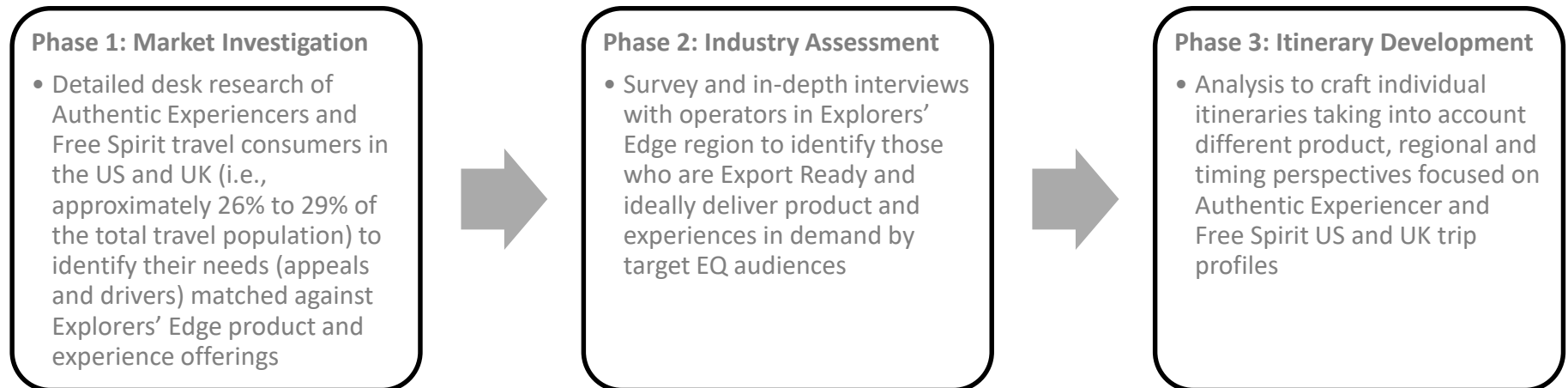


Methodology

To develop the draft itineraries presented in this report, the Twenty31 team engaged in the following process outlined below. As with all product and experience development, the task involves part science (i.e., surveying operators and matching against EQ travel consumer trip expectations and Explorers' Edge brand appeals) and part art (i.e., ensuring a balance of itineraries by region, experience, trip length, etc.).

While the Twenty31 team recognised that some operators not necessarily included in these draft itineraries currently market to and/or manage US and/or UK travel consumers, our intention was to develop itineraries which we felt best presented a broad cross-section of the world-class and unique products and experiences offered in the Explorers' Edge region.

Additionally, these draft itineraries should be considered evolving concepts, with the potential of alternative and/or additional operators and experiences included and also new itineraries developed. The intention is for these draft itineraries to showcase to the industry in Explorers' Edge what is possible with itinerary marketing and what is in demand by high-value Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirit travel consumers in the US and UK. These draft itineraries should stimulate further itinerary development and greater interest by operators wanting to grow and expand their businesses.



From Routes to Itineraries

The methodology to develop the itineraries from routes was as follows:

- **Step 1:** Explorers' Edge shared a list of 20 touring routes incorporating a number of product and experience categories and including one or more areas within the region. The Twenty31 team reviewed the 20 touring routes and determined if there were any overlaps or commonalties which could be combined.
- **Step 2:** The Twenty31 team then ensured that the main trip appeals of US and UK EQ profiled travel consumers were covered off, along with a balance of Explorers' Edge regions and operators.
- **Step 3:** Ten unique itineraries were then crafted.

Ensuring a Fit with Explorers' Edge's Brand

To ensure the itineraries were authentic and unique to Explorers' Edge, the overall brand position was used as a guiding principle:

'A quintessentially Canadian wilderness experience just two hours from the city.'

Furthermore, the itineraries ensured relevance with Explorers' Edge's Brand Voice:

'Sophisticated, urbane, wise, majestic, empathetic, Canadian...with a hint of playfulness and wit.'

The Importance of Being Export Ready

Today's travellers, specifically identified Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits in the US and UK are far more complex than in the past. They are looking for services and experiences that match what they've come to expect. Today's travellers are digital savvy and have the world at their fingertips. In order for Explorer's Edge's tourism industry to remain competitive, operators must ensure proper communication and service to potential visitors.

As part of the process to develop the draft itineraries, our team evaluated select operators by their perceived export readiness using a common framework adapted from Destination BC's and Destination Canada's export ready standards:

- **Business Ready:** Refers to a business that has all their licenses, permits and insurance in place in order to operate legally.
- **Visitor Ready:** Refers to a business that markets to potential visitors in the planning stages, communicates with potential visitors year-round, and is ready to accept advanced reservations.
- **Export Ready:** Refers to a business that markets to and through travel trade distribution sales channels, understands commission or net rate pricing, agrees to trade bookings and a cancellation policy. Additionally, these businesses are currently targeting or have plans to target US and UK travellers.

The operators and businesses included in the draft itineraries are deemed to be Export Ready.

Export vs. Market Readiness

Moving beyond Export Readiness, some destinations have instituted a further screen to guide and develop operators as 'Market Ready', i.e., a set of rules to ensure a standard level of quality and service delivery. With over ¾ of US and UK travel consumers citing TripAdvisor as a key planning tool (and source of destination/experience influence) when selecting an accommodation, restaurant, tour operator and/or attraction, the importance of being Market Ready cannot be overstated.

Given the time and budget involved in first selecting and then travelling to the Explorers' Edge region, it is vitally important that the suggested itineraries promote those operators that are Market Ready:

- To ensure Explorers' Edge maintains a reputation as a Canadian region delivering a quality and unique experience; and
- To maintain and nurture the Explorers' Edge brand and those of the myriad operators.

While Ontario does not have a widely accepted set of Market Ready standards in place, a number of jurisdictions do, which can provide guidelines for Explorers' Edge. The Twenty31 team reviewed the following Market Ready standards, in order to devise a best-practice solution:

- Tourism New Zealand: Qualmark
- Tourism Australia: The Tourism Export Toolkit
- Destination British Columbia: Export and Market Ready Standards
- Travel Alberta: Export Framework
- Destination Canada: Export and Market Criteria

The following provides a list of questions by categories (i.e., business operations) designed to be answered in the positive by Explorers' Edge operators. It is assumed that answering 'Yes' to at minimum 75% of the questions would constitute being Market Ready. Given a great majority of the operators are SME's, the questions would likely need to be tailored per individual operator.

Explorers' Edge Market Ready Criteria Check List

Customer	Product/Experience	Staff	On-Site Experience	Investment	Feedback
1) Does the operator understand and know their customers: trip needs and preferences?	1) Does the operator provide a unique and compelling product/experience?	1) Does the operator provide effective and regular training for their frontline staff?	1) Does the operator provide a safe, friendly and engaging local experience?	1) Does the operator invest in new products and services to improve and/or enhance their current offering?	1) Does the operator have a system in place to communicate in 'real-time' with new and prospective patrons?
2) Does the operator understand the profile of the customer from a demographic and psychographic perspective?	2) Does the operator provide a unique and compelling product/experience within the Explorers' Edge brand positioning?	2) Are the operator's staff trained in customer service and able to effectively interact and engage with US and UK travel consumers?	2) Does the operator's infrastructure reflect a high-degree of maintenance and cleanliness?	2) Does the operator invest in the infrastructure of their business on a regular (i.e., annual) basis?	2) Does the operator have a system in place to effectively deal with customer complaints?
3) Does the operator successfully deliver on the needs and expectations of US and UK EQ travel consumers?	3) Does the operator provide a unique and compelling product/experience related to EQ profile travellers' trip appeals and drivers?	3) Are the operator's staff trained to address the needs of specific patrons: culture, language, gender, disability, etc.?	3) Could the operator's infrastructure and/or service offering be considered a minimum of '3-stars' (based on common rating systems)?	3) Does the operator invest in technology solutions including actively maintaining a website and Facebook page?	3) Does the operator monitor and respond to feedback on TripAdvisor and Facebook?

Part 4: Recommended US and UK Itineraries



Recommended Itineraries – Methodology: Routes to Itineraries

	1) Lake Bernard & The Villages of Almaguin	2) The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay	3) Explore Algonquin Gate to Gate	4) Muskoka Fall Colours	5) Town & Country	6) The Group of Seven Now	7) Muskoka for History Buffs	8) Craft Brew & Cranberries	9) Canada's Best Golf	10) Cruise The Lakes
1) The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay		x								
2) Park to Park – Killbear to Algonquin			x							
3) Canadian Landscape Tours – Rocks, Trees, Lakes					x					
4) Algonquin Park Gate to Gate			x							
5) Town & Country Tour of Ontario										
6) Magical History Tour							x			
7) Lake Bernard & The Villages of Almaguin	x									
8) Craft Beer & Cranberries: Local Food Touring								x		
9) Canada's Best Golf									x	
10) Canadian Paddling Culture			x							
11) Off the Grid as Nature Intended: Loring-Restoule				x						
12) Maple Leaf Forever: Fall Colour Touring				x						
13) Moose Tracks: Algonquin Wildlife Searching	x									
14) Ontario Parks Day Trip										
15) The Luxurious Wilderness					x					
16) Soundscapes & Dark Skies: Into the Woods for Serenity Now							x			
17) Canadian Wilderness 101			x			x				
18) The Group of Seven Now: The Canadian Arts Scene						x				
19) Cruise the Lakes										x
20) Just Bring Your Toothbrush Tour										

Recommended Itineraries

Itineraries	Explorers' Edge EQ Brand Appeals					Explorers' Edge Regions				
	Active Adventure	Award Winning Cuisine	Connecting with Locals	Personal Journeys	Vibrant Communities	Algonquin Park	Almaguin Highlands	Loring-Restoule	Muskoka	Parry sound
#1 Lake Bernard & The Villages of Almaguin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
#2 The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay	X		X	X	X			X	X	X
#3 Explore Algonquin Gate to Gate	X			X		X	X			
#4 Muskoka Fall Colours	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
#5 Town & Country	X	X		X	X	X			X	

Recommended Itineraries, cont'd

Itineraries	Explorers' Edge EQ Brand Appeals					Explorers' Edge Regions				
	Active Adventure	Award Winning Cuisine	Connecting with Locals	Personal Journeys	Vibrant Communities	Algonquin Park	Almaguin Highlands	Loring-Restoule	Muskoka	Parry sound
#6 The Group of Seven Now	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
#7 Muskoka for History Buffs		X	X		X	X			X	X
#8 Craft Brews & Cranberries		X	X		X				X	X
#9 Canada's Best Golf		X	X		X				X	X
#10 Cruise the Lakes		X	X	X	X				X	X

Itinerary I: Lake Bernard and The Villages of Almaguin

Description: Just 50km north of Huntsville, Muskoka on Highway 11 and just west of Algonquin Park, Ontario's Almaguin Highlands is one of the province's best kept secrets. Boasting thousands of lakes and rivers, rolling hills and rich green forests, the Highlands are peppered with small, picturesque villages and hamlets, making the region the perfect break from busy city life. Starting in Huntsville, just a few hours north of Toronto by car, this route winds its way through the Highlands and rounds out with a few days in Algonquin Park – Canada's oldest provincial park.

Day 1 – Huntsville – (Start at “A” to “B” on Map)

Make your way straight north from Toronto on Highway 400. In just 2.5 hours you will arrive in the charming town of Huntsville, Muskoka, which is nestled between beautiful Lakes Vernon, Mary, Fairy and Peninsula. Take some time to explore Muskoka Heritage Place, including its authentic replication of local pioneer and settlement communities, and the historic Portage Flyer train. Huntsville is also home to many of the 98 murals of the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery – huge replicas of these iconic Canadian masterpieces (take the tour using your smartphone or tablet at www.go7murals.ca).

Some options for your first overnight stay in the region:

- Deerhurst Resort for families
- Hidden Valley Resort
- Fairy Bay Guest House B & B

Where to Eat:

- 3 Guys and a Stove for sophisticated casual dining and local food infusion
- Spencers Tall Trees for a great view and great food
- Farmers Daughter for your gourmet grocer
- On the Docks Pub for 'cottage country' pub food
- Mill on Main for the best rooftop patio in town
- Seven Main Café for sweets, coffee and breakfast and lunch bites

Day 2 – Huntsville to Burk's Falls – (“B” to “C” on Map)

Before you make your way further north today, head downtown to visit Huntsville's main street shops, including The Nutty Chocolatier, Ontario's iconic small town chocolate shop, or legendary Algonquin Outfitters – purveyors of all things outdoors. Then it's off to the Almaguin Highlands! Just 45 minutes of driving north you will discover The Screaming Heads - a free, public art exhibit in Burk's Falls that features mesmerizing larger-than-life concrete sculptures.

Day 3 – South River & Lake Bernard – (“C” to “D” on Map)

Today the village of Burk's Falls and the town's Heritage River Walk is first on tap. The trail stretches from the racetrack at the arena to the old footbridge below the dam. With the stunning Magnetawan River flanking you, it's the perfect spot for a morning stroll. After lunch in Burk's Falls, make your way north once again to South River, located on the west side of Algonquin Park, and the home of the award-winning Highlander Brew Co. It was also one of the only spots that Canada's most famous painter – Tom Thomson – would paddle right into in his canoe! Located close by is the village of Sundridge, home to magnificent Lake Bernard – the largest freshwater lake in North America without an island. Do your best to spot one...

Where to Stay when exploring the Villages of Almaguin:

- Northridge Inn for a boutique experience on Lake Bernard
- Fern Glenn Inn B&B for a woodland experience and wonderful onsite hosts
- Edgewater Park Lodge family cottage fun

Where to Eat in The Highlands:

- Dee's Bistro in Burk's Falls for family dining and live music
- Danny's Justa Pasta – Sundridge
- Michael's on Main - Sundridge
- Maple Café in South River for your espresso fix, breakfast and lunch

Itinerary I: Lake Bernard and The Villages of Almaguin, cont'd

Day 4, 5 and 6 – Algonquin Park (“D” to “E” on Map)

Canada’s iconic park is accessible at many points from the Almaguin Highlands (and the best part is it’s less busy on this side!). Choose from the many available, fully outfitted canoe trip options through the park to cap off your exploration of the Highlands. Consider the two night Wolf Howl package from the Northern Edge Algonquin team, or book a private log cabin weekend with Voyageur Quest. This is the great Canadian wilderness at its legendary best.

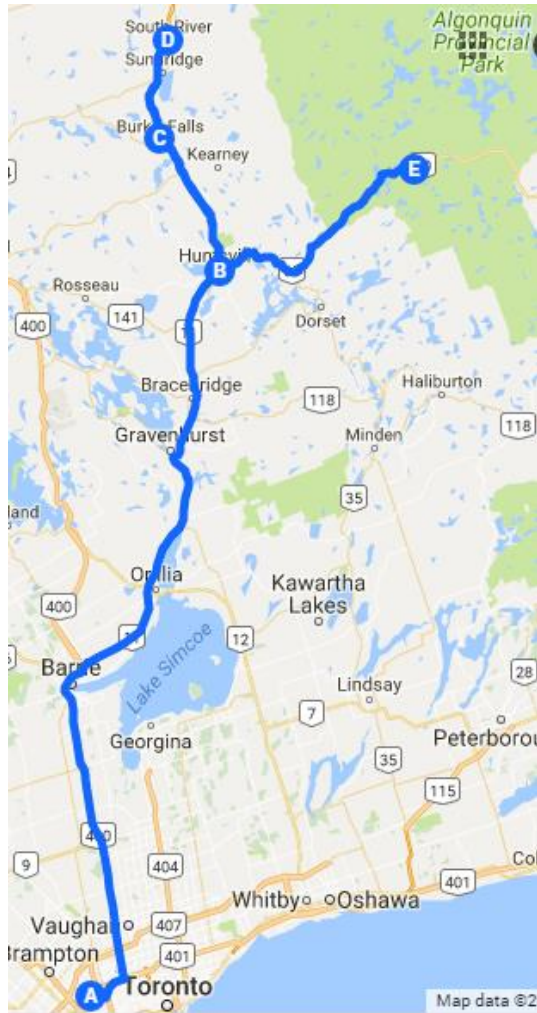
Suggested ‘Algonquin West’ Accommodations & Canoe Trips:

- Northern Edge Algonquin
- Voyageur Quest

Outfitters for all your paddling needs:

- Voyageur Outfitting – South River
- Algonquin Basecamp – Kearney
- Canoe Algonquin – Kearney
- Swift Canoe – South River

Itinerary I: Lake Bernard and The Villages of Almaguin, cont'd



The Screaming Heads on Midlothian Road, near the town of Burk's Falls.

Itinerary 2: The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay

Description: The Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, designated by UNESCO in 2004, spans more than 347,000 hectares in the world's largest freshwater archipelago, known by locals as the 30,000 islands. A geographic area rather than a building, you'll arrive at the biosphere's southern entry point, Honey Harbour after a 2.5 hour drive from Toronto. Now you can walk, swim, eat and drive your way through the Amazing Places of Georgian Bay – an ecologically unique spot on the planet!

Day 1 – Bala and Johnston's Cranberry Marsh ("B" on Map)

Welcome to Bala – the Cranberry Capital of Ontario and home to one of Canada's thriving cranberry farms. Take the "From Bog to Bottle Tour," have a tasting at the adjacent and award-winning Muskoka Lakes Winery, or head out onto one of five year-round hiking trails that surround the marsh. Afterwards visit the charming town of Bala, situated on the beautiful Moon River and showcasing the Bala Falls. Also be sure to stop in summer at Don's Bakery for a signature "cranberry bite," and at the Bala Museum.

Day 2 – Parry Sound Tower Hill Lookout & Hole in The Wall

After an overnight in Bala, Port Carling or Mactier, it's time to drive north in the biosphere to beautiful Parry Sound on Georgian Bay. Start in downtown Parry Sound, and make your way to the West Parry Sound District Museum and the Tower Hill Lookout. This 30-meter high observatory was originally used to spot potential forest fires, now it provides the best views of Georgian Bay and the Parry Sound harbour. After your museum visit and a tour of the award-winning Tower Gardens, enjoy lunch downtown. After lunch take in a cruise of these famed 30,000 islands aboard the Island Queen, where you'll see up close another amazing place – the Hole in The Wall, a narrow passageway between Huckleberry and Wall Islands – and also an "Amazing Place" of the biosphere.

Day 3 – The Biosphere From Above

This morning after breakfast and a maybe pre-lunch stroll, make your way back to Parry Sound Harbour to visit Georgian Bay Airways. Take a flight with this award-winning float plane company to Georgian Bay Island, where you can explore the hiking and shorelines, bring your bathing suit for a dip in Georgian Bay and explore The Waubuno, Georgian Bays most famous shipwreck. Dinner this evening is a fish fry, by plane, at Henry's famous restaurant.

Day 4 The French River Gorge ("C" on Map)

Head to the northern-most tip of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve for a visit to French River Provincial Park and a stunning view of the French River Gorge, forged over the years by powerful waters. The newish Visitor Info Centre is a great spot to learn more about the incredible, rugged terrain of the Parry Sound area.

For a water adventure, possibly take in a sea-kayak tour, either guided or on your own.

Where to Stay When Exploring The Parry Sound Area:

- Harmony Outdoor Inn for serenity
- Log Cabin Inn for off the beaten path
- Cranberry Cottage for your waterfront B&B
- Sunny Point Resort, Cottages & Inn for waterfront fun
- Bear's Den Lodge for an iconic Canadian lodge experience on the French River

Where to Eat in Parry Sound and Surrounding Area:

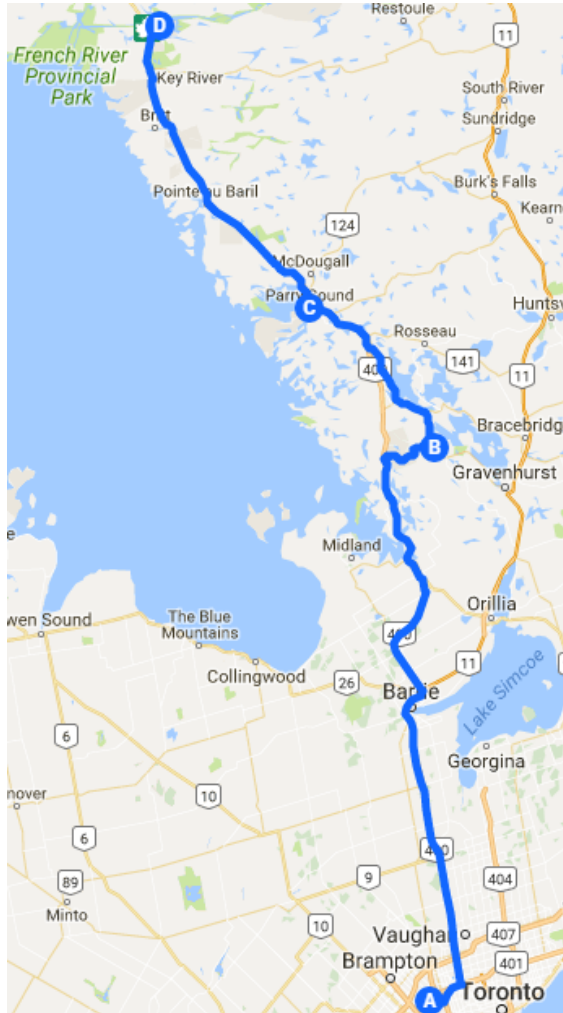
- Log Cabin Inn for something special
- Maurizio's Pizza for the best pie in town
- Bistro by the Bay for lunch on the patio
- Wellington's Pub & Grill – an all-time favourite with locals and visitors

Itinerary 2: The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay, cont'd

Where to Explore in the Parry Sound Area:

- Island Queen Cruise Ships to explore the Biosphere Reserve's thousands of islands
- Georgian Nordic Ski Club for paddling and biking trails (pass required)
- Bear Claw Tours for ATV adventures on the Canadian Shield
- Parry Sound Bikes or Trysport for two-wheeled rentals (they also sell bike passes)
- Georgian Bay Airways for the breathtaking birds' eye view
- Johnston's Cranberry Marsh
- Ontario Sea Kayak Centre
- White Squall

Itinerary 2: The Amazing Places of Georgian Bay, cont'd



A guided sea kayak tour in Georgian Bay.

Itinerary 3: Explore Algonquin Gate to Gate

Description: Canada's first official provincial park, Algonquin Park was established in 1893, and spans more than 770,000 hectares of iconic Canadian Shield and wilderness. Days move a little slower here, as you pass the time exploring: hiking or biking, or paddling the more than 2,500 lakes of Algonquin Park, the setting for some of Canada's most famous artists, the Group of Seven. The paddling in Algonquin Park is world-class and you will likely experience deep connections to the area out on the water. Accessible from Toronto in just three hours, this route brings you north of the city via Gravenhurst for a lesson in the area's rich history, before heading on towards the park.

Day 1 – Huntsville (“A” to “B” on Map)

Make your way straight north from Toronto on Highway 400. In just 2.5 hours you will arrive in the charming town of Huntsville, Muskoka, which is nestled between beautiful Lakes Vernon, Mary, Fairy and Peninsula. Take some time to explore Muskoka Heritage Place, including its authentic replication of local pioneer and settlement communities, and the historic Portage Flyer train. Huntsville is also home to many of the 98 murals of the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery – huge replicas of these iconic Canadian masterpieces (take the tour using your smartphone or tablet at www.go7murals.ca). Huntsville is also a gateway/home base for many folks heading in and out of Algonquin Park.

Day 2, 3 and 4 – Algonquin (“B” to “C” on Map)

The next three nights you're one with the water. Choose guided or unguided complete outfitter packages from a number of first class canoe outfitters in the region. Try overnight camping at a park site with everything you'll need provided by the outfitters too (including instructions on how a camp coffee maker works!)

Day 5 – Things to See & Do in Algonquin (“C” on Map)

Now that you're a pro at camping and canoeing, consider spending a day exploring more of the park. Head to the Visitor Info Centre for displays, souvenirs, and workshops and programs. Head to the Logging Museum to see how Algonquin got its start, to the Algonquin Art Centre for incredible Canadian works of art, and to a lecture or presentation at the outdoor theatre (including Wolf Howl gatherings on Thursday nights during the summer). You can also rent bikes from Algonquin Outfitters at their Lake of Two Rivers store, and ride one of three incredible off-road trails.

And be sure to stop to view the beautiful Ragged Falls vista at Oxtongue Lake Provincial Park – just outside Algonquin's west gate.

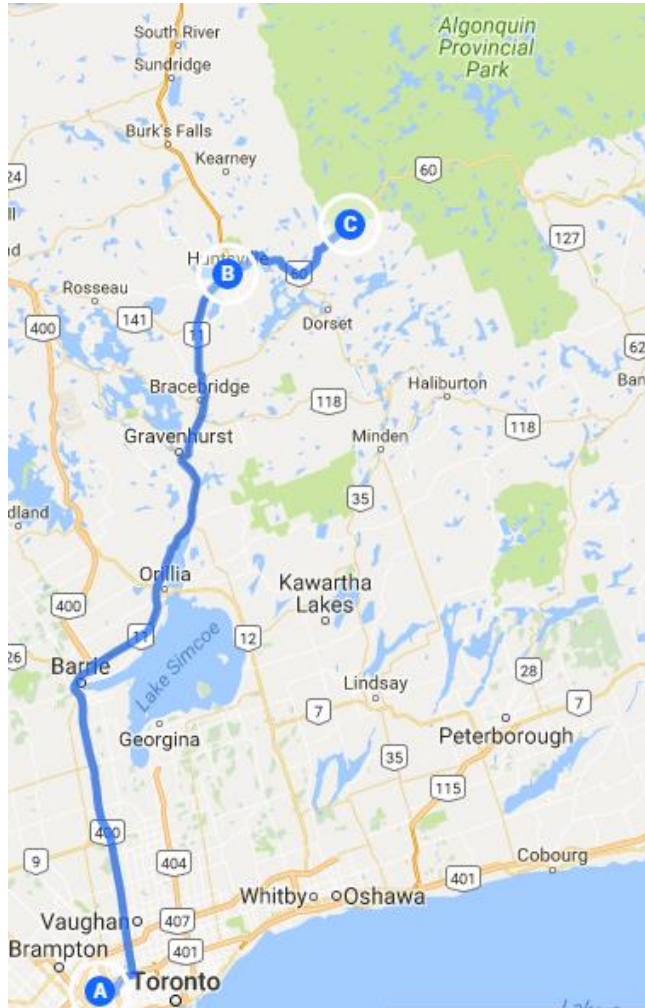
Where to Stay When Exploring Algonquin Park:

- Fern Glenn Inn B&B for some solitude
- Hay Lake Lodge and cottages rentals (east side of Algonquin)
- Bartlett Lodge for a little luxury in the park (accessible by water taxi)
- Blue Spruce Resort for a family stay
- Any one of the Resorts of North Muskoka

Outfitters In Algonquin Park:

- The Portage Store
- Algonquin Outfitters

Itinerary 3: Explore Algonquin Gate to Gate, cont'd



Transporting tripping canoes in Algonquin Park.

Itinerary 4: Fall Colours

Description: Discover Canada’s most spectacular display of fall colours (Red, Orange, Yellow & Blue) in the Algonquin/Muskoka regions. What makes these areas so special is that the brilliant reds, yellows and oranges are reflected in thousands of sparkling blue lakes and rivers that dot the wilderness north of Toronto. It’s Mother Nature’s epic fireworks mirrored to perfection in our legendary waterways!

Day 1 – Gravenhurst to Milford Bay & Parry Sound (“A” to “B” to “C” on Map)

Gravenhurst is home to the historic RMS Segwun at the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre. Built in 1887, in Scotland, and assembled in Gravenhurst, the Segwun transported passengers, mail and freight throughout the Muskoka lakes until she was decommissioned in 1958. Enjoy lunch onboard today in the impeccably-restored ship as you appreciate the spectacular view of fall colours on iconic Lake Muskoka.

Make your way north to Bracebridge (be sure to check out the stunning falls in the centre of town) along Highway 118 to Milford Bay. Take your time, get out and stretch your legs at the Huckleberry Rock trail, built on a massive deposit of billion-year-old pink granite that has formed an unforgettable lookout over gorgeous Lake Muskoka for over a century.

Day 2 – Parry Sound / Killbear Provincial Park (“C” to “D” on Map)

Continuing from Milford Bay along Highway 118 through the town of Port Carling, you’ll head towards Parry Sound on Georgian Bay (part of the Great Lakes system within Lake Huron). Though the terrain here is more rugged and windswept than other parts of the region, and with fewer trees due to exposed granite, you won’t want to miss the opportunity to see how blue the water sparkles in fall with a guided sea kayak trip with the Ontario Sea Kayak Centre or White Squall Paddling Centre. Especially impressive is an exploration of the shorelines at Killbear Provincial Park by sea kayak if you can plan an additional day in the region.

Day 3 – Restoule Provincial Park & Sundridge (“D” to “E” to “F” on Map)

After breakfast this morning make your way north-east to Restoule Provincial Park, a spot that’s off the grid as Nature intended. Outdoor adventurers will want to make their way to the Fire Tower Trail Lookout over Stormy Lake - a 7km uphill hike – but so worth it!

After lunch in Port Loring at Jake’s Place or Roxanne’s, it’s time to head south again to the “sunniest village in the Almaguin Highlands” – Sundridge. Here you’ll find unparalleled views of beautiful Lake Bernard, which has the distinction of being the largest freshwater lake in the world that doesn’t have any islands. Take the walking trail to see the leaves as a canopy overhead, and have the camera ready at the Lookout.

Day 4 – Huntsville & Algonquin Park (“F” to “G” to “H” on Map)

After breakfast today you will turn your sights south towards Algonquin Park, the country’s most storied provincial park. First though it’s a stop in Huntsville, Muskoka for a trip to the Lion’s Lookout, overlooking this picturesque town of 17,000 residents. Head downtown for shopping and lunch, and then across Highway 60 to famous Algonquin Park. Locals will tell you that the Lookout Trail is the best hike to take in the beautiful rich oranges and reds of fall. The two kilometre trail is another one that makes the effort worth it.

Itinerary 4: Fall Colours, cont'd

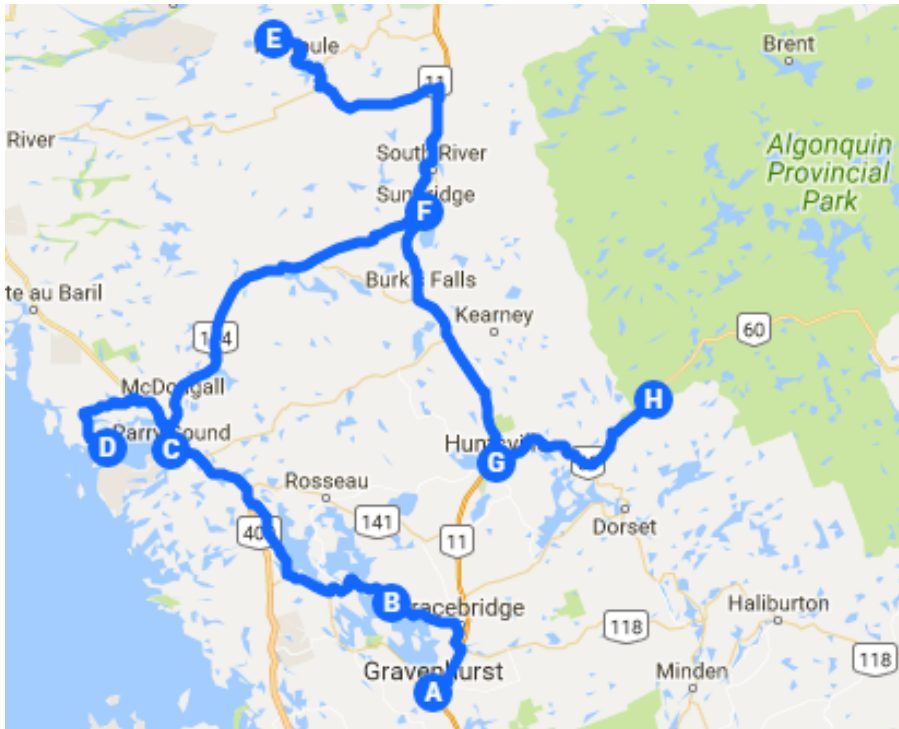
Where to Stay When Exploring Fall Colours:

- Residence Inn by Marriott in Gravenhurst
- Shamrock Lodge in Port Carling
- Rocky Crest Golf Resort in Mactier
- Grand Tappatoo Resort Parry Sound
- Sherwood Inn in Port Carling
- North Ridge Inn in Sundridge

Where to Eat:

- Oar & Paddle in Gravenhurst
- Fine Thymes Restaurant in Bracebridge
- Camp Muskoka in Port Carling
- Wellington's Pub & Grill in Parry Sound
- The Moose Café near Algonquin (Dwight)

Itinerary 4: Fall Colours, cont'd



The Explorers' Edge region's brilliant fall colours.

Itinerary 5: Town & Country

Description: Canada’s renowned wilderness meets the best it has to offer in accommodations on this trip. Dip into the wilderness and back into luxury. Muskoka and Algonquin boast a number of beautiful resorts and hotels set against the backdrop of Muskoka Ontario’s cottage country, rugged pristine Algonquin Park and the storied rugged Canadian Shield. All accessible from Toronto in just a few short hours, you can hike, paddle and cruise through your days and indulge in some unforgettable pampering too.

Day 1 – Muskoka (“A” to “B”, “C”, “D”, “E” on Map)

Welcome to Muskoka! Make your way north of Toronto towards Huntsville, with a front row view to the great Canadian wilderness. Stop in Gravenhurst to visit the Muskoka Steamship and Discovery Centre, and a pique at the renowned Muskoka steamships which moor here. Carry on towards Bala Falls, get out and stretch your legs at the headwaters to the Moon River which empties into Georgian Bay. Also get at taste for this town – known as the “Cranberry Capital of Ontario” with a visit to Johnston’s Cranberry Marsh and Muskoka Lakes Winery, or at Don’s Bakery in the warmer months. Enjoy one of five interpretive trails here as well.

Check in to one of two spa resorts in the area - the JW Marriott in Minett or Sherwood Inn – a ClubLink property – in Port Carling. Pamper yourself with a view to the wilderness around you, delicious food, and exceptional spa treatments. Tour the grounds at each property, and ask about nature trails and programming.

Day 2 – Muskoka (“B”, “C”, “D”, “E” on Map)

You’re still spa-ing, but be sure to head to Port Carling to tour the local boutique shops. Take a cruise aboard the Peerless II – a renovated 1940s era supply boat that moors in port, and enjoy the enlightening commentary by ‘Captain Randy’ and his staff.

Day 3 - 7 – Algonquin Park (“B”, “C”, “D”, “E” to “F” on Map)

In the morning you’ll head to Algonquin Park to the Portage Store on Canoe Lake. Take the guided half-day canoe trip, a great introduction to what the region has to offer paddlers of all skill levels. Savor a delicious packed lunch, before ending the day in front of a roaring campfire under the stars at an Algonquin Park resort or nearby hotel.

Where to Stay for a Little Pampering:

- JW Marriott The Rosseau in Minett
Sherwood Inn – Port Carling
- Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville
- Touchstone on Lake Muskoka Resort in Bracebridge

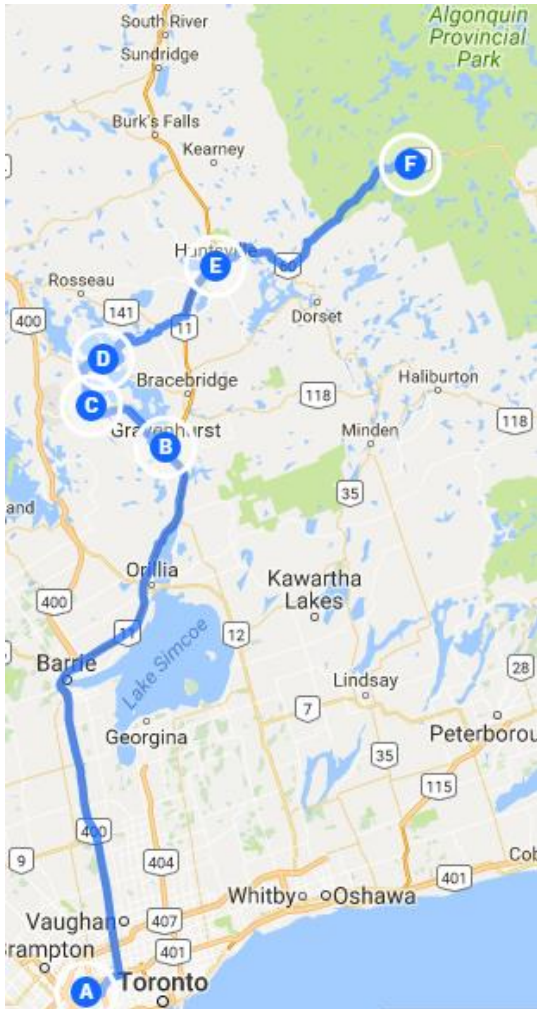
Where to Eat in Muskoka & Algonquin Park:

- Bala Bay Inn
- JW Marriott The Rosseau (multiple restaurants)
- Turtle Jack’s Port Carling
- Frankie’s Surf Club Port Carling
- The Vintages Dining Room at the Sherwood Inn in Port Carling
- Killarney Lodge in Algonquin Park
- Bartlett Lodge in Algonquin Park

Where to Get Pampered:

- Deerhurst Resort
- JW Marriott
- Touchstone on Lake Muskoka
- Trillium Spa & Resort in Port Sydney

Itinerary 5: Town & Country, cont'd



Complete relaxation and pampering at the JW Marriott The Rosseau.

Itinerary 6: The Group of Seven Now

Description: Experience Algonquin Park from the view of your platform tent in Algonquin, or explore Parry Sound, with a luxury tent to call home. Both areas famed for being the subject of several pieces of work by Tom Thompson and other members of the famous Group of Seven. With all the comforts of home, and just a few hours north of Toronto, your stay will be spent hiking and cruising the multitude of trails and lakes the region has to offer exploring the charming towns of Muskoka, all the while taking in the region's rich arts history.

The Group of Seven and especially one of their members Tom Thomson hold a powerful connection to the Explorers' Edge region. There are numerous monuments to the Group including at Oxtongue and Canoe Lake, paddling routes dedicated on the South River and artisan stations in Parry Sound that let artists see what Thomson painted. There is so much to see and experience with the Group of Seven.

Additionally, 2017 marks the 100 year anniversary of his Thomson's mysterious death. Throughout the year different organizations from all over the community will be hosting events, workshops and exhibits.

Day 1 – Cache Lake (“A” to “B” to “C” on Map)

En route from Toronto today, make a stop in Huntsville for lunch and a browse of the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery. An impressive collection of more than 90 murals celebrating the unique artwork of Canada's Tom Thomson and The Group of Seven, several of which are located in downtown Huntsville, surrounded by shops and lunch options. Following lunch make your way to your home for the next few nights; if it's at Bartlett Lodge, be sure to leave time to catch the water taxi that will bring you across Cache Lake!

Day 2 – Algonquin Park (“C” on Map)

Following breakfast this morning, the day is yours. Start at the Portage Store on Canoe Lake for tips and helpful advice on how to explore Algonquin. Follow in the footsteps of the Group of Seven's Tom Thompson, learn about his last days in the park, including the lore surrounding his mysterious death. After dinner this evening, enjoy a sunset cruise on the lake.

Day 3 – Lake Joseph (“C” to “D” on Map)

Following breakfast this morning, take a detour through Baysville to explore more of the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery murals located there. Stop in Bala Falls for a hike, or visit the Iroquois Artisans to view the Steatite sculptures of the region's Iroquois and Haudenosaunee people. Explore the tiny, iconic town of Bala and lunch with the local cottagers.

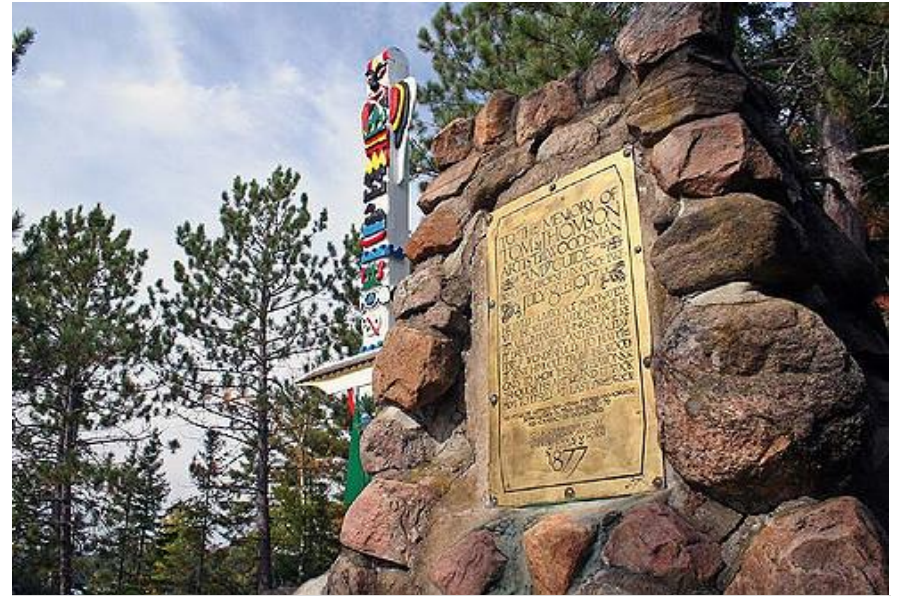
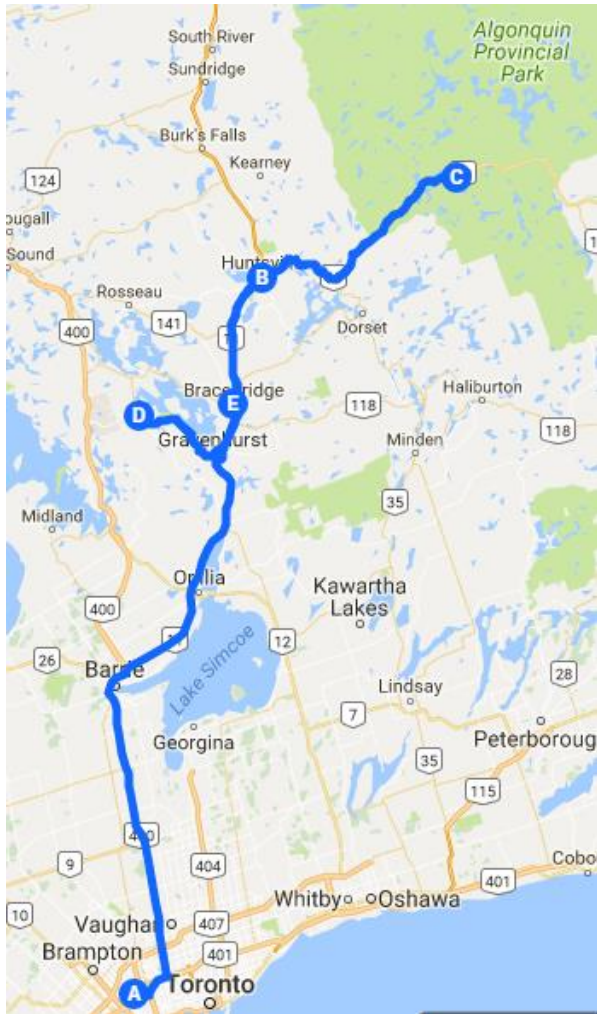
Day 4 – Bracebridge (“C” to “E” on Map)

Head to Bracebridge today and visit the Chapel Gallery. Here you will discover a number of artists inspired by Canada's wilderness and the traditions of the Group of Seven. If available, get a copy of the Muskoka Arts and Crafts Guild Book, an in-depth anthology of Muskoka's finest artists, craftspeople and galleries. Save time in the afternoon to visit one of the other galleries and feel free to purchase some art to take home for your own collection.

Where to Add Some Glamour to your Camping:

- Tent & Breakfast at Bartlett Lodge in Algonquin
- Luxury Tents at Harmony Outdoor Inn in Parry Sound

Itinerary 6: The Group of Seven Now - HOLD



The Tom Thomson Memorial Cairn, Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park.

Itinerary 7: Muskoka for History Buffs

Description: Drawing its name from the Chippewa tribe chief, Mesqua Ukee, the Muskoka Region, opened for settlement in the late 1800's. Originally settled for logging, it is now the centre of the great Canadian wilderness, just a few hours north of Toronto. Muskoka, Algonquin and the surrounding areas are now recreational hotspots, with beautiful hiking, world-class paddling, cycling and more – but it is the region's historical past – including the 150 year-old resorting industry – that gives its long-standing cultural flavour.

Muskoka's rich history is waiting for you to explore. During this itinerary keep in mind the many historical sights and attractions in the region and feel free to modify your plans. There are numerous local museums, the Muskoka Heritage Place and the Dyer Memorial in Huntsville, the Bird Mill in Bracebridge Falls, the Group of Seven artists' commemorations and so much more.

Day 1 – Gravenhurst (“A” to “B” on Map)

Just a two hour drive north of Toronto, Gravenhurst sits at the entry point to the region, but it's not to be missed. After lunch today, make your way to the Sawdust City Brewing Co. A strong supporter of the arts in the region, Sawdust has been brewing for more than two years now and boast an impressive list of standard and seasonal beers. Alternatively, check out a performance at the Gravenhurst Opera House and the Arts at the Albion, Muskoka's newest artist collective in an historic building.

Day 2 – Bala (“B” to “C” on Map)

Head north-west today to Bala. Take Route 169 through Hardy Lake Provincial Park, where no services or motorized vehicles are allowed in the park, so it's some of the quietest hiking around. Once you arrive in Bala, take your pick between Bala's Museum, or Johnston's Cranberry Marsh. The family run museum celebrates the life and writings of L.M. Montgomery, who wrote *The Blue Castle* while vacationing in the home. Next stop is the Marsh, boasting five year-round hiking trails and seasonal events. Save some time tonight to check out the Dark Sky Preserve at Torrance Barrens - an area surrounding a park, that is kept free of artificial light pollution for the purposes of night sky viewing. Torrance Barrens is the first of its kind in Canada, and it's worth staying up a little later to view what so many of us miss out on living in large urban centres.

Experience an Historic Muskoka Resort:

- Windemere House in Port Carling
- Port Cunnington just outside of Dorset

Where to Eat in The Gravenhurst Area:

- Dock of the Bay for lake views
- Oak & Paddle Restaurant for your trip to Main St.
- Blue Willow Tea Shop for the best coffee in town

Day 3 – The Village of Dorset (“C” to “D” on Map)

This morning make your way to the old Clayton property in Dorset, where you'll find the Lake of Bays Museum and Navigation Society. The property is the permanent docking facility for the SS Bigwin, a former ferry boat for use for vacationers travelling to the famous Bigwin Island Resort. The Bigwin once carried celebrities including Louis Armstrong, Winston Churchill, Greta Garbo and Clarke Gable. Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the historic village of Dorset as well. Take a climb up the Dorset tower – especially in fall – for an epic panorama view of Lake of Bays.

Itinerary 7: Muskoka for History Buffs, cont'd

Day 4 – Algonquin Park (“D” to “E” on Map)

Today you're on your own, enjoy the day taking in any one of the lakes in the park, take in a paddle or spend some down time with a book at your hotel.

Algonquin Outfitters at Oxtongue Lake can hook you up with paddling equipment for a paddle around the lake from their store dock. Then it's in to Algonquin Park to the Visitor Information Centre – where you'll discover the history of the park – to the Logging Museum a little further along from the west gate.

Day 5 – Baysville (“E” to “F” on Map)

Travel southwest to Baysville today. A village in Lake of Bays township, Baysville is home to the Lake of Bays Brewing Company, you might be in time for the Summer Beer Cruise hosted on the SS Bigwin – if you're not in luck, treat yourself to the best butter tart in town at the Humble Pie Butter Tart Factory.

Where to Stay in North Muskoka:

- Colonial Bay Cottages
- Foxwood Resort
- Pines Cottage Resort

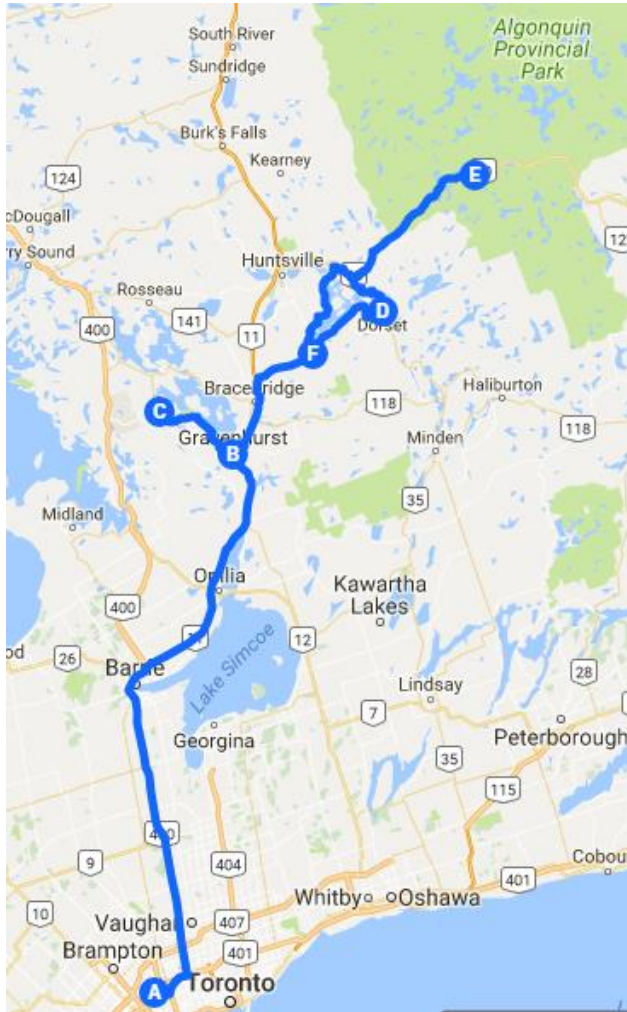
Where to Eat:

- Cast Iron Restaurant – Baysville
- Moose Café – Dwight

Who To Paddle With in Algonquin:

- The Portage Store
- Algonquin Outfitters
- Algonquin Bound

Itinerary 7: Muskoka for History Buffs, cont'd



Bala's Museum is in Bala, Muskoka.

Itinerary 8: Craft Brews and Cranberries

Description: This region has been making a name for itself in the craft beer industry for some time now, with a number of award-winning ales being produced here. There is a great local food movement, supported by local farmers markets, seasonal events and a host of outstanding chefs and restaurants. But it's the four breweries and a winery that have really put Ontario's cottage country on the culinary map.

Day 1 – Gravenhurst (“A” to “B” on Map)

Arrive from Toronto in “the gateway to Muskoka” on a Friday – the weekend is full of Saturday night live music opportunities and it's best to be rested and ready for your visit to Sawdust City Brewing Co. and their awesome Saloon. Enjoy an afternoon walk down by the Muskoka Wharf (where Muskoka's historic steamships are moored), or visit the talented folks at the Arts At The Albion across the street from the brewery. Then it's to the Saloon for a tour and tasting, and whatever else is happening, from special events to “broga” (yoga and beer pairings). Stay at the Residence Inn by Marriott or at the Inn on Bay within walking distance from the brewery. Featured ales: Golden Beach Pale Ale, Lone Pine Ale, Long Dark Voyage to Uranus.

Day 2 – Cranberry Marsh & Winery (“B” to “C” to “D” on Map)

After breakfast in Gravenhurst, head northwest to the picturesque town of Bala (the ‘Cranberry Capital of Ontario’) and home to Johnston's Cranberry Marsh. This unique farm makes everything you can think of out of cranberries and blueberries, both of which are indigenous plants to the region. They also use them to make award-winning wines at the adjacent Muskoka Lakes Winery. Take the “Bog to Bottle Tour” – a Destination Canada Signature Experience. Featured wines: Georgian Bay Rose, Red Maple Desert Wine.

Enjoy lunch in town or a bite at the Bala Bay Inn, the Moon River Lookout or Don's Bakery (summer only), then into the car for a leisurely drive across Highway 118 through Port Carling to Bracebridge and Baysville on Lake of Bays.

Day 3 – Lake of Bays Brewing Co (“D” on Map)

Located right on Highway 118, this award-winning brewery is known for its beers associated with Canadian sports teams. Enjoy a brewery tour and a tasting on the parking lot patio, which features one of the mural replicas of the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery. An iconic destination in the Lake of Bays area, the staff here won't be shy about recommending some local spots to visit. Head from here to the trails at the Echo Valley Mountain Bike Park for hiking and biking, or the Humble Pie Buttertart Factory for a favourite Canadian treat.

Featured ales: The Wild North series, Spark House Ale, Rock Cut.

Day 4 – Muskoka Brewery (“D” to “E” on Map)

You're off to Bracebridge today to visit the oldest brewery in the area, Muskoka Brewery. Operating since 1996, their unfiltered brewing method and creative seasonal beers have put them on the map as a top quality Canadian microbrewery. After lunch in town make your way southeast to Bala, the home of Muskoka Lakes Winery. Grab you glass and take a tour of the cranberry marsh that surrounds the winery where you will learn the intricacies of producing one of Muskoka's staple products. Enjoy a tour and tasting, and then head to LivOutside on the beautiful Muskoka River to try your hand at Stand Up Paddle boarding with the friendly staff at this outdoor adventure store.

Featured ales: Mad Tom IPA, Winter Beard, Detour Cream Ale.

Itinerary 8: Craft Brews and Cranberries, cont'd

Where to Stay (Please Don't Drink & Drive!):

- Quality Inn in Bracebridge
- Inn on Bay in Gravenhurst
- Lone Pine Inn in Gravenhurst
- Resorts of North Muskoka in Baysville

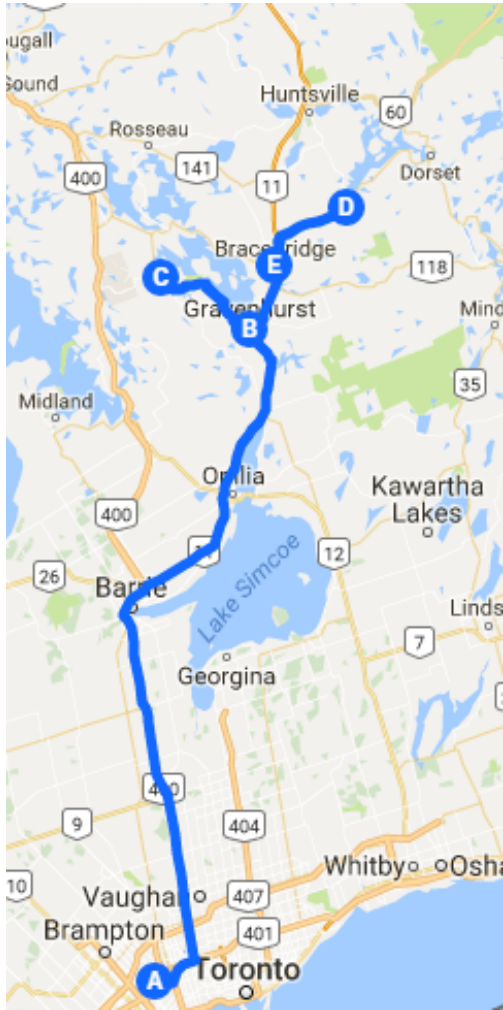
Where to Eat:

- Ronnie's Wood Fired Pizza
- The Old Station Restaurant in Bracebridge
- Cast Iron Restaurant in Baysville

Who to Drive you!:

- Brew Tours out of Toronto offers great local brew tours of the area

Itinerary 8: Craft Brews and Cranberries, cont'd



Getting ready for a tour at Lake of Bays Brewing Co.

Itinerary 9: Canada's Best Golf

Description: Muskoka has quickly become the centre of Canadian golf, surrounded by hundreds of lakes, rivers, forests and amazing rock outcroppings that rise up around the fairways, creating some challenging, yet inspiring golf courses in the heart of the Canadian Shield. There are also over 30 spots to choose from, including championship courses. Begin at Muskoka Bay Resort, a luxurious retreat in Gravenhurst, before making your way to Deerhurst Highlands, one of the region's original golf courses. A short boat ride out to The Bigwin Island Golf Club will leave you feeling tranquil and relaxed, followed by a day at The Ridge in Manitou for more lakeside views. Finish your time at Lake Joseph, surrounded by tall pine and natural surroundings that have been captivating outdoor enthusiasts for years.

Day 1 – Gravenhurst (“A” to “B” on Map)

After a picturesque 2.5 hour drive north of Toronto, start your golfing tour in the town of Gravenhurst, a community that is rich in arts, culture and heritage, and known for some of Muskoka's most celebrated events. You'll make your way to Muskoka Bay Resort, where pockets of untapped beauty, mammoth rock ridges and wetlands are combined to create a stunning award-winning golf course. Afterwards, visit the 17,000 square foot Clifftop Clubhouse for scenic views over the property and grab a bite to eat in the dining room, check out the latest gear in the pro shop, or cool off in the infinity-edge swimming pool.

Day 2 – Huntsville (“B” to “C” on Map)

Just a 35-minute drive north from Gravenhurst, is the vibrant waterfront community of Huntsville anchored on the iconic Canadian shield. You'll find yourself at Deerhurst Highlands, a 7,000 yard course, which was ranked one of Canada's top 100 golf courses, and set the standard for golf courses in Muskoka with its dramatic landscape, elevation changes, rugged granite outcroppings and dense forests. This course will put your golfing abilities to the test, but on-course food and beverage service is available to keep you energized, as well as a full service pro shop and golfer's lounge for you to relax at after a round.

Day 3 – Lake of Bays (“C” to “D” on Map)

Less than an hour away is the Lake of Bays, a picturesque town along the water, chock full of outdoor activities, including fishing, canoeing and of course golf. The Bigwin Island Golf Club is made up of sweeping fairways that drape naturally over the rugged Muskoka terrain, exposing lake vistas at every turn and you'll arrive on the included valet boat service to and from the island. After a round on this challenging course you can experience world-class dining in the Marine Dining Room, or take in the view of the water from the Dockside Grill.

Day 4 – McKellar (“D” to “E” on Map)

Arrive in McKellar, just 25 kilometres east of Parry Sound, a playground for outdoor enthusiasts with over 15 lakes, numerous rivers, walking trails, and home to The Ridge at Manitou. This course embodies its surroundings, hewn out of the Canadian Shield, flowing through rock, forest and meadowland. Leave time to relax lakeside on the patio, or explore the timber frame clubhouse with floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase a glorious view of Manitouwabing Lake.

Itinerary 9: Canada's Best Golf, cont'd

Day 5 – Lake Joseph (“E” to “F” on Map)

Head south to Lake Joseph, surrounding by beautiful cottages and waterfront properties. The Rocky Crest Golf Resort is surrounded by giant forests of pine, white birch and hemlock, with rolling fairways that captivate golfers, and the granite outcroppings challenge your skills. After your round of golf, head over to the pine-log lodge-style clubhouse that's nestled between towering trees and rolling greens.

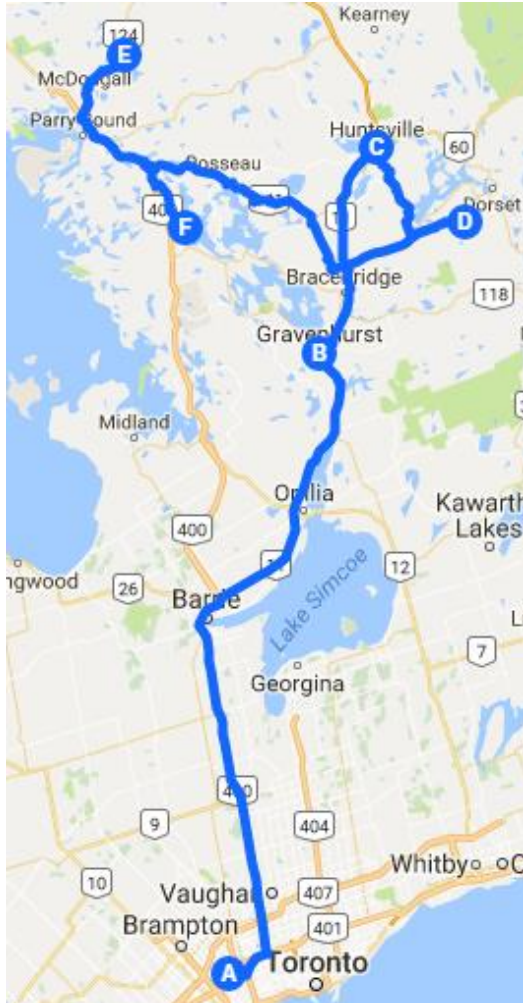
Where to Stay:

- Tranquil Woods Bed and Breakfast for a stay in an elegant Victorian-style home
- 40 Bay Street Bed and Breakfast for an authentic B&B experience, and a quick walk from Parry Sound's harbour

Where to Eat:

- On The Docks Pub to relax along the water
- Spencers Tall Tress Restaurant for refined European dishes paired with wine
- Dock of The Bay for seafood, steaks and pasta in a classic Muskoka setting
- Cliffside Bar & Grill for stunning views as you dine

Itinerary 9: Canada's Best Golf, cont'd



A view of Bigwin Island Golf Club in fall.

Itinerary 10: Cruise the Lakes

Description: The history and tradition of the Explorer's Edge region of Ontario is tied entirely to the waterways that define our very character. Water is everywhere in Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound, and for those not interested in propelling themselves with a paddle or oar, what better way to experience this freshwater paradise than to take a cruise on one of the fantastic boats that cross our rivers and lakes?

Day 1 – Muskoka Steamships: Gravenhurst (“A” to “B” on Map)

After arriving from Toronto, start in Gravenhurst and hop aboard the RMS Segwun, North America's oldest operating steamship or the modern Wenonah II, for a two-hour cruise past stretches of natural scenic shoreline decorated with grand summer homes. You will be served lunch on the ship and learn about the rich history found in Muskoka. Afterwards head to the one-of-a-kind Muskoka Discovery Centre, where the traditions of the steamship, boat building and resort era are captured and educate curious visitors about life in and around the water.

Day 2 – The Lady Muskoka: Bracebridge (“B” to “C” on Map)

Head to Bracebridge, a town known for its central waterfall. Take a walk through the historic downtown, visiting the local shops and dining establishments. You can stay active with hikes to the nearby waterfalls, trails or beaches. Take a trip down the Muskoka River aboard the Lady Muskoka and view the blue waters, majestic green pines and stunning scenery in this major regional waterway. Try paddling the river with a SUP or kayak rental from LivOutside – located across the road from the Lady Muskoka.

Day 3 – The SS Bigwin: Dorset (“C” to “D” on Map)

Sail across the beautiful Lake of Bays aboard the historical SS Bigwin with departures from the dock in Dorset. Arrive early and tour the Marine Museum, where you will find artifacts, photographs and historical recollections about the marine history surrounding the area. After your cruise, refresh yourself at the Lake of Bays Brewing Company, one of Ontario's fastest-growing craft breweries, and sample local brews and the team's newest creations in the beer garden.

Day 4 – Sunset Cruises: Port Carling (“D” to “E” on Map)

It's a morning of driving across the picturesque region to the historic town of Port Carling – the heart of Muskoka's cottage country and the hub of the Muskoka lakes. Join Captain Potts and crew for a tour on the Peerless II – a 1940s supply boat that can take you places on the lakes some of the bigger boats can't. And the running informative commentary by Captain Potts and his crew as they regale you with local history will leave you filled with stories to tell. Be sure to stop at the Muskoka Lakes Museum (also at the locks in town) for a further look into the region's past. Lots of great dining and patios to be had for lunch in Port Carling as well!

Itinerary 10: Cruise the Lakes, cont'd

Day 5 – Island Queen or MV Chippewa III: Parry Sound on Georgian Bay (“E” to “F” on Map)

Explore the UNESCO Georgian Bay Biosphere Bay, that stretches 200 km along the eastern coast from Port Severn to the French River, the world’s largest freshwater archipelago. Hike or paddle the area to discover a variety of rare species, open waters, coastal wetlands, sand and cobble beaches and upland forests.

The Island Queen Cruise in Parry Sound departs in the afternoon for a three-hour cruise to Georgian Bay’s outer islands, and you will visit historic sites like the Hole in the Wall, Killbear Provincial Park and the Rose Point Swing Bridge. To see it all from the sky, Georgian Bay Airways offers sightseeing air tours over the historic sights and pristine wilderness of Georgian Bay’s rugged coastline. For 360 degree views, you can hike up the Tower Hill Lookout, sitting 30 metres high. You can also cruise on a replica schooner – the MV Chippewa III, which also moors at Parry Sound harbour.

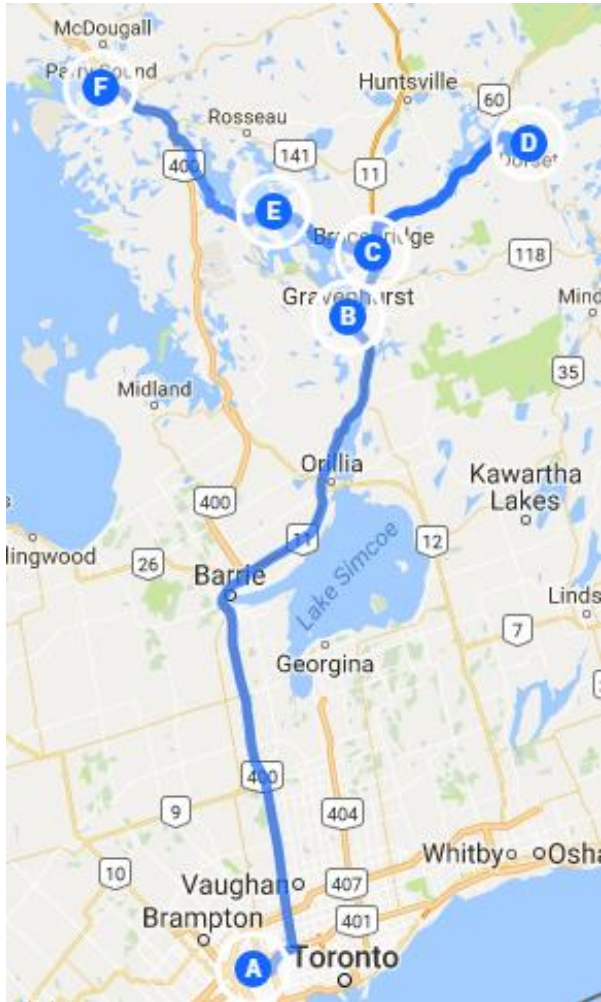
Where to Stay when Cruising:

- Port Cunnington Lodge & Resort
- Between the Maples Bed & Breakfast
- The Moose Bed & Breakfast for a classic Victorian B&B experience

Where to Eat on Shore:

- Bistro by the Bay for homey eatery with porch seating
- The Dam Pub for a quaint tavern with music and a wide whisky selection
- The Creative Plate Eatery Restaurant for casual dining and waterfront views
- Muskoka on the Rocks for a low-key pub and bar fare

Itinerary 10: Cruise the Lakes, cont'd



The RMS Segwun.

Part 5: Next Steps



Travel and Tourism Itinerary Design

When developing travel product, or experiences for any market, well thought out, logistically simple itineraries are crucial. The importance of positive word of mouth reviews in the travel marketplace cannot be overstated enough.

As these are recommended itineraries, the consulting team asks Explorers' Edge to consider the following points, prior to finalizing any itinerary:

1. Review from a local perspective and ensure appropriate routes (i.e. With vistas or landmarks) are chosen
2. Ensure name place and branding consistency. (i.e., Explorers' Edge vs. Muskoka vs. Almaguin Highlands, etc.)
3. Put the needs of the market, not politics, first when designing any itinerary.
4. Complete a thorough pricing and inclusion/exclusion exercise for each itinerary (i.e., converting the itineraries to packages).

Distribution Channels and Possible Next Steps for Explorers' Edge

A persistent challenge at the destination level involves efforts to increase sales through the packaging and bundling of local experiences. Destinations rely on their representative accommodators, operators and small businesses to engage in packaging activities, an approach that largely depends on the business acumen of the respective participants. The inherent challenge of relying on local tourism assets to participate in packaging is a lack of resources and industry experience. For the best results, one point of contact that creates the package, acts as the point of sale and manages consumer contact is recommended.

Given their position representing and receiving funding often from multiple public and private stakeholders, Destination Management Organisations rarely see themselves in the position to be that single point of contact to create, sell and deliver packages. We recommend considering the implementation of one, or a combination, of the following distribution models (i.e., at a later date, possibly in 2017+).

I. TAKE IT IN HOUSE

A considerably bold move, Explorers' Edge could engage an in house team member to engage their representatives in packaging and sales activities, thus allowing said destination to employ a clear call to action in all marketing efforts. The representative would be responsible for:

- Creating packages and bundled itineraries for select target markets
- Develop necessary marketing materials
- Manage all package related inquiries via a dedicated number and email
- Act as the point of sale
- Handling all commissions and vouchers

Explorers' Edge would maintain all marketing responsibilities. The benefits of this is the direct oversight and considerable value add for Explorers' Edge representative businesses. The cons include any number of political issues, including the inability to assure that every business would benefit equally. One option would include offering this service only to those operations who meet a pre-determined list of Market Ready criteria (see previous), ideally the motivation for increased sales would encourage an overall lift in the quality and competitiveness of the regions' tourism assets. A further challenge is addressing the need for TICO accreditation and the associated accounting and financial challenges.

Distribution Channels and Possible Next Steps for Explorers' Edge, cont'd

II. APPOINT A LOCAL POINT OF CONTACT

Managing all packaging operations and sales internally would require a very progressive destination. In most cases, this course would be a departure from a DMO's mandate. A second option would be to engage with a third party, either a local travel agent or inbound tour operator with existing training and licences, and task them with the aforementioned packaging responsibilities. A memorandum of understanding that contained clear key performance indicators would be required to govern the relationship. Explorers' Edge would maintain all marketing responsibilities.

The benefits to this approach would be a detached sales 'arm', again a further benefit to businesses who support Explorers' Edge. The negatives would include maintaining quality control, training and service levels and marketing standards. A further challenge would be the question of profits, and ensuring that the proposition remains profitable enough to allow Explorers' Edge control over the aforementioned potential challenges, in addition to the question of re-investment into the region of a percentage of the profits.

III. DELIVER AS SUGGESTED ROUTES WITH NO POINT OF PURCHASE

A frequent route engaged in by several destinations (i.e., Southwest Ontario), this is a straightforward marketing approach. The benefits are that it is simple, it is not a resource drain, nor is it a politically charged course of action. The drawbacks are that there is no clear call to action, a limited ability to accurately measure results, and the benefits are less obvious to the participants.

Given Explorers' Edge's current business model, we would recommend this option as an immediate next step – i.e., the promoting of the itineraries via a content marketing strategy.

IV. DEVELOP A TRADE RELATIONS STRATEGY

Arguably the most realistic scenario, Explorers' Edge could engage with an external party to develop and implement a trade relations strategy. The third party would have the expertise required to utilise Explorers' Edge's itineraries and bundled product, and engage custom trip planners, outbound and receptive tour operators, and destination management companies with a view to developing legacy trade relationships targeted at small groups and the FIT market in Canada, the US and the UK.

Distribution Channels and Possible Next Steps for Explorers' Edge, cont'd

Converting the Itineraries to Packages: Operator Outreach

Once the itineraries have been finalized, the in-house team at Explorers' Edge should consider which businesses could be "basketed" to form compelling and unique packages with relevance to each itinerary.

Communication of the final itineraries to the stakeholder community should be conducted in order to prompt thinking and collaboration by tourism operators to come up with pertinent packages themselves that are appropriate for the themed itineraries.

First, a criteria for being listed on the itineraries must be established and communicated internally and externally. As an example, Golf experiences is likely market ready with plenty of Stay & Play packages already on offer.

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**For More Information Please Contact:
Oliver Martin, Partner, Twenty31
(+1 416 721 3544; oliverm@twenty31.org)**

