

Destination Trails Market-Readiness Guidelines

DEFINITION OF A DESTINATION TRAIL (Hiking and Walking)

Destination Trails attract visitors to a tourism cluster/region for hiking and walking activities while touring the province or region. Destination trails are set in a distinctive landscape that reflect the province's most distinguishing characteristics, such as views, natural features, culture and heritage. They provide opportunities for visitors to immerse themselves in the most extraordinary, attractive natural and cultural features of the provincial landscape and coastline. Destination trails are designed for the touring/explorer market, offering varying degrees of difficulty and lengths.

DESTINATION TRAILS MARKET-READINESS GUIDELINES

Provincial Brand and Tourism Development

- Destination trails have a theme consistent with the attributes of the province and the province's brand pillars of people, culture and natural environment.
- Example: coastal trails that provide unique panoramic ocean views and the possibility of viewing whales, icebergs and seabirds.

Cluster of Attractions and Services

- Destination trails are typically surrounded by other attractions, offering complementary experiences and activities and linked by reasonable time and distance to services, such as food, accommodations, attractions and other visitor services.
- A demonstrated regional approach to development and promotion, with collaboration among key stakeholders, including local tourism businesses, other non-profits and government-operated sites, municipalities, communities, etc.

Management

- Tourism Assurance Plan approved and adheres to General Market-Readiness Guidelines.
- The trail is owned, monitored and maintained by a recognized entity.
- A current long term plan for management, development and maintenance of the trail.
- All regulatory processes and compliances are in place (e.g. License to Occupy). (See Appendix A - Trail Development Checklist).
- Marketing plan (target markets, pricing strategy, communications tactics, budget).
- Marketing materials such as website, social media, rack card and brochures.
- Engagement with local communities, businesses and other regional and provincial tourism networks.
- An ongoing commitment to frontline training in customer service and site interpretation.
- Effective data collection and utilization of visitor statistics/research.
- Consistent and reliable visitation data collection system.

Designed for the visitor journey

- Destination trails have high quality standards for design, maintenance and interpretation, with a visitor-focused approach to the experience from arrival to departure.
- There is a demonstrated commitment to promoting other attractions and services in the region.
- Adequate, site-based parking in close proximity.
- Branded on-site signage and washroom facilities.

- Technical expertise in design, enhancements and construction oversight.
- Trail construction and maintenance that is sensitive to ecological factors.

Planning/Booking

- Offer clear and comprehensive information and planning tools to the prospective visitor.
- Responsive website and online content should be well-designed, addressing the information needs of visitors.
- The following information is available:
 - Trail descriptions
 - Directions to trailheads
 - Information about trail conditions and safety
 - Accessibility levels (i.e. paved, rocky terrain, loose gravel, packed soil)
 - Maps, easy to understand route options
 - Suggested itineraries
 - Links to food experiences, accommodations, attractions and other services on or nearby
 - Accurate contact information

Sense of Arrival

- Clear and concise directional signage to the trailhead including level of accessibility.
- Well-maintained parking areas conveniently located and adequately sized.
- Clear and concise trailhead signage incorporated into the parking area and includes:
 - Length and duration of trail
 - Estimated travel time
 - Level of difficulty
 - Seasonal information
 - User rules and guidelines
 - Safety and emergency information

Experience on the Trail

- Strive for quality people and program-based experiences that interpret and celebrate the stories of natural/cultural icons of the location.
- Experiences are visitor-focused, informative and have active engagement with other assets (stakeholders, community events, services).
- Adequate informational and directional signage along the trail for a safe and positive experience.
 - Trail markers and signage inform users of changes in routes and possible hazards along the route
 - Distance markers
 - Trails in good condition with a hard stable surface and generally dry and free of debris
 - Washrooms, if provided, are clean and well-maintained
 - Built infrastructure (handrails, bridges, steps, etc.) kept in good repair

Departure

- Encourage repeat visitation
- Encourage sharing of stories, photos, videos through social media channels and using #ExploreNL
- Encourage feedback and sharing on TripAdvisor, Review on Google and “Contact US”

Appendix A - Trail Development Checklist for Project Sponsors

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation recognizes the valuable contribution of walking and hiking trails to the tourism experience. In consultation with other departments and agencies, this checklist has been developed to inform trail stakeholders of the regulations and other requirements related to trail development activities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- Crown Land** – Under the *Lands Act* all trails that use crown land **require** a Licence to Occupy (LTO). This includes trails within a municipality. Contact information for your Regional Lands office can be found at http://www.flr.gov.nl.ca/department/contact_lands.html
- Provincial Archaeology Office** – Under the *Historic Resources Act* any plans for new trails or upgrades to existing trails that have not had prior approval from the Provincial Archaeology Office are to be referred to that office for review. As part of the LTO application, trails will also be reviewed by the Provincial Archaeology Office.
- Liability** – The organization or committee **is** liable for issues related to any trails constructed or enhanced. It is recommended that trail owners/managers assess trails and consider their responsibility to the public before promoting their trail(s).
- Signage Policy** – Fingerboard signs permitted through the Department of Transportation and Works can provide direction to trail heads (i.e. parking areas). These signs are issued through a permit system and include the manufacture, installation and maintenance for an annual fee. Other permitted signs along provincial highways include off-site promotional signage, issued through a permit system by the Service NL. Applications for both fingerboards and off-site promotional signs are available at <http://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/licenses/highway/index.html>.
- Trail Standards** – While no trail construction standards have been adopted by the province, existing provincial construction standards should be adhered to (e.g. rise and run of steps). It is recommended that groups engage experienced trail designers, builders and project managers during construction. The technical skills obtained by trail workers as a result of professional expertise will contribute to a quality trail product and maintenance in the future. A well designed and built trail with expertise requires less maintenance. Consider using aggregate material instead of wood.
- Environmental Assessments** – Under the *Environmental Protection Act*, trails more than 10 kilometres in length are required to be registered. Registration may also be required for trails that occur near sensitive areas or, as per Section 28 of the Regulations, for trails that will occur within 200 metres of a scheduled salmon river. http://www.mae.gov.nl.ca/env_assessment/
- Water Permit** – Under the *Water Resources Act*, a permit is required Water Investigations Section when construction is within 15 meters of a body of water (including wetland). A permit will also be required for any work within a Protected Water Supply Area. <http://www.mae.gov.nl.ca/waterres/permits/>