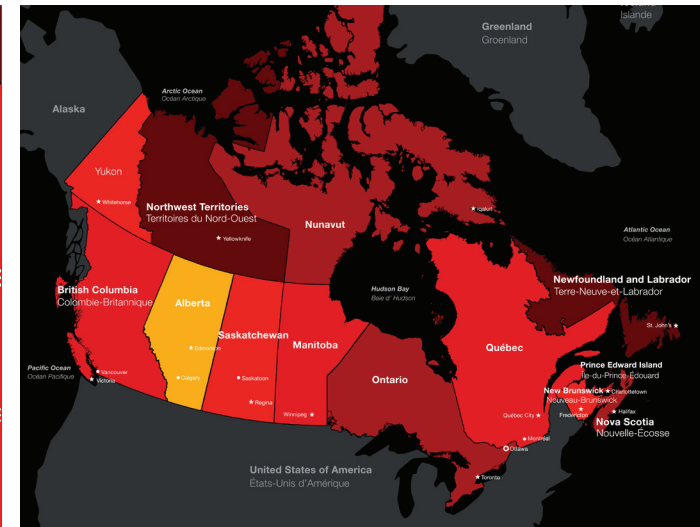


Signature Experiences Collection® Case Study Series

Heritage Park Historical Village

Calgary, Alberta
www.heritagepark.ca
October 2012



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How the West Was Once

Leading by Example

Discover how a fully immersive visitor experience, on 127 acres of land inside the city of Calgary, can transform visitors by taking them back to another place and time in Canada's history. In this living museum, the buildings and artifacts are only the props; and are the stage on which great stories are told.

Join Sandra Kam, Manager of Marketing and Special Events, at Heritage Park Historical Village in Calgary, Alberta as she shares her insights on the company, experiential travel and their Canadian Signature Experience.

Tell Us About Your Company

Heritage Park Historical Village is Canada's largest living history museum. We immerse visitors in the story of the settlement of Western Canada from 1860 to 1950. Our costumed staff bring the stories of the past to life, while our 180 exhibits are our stage to engage.

Our year-round, urban operation began with the dream of a number of committed individuals who wanted to preserve the past. Small towns were disappearing in the west and they wanted to create a historical village so this piece of our history wouldn't be lost. The original families remain involved with the site today, although we just lost one of our founding fathers, Roy Jennings. He will be remembered for his contribution to preserving this way of life.

What does “Experiential Travel” mean to your business?

It means being fully immersed, engaged, and enthralled in whatever you are doing. It could be through a hands-on experience or being immersed in the total atmosphere that takes you to another place and time.



What makes a “Memorable Travel Experience”?

It's about engaging, enthralling, and inspiring visitors! At Heritage Park Historical Village, we ensure that this is done in ways that inform and educate our guests, while guaranteeing they have a great time.

We had a guest who asked me once “What’s that thing on the wall?” I told him it was an old-fashioned telephone that goes through an operator. He picked it up and heard multiple conversations. For him it was a “WOW moment”, for he had no idea this type of phone ever existed.

Are you seeing any increase in demand for experiential travel?

Yes, it's exactly what the average person wants. Everybody is looking for an experience to take them away from their everyday life. Whether it's educational or just for fun, Heritage Park Historical Village allows people to step back in time and imagine living in another era.

What's important to you as a company?

Offering authentic, engaging experiences that bring the past to life, while protecting and preserving the heritage assets we have.



Describe your ideal guests.

Our ideal guest is someone who wants to learn a little bit about the history of Western Canada, while having an immersive and relaxing experience. Multi-generational families love us because there is a real opportunity for them all to connect with the past in meaningful ways. Younger generations can ‘live it’ not just hear about it.

The majority of our visitors are Canadians. We had a greater percentage of visitors from the United States than Tourism Calgary reported last year, which we find interesting, but in general our mix is:

- 85% Canadian (of that 76% from Alberta).
- 4% USA (primarily Texas, California, Washington and Florida).
- 11% International (England, Germany, France and Australia).

We have two key traveller types that visit the Park: Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers.

Tell us about your key partners.

We work with a wide range of community partners such as Big Rock Brewery, Jazz YYC, and the Fibre Arts Guild to help us deliver specialty programs. ***These represent new revenue streams for us and really help to connect visitors and people from the local community to one special aspect of How The West Was Once.*** Some of these programs charge a fee of up to \$90 per person but we have never had a problem with the price tag. To the contrary, we often sell out.

Our Big Rock Brewery program lets guests learn the craft brewing process, led by our partner - the brewmaster. We also offer a canning program, a heavy horse team driving workshop and a spinning course to name a few.

Over the last three years we established a successful liaison with our local aboriginal community to tell the story of the Plains native Indians. We hadn't told this story before, as we felt it was best told by their people. Together we have built an Aboriginal encampment and engaged First Nations storytellers so they can tell the story about fur trade in the 1880s, and how their ancestors lived and worked with the missionaries.

What are your main sales channels?

The park receives 500,000 visitors per year. From a tourism perspective, the vast majority are fully independent travellers.

Group tours represent approximately 1% of our current business, with 5,000 group tour visitors per year. The main tour operators we work with in Canada are Brewster, Jonview, and Misa Tours. In the USA we work with Holiday Vacation, Globus, Tauck Tours, and Adventure Caravan.

Tell us about your marketing.

We're in the process of making a real shift in our text, images, and how we work with our ad agency as a result of understanding the attitudes, values, and motivations of our two key traveller types: Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers. Understanding the Canadian Tourism Commission's Explorer Quotient® research helped us take a look at our images. As one example of this shift, although the previous images were beautiful and artistic, they only represented the place. We had very few images of guests engaged in the many wonderful experiences within the Park.

We'll be launching a new website soon, and we plan to increase our use of video to help people better understand the experiences we offer.

Two years ago we started working towards attracting the Chinese market. We attended a trade mission to China with the City of Calgary, Tourism Calgary, Travel Alberta and various other corporations. We've also started investing in translating our travel trade sheets into Mandarin.

Your Canadian Signature Experience

Do you love learning about early cultures? At Heritage Park Historical Village you will be transported back in time to discover How The West Was Once. Step into an authentic Western Canadian pioneer culture beginning in the 1860s: discover the dangerous life of a whiskey runner and the hardships of fur traders and prairie pioneers. Gain an intimate understanding of the early culture of Plains Indians, and learn how the Canadian Pacific Railroad helped settle the western provinces.

Converse with local townsfolk – friendly, costumed guides who engage you in stories about the historical buildings and early families of Western Canada. Find out how riverboats helped to settle the west as you cruise the reservoir aboard Calgary's only paddle wheeler. Or, step into a tipi where you will work making bannock with a Plains Indian. Sign up to be a voyageur or move forward in time and discover what it was like. Sample early Canadian fare: fresh baked cheese buns, Canadian elk, old-fashioned rock candy and hand-cranked ice cream. Every step of the way you'll gain a unique, intimate look at the people and experiences that helped shape Western Canada.

Located in the heart of Calgary, Heritage Park Historical Village is Canada's largest living history museum: a 127-acre park with 180 buildings and structures, and 50,000 artifacts to discover. It requires a full day to experience. The historical village is open daily from mid-May to mid-September, and the Gasoline Alley Museum is open year-round. The park is a 15-minute drive from downtown Calgary; public transit is available. Requires walking.

Who does your Signature Experience appeal to?

People who are curious about the past, want to enjoy a shared experience, and who want to be enthralled, engaged, and inspired!

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

Step into the past through this fully immersive historic experience, that takes you back in time to the 1860s through 1950s and discover how the distinctive culture of Western Canada was shaped.

"It's touted as the world's largest living museum and I think that's a fair description. It's not only a re-creation of an old time Calgary but also had an assortment of well informed actors playing their parts (banker, doctor, teacher) and are extremely informative and interesting. Everyone was professional and friendly."

Trip Advisor Guest



My goal is for you to come and have a great time
and walk away with ONE WOW MOMENT!

How do you sell your Signature Experience?

It is available to independent travellers, all sorts of groups - from schools to the travel trade, and we can work with tour operators who package independent travel.

Tell us something we don't know.

We originally thought that the majority of our guests would be Cultural Explorers. After Travel Alberta invested in the CTC EQ research, we conducted a survey of our guests and discovered the majority were Free Spirits followed by Cultural Explorers. This insight provided us with new information to take a look at our customer base and think about the programs and activities we offer. It also gave us hope that we could use this knowledge to target Free Spirits as a way to help us work on changing perceptions of our business.

Insights for Others

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

We are branching into many more thematic programs, which are connected to our history, and appeal to a subset of our visitors. This allows us to work with more community partners, and while it only represents an incremental new revenue stream at this time, it also is a way to continually refresh the opportunities on site and create reasons to revisit.

Any marketing challenges?

As a living history museum, some people don't quite understand exactly what we do; they think we are like other museums or historic sites, static places filled with exhibits. They don't realize that once you cross the gates into our site, you become part of the past. This challenge exists with visitors and some of our tourism colleagues who cluster us together with more traditional heritage sites. The idea of co-marketing us with Canada Olympic Park or a Zip-line is a stretch for them, so we have to work hard to change perceptions.

Any benefits of being in the Signature Experiences Collection?

We are already reaping benefits from the travel media. I thought this would take two to three years. The FAMs we are getting as a result of being in the Collection are helping because the CTC focuses at times on different markets, writers, and buyers than Travel Alberta and Tourism Calgary so it's increasing our exposure to international markets. In Australia, there was this beautiful book put together and we were included. There is no way we could have achieved this on our own. The book is absolutely stunning, it could be a coffee table piece!

Any tips for others?

It's going to take time. Discovering a new way to think about your target markets based on psychographic research is very powerful. Making the changes it inspires has to be done thoughtfully and integrated over time.

Any final words of wisdom?

It was actually a bit intimidating when we began the change process. Don't get overwhelmed by the shift to experiential tourism. I had a great mentor once who said: "Do you know how to eat an elephant? One bite at a time." It's okay to tackle one or two things per year and know you are making progress.

Story contributed by: Sandra Kam, Manager of Marketing and Special Events, Heritage Park Historical Village.

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