

Tourism Development and Marketing Plan

March 2020



Tourism Study

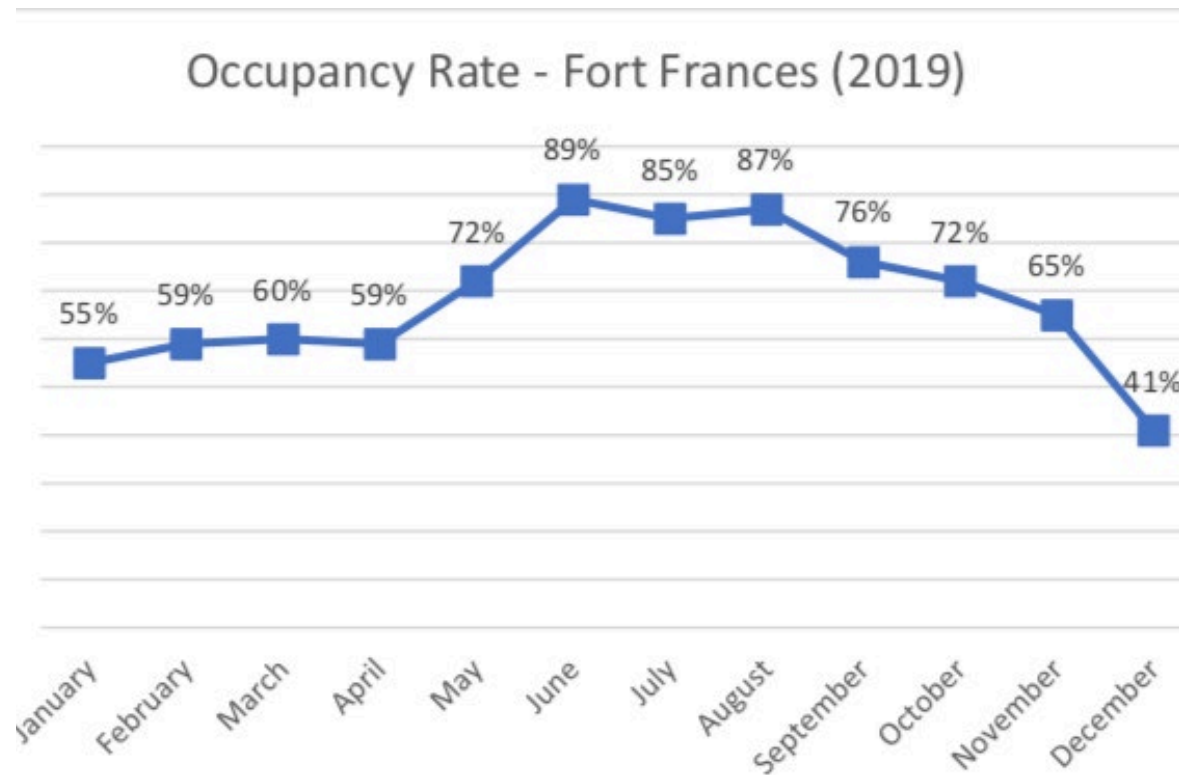
A study was completed by Rynic Consulting to create a multi-year tourism marketing plan. The study was carried out through the winter of 2020.

A copy of this report has been provided to council.

Why Tourism?

- Tourism sector development in Fort Frances is a key diversification strategy amidst a repositioning of the Fort Frances economy post-mill closure.
- Quality of place is a direct bridge between tourism and economic development. Both locals and visitors appreciate “town beautiful”.
- Fort Frances deserves to be a place people want to visit, relocate to, and invest in. This plan delivers each of a Product Development Roadmap and a Tactical Plan to achieve this

A Plan for Both The Short and Long Term



The unique characteristics of tourism in Fort Frances, including significant drive-through traffic to NW Ontario, remote location vis a vis major urban centers, and border location drive the need for:

- a) A new production option positioned for the future and longer term that can attract folks from distance given product uniqueness and greater distance traveled are directly correlated;
- b) More “scrappy” tourism tactics that take advantage of current tourism patterns;
- c) Creation of niche draws that leverage what Fort Frances has and can do.

Content of this Plan is focused on driving overnight stays and high occupancy rates.



Tourism Development Plan and Marketing Objectives

1. Nurture experiences

- “Afishianado”- Enhance Rainy Lake as an angling destination
- “Forageur”- Develop learn-to guided food experiences

2. Drive Accommodation Occupancy Rates

- Winter- Angling on rainy lake
- 1-2 shoulder season sport tournaments
- A 30 hours-3 day stay 'n play market

3. Nurture the Supporting Atmosphere...Connect the Dots

- Foodie experiences
- Product-thematic events
- Craft/maker retail premises
- Beautification of Scott Street/town entrances/main street/Trans Canada
- Wayfinding/direction to water
- Shevlin/expanded marina
- Trail/water rentals

4. Sell Fort Frances

- Establish marketing foundations
- Develop core product creative direction
- Implement core product marketing/advertising program
- Establish a 30 minutes stop, shop, and go market

First Steps

Product Development

- Use Air BnB Experiences to create local packages
- Use various platforms to encourage locals develop ideas for Fort Frances experiences

Website Development

- Establish an effective digital website presence to anchor/support all promotional tactics
- Active blogging
- Anchor content, dynamic
- Have request for proposal ready for June 2020
- Have website established summer of 2020 to prepare for 2021 season

Digital Media Library

- Develop a digital library of community marketing assets related to various experiences.
- Identify content writers to develop stories and articles that convey the Fort Frances angling experience for publishing on destination website.
- Create a content marketing calendar.

COVID-19 Recovery Program

- Timeline for recovery, border reopening, etc. is unknown.
- Deliver a campaign that will accelerate recovery of hotel occupancy rates once public health orders have been eased (estimated June).
- Incentivize an appeal to past customers for a return visit .
- Geotarget tourists at border crossing

Saving for Investment

- Funds to support tourism infrastructure partnerships with the Town or other community initiatives
- Savings to support a 2021 'Next Steps' plan with reduced MAT funding as a result of COVID-19 closures



Next Steps

Targeted Digital Ads

- Ads for various aspects of tourism development will be grouped by type: angling supplies, therapy shopping, restaurants, etc. or by distinctive stop, shop, and roll groupings (e.g. one gas station, one restaurant, one retailer per promo).

Expand Social Media Presence

- Build an engaged social media following on Facebook and Instagram.
- Ensure a constant and active feed to social networks of new content and stories about Fort Frances angling opportunities.
- Use social media platforms to generate traffic to the website fishrainylake.ca
- Facebook: core social page, use it for communication and traffic management to destination website
- Instagram: brand awareness, visual platform, use ads to drive to packages

Create Stay n' Play Packages

Examples include:

- 1) Trails based (ski/snowshoe/hike/bike/snowmobile/ebike)- Manion Lake (72 km east), Rainy Lake Nordic Ski Club:** Trail-based activities are good day-long activities with retreat to urban comforts in evenings. As opposed to boating, most people have access to equipment they already own and use.
- 2) Heron Landing Golf Course:** Interest in overnight golf course stay 'n play is correlated with golf course quality. A "Top 10" will have much stronger overnight-related stay interest than a typical course. Priority should be Heron Landing golf course on Couchiching First Nation, which was selected as top new course in Ontario when it opened.