“HAVEN’T BEEN THERE, DONE THAT: HOW EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IS TRANSFORMING THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE”

Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Conference 2011
Bermuda

Judy Karwacki, Small Planet Consulting
www.smallplanet.travel
Why Experiential Travel?

• Diversify from softening Sun, Sand and Sea market
• Respond to market trends
• Competitive advantage
• Attract higher end, more educated, more socially, culturally and environmentally conscious travelers
• Increased length of stay and spending
• Word of mouth and repeat business
• Promotes low volume, high value tourism
Types of Visitor Experiences

- Passive: $5
- Entertaining: $25
- Engaging: $80
- Immersive: $375

Program Price ($000's)

Guest Experiences: Value, Price Point, and Volumes

- Low Volume
- High Volume

Adapted from ©Céles Davar & Nancy Arsenault
www.tourismcafe.ca
Why Experiential Travel?

• Sustainable development
• Economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits
• Strengthens and builds communities
• More rewarding and fun for everyone involved, but more work too!
Experiential Travel

Travel that engages travellers in a series of memorable events, that are revealed over time, are inherently personal, involve the senses, and make a connection on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level.
Experiential Travel

**Products**
- Series of events
- Authentic, interactive activities
- Engage 6 senses
- Meaningful connections

**Marketing**
- Market dreams
- Position themes
- Personal relevance

**Results**
- Create memories of a lifetime to share with friends & family.
- Marketing success!
The Best Things in Life are Not Things

Pine and Gilmore
Difference between Tourism Product and Tourism Experience

Tourism product is what you BUY

Tourism experience is what you REMEMBER!

Canadian Tourism Commission
Product: Tropical beach vacation featuring luxurious accommodations, meals fine restaurants, spectacular views, beach activities
Belmont Estates, Grenada
Agritourism Experience
Belmont Estate, Grenada

- Unique, authentic working plantation
- Cocoa fermentary
- Garden
- Museum
- Restaurant
- Artists cooperative
- Gift shop
- Cultural entertainment
- Animals
- Community programs
Community Fish/Seafood Experience

- Barbados, St. Lucia and Grenada
- Sample local fish, seafood other dishes,
- Tour local community
- Local culture
- Meet the people
- Popular among locals and visitors
From Product to Transformative Experience
Lobster Fishing with Captain Jack

Experience: Learn, prepare and taste all aspects of the Caribbean lobster from a third-generation lobster fisher. Catch your own dinner on a memorable fishing trip to visit Captain Jack’s lobster traps around the bay. Visit his home in the fishing village to meet the family over a tasty Caribbean fruit drink. The Captain will teach you how to prepare your catch, and then roast it with tasty Coconut-Rum Butter over an open fire. Savour your culinary labours while watching a glorious sunset on the beach. An all-around fun, educational and tasty day!
Moving from Product to Experience

Commodity

Product

Service

Experience

Most Value

Least Value
Experiences in Demand

- Reaching into the community to meet local people and participate in day-to-day community experiences
- Hands-on, and interactive activities
- Special access and behind-the-scenes tours that are not available to mass market
- Learning and discovery that is participatory, involves two-way communication and interaction with locals, and fosters personal growth
- Experiences that promote sharing with family, friends and fellow travelers
- Voluntourism and philanthropy that promotes world citizenship
Identify Experiential Assets

STORY MAKERS/CORE EXPERIENCES – unique, authentic competitive advantages that draw visitors to destination (e.g., nature, culture, adventure, heritage, cuisine)

DEMAND GENERATORS – unique and authentic features that draw visitors (e.g., signature festivals, iconic attraction)

DEMAND SUPPORTERS – attractions and activities that don’t draw visitors but add to the appeal of the destination (e.g., local festivals, attractions)

LOCAL SECRETS – actors, musicians, dancers storytellers, cooks, historians, subject experts as well as local ‘in-sider’ stories, foods, places, activities, etc. that could be shared
Brainstorm Experience Ideas

- Why are we different here? What makes us who we are?
- What can be done here and no where else?
- What are the local hot spots, hidden gems, secret places?
- What behind the scenes, backstage, exclusive opportunities can we offer?
- Who are the experts and treasure troves of knowledge in our community?
Brainstorm Experience Ideas

- Can our experience provide our visitor with bragging rights?
- How can we involve visitors in our everyday life and work activities, and provide a hands-on, interactive experience?
- What are fun and educational ways in which visitors can contribute to our communities?
- With whom can we partner to package and create more unique experiences?
- What elements of surprise, unexpected touches can enhance the experience?
Setting the Stage for Memorable Experiences

- Small groups to allow for personal connections, storytelling, authentic learning
- Networks of skilled, resourceful tour directors and tour guides to orchestrate experiences
- Local resource specialists and subject matter experts to share knowledge and connect travelers to the local community
- Free time, flexibility and spontaneity - within tour itinerary to allow for self-discovery and unplanned opportunities
Creating Memorable Experiences

- Authentic local people
- Sense of place cues
- Themed and special interest
- Excite with everyday activities
- Interactive, hands-on, learning
- Engage all 6 senses
- Surprise and wow aspects
- Memorabilia to record and sustain memories
- Personalize and customize
- Treat customers like guests
Interactive Exercise

- Choose a story maker/core experience
- Choose a target market
- Design and describe an experience, using local demand generators, demand supporters and local secrets
- Explain why is works
Break away from the crowds and enjoy the rich cultural flavors of Waikiki’s Chinatown on an interpretive walking tour

*Walk though its mysterious streets, learn about local Tongs (quasi secret societies), cultural dishes and even homeopathic remedies.*

**Highlights (3 hours):**

- Interpretive cultural walking tour of Waikiki’s Chinatown
- Experience the sights, sounds, and smells of Chinatown, something most tourists don't get to do.
- Taste the various offerings of Chinatown from hand-selected vendors:
  
  *Malasadas and Kona Coffee; Local Artisan Jams and Jelly; Char Siu and Roast Pork; Dim Sum; Manapua; Bubble Tea; Exotic Seasonal Fruits; Traditional Asian Street Foods*
Gain insight into Aussie beach culture at the easternmost point of Australia, Byron Bay.

Duration: 4 days / 3 nights
Interactive Exercise

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Lobster Fishing Experience Example

- **Story Maker/core experience:** Fishing culture/cuisine
- **Target market:** Lobster-lovers, foodies, culture and soft adventure travellers, domestic visitors
- **Experience:** Fishing boat tour with local captain. Home and village visit. Learn how to fish for, prepare and cook lobster. Eat lobster, local foods on beach at sunset with local drink. Coconut-Rum sauce recipe, digital photos.
- **Why it works:** Variety of interactive, hands-on cultural experiences tied to passions of market and iconic Caribbean experiences. Personal interaction with locals. Reach into community and learn about every day life. Memorabilia to share with family and friends.
Experience Diagnostic Technique

- Two key questions
  - Did you enjoy the experience?
  - Was it what you expected?
- Four possible answers
  - Experience was as expected, was enjoyed
  - Experience was as expected, but not enjoyed
  - Experience was not as expected, and not enjoyed
  - Experience was not as expected, but was enjoyed
## Experience Diagnostic Technique

### Experience Diagnostic Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you enjoy the experience?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was it what you expected?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communicating the Experience

- Knowing your target market
  - Moment mapping – Understanding their needs from the moment they begin planning their trip till after they return
  - Anticipating and exceeding needs and expectations physically and emotionally
  - Motivations – escape, indulgence, learning, renewal, adventure, special interests, etc.
  - Preferences – comfort level, cost of trip, convenience of logistics, control of buying and trip management
Communicating the Experience

• Words
  • Don’t talk about activities, events, places, features
  • Focus on experiences and feelings
  • Messages about personal benefits
  • Tell a story to a friend – traveller to traveller
  • Make reader feel as if they are right there with you
  • Vivid share – sound of the wind in the sugar cane fields, smell of fresh baked coconut bread, feeling of floating down river on a raft, taste of home-made preserves
  • Personal, intimate, unique, authentic, real
THE EXPERIENTIAL ITINERARY

Presented by Ka’ana Boutique Resort

Overview

Inspire to embark on a 6-day expedition to Belize and have an experience that is authentic, exclusive, and life-changing. With Ka’ana Boutique Resort as your expedition leader and your story-teller, expose your senses to the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feel of a region that has everything the experiential traveler craves. Climb the tallest peak in the Cockscomb Basin Mountain Range, travel through the underworld of the Maya, taste the cuisine of multiple cultures, and explore the healing rituals of an ancient past with Belize’s last Mayan Shaman.

We’ve outlined a full itinerary that gives you the opportunity to maximize each day of your stay in Belize. However, this is your life-altering experience and we want you to decide what elements will achieve that goal. The possibilities are immense and we hope your expectations will be as well.

6 Night Itinerary

Day 1. Arrival/Museum Tour
Meet your adventure specialist for a 20-minute drive from the airport to the Traveller’s Inn or Harriott Center to share in the journey of Belize’s rum making history. Continue for
Communicating the Experience

- **Images**
  - People connecting with their surroundings, sharing special times with each other
  - Show experiences through a traveller’s eyes
  - Destination context important, but traveller the focus
  - Authentic, real and natural - not posed
  - Real, intimate moments
  - Sense of energy, vitality and warmth
  - Capture special moments in time
  - Evokes feeling of participating in experience
  - Feelings of fun, connectedness, peacefulness, elation, wonder, surprise, etc.
Belmont Estates, Grenada
Gouyave Fish Friday, Grenada

Credit: Trip Advisor
Surama Ecolodge, Grenada

Kevin Loughlin
Communicating the Experience

- **Video**
  - Short clips
  - Focus and style like images
  - User-generated content
  - Professional video not required
Online

• Your website
  • Rich content – words, video, images, sounds, maps, etc.
  • Fresh content
  • User-generated content
• Other websites - media, travel trade, blogs, podcasts
• Social media - travel sharing sites, travel review sites, forums, Facebook, Flickr, Youtube, etc
Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative
Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI)

- Began in 2006
- Rupununi Region a key focus
  - 50 percent of enterprises are Amerindian-owned
  - 60%+ of all tourism employees are Amerindian
  - 81% of businesses have 95%+ Amerindian employees
Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI)

- Key approaches
  - Export ready suppliers
  - Themed experiential activities and itineraries
  - Niches – birdwatching, nature, culture
  - Market focussed – niche marketing by nurturing partnerships with tour operators, media, other influencers
  - Leveraging funds – collaboration with donors to fund complementary initiatives
Implementation Results: Media
Implementation Results: Tours
Implementation Results: Complementary Projects

- **Canadian International Development Agency**
  - C$150,000 - indigenous tourism product development & training

- **European Commission**
  - US$ 75,000 - birding guide training
  - US$ 75,000 - sustainable enterprise training

- **Welcome to the BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION Georgetown**
  - US$ 36,000 - sustainable tourism good practices workshops & checklists

- **Inter-American Development Bank**
  - $150,000 - sustainable tourism product development & marketing

- **Inter-American Development Bank**
  - Community Tourism Development in the Rupununi Blue Print
Implementation Results: Sportfishing
Implementation Results: Sportfishing

Supporting development of fisheries policy and regulations, and Amerindian sportfishing development
Implementation Results: Indigenous Tourism

Surama Village Eco-Lodge
Mayaramang Shuramata Weinipai
Greetings from Surama
Morupo Eenepanki (Welcome)

Surama Village Eco-Lodge
“Welcome to Our Way of Life”
Sources and Resources

The following are gratefully acknowledged as the key sources of the information presented:

- *Defining Tomorrow's Tourism Product: Packaging Experiences*
  - *CTC Experiences Toolkit*
  - [www.canadatourism.com](http://www.canadatourism.com)

- *Experience Nova Scotia: A Toolkit*

- The Tourism Cafe (presentations, other content produced by Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Celes Davar, Todd Lucier) [www.tourismcafe.com](http://www.tourismcafe.com)

- *Experiential Tourism and the Cyprus Hotel Experience, Celes Davar* [www.earthrythms.ca](http://www.earthrythms.ca)