



## Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience PROGRAM

### *2009-10 Program Information Kit*

Operators of accommodations, attractions and adventure tourism businesses are invited to apply to participate in the Bay of Fundy Recommended Experiences program. The 2009-10 program begins in late October 2009 and concludes in August 2010. The deadline for applications is October 5, 2009. Questions? Contact Terri McCulloch [terri@bayoffundytourism.com](mailto:terri@bayoffundytourism.com) 902-254-4041

Program applicants will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

#### **General Qualifying Criteria**

- Be licensed and graded (if applicable) or adhere to any other specific regulatory items
- Be open at least 90 consecutive days a year
- Have liability insurance and safety equipment as appropriate
- Have a staffed storefront location or welcome area
- Be accessible by roads suitable for motor vehicles and provide site-based parking or parking in close proximity
- Have suitable on-site signage/interpretation
- Be accessible through the following communication tools: phone, e-mail, website, fax.
- Have public restroom facilities
- Offer currency exchange rates consistent with industry norms
- Have staff trained in customer service – SuperHost or equivalent
- Have a brochure and market their product or service

#### **Additional Sub-sector Criteria**

##### *Accommodations*

- Canada Select minimum 3 1/2 -star (or CAA/AAA minimum 3 diamond) or equivalents
- 4 rooms or greater in size
- restaurant or public kitchen facilities located on site preferred or within reasonable walking distance
- coastal orientation or unique design (historic property) and/or themed or linked to the Bay of Fundy environment

##### *Adventure Operators*

- all applicable guiding certification
- CPR/First Aid training
- provide interpretation
- have a point of sale in the Bay of Fundy region
- provide a well-themed value-added experience of the Bay of Fundy

##### *Attractions*

- must be staffed
- provide interpretation, orientation, on-site signage or visitor map
- Fundy-related theme: history, culture, agricultural, specialty food (lobster, winery, etc.)

## **Program Completion Criteria**

To achieve recognition as a “Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience”, participating tourism businesses must successfully complete all of the following program elements

### **Product Assessment & Mentoring Sessions**

*October-November 2009*

Candidates will be visited for a site assessment and will participate in a individual product mentoring session. Candidates will complete the business improvement tasks identified and scheduled as a result of this session.

### **Marketing Mentoring Session**

*March 2010*

Candidates will participate in a marketing mentoring session to discuss marketing advertising and PR (including the use of social media). Candidates will complete the business improvement tasks identified and scheduled as a result of this session.

### **Professional Mystery Shop**

*Summer 2010*

Participating businesses will be assessed by typical customers in their target markets through professional peek season mystery shopping. Candidates must undertake remedial activities as discussed and agreed to in the post-shop mentoring session.

## **Maintaining the Designation**

Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience operators must participate in regular mystery shop quality monitoring. Certified operators must achieve an overall mystery shop score of Very Good or higher. Operators who achieve an overall score of Good will be required to complete business improvement tasks, within an agreed-upon time period, to address areas requiring improvement. Operators scoring lower than Good will not be permitted to remain in this quality program.

In the years following graduation from the program. Bay of Fundy Recommended Experiences pay an annual membership fees to retain the designation (est. \$200 to \$350 for 2010).

In the event that a Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience business changes ownership, every attempt will be made to ensure that the new owners are encouraged to participate in the program so the business can maintain the designation. The designation is not immediately transferable to new owners without review by Bay of Fundy Tourism.

## **Membership Benefits**

Membership benefits for Bay of Fundy Recommended Experiences open the door to new partnerships, new markets and improved delivery of cohesive and themed Bay of Fundy experiences to visitors. Detailed membership benefits for Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience operators as well as suggested methods for leveraging best benefit from membership are as follows:

## 1. Marketing

Operator marketing benefits are designed to augment the marketing efforts of individual members and to enhance the positioning of the Bay of Fundy product by the two provincial tourism departments. Specifically, the Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience (BoFRE) designation is promoted in a variety of ways as a quality-assured, cohesive network of visitor experiences.

### a) Promotion of the Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience logo/phrase in provincial Travel Guides

Each year approximately 1,500,000 copies of the NB & NS provincial travel guides are distributed throughout the world (940,000 English, 660,000 French, 100,000 travel guides on CD). The Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience program and its quality promise to visitors are featured in these guides by logo and by program description.

*Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience members can augment the effectiveness of this promotion through the travel guides by including the BoFRE logo (or the line “A Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience”) in all listings and paid advertisements in these guides.*

### b) Listing, link and packages on [www.bayoffundytourism.com](http://www.bayoffundytourism.com)

The partnership's website [www.bayoffundytourism.com](http://www.bayoffundytourism.com) includes free member listings of all Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience operators. This listing is partnered with an interactive interprovincial Fundy map, with click-throughs to members and Fundy communities where members are located. Member listings include: location, phone number, star rating (for accommodations), short product description and link to each member site. Quarterly summary reports of activity on this site will be provided to members.

Each spring, member operators can submit packages to the Bay of Fundy website. Up to two packages per operator may be posted (space permitting).

*BoFRE members can make the best benefit from this partnership by:*

- 1) linking back to the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership website,*
- 2) asking their web master to track referrals from the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership site,*
- 3) submitting packages annually for inclusion on the website.*

### c) Intercept presence in the region

The Bay of Fundy Map & Activity brochure (English & French versions) are distributed to all provincial VICs in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (including two VICs in Maine). Brochures are also distributed through a unique partnership with Bay Ferries on all vessels and terminals and through mailouts. Approximately 55,000 Bay of Fundy brochures are distributed annually. The BoFTP also conducts Fundy training with all VICs and Bay Ferry terminals. This training familiarizes staff with the interprovincial Fundy product, suggested uses for the brochures and highlighted the significance of the Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience designation.

*BoFRE members will benefit even more by actively promoting the Fundy brochures to their guests and by referring guests to other businesses in the Fundy Recommended network. Also, members are encouraged to use the tools provided by the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership (such as the Living Tides of Fundy video and the pre-shop service standards) to train their staff on key Bay of Fundy themes and motivate them to create high-quality visitor experiences.*

#### **d) Media & Travel Trade Promotion**

Through a natural partnership with provincial media and trade teams, Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience members are exposed to the media and travel trade whenever possible. Key messages about BoFRE members include: assurance of quality at all locations, high product knowledge of key Fundy themes, interest and capability of working with travel trade partners, knowledgeable and professional staff, consistent product delivery and willingness to host media writers

*BoFRE members best benefit from media & trade promotions by developing a database of high-quality digital photos of their business and hosting media and travel trade fams when requested.*

#### **e) Exposure through Bay of Fundy Social Media Channels**

Bay of Fundy Tourism is a leader in the use of social media for destination development in Canada. The organization has been blogging since 2006 and successfully uses Facebook, Flickr and Twitter to raise additional awareness of Bay of Fundy through these innovative initiatives. The Bay of Fundy blog receives XX unique visitors per year, the Bay of Fundy website receives XX unique visits per year. During the first year of the New7Wonders of Nature campaign the Bay of Fundy received an additional XX hits on the website.

*BoFRE members are encouraged to make Bay of Fundy Tourism aware of activities and events in their area for inclusion in Fundy's established social media channels.*

#### **f) New7Wonders of Nature**

Bay of Fundy is now a finalist in a global campaign to declare the New7Wonders of Nature. Bay of Fundy Tourism is Bay of Fundy's organizing committee and will continue to strategically promote the Bay through this internationally significant contest. The Bay of Fundy is the only site in Canada in the campaign and now one of only 28 international finalists. The campaign continues through 2011. Exposure of Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience on the Bay of Fundy's website will be high throughout the campaign.

*BoFRE members are asked to encourage their visitors to vote for the Bay of Fundy for the New7Wonders of Nature as well as to champion the vote in their community. Links to the voting site from each member site are also encouraged.*

## 2. Networking Benefits

Professional development and networking is vital to the continued growth and success of the Tourism Partnership and its member businesses. BoFTP members receive partnership activity updates through frequent e-newsletters and they are presented with the following networking opportunities:

### a) Annual General Meeting & Conferences

Bay of Fundy Recommended members have the right to vote at the annual general meeting and other general membership meetings. Other events throughout the year offer members the opportunity to network and socialize with other BoFTP members, hear current industry updates, relevant provincial news, and help shape the future of our organization. BoFRE members may have discounts on conference admissions that are not offered to the rest of the tourism industry.

*BoFRE members best benefit by attending and participating in the AGM and conferences.*

### b) Board/Committee Participation

Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience members have the opportunity to get involved with BoFTP committees and participate in the organization's future strategic direction and program development through participation on the board and/or sub-committees.

*BoFRE members may indicate a willingness to serve on a Fundy sub-committee at any time during the year.*

### c) Partnerships

In addition to Bay of Fundy Tourism's 10-year-old relationship with New Brunswick Tourism & Parks and Nova Scotia Tourism Culture and Heritage, the BoFTP has nurtured several strategic partnerships with tourism businesses, associations and development groups in the interprovincial region. Such partnerships include: Bay Ferries, VIA Rail, regional development agencies, county and town municipal units, Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership, Dalhousie University, Tourism Atlantic, etc.

*Members can participate in the growth of the BoFTP through partnerships by encouraging organizations with which they are involved to join and support the BoFTP in the Friends of Fundy or RDA/RTIA/Municipality membership category.*

## 3. Business Development Benefits

After graduating from the Bay of Fundy Recommended Experiences program, your annual membership fee includes the following business development benefits:

#### a) Mystery Shop

The Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership continues to ensure the delivery of quality experiences in the Bay of Fundy region by monitoring member businesses through mystery shopping (every 2 to 3 years).

*Members can continue to welcome the mystery shop as an opportunity to receive valuable feedback on the visitor experience they offer.*

#### b) Post-shop Mentoring

BoFTP regularly corresponds with each Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience to conduct customized post-shop mentoring sessions. This provides each business with the opportunity to use staff market readiness expertise to enhance their business and achieve higher quality visitor experiences.

*Members best benefit from the post-shop mentoring by striving to meet and exceed the BoFTP service standards and implementing the business improvement suggestions arising from the post-shop mentoring.*

#### c) Provincial Liaison

Provincial tourism department staff from both Marketing and Product Development Divisions serves on the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership's Board of Directors. This ensures that the activities of the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership harmonize with provincial priorities and initiatives.

#### **Questions?**

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