

SHiFT

Jasper Motorcycle Tours: A SHiFT Case Study

February 2015





JASPER MOTORCYCLE TOURS

In 2007, Candace Broughton had a dream: to share her love of riding with visitors as a unique and personal way to discover Jasper National Park.

Nine years later, Candace's dream has become a reality. Jasper Motorcycle Tours offers one, two and three-hour tours to over 4,000 guests per year. Seven full-time and 20 part-time riders provide the internal combustion that propels the company forward. Between May and October, drivers delight and excite visitors from around the world with their personal tales of life in the park as they take in the awe-inspiring sites of true mountain wilderness.

Success!

Testimony to their success can be found in their 5-star TripAdvisor rating and 2014 Award of Excellence, which came close on the heels of being designated a Canadian Signature Experience in 2013 by Destination Canada. But if you ask Candace and one of her full-time

drivers Stan Chell, they will tell you that they are most proud of the tears of awe they bring to their guests' eyes and the genuine relationships forged between guests and staff members. This personal experience is rooted in a company that trusts each other and works like a family.

Mary Darling, the CEO of Tourism Jasper, had her world rocked on her first ride with an experienced driver-guide. Darling raved, "If I could clone these guys I would! They are amazing ambassadors for our community and visitors love them."



We love our guests!

Every guest has a secret dream of being a biker, riding with the wind, and feeling free. “But 95% of our guests aren’t riders. Many have a family member who has a bike and they are looking for a fun and safe way to give it a whirl! While we welcome families and children, the majority of our guests are 50 to 80 years old, with our oldest guest that we know of being 92 years old. Aussies are our biggest international market, but we get people from all around the world because Jasper attracts people from everywhere,” explains Candace.



About the Company

Jasper Motorcycle Tours offers *Sidecar Tours in the Great Canadian Rockies* on legendary Harley Davidson Motorcycles, driven by professional riders. People of any age, even with a disability, can experience the “THRILL OF RIDING”. Guests step out of their comfort zone and into their leathers for a journey with memories that last a lifetime.

Carrying two guests per sidecar, a personal driver-guide will stop for photo opportunities and let you switch seats while you soak in the majesty of Jasper National Park. Options of one, two, or three-hour tours are available, at a cost of \$99 to \$209. If three hours just isn’t enough, you can enjoy a five to six-hour Canadian Signature Experience for \$299.

The goosebump moments!

It begins when guests are literally lined up by their biker drill sergeant and dressed in authentic biker leathers. From the helmet to the chaps, this entertains and engages, and the laughter begins.

Then the feelings of coolness and freedom takes over and you are soon to be riding a Harley Davidson; something people only dream of, or are too afraid to try. Thanks to Jasper Motorcycle Tours, visitors are pushed to the edge of their comfort zone!

Columbia Icefield Parkway Tour in a Side Car

One of only 20 Canadian Signature Experiences in Alberta.

Be a biker for a day! Take to the road on a chauffeured motorcycle sidecar tour of the Icefields Parkway, through the heart of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site and one of the world’s most spectacular scenic drives. Find your thrill on Jasper Motorcycle Tours’ trip to world - famous destinations including ancient glaciers and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Get suited up in leather coat, chaps, gloves, glasses and helmet, and prepare for the ride of your life. Meet your personal driver-guide, tuck into the sidecar wearing your heated vest, and you’re off!

“Excitement, sanity and vulnerability all at once.”

The #1 experience was being dressed - it changed my personality, I was someone different with the outfit. The #2 experience was when we saw a bear and Bowen [the guide] cut the engine and we just stopped and watched. Not too close, but not being in a car with all the protection - it was just me, the bike, Bowen and the bear. And #3 was the riding experience; the connection we made riding was so different than anything in my regular life, I’ll never forget it.

Mary Darling, CEO Tourism Jasper

You need to be mature to work here.

“Our guides are the secret to our success,”

beams Candace when she reflects on her company.

Unlike many tourism companies, they rarely hire young drivers. Each driver-guide is between 40 and 60 years old. Most have ridden their entire lives, and they know and love the park. They are closer to the guests’ demographic, have stories to share, and are masters at developing personal relationships in a short period of time. This is where memories are created. Guests don’t simply go on a tour with Jasper Motorcycle Tours, they go on a tour “with Stan,” “with Ted,” “with Candace,” or any one of their memorable and caring guides.

We add value.

Jasper Motorcycle Tours is the only Harley Davidson motorcycling touring company in North America. As driver-guide Stan explains, “We create a new reason to visit and enjoy Jasper National Park because we personalize every trip and can take you to places only ‘locals know’, which thrills our guests.” One of the main reasons people visit Jasper is to experience the nature and wildlife. “We wanted to create a safe but exhilarating way for guests to get up close to wildlife with no doors or windows, yet respect the majestic animals in our park. Through our guides and flexible routes we can take guests off the beaten track and educate them. The end result is a very personal experience that is exciting, adventurous, intimidating, and very cool!”



Bumps on the road.

When the company first began “we had a lot of people who lifted their eyebrows and said ‘You’re going to do what?’ And, some simply thought we’d fail. Basically no one had ever heard of what we were trying to do; they didn’t understand why we wanted to share this magnificent park on a Harley Davidson with visitors.” The Department of Transport had never issued a commercial license to a motorcycle touring business and with Jasper National Park they didn’t fit into the traditional businesses’ box to get an operating license. It would have been easier if they had been a horseback riding company. But they persevered.






Personalizing the experience.

Each guest is special. And each rider has a story to tell. Driver-guides take pride in building relationships with visitors, enhancing the tour experience with local color and personality. "In truth, we don't fully realize what they are experiencing; we live it through their words, expression, and excitement," shares Candace. But they know the magic lies somewhere between looking cool, having amazing conversations, and for a short time, being a biker!

Slow, steady growth.

The first year they had two bikes selling four to ten tours per day. In 2014, their volume was as high as 96 visitors per day plus the rental business and retailing memorabilia such as the signature photo that sells for \$18. Each new Harley Davidson bike also increases the need for more trusted, talented riders that are reliable and comfortable with guests. The extra income doesn't hurt either!

Key SHiFTS

1. **FROM:** 100% of leisure travellers in the early years
 **TO:** business coming from the travel trade after we hit the critical mass level to service them.
2. **FROM:** Trying to market alone
 **TO:** working with Tourism Jasper and other destination marketing organizations who are professionals that can extend the reach of the company.
3. **FROM:** Lots of marketing to get our name out
 **TO:** Tonnes of word of mouth promotions from happy guests and using tools like TripAdvisor.

Advice for others interested in experiential travel.

1. It takes time, but if you passionately believe in what you are doing you'll get there.
2. Personalize, personalize, personalize. The bikes are cool, but the photo with the bike and the driver-guide is what they talk about for years. Know what kind of staff you need and stick to your guns if you want to create a corporate culture that works.
3. Don't let obstacles or naysayers stop you. It's your dream, and no one can take it away from you.
4. Work with your DMO; they are a tour operator's best friend. We are good at riding and delivering great visitor experiences; they know how to attract people to Jasper and help us make more sales.
5. Work with the travel trade. As a small business you can't get your name out there enough selling to walk in traffic. The travel trade takes a cut - sure they do - but it brings guests we wouldn't otherwise reach. It's a win-win that has helped grow our business.

"Born to be wild."

We absolutely loved the experience of riding on a Harley Davidson and sidecar from Jasper through the Jasper National Park. It started in the depot with putting on the leathers and bandana and finished with riding through the park with "Born to be Wild" blasting through the speakers. Thank you to all the staff for a truly unforgettable experience.

TripAdvisor 5 of 5 stars Reviewed 7 September 2014

"The math is simple: 80 people paying full price that we attract alone, or 800 people with a 25% discount working with the travel trade."

Candace Broughton, Owner/Operator

"She trusts me."

As a full-time employee, Candace trusts me to make major business decisions; this keeps our team together. We have a business culture that people we hire belong in, want to be part of. It's like an exclusive group of people but we happen to be employees.

Stan Chell, Motorcycle Driver-Guide

Where do you see your company in 3 years?

"I see us continuing to make people's dreams come true; checking off another point on their Bucket List."

Who's there to help?

In 2012, Tourism Jasper recommended to Travel Alberta that Jasper Motorcycle Tours be considered for the Canada's West Marketplace Scholarship Program. The program was designed by Travel Alberta to help industry showcase Alberta travel experiences to international tour operators. Scholars are offered mentorship and financial assistance to attend Canada's West Marketplace for three years.

As a new tourism operator, Candace was willing to explore every channel and work with the DMO to grow her business. She recognized that approaching international markets was very difficult on their own, and quickly understood that, while working with the travel trade was new to her, this marketplace was an effective way to present their products, experiences and services to tourism buyers from around the world. In addition, they worked closely with Tourism Jasper and Travel Alberta to support site visits by travel trade clients, which allowed them to demonstrate their product and establish important relationships that in turn helped increase interest in the experiences they offer.

As a graduate of the three-year Canada's West Marketplace Scholarships Program, Jasper Motorcycle Tours has been successful at exporting their business through the travel trade for several key reasons: They are very passionate about staging a travel experience that engages each of their guests in a very personal way and offer an experience that meets international visitor demand. They can administrate and manage bookings and confirmation online, offer net rates (which is typically at 20 to 30% below the published rate), have an active quality assurance program, are committed to targeting international markets for at least three years, and are willing to adapt the experience to serve the needs of overseas clients. According to Cameron Spence, Industry Development Manager for Travel Alberta, "Jasper Motorcycle Tours has successfully leveraged the Canada's West Marketplace Scholarship Program as a powerful tool to showcase themselves to the world." Candace summarizes working with the travel trade this way "Do the math, it's simple. We could have 80 people paying full price, or we can work with the travel trade and have 800 people with a trade discount. The volume has let us grow our business, provide more hours of work, and allowed us to increase our fleet of motorcycles."

Stephanie Clovechok, Experience Development Manager with Travel Alberta believes Jasper Motorcycle Tours is a perfect example of an organization that understands the distribution chain of the travel trade and how to market their experience through tour operators and receptive tour operators. The travel trade is constantly requesting new and exciting product that create a unique travel experience while stepping outside of what is known or expected from a destination.

"WOW WOW WOW"

Being a slightly mature, wannabe, biker chick this experience was on the top of my list when my husband and I decided to do an RV tour of the Canadian Rockies from Calgary to Vancouver. I telephoned from the UK to book ahead ... We checked in at the Harley shop and was decked-out in all 'the gear' and then we were introduced to Rob, who was gonna be our driver for the 3 hour tour we had booked. We couldn't have asked for a nicer guy, who seemed to know exactly what we would like to do ... The 3 hours plus flew by and I could have stayed on that bike for another 3 hours. No matter what your age this is a MUST DO when you visit Jasper. - TripAdvisor 5 of 5 stars Reviewed 21 October 2014

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Marty Eberth, Director of Industry Development, Travel Alberta

Researcher/Author

Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Managing Partner, Tourism Café Canada
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