

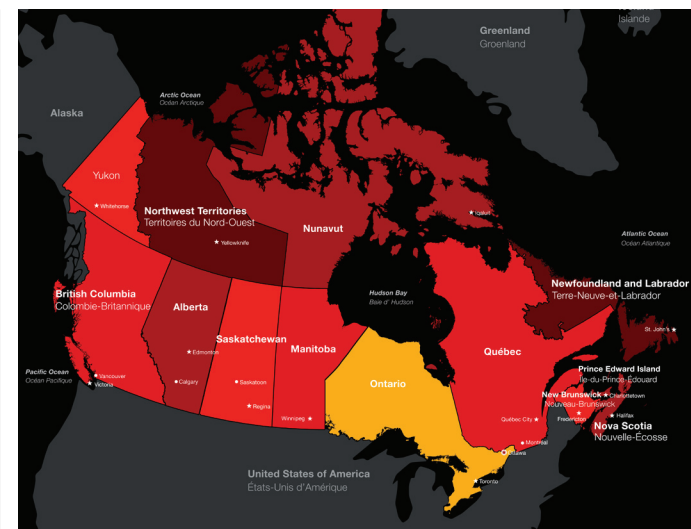
Signature Experiences Collection® Case Study Series

Inniskillin

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

www.greateststatesniagara.com/Discovery/Group-Tours/Inniskillin

October 2012



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Extreme Canadian Icewine Experience

Leading by Example

Tasting. Discovering. Indulging. It's all about engaging the senses when you step into the legendary Inniskillin Icewine vineyard to enjoy this Canadian Signature Experience. Designed for the leisure travel market, it also is frequently delivered to our internal colleagues within the Constellation corporation. This experience is an ideal way to introduce people to Canada, Niagara-on-the-Lake and our vineyards.

Join Deborah Pratt, responsible for winery public relations with Inniskillin at Niagara-on-the-Lake as she shares insights on their company, experiential travel and their Canadian Signature Experience.

Tell Us About Your Company

We have been in business since 1975 and have built a strong reputation in the wine industry for our award-winning capability for making Canadian wine. The most prominent of Canada's Icewine producers, we now export this luxury wine to 73 countries and are carried by 28 airlines.

Inniskillin was the first to receive a winery license after prohibition. Our 1989 Icewine was the recipient of the internationally acclaimed Grand Prix d'Honneur from Vinexpo, France, and we were instrumental in developing Canada's VQA system (Vintner's Quality Alliance). Our winery is open year round and is located 1½ hours from Toronto and 40 minutes from Buffalo, NY.

We began offering tours to the public in the early 80s and expanded to today's year round program of both public and private tours. We receive approximately 250,000 guests per year from throughout Canada and around the world.



What does “Experiential Travel” mean to your business?

At Inniskillin, it's about carefully layering Icewine memories through an interactive journey that begins in the vineyard to establish a sense of place and a connection to the grapes. We move the guests through the journey, engaging the senses, sharing the wine story and concluding in our secluded cellar immersed in a rustic, yet luxurious atmosphere surrounded by exquisite wines. It's a rustic experience that uniquely showcases Inniskillin's historical roots.

What makes a “Memorable Travel Experience”?

It's about creating a special memory with travellers and connecting them to the land. The key word to describe what we strive for is **luxury**.

Are you seeing any increase in demand for experiential travel?

Most definitely people are looking for experiential travel. Wine enthusiasts want to expand their knowledge and apply it to their own life and entertaining. In our case, guests want more than simply touring and tasting. They want to learn about food and wine pairing, proper stemware and discovering new ways to enjoy Icewine.

What's important to you as a company?

Beyond producing award-winning wine, from a tourism perspective it's about authenticity, credibility, a value-based experience, educating travellers about our wines, and showcasing our historic connection to Canada's wine industry. We also want to ensure our visitor experiences are easily enjoyed by all. Nothing is worse than not being able to participate in an experience because it has a minimum requirement of 30 people. We believe that flexibility and catering to what the traveller wants is extremely important; we don't want to exclude any guests!



Describe your ideal guests.

Our leisure travellers are people who travel a lot; they are looking for something beyond the typical vineyard activity and are willing to pay for an experience that is unique. They are people who enjoy what we call *leisure education*; they want to learn something new in a fun way.

Tell us about your key partners.

We collaborate with many different partners. One that relates to the Signature Experiences Collection in particular is our partnership with Niagara Helicopters (who are also in the Collection for their *View to a Thrill* program).

I provide them with mini bottles of Icewine so that when they go to Asia to market, they can take our wine and promote it with their Signature Experience. Elmhirst's Resort, another Signature Experience Collection member, has also approached us, so we are now looking at how we can partner with others in the Collection to create new products and market with companies of the same quality.

What are your main sales channels?

- Fully independent travellers represent 70% of our tourism business.
- Group tours represent approximately 30% of our tourism business.
- The main Canadian in-bound companies we work with include: Jonview, Canadian Tours International, JTB Canada, Maple Fun Tours, Odytours-Canadian-Odyssey, and OK Tours.
- Internationally we recently signed a contract with Tauck Tours based in the USA.

Tell us about your marketing.

The Canadian Tourism Commission international markets that we are aligned with include the USA, China, Japan, and South Korea. We have been building into Brazil and India markets as well.

We are active with the travel trade, media relations, and social media including a Facebook page and a TripAdvisor account.

Activities we regularly support include media and travel trade FAM trips. We attend trade shows, purchase paid advertising, print brochures, execute photo shoots, send out e-blasts and support industry education initiatives such as this case study! We list all our tourism activities on our website, and identify our Signature Experience with the special CTC badge. We cross promote with other tourism partners.

We continue to expand our language capabilities. At the moment we can deliver our Signature Experience in English, French, and Japanese. Beyond English, some of our print materials are available in Chinese, Japanese, Italian and Korean.

Who does your Signature Experience appeal to?

This experience appeals to all types; couples, single ladies, gourmards. Whether the guest is a gourmet cook or just sampling wine, we find when they return home, they want to share the wine and food pairings they've discovered with friends and family. For guests who purchase the wine glasses, they often tell us they are planning to go home and replicate the experience for their friends! It's fun, they go from being immersed in the story, to staging and telling our story.

According to the Canadian Tourism Commission, our Signature Experience primarily appeals to Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits.

"Fabulous Icewine!! Loved our tour here! Went out and saw the grapes and learned how the shape of a glass can change the taste of a wine drastically. Absolutely amazing. Our tour guide was incredibly nice and knowledgeable. I loved this tour!"

Trip Advisor Guest



Your Canadian Signature Experience

Discover the secrets of Icewine with Inniskillin's Extreme Canadian Icewine Experience; designed to tantalize your taste buds and awaken the wine connoisseur within you.

Learn Inniskillin's secrets for producing award-winning Icewine as you indulge your curiosity and your palate with this truly unique wine adventure.

Strolling through the Icewine vineyard with a glass of Sparkling Vidal Icewine, you'll unearth the magical process of creating Icewine. As you discover how the grapes are left on the netted vine well into the winter months to concentrate, we'll explain how the flavour intensifies and how we know the exact moment to harvest the grapes when the temperature drops below minus eight degrees Celsius for a sustained period of time.

In the underground cellar, where historic Icewines are aging, you'll be treated to a private, structured wine tasting. A comparative tasting of our Riesling and Oak Vidal Icewines, using a Riedel Vinum Extreme Icewine Glass will transform your understanding of how the shape of a glass distinctly affects the aroma and taste of the wine. This is where the luxurious feeling of being in a secluded cellar with an exquisite wine really resonates with our Icewine guests. It's a true rustic experience that relates to Inniskillin's historical roots.

After comparing several styles, a duet of unlikely food pairings stages the grand finale as you experiment and identify which Icewine best pairs with which culinary delicacy.

How does your Signature Experience contribute to Canada's competitive landscape?

We were the first company to introduce Canadian Icewine to the international market. Now we are internationally renowned, award-winning, and bring our name, reputation, and worldwide reach to the Signature Experiences Collection.

How do you sell your Signature Experience?

We sell directly to independent travellers and through the travel trade on a year-round basis in the leisure and corporate sectors.

Tell us something we don't know.

I promote our *Extreme Canadian Icewine Experience* heavily within the Constellation newsletter and on our intranet. If we are welcoming a sales representative from within our company, or a restaurateur, a wine retailer or wholesale client, we will provide this experience for them as a way to connect them quickly to the history and quality of our company, as well as our signature Icewine products.



“We bring out unlikely pairings for our guests. Instead of telling them which one matches which Icewine, we let them experiment; taste and see what they think works and then we chime in. It’s far more memorable and personal this way.”

“We like to keep the element of surprise in our tours. We don’t like saying exactly what we will be doing because we may change up the wines depending on the time of year, the Sommelier’s preference, or our desire to expose our visitors to certain wines.”



Any final words of wisdom?

Be authentic, flexible, deliver value, never compromise on quality, and always look ahead to the next innovation, the next opportunity to improve the visitor experience.

Story contributed by: Deborah Pratt, Winery Public Relations, Inniskillin Wines, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Researcher: Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Tourism Cafe Canada.

Insights for Others

Have you made any changes to respond to the demand for experiential travel?

The biggest change was making the experience available for individual and group visitors.

Any marketing challenges?

We didn’t have photos of our guests actually engaged in the experience. Much of our photography illustrated the vineyards, infrastructure and wine. Adding the engagement element was a shift we made to connect our guests personally to our tourism experiences.

Any benefits of being in the Signature Experiences Collection?

Our Canadian Signature Experience program has been a huge benefit to promoting wines within our own company, our clients and with prospective clients. Other benefits we are realizing from being in the Collection include:

- establishing new partnerships;
- stimulating thinking about new tourism packages;
- the credibility of being recognized by the Canadian Tourism Commission; and
- sharing the excellence of our partners and expanding our pride in Canada.

Any tips for others?

Stay focused on your experience; keep it streamlined so that you don’t overwhelm your visitors.